

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

BRIAN E. CARLSON

*Interviewed by: Raymond Ewing
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Q: This is an interview with Brian E. Carlson. It's the 13th of February 2006. My name is Raymond Ewing. This interview is being conducted through the auspices of the Foreign Affairs Oral History Program at the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training at the National Foreign Affairs Training Center.

Brian, it's good to have this opportunity to talk with you about your Foreign Service experience. It looks to me like you entered the Foreign Service of the U. S. Information Agency in about 1970.

CARLSON: Exactly. I entered the Foreign Service on January 5, 1970.

Q: Right at the beginning of the year. OK. How did that come about? Earlier today you told me you grew up in Alexandria, Virginia.

CARLSON: I did, indeed. I was born and grew up in nearby Alexandria, Virginia. My parents lived here since soon after World War II ended, so I spent my entire youth growing up in this area. When I was in my senior year in college, I thought that I was going to become a journalist or something of that nature. In my senior year, the Foreign Service examination was offered through the campus career counseling center. In those days, major corporations and government agencies came to campus to talk about their business and to recruit graduating seniors.

Now, I may have been one of the few people at Vanderbilt University that spring who even knew what USIA was. Because I grew up in the Washington, D.C. area—*The Washington Post* was my “hometown paper”—I knew some of the government agency acronyms. Now, to be clear, I was not—in my college years—particularly interested in government service. My father owned his own business; he was an air conditioning and heating mechanical contractor. He bid on, won and performed work on both commercial and many government buildings. At various times during my high school and college years he won contracts to work on State Department buildings on Navy Hill (even then, we knew the space belonged to the CIA, however) and in the Pentagon. Perhaps because of some of the government people he dealt with in business, he had a relatively low opinion of civil service workers. Probably I had absorbed some of that attitude.

So, on a Saturday in early spring 1969, I took the Foreign Service exam downtown at the federal building in Nashville. It was almost on a lark. I had never planned to seek a

government job or to enter the Foreign Service. I merely agreed to go and take the written exam with a friend who really did want to get into the Foreign Service.

As fate would have it, I passed the test and he did not.

Q: You took it in what year?

CARLSON: I think that would have been the early spring of 1969. I graduated from Vanderbilt in the summer of 1969 with a degree in American history. It was the time of the Vietnam War and I was pretty quickly identified as a prime candidate for the draft. In those days your draft notice arrived soon after you graduated from college.

Passing the Foreign Service written exam resulted next in an invitation to an oral interview. I passed. I remember clearly that one of the oral interview questions was a conundrum. It was more or less phrased as, “Beginning approximately four hundred years ago, the continents of South America and North America were both colonized and settled by Europeans. Yet, despite a number of similarities, as well as historical and technologically equal starting points, the two continents today have reached very different levels of economic development. To what forces and factors do you attribute the differences?” I have no clear memory of how I answered. Probably in spite of my answer, I passed the oral interview and was placed somewhere on the rank order list. Even though I had not, at that point, been offered employment, I was asked to fill out security forms.

As the State Department process proceeded, I applied to my draft board to be allowed to see whether this would work out – would I get an employment offer from the Foreign Service? And, whether it might be considered an alternative form of service to going into the military? In those days (the late 1960’s) a lot of us thought that going to Vietnam as an ordinary soldier was not a particularly attractive idea. The anti-war movement was in full swing and draftees were regarded as mere cannon fodder. I was not especially anti-war in a philosophical sense, nor anti-government. Like a lot of people my age, I regarded the entire Vietnam war as a waste of national resources – and young men’s lives.

So, I proceeded with the Foreign Service application while simultaneously appealing my draft status through the fall. In fact, the delay was worth the effort. The draft issue simply went away when Nixon introduced the draft lottery; in the December 1, 1969 lottery my birth date (March 9) was drawn with a high number, something like 317. That meant that I was unlikely to be called up by the Selective Service. I could proceed to pursue a career.

Meanwhile, the Foreign Service process marched along. I passed the oral and the medical and the security and so forth, and sometime in the fall I got a letter offering me an appointment in the Foreign Service and an invitation to join a Junior Officer Trainee (JOT) class that would begin on the fifth of January, 1970. I remember the starting salary offered was a very round number: exactly \$8000 per year.

Q: In those days the written examination was for both the State Department and USIA...

CARLSON: Right.

Q: ...but you indicated a preference for USIA...

CARLSON: I did. I do not remember now exactly the details of how you indicated this preference. But, because of my interest in journalism (I worked on the college newspaper) and American history, and because of what I thought I knew about USIA and its activities—the press work and the public advocacy—these were things that attracted me more than traditional State Department work in those days.

Besides, the Foreign Service career path interested me. The “up or out” nature of the Foreign Service – a system that depended on advancing in order to continue your employment—appealed to me. I never had any interest in joining the Civil Service. It seemed to promise only the dull, gray and boring routine of the same thing, over and over, day after day, in the same office, with the same colleagues, for your entire working life. I had at least learned enough about the Foreign Service system to have the idea that you moved around and progressed, both in job, in rank and intellectually.

In those days, most of us assumed that once you joined a large corporation or other stable employer, you were going to spend your career there. The stereotype was that you would leave with a gold watch and a pension at the end of your working days. I think young people today in 2006 don't expect that kind of career path, but when I came out of university; my friends and I were, in essence, trying to select a lifelong association with an ideal employer with which we could be happy for a lifetime.

Q: Had you traveled abroad? Had you lived abroad?

CARLSON: No, relatively little at all. My parents had traveled abroad some on vacations, but usually not with me. At the point that I joined the Foreign Service, my only foreign travel had been to Canada. So, no, I had not had experience with travel, or even with moving around.

At that point, I had just married. My wife, Marcia, had grown up in the family of an oil company executive. She had moved around the U.S. all her life, having lived in about six different cities in the U.S. Her goal, she told me when we got married, was to live in one place and never move again! [Laughter] So things turn out.

Q: Where you had basically grown up in one place and thought you'd like to move around.

CARLSON: I believe it was more that, once I thought about the Foreign Service, I decided I would like to try something different. It seemed that the Foreign Service represented a select part of government service. I was also attracted to a job that had some connection to national policy, and the kinds of things that fill the front pages of our national newspapers. Remember, I grew up in a region where the morning newspaper and

the evening television newscast were filled with national policy questions and international affairs. I certainly did not know exactly what diplomacy was all about – this was long before the days of internships – but I had some images and impressions of what living and working in foreign countries might be like.

Q: Seems to me the procedure—the process—worked very swiftly for you. You took the exam roughly April of '69 and were on board in early January of '70.

CARLSON: Yes, it moved along rather quickly, although at the time I thought it was moving slowly. I knew little of government processes and pace. On that first day, I found that I was a member of a class of, as I remember, about 35 or 36 people, half USIA and half State employees. In those days the two classes were trained in the A-100 course together. I remember that we of the USIA class were sworn in by the then-director of USIA, Frank Shakespeare. His was a well-known name in D.C. from his work as president of CBS television and as a supporter of President Nixon. In our JOT class, I was, along with another officer, Chuck Loveridge, the youngest officer in the class at age 22. Both Chuck and I tired of continually being asked if we were someone's dependents. We grew mustaches in order to look older.

Q: Were you sworn in at the Foreign Service Institute?

CARLSON: No, we were sworn in by the Director at USIA headquarters at 1776 Pennsylvania Avenue, about a block from the White House. My, but that address was symbolic! The plaque on the wall facing Pennsylvania Avenue said "USIA – Telling America's Story to the World." You really felt like you were part of America's government when your office was but a block from the White House.

But, our A-100 course basic training took place at the Foreign Service Institute in Rosslyn, in the old FSI building -- I think it was 1400 Key Boulevard, if I remember correctly. The buildings were government leases of private office buildings, and the rent must have been pretty low because the FSI spaces were pretty grim. We did not really mind however because it was all new and exciting to us.

The A-100 course was like a college seminar, sort of a foundation course in the U.S. government's national security apparatus – "American Government 101."

And one of the things that made it stimulating was that most of us Junior Officer Trainees were social and intellectual equals. We were about the same age, all university graduates, perhaps a few with masters degrees, and drawn from all over the United States. There were just three or four married couples among us, but several members of the class married each other during or soon after our training. The Department and USIA encouraged marriages, because they said quite openly, the Foreign Service gets "two for the price of one."

In addition, it was clear that spouses – wives in those days – were considered an integral part of the officer's career. They were expected to contribute through representation and

embassy volunteer work, and there was a paragraph about the wife in the officer's annual evaluation report.

Q: ??? the A100 course was there, you did some off-site...

CARLSON: I guess that's true. We had some off-site meetings. We went to other government agencies, but in some cases their representatives came to FSI I remember a class visit to a crown cork bottling plant in Baltimore which was supposed to underline for us the importance of American exports. We also had some meetings with private industry groups that had an interest in foreign affairs. One especially memorable event was an evening "bourbon tasting" sponsored by the American Bourbon Council. President Johnson had decreed, we were told, that whenever an American embassy offered Scotch whisky to guests, then American bourbon had to be offered too. Apparently this event was intended to make sure we would appreciate and remember to serve the American product at representational events abroad.

We went to a rustic inn in western Virginia for an off-site retreat for a few days. I'm not sure it's the same place the take the new officers now, but I remember thinking that it was intended to inculcate us with the Foreign Service ethos. We all believed that we were continually being assessed – that our mentors were trying to decide who would be a successful officer and where they might best serve. This was long before "cones" were introduced, but we already understood that there was a pecking order in the Foreign Service.

Training also included a couple of weeks apart from State, with just the USIA group. During that period we were introduced to the U. S. Information Agency, while State employees were probably being given, if I remember, the introductory consular training course. One aspect of the Foreign Service that is very different from today was that I received absolutely no consular training. Neither in the A-100 course nor at any time in my career did I ever get even the most rudimentary orientation to consular work. I went from the A-100 course directly into language training.

Q: At what point did you have your first overseas assignment? You went to Caracas first as I understand. You obviously knew that before you did Spanish language training.

CARLSON: Yes. Much as happens today with newly hired officers, we were encouraged to "bid" or otherwise indicate our preferences. We were told to think about where in the world you hoped to go, and what kind of work you might do there. We were encouraged to go and call upon desk officers and to make our interests known to the "area offices" (as regional bureaus were known at USIA).

Our assignments were announced on the last day, just before the end of the A-100 course. I wanted to go to Eastern Europe. This was not because I knew East European languages or had particularly studied the history of the region, beyond a college course or two. Rather, I concluded that if you're going into the foreign policy business—and remember this was the Cold War period—there was no point going to some backwater place far

from the front lines. I wanted to “go where the action is.” It seemed to me the action would be in Eastern Europe where East met West in those days, where America and her allies faced the Soviet Bloc, where the lines were clearly drawn.

I bid enthusiastically on posts in Poland and Russia and all those sorts of places, but I didn’t have any Slavic language background. In those days the Foreign Service philosophy held that it was ideal to test all new officers early in their career by challenging them to learn a new language from scratch and to work effectively in a new and unfamiliar culture. We were already sworn in as fully tenured officers, but the idea was to gauge whether a young officer would likely succeed in the Service. So, even if you knew a difficult language, they would train you in a new one. I had a friend who spoke both Russian and German, and they assigned him to Polish language training.

Q: They gave him Polish language training?

CARLSON: Yes, they gave him Polish language training. In my case, I listed Latin America as my second interest, and they had a certain number of jobs to fill, so I ended up assigned to Caracas.

Q: Had you had any foreign language before?

CARLSON: I studied French in high school and college. As is the case with most Americans who take French in high school and college, mine was totally non-functional.

Q: So you hadn’t passed the language...

CARLSON: The Foreign Service Institute administered a test if you claimed any proficiency in any language. I think I got a 2,2 (speaking, reading grades on a scale of zero to five) or a something like that, in French. Maybe it was just a 1,2 or something. I did not focus on languages in college, and merely met the minimum requirement for graduation. We read classics in French, but we did not practice spoken language much at all. Of course, at that time, you did have to have *at least a few* credit hours of a foreign language in order to receive a bachelor’s degree from a reputable university.

Q: So you had six months or so in Spanish?

CARLSON: I believe the combination amounted to about six weeks in the A-100 course, and then approximately five months or twenty weeks of world language training. I studied Spanish at FSI, and I eventually got the required grade. As I remember it was a 3,3 or so—whatever minimum required to get released from language training. In theory, that 3,3 meant that you could read and speak the language sufficiently to carry out your principal professional duties, but perhaps not much more. It was claimed that if you scored a 3,3 at FSI, you could learn much more vocabulary and become more fluent by living and working in the country where the language was spoken.

Q: At the end of language training.

CARLSON: Yes, I departed to an assignment as a so-called “junior officer trainee” in the American Embassy in Caracas. In those days a junior officer training assignment was for 12 months. It was “over complement” – meaning that you did not occupy an existing position on the organization chart. It was intended to be a rotation among various jobs in the mission – both in USIA work (the cultural work, exchanges, the press side and the binational center), as well as in different embassy sections (political, economic, administrative). In each section, a younger officer was assigned to be my “supervisor” and I was given some kind of assignment or project to work on. The only one I got a pass on was the consulate because I had not had consular training. I suspect I was not of much use to the sections, but I did work for periods of four or so weeks in the political section, administrative section and the economic section, and I think also in the defense attaché’s office for a time.

Q: I always thought the JOT program of USIA was a good introduction, and I often thought more State Department junior officer positions suffered sometimes because they didn’t have the opportunity that USIA’s JOT had to move around and get different experience, to get a different experience, get a real insight into all aspects of the service. Caracas was probably a large enough embassy in those days that you were able to get a lot of different experiences.

CARLSON: Caracas was a large embassy. I could be wrong, but I think it was about 200 Americans, not counting the USAID mission and the Peace Corps. Caracas was capitol of a country that supplied a significant amount of oil to the United States, and still does. It was a front line state in the U.S.-Cuba standoff. The U. S. perceived that it had significant interests there. The embassy was headed by a legendary career ambassador. Robert McClintock was his name.

I spent four years in Caracas – which was unusual for a JOT – and McClintock was chief of mission the whole time. He was the epitome of a traditional diplomat, very much an ambassador from the old school. It was his fourth mission, something that doesn’t happen to many people these days. I believe in State Department circles he was seen as a bit of a renegade.

McClintock became famous in the Foreign Service at his first embassy. It was Cambodia, newly independent and led by Prince Norodom Sihanouk. McClintock, with a reputation as a martinet and said by many to have a high opinion of himself, had taken in private to calling the leader of the country “Snookie.” Well, eventually this got back to Sihanouk. He understood that the American ambassador was referring to him disrespectfully, he complained to Washington, and McClintock was pulled out of the post after just two years under something of a cloud. For many people in the highly competitive Foreign Service, that would have been the end of a career.

Q: He was ambassador at the time?

CARLSON: He was the ambassador. Cambodia was his first ambassadorship. As a

punishment, he was sent to a real backwater of a place—this was in 1958—sent to a backwater called Lebanon. It turned out that early in his tenure a political crisis developed in July, 1958, and the United States sent the U.S. Marines ashore to stabilize the situation. This was done over the objections of the embassy. The State Department argued that this deployment wasn't yet necessary. But, the Marines had their orders from the Joint Staff and, so they believed, from the President. So, the Marines came storming ashore with their landing craft on the beaches of Beirut.

There was a famous Life magazine picture taken, in which Ambassador McClintock, dressed in his dark suit and carefully knotted necktie, is holding his French poodle, Golly, on a leash. They are standing on the sandy beach as surprised Lebanese sunbathers look on, at this heavily armed Marine officer and his troops splashing ashore through the water. McClintock is looking very dapper with a fluffy pocket handkerchief and shined shoes with Golly on a leash. In a single image, McClintock signaled the State Department policy view: this is not a military emergency and the Marines are not needed here!

Q: He had it under control, huh?

CARLSON: That Life cover picture, of course, simply "made" McClintock's career. If I remember correctly, he was subsequently appointed ambassador to Argentina and then later ambassador to Venezuela. Both of those were considered very important AR bureau posts in those days in the Department. By the way, Golly was still with him in Caracas and attended most embassy general staff meetings, preceding the DCM, Frank Devine, as the three of them entered the room and we all stood up.

McClintock was a good mentor to me. He would occasionally reach out and find junior officers, and give them a task or put them to work on something. I don't know whether he thought of it as mentoring or just getting some dirty work done, but it was good experience for me. It was good training, and I got to see how an ambassador does his job.

Q: I think he was very much a field officer in the sense that he was probably more effective in posts abroad than in Washington. I think of him very much in Lebanon and in other places that you've mentioned. I'd forgotten about Cambodia, not so much as Assistant Secretary of State.

CARLSON: No, I don't think he ever became Assistant Secretary of State.

One of the things he did was this: there was in Caracas a large American expatriate community that had an annual picnic on the Fourth of July. This was a very large community event that they put on, not only for the Americans in Venezuela, but also the citizens of the country were invited to participate. It was held in one of the city's principal parks and included a festival with a large raffle. Several American automobiles were among the prizes each year, as well as lots of donated airline tickets to New York and Europe and other prizes. Selling tickets for the raffle was a very big endeavor, and the embassy had a sales quota to make. We sold tickets not only within the embassy community, but officers sold them to their working contacts and local friends outside the

embassy as well. American oil companies, banks, airlines and other businesses did likewise. This raffle got city-wide attention each year.

McClintock selected me—a Junior Officer Trainee who didn't have any real responsibilities—to manage the embassy's participation. It was my first taste of fundraising; it was also my first large scale management challenge. I was charged with not only distributing and selling raffle tickets, but keeping track of all the embassy people who received tickets to sell, setting quotas section by section, how many tickets they had sold, and trying to find new venues to sell raffle tickets. I can't remember the numbers we sold, but we were apparently successful enough that my effort was deemed satisfactory.

Q: You didn't have to reach into your pocket and buy a certain number to satisfy the quota?

CARLSON: No. Thank goodness, because in those days I remember I started at a very modest salary. Eight thousand dollars a year was my salary when I went in as a Junior Officer Trainee to Caracas. Caracas was one of the world's most expensive cities in those days. I remember remarking that my housing allowance to rent an apartment was over \$5000, and thus a significant addition to the cost of having me in Venezuela. After you added in the cost of living adjustment and whatever other allowances, it cost double my salary to keep me in Caracas. All my family at home found such figures incomprehensible.

After returning from Caracas to Washington in 1974, my wife and I discovered that all of our friends, who had gone off to Lima, San Salvador or other places – except for Western Europe – had all managed to save large amounts of money and returned to Washington from their initial assignments with nest eggs. They typically sold their car at the end of their tour and thus were able to make a down payment on a house in the Washington suburbs. We came back from four years in Venezuela having not saved a dime. We weren't behind, we weren't in debt, but neither had we been able to put anything aside, either.

Q: OK, anything else about this first year of rotation that you want to say? I think it was primarily to learn, to be oriented to the work with the embassy.

CARLSON: It was, and I learned some things. I remember one day I went to work in a sports coat, one I thought rather dapper looking. But it was a sort of a bright green, one of the colors people wore in those days, I guess. Unexpectedly, I was called up to the ambassador's office. Some important Venezuelan political figure had died and McClintock needed to express his condolences. He didn't really need to go himself, he just wanted an embassy officer to go over and drop off his calling card at the funeral. But, looking me up and down, he sternly told me, "You'll have to go home and change clothes." I learned something that day about always being prepared for whatever might come up unexpectedly.

Q: You mentioned that you wound up staying in Caracas four years. How did that come

about? I thought that generally in those days under the USIA/JOT program generally an officer would do a year of training and then move somewhere else?

CARLSON: That was the norm. After I'd been in Caracas about 10 or 11 months, and was nearing the end of my rotation year, a telegram arrived from Washington. It said, simply and very perfunctorily, with no advance consultation with me of any kind, "Carlson assigned to Tucumán. Direct transfer, no home leave. Report to Tucumán in thirty days." I think it didn't even mention the word "Argentina." It simply said "Tucumán," and I had to go home and figure out what country Tucumán might be in!

I learned there was a small bi-national center in San Miguel de Tucumán, a remote provincial city in northwest Argentina. The staff consisted of one American officer. It was a binational center, miles from the nearest consulate, and 600 miles from the embassy.

Frankly, I was not pleased with this assignment. I had already begun to believe that it was preferable to see USIA's work (or public diplomacy as it's called today) closely linked to policy. It seemed important to me to connect USIA work to what the State Department and the rest of the U. S. government is doing. I think there's something to be said—there's a lot to be said—for the two going hand in hand and reinforcing each other.

Tucumán seemed to me to be a remote—dare I say, boondocks—posting. It struck me, as I learned more about it, as an unimportant post with a soft cultural agenda of teaching English and staging the odd traveling art show. None of that appealed to me very much. I feared being out of sight and forgotten for future assignments.

And, of course, Tucumán would not get me to Eastern Europe

I didn't really have to object to the assignment myself because - interestingly enough - my Public Affairs Officer did. In those days in USIA the Public Affairs Officer was a real king, particularly in a big post. My PAO was a guy named Edmund Schechter. Ed took exception to the fact that Washington had dared to assign one of his officers without consulting with him first. He objected. He put his foot down. He said, "In fact, I want Carlson to stay here. I've got important things for him to do here."

Caracas had just been approved for or suddenly had a vacancy in the Student Affairs Officer position. This job was essentially outreach—go down to the university every day and engage with all the radical student leaders. Remember, this is only a few years after 1968. The universities in South America were generally hotbeds of politics—anti-Americanism—and a source of future political leaders. It was the sort of place you could only go after the security officer verified that there were no demonstrations or anti-American activities going on today, and even then you went with some caution. USIA was trying hard to reach out to this younger audience – the successor generation – to find ways to engage with them. That was the job of the Student Affairs Officer. Schechter's objection proved successful and, a few weeks later another cable arrived saying, "Previous assignment per REFTEL cancelled. Carlson is assigned as Student Affairs

Officer Caracas.”

Q: Someone else when to Tucumán.

CARLSON: I guess so. I never looked over my shoulder at Tucumán again! I stayed in Caracas. I was the Student Affairs Officer for about a year. Then, because an officer transferred, an opening occurred in the assistant information officer (AIO - press attaché) position. I got moved into that one, which was what I really wanted to do most of all, anyway.

Q: Before we leave your JOT assignment, let me ask you: Were you the only JOT in Caracas or were there a couple of others, too, at the same time?

CARLSON: I was the only USIA junior officer trainee, or as we called it, JOT, during my time in Caracas. If I remember correctly, State had a somewhat similar JOT rotational training program in those days, but it did not last 12 months, and it didn't involve as much variety in terms of working in different sections of the embassy. I think it rotated mainly through State Department sections.

Q: I don't know about this particular period, but at times they had something they called the "central complement" so that you were not encumbering a position at the post but were rotated around, as you said for at least a year, and the second year would be in a position at the same post rather than going to another embassy.

CARLSON: Right. And it may be they did that. I have the sense that USIA and State followed very similar personnel policies in those days. I'm not sure.

Q: You became the Assistant Information Officer which was mainly dealing with the press or other aspects of the information?

CARLSON: My job was mainly dealing with the written press. There were two "AIO's" as they were called: Assistant Information Officer positions. Three people worked media issues. The information officer (IO), whose name was Daniel Garcia, and Gerald "Gerry" Waters was the AIO for radio and television. I became the AIO for press when Guy Farmer departed at the end of his tour. Dan Garcia was very much oriented toward the press side of things, so I helped him and learned a lot from him. Dan was the fastest typist I had ever seen – he could transcribe a conversation or speech, in either Spanish or English, literally at the speed a person talked. I thought that was a pretty useful skill in those days, before digital recorders came along.

Together, we met with journalists, called on editors, sought their views, and provided them information. We distributed magazines, sent out press releases, set up press conferences, and attended press events. One of my duties was to attend the President of Venezuela's weekly press briefing and report back to the Ambassador and the PAO on what transpired.

In USIS, we ran a program of distributing pieces of the “Wireless File” as it was called in those days, the daily flow of teletype material from Washington explaining statements by U. S. government leaders, texts of official documents, articles about American life, society and politics, and special information packets. One of my regular assignments was to write a sort of op-ed column each week which was “placed” in a number of newspapers around the country. This was common practice in those days. We didn’t pay for placement. We provided this bit of opinion journalism at no cost. It was based on current policy and facts, attuned to Venezuelan interests, and drawn heavily from or based on the Wireless File. Studying history and writing papers in college was good practice for this! I wrote these columns each week...

Q: With a by-line?

CARLSON: The by-line was a pseudonym, and when trying to pick out a pseudonym Garcia suggested that it should be something that didn’t disguise the fact that I was American. Nor should it imply I was a pure Venezuelan. So I was “William Cornelius.” I don’t know where we got that from, but at any rate I did these articles and met with journalists. Guy Farmer, a former wire service reporter, was another great teacher in the short time we had together.

There was a steady emphasis on “placements.” That is, we counted how many column inches of our materials were “picked up” by the Venezuelan press and radio. In addition to the op-ed columns I wrote, the Wireless File each week carried several “byliners” by USIA’s own correspondents based in Washington. These were American writers analyzing and explaining U.S. policy for a worldwide audience. Their articles were not particularly tailored for a Venezuelan or even Latin American audience, so sometimes we would add to or change the article to give it a little local touch. Washington was, I remember, very pleased with our success in placing articles in the Venezuelan press.

I found the Venezuelan version of oral Spanish to be particularly challenging. Venezuelans, as do most of the peoples around the Caribbean, clip the ends of their words off. They only pronounce the first half of a word, and they tend to speak very rapidly. The *caraqueno* radio news broadcasters are incredible – they speak faster than the human ear can hear, or at least my gringo ear! (Later in my career I served in Madrid, and it was wonderful! I had no problem understanding or speaking whatsoever.)

Q: Did the information section division also do some translation of the Venezuelan press?

CARLSON: We did. Part of my job was to supervise the operation called “Media Reaction” in which we reported editorial comments on American policy, and over time I got to be pretty good at translating from written Spanish into English. We focused not on Venezuelan domestic politics or even Venezuela’s relations with its neighbors, but on how the Venezuela media reported on and criticized American policies. This was the period when OPEC was flexing its muscles and Venezuela was a major player in the oil business. The Venezuelan press was diverse and energetic, with the resources to have

reporters in Washington and other cities. The radio scene was vibrant and television was coming into its own at that time.

Q: Do you want to say a word or two about the Foreign Service National staff or the information staff? I assume you had ???

CARLSON: We had a large Foreign Service National staff. I can't say exactly how many, but I remember one of my tasks was to supervise a gentleman who had probably worked at that point for 35 years for the U. S. embassy. I was his "supervisor." I looked rather young at the time—and I was young—and here I was "supervising" this much older, more experienced person. He could have been my father's age. Fortunately, I realized that I had far more to learn from him, and little reason to "manage" his work.

If there's one real advantage to USIA (or public diplomacy) work, it is that you learn so much from and are so dependent upon the FSN's, the locally engaged staff drawn from the people of the country. As a junior officer, to be put in a putatively supervisory position over somebody who knows so much and has so many years of experience, well, it was daunting. I had several people – a photographer and several others – who worked for me. It was certainly my first experience trying to figure out what motivates different people. I worked at that from a clear position of being a heck of a lot younger and less experienced. I learned early that when you're in those sorts of positions, you don't so much "supervise" as you collaborate, enable, and communicate. Maybe you lead, but only in the same way a fresh second lieutenant "leads" an experienced sergeant. Giving orders or "exerting authority" is not really part of the deal in that kind of situation.

Q: How about contacts with newspaper editors, reporters? I don't know if there were any American correspondents around. Was that pretty much done by the PAO, the Information Officer???

CARLSON: The PAO and the information officer dealt with the American press who came to town, and that happened relatively frequently. There was often somebody from the U.S. press around, and we had resident Associated Press and UPI bureaus in town. There were stringers or part-time correspondents for several American dailies in Caracas. The *Caracas Daily Journal* was one of the three most prominent English-language newspapers in South America. Once in a while I would be engaged in one aspect or another of the American press coverage, maybe setting up interviews inside the embassy for a visiting American journalist.

I remember at one point dealing with the political counselor who succeeded Bill Luers (William H. Luers). Luers was the first Political Counselor I worked with and then he left. His successor was a pompous little fellow. I called him to set up an appointment for him to talk to a *New York Times* reporter about the forthcoming Venezuelan elections, and he exploded—perhaps he'd had a bad morning—saying, "Why should I do that? Why should I spend my time talking to this American reporter? All I do is write his damn story for him, and then he'll go off and claim credit, and all I've done is waste another hour of my day!"

I was in shock from this reaction—it was the first time anyone had refused to brief a journalist, or had gotten so emotional about it. I went back to Dan Garcia, the IO, and reported what I'd been told.

Dan said, “Well, that’s really stupid. Here’s the opportunity to educate the American public about what we’re doing here, why it is important, and how America’s interests are affected. This guy doesn’t see why that’s part of his job.” I remembered that lesson for a long time.

Q: I think I agree with Garcia!

CARLSON: Exactly!

Venezuela seems to be the sort of place where politicians never seem to go away. A number of the people that I dealt with in the 1970’s are still active on the scene today. It’s interesting to hear their names come up again in the news once in a while, or to see they are in some high government position or whatever. In those days they were important contacts for me, reasonably important contacts for the embassy, and we had identified them early in their careers. Now, that doesn’t mean I’ve kept in touch with them over the years, and they probably don’t have any particular memory of me, but I recognize a few of those names. But I think it says something about the investment we in USIA were making in youth leaders, student politicians and young journalists in those days. Sadly, we failed to stick with them in the intervening years because USIA budgets shrank.

Q: I guess I should ask you if Hugo Chavez was one of them.

CARLSON: No, Chavez was not one of mine, but some of his current compatriots were. It seems to me that they were much more open-minded or balanced in those days than they are today.

Q: Did the PAO/IO ambassador ask you as probably one of the younger, more junior members of the overall embassy staff to particularly keep in touch with student leaders or younger journalists or anybody?

CARLSON: Once I left the student affairs job, I didn’t have much of a relationship with students, but clearly the younger journalists were the more likely contacts for me to work with. They were the people that I would associate with. I did not usually meet with the older editors unless I was with the PAO or the IO, then I’d meet the more senior journalists. There was a lot of entertaining. I learned early on that priority number one was to be in personal contact with at least a few Venezuelans every day. That took precedence over staff meetings and other inside-the-embassy obligations. Ambassador McClintock had a custom of holding a reception every Friday night. Weekly. Absolutely without fail, if he was in the country, there was a cocktail party at the Residence to which any section of the embassy could bring any visitors that they had in town, or any contacts that they wished to do something for.

Q: Did they put them on the list?

CARLSON: I think we added them to a list during the week, and an invitation would reach the guest, and they were invited. The officer who put them on list was expected to be there to squire them around and introduce them to the Ambassador. An invitation to the American ambassador's residence was something sought after by visiting Americans and Venezuelans alike. The Residence was high up on the hillside with a panoramic view overlooking the valley of Caracas from the terrace. The Ambassador obviously did a lot of dinners and things like that as well, but this weekly reception was open to all those various agencies that were at the post.

It is something that I remembered as I progressed in the Foreign Service: simply put, the value of the ambassador making himself or herself, as well as the Residence, available to the entire mission so they can get their business done. In any embassy there are a lot of different people doing things, and as Ambassador you can't know what they all are. You can't do everything. You need to be inclusive. You need to empower your people. I thought that was commendable, and worth remembering.

Q: I certainly agree with that comment, but I don't think I've ever run into a situation where there'd be almost a routine weekly reception. I can remember working for ambassadors who would think that it would be a good idea to include sometimes known as "Cats and Dogs" or contacts of others list. But to do it on a weekly basis...

CARLSON: Yes, it's the only case I've seen of such a regular event. The way it worked was that this was an embassy with a pretty big staff and a senior DCM, a large Residence staff, and all those sorts of things. So, some of the senior officers were often sort of "in charge" of this event. The ambassador would slip in, make an appearance and shake a lot of hands, and go upstairs or out again. His actual time consumed was not so much.

Q: But it was at his Residence.

CARLSON: Yes, it was at the Residence, and you did see him during the course of the evening. I remember also one evening we learned one of those Foreign Service "social graces." Somebody came over and whispered to my wife and me, saying, "The Ambassador's got a dinner here at eight o'clock, so we've got to get them all out of here."

I looked around this room, at probably 150 happily chattering people, all holding drinks and showing no signs of leaving. "Get them out of here? How do you break up a party so quickly?" I asked. The more senior FSO smiled and said, "Just sidle up to people and gently whisper, "The Ambassador would like to greet you – right over there by the door." You know, it was marvelous! We turned off the liquor, put the ambassador by the door, and cleared the room in about 10 minutes.

[Laughter.]

Q: It wasn't necessary to ring the fire alarm!

CARLSON: No, no!

Q: Anything else about your first assignment to Caracas that we should cover?

CARLSON: Times got tough. This was during the time of OPEC and the first oil crisis. I was there from 1970 to 1974, basically summer to summer. There was considerable tension in the relationship. Venezuela was a founding member of OPEC and crude oil prices went up considerably. This was a time when American ownership and control of natural resources in Latin American countries was controversial, at least among the leftists and intellectuals. There was always the threat to nationalize the oil industry or to in other ways to restrict the American investment in the oil industry. There was plenty of other American business and investment there. GM for example assembled cars in Valencia.

Venezuela was in those days experiencing some tension between the more conservative and more pro-American-business people on the one hand, and the less-amenable, anti-capitalist alternative on the other. Some people put this in the context of the Cold War and global communism. I was there during the 1974 election of Carlos Andres Perez -- his first election.

It was an interesting time to be in Latin America. You could always sense an undercurrent of fundamental anti-Americanism. We could go on at length and define that term, but I think most of us know what we're talking about. I spent my tour trying to explain American motives and actions to people who were less and less disposed to accept my arguments. This was the period of the Vietnam War, and Nixon's resignation over Watergate, and a worldwide perception that America was slipping away from the principles that made her great and admired.

A fellow officer and friend, Barry Jacobs, and I each day tuned the USIS radio teletype so that, instead of receiving the USIA Wireless File transmission from Washington, we could get the Associated Press. All summer—especially the 1974 summer that Nixon resigned—we'd go into the windowless teletype room and stand there ripping and reading the AP copy. It was gripping stuff, because that was the best, most authoritative, most up-to-the-minute account of what was happening to our government in Washington. We felt like witnesses to history, but also a little uncertain because this seemed to be truly scary stuff.

Q: As you said before, Venezuela always has been a particularly important country to the United States because of the oil supply ??? really on that source along with some others.

CARLSON: I was sent out in the fall of 1971 to Maracaibo. The United States had a consulate in Maracaibo, and I was sent out there for about six weeks while the Maracaibo branch public affairs officer, Larry Ikels, and his family went on home leave. My wife

and I were sent out to “hold the fort” and serve as acting Branch Public Affairs Officer while Larry and his family were away. We stayed in the BPAO residence, watered the plants, fed the dog, and became part of the consulate staff. As it turned out, while they were in the States, Larry’s newborn baby was diagnosed with a serious disease. Larry and his family never did, in fact, return to post, so I ended up being acting branch public affairs officer up there for something like four months or so.

Q: That was the only USIA position...

CARLSON: ...yes, the only USIA American officer position out there. There were I think two State Department officers in the Maracaibo consulate, because this was the operational center of the oil industry. Maracaibo is on the edge of a lake, and large oil wells were visible all across the lake. Maracaibo is also the largest city in Venezuela near the always volatile border region with Colombia. In the immediate area the Rockefeller family had an enormous ranch doing experimental cattle breeding.

Maracaibo had a decidedly different atmosphere from Caracas. With less political life, Maracaibo was much more – I don’t know whether to call it more pro-American or less politicized. Personal relationships were more normal there. Americans were warmly welcomed and it was a good experience for me. I was in charge of the office and had certain latitude about what to do and how to do it. The Maracaibo binational center (BNC) was commercially successful as an English teaching institute, and the “profits” from the classes funded an active schedule of cultural and speaker programs.

Q: You were involved in all aspects of public diplomacy, not just the press.

CARLSON: Doing everything: economics, politics, whatever. Yes, doing press work, publishing newsletters, everything, putting on cultural events. The bi-national center was active, so that you were also supervising a fairly serious business operation with employees and customers, textbook purchases, utility bills, a large professional staff, a local board of directors, etc. There was a lot to be learned there. I think I began to realize what I missed in not going to Tucumán, and I’ve always had a great deal of respect for what independent, self-funding institutions like BNC’s can do for America’s public diplomacy.

Q: So even though you didn’t get your assignment to Argentina, you got a little bit of an experience with that sort of thing.

CARLSON: Exactly, but probably I got enough BNC experience there in Maracaibo that I didn’t really miss not having gone to Argentina!

Q: Another difference that you alluded to was that in Maracaibo there was a consul and some other Americans.

CARLSON: And the focus of attention. The big oil companies were always ready to put on a good show by helicoptering visitors such as Congressmen out to an oil rig on the

lake and explaining how it all works. Then, as now, most of Venezuela's heavy sulfur crude gets refined in Louisiana or Texas and sent to the northeastern U.S. as heating oil. The American oil companies own most of the refineries that are capable of handling Venezuelan crude. The heavy crude is less valuable per barrel than Middle Eastern or North Sea oil. We got lots of CODELs, senior Administration figures, and people like that. It may seem strange to believe that any Congressional delegation would ever want to go to a place as remote as Maracaibo, but in the winter time, I guess, Maracaibo was considered reasonably attractive.

Q: Because of the oil and maybe the Rockefeller farm.

CARLSON: Right. Things like that brought in a lot of business. Maracaibo's location near Columbia was then, as now, a factor. There was a certain amount of cross-border smuggling, and there were political struggles between Venezuela and Columbia in those days, so it was an area of some interest. I believe our intelligence community paid at least some attention to the region.

Q: In addition to the three or four months that you spent in Maracaibo, did you travel around Venezuela a lot from Caracas or not too much?

CARLSON: I realized later that—compared to our experience in subsequent posts—that my wife and I had not traveled very much during our time in Venezuela. First of all, Caracas was expensive for us, a young couple on a junior officer's salary. At the time it was one of the most expensive cities in the world. Our daughter was born in 1972 in Caracas, so having a small child limited our travel. Moreover, there weren't that many miles of paved roads in Venezuela in those days. The drive to Valencia was on a super highway, but Maracaibo, if I remember right, was about a six- or eight-hour car journey across pretty rough roads and some desolate territory. There just were not many places to go to by the means that we were able to go. Air fare was expensive, and so we made big few trips.

The Caracas embassy had an aircraft assigned to the defense attaché. On a "space available basis," we made a couple of trips to Bogotá and Quito. That is, when flying a routine mission to a country in the region, the DAO occasionally would offer to take a few embassy employees along at no cost. The opportunity to do this rotated around through the American staff, so in four years we twice got an opportunity to go. We'd occasionally make flights with this airplane, but you were very much dependent upon the schedule of the airplane: when it wanted to go or where it was going, or when it was returning. It was based in Caracas but served the embassies in Bogotá and Quito as well, if I remember correctly.

Q: There's a very high waterfall.

CARLSON: Yes. Near the Canaima lagoon is Angel Falls. Right.

Q: Did you get there on a DC-3?

CARLSON: We did get to Canaima. We made one trip there on a commercial flight. At that time, the airliners landed on a dirt strip and we stayed in a rather rustic cabin on the edge of the jungle, overlooking the tea-colored waters of the Canaima lagoon and some spectacular scenery. There was no electricity except that provided by a generator. We used candles and lanterns. I remember ice was in very short supply.

While there, we took a day trip up a tributary of the Orinoco River in a "curiara" (a long dugout canoe used by the natives). It was a day-long trip with a guide. The dugout had a gasoline outboard motor in the back, but the boat itself had been made by hand. It seemed that we went pretty far up river, and at some point along the way, the guide said, "Let's stop and visit this old guy. Nobody's seen him in a while. Let's see if he's still there."

It turned out the fellow we sought was a genuine hermit, living in the jungles of central Venezuela. He was a Lithuanian who had fled from the post-war traumas in Eastern Europe, having apparently had enough of civilization. We were—other than "the damned Indians" as he called them, meaning the native people—we were the first people he had seen in four months. In a little "slash and burn" field he was growing some vegetables, and he hunted small game. I remember he cursed the Indians – because they snuck in and stole his tomatoes. I found him and his East European story – a twentieth century hermit in the middle of the Venezuelan jungle – fascinating!

[Laughter]

Q: A very unlikely place, but there you go.

CARLSON: Yes, Exactly.

Q: OK. Anything else about Venezuela?

CARLSON: No, I think that's about all.

I'll just wind it up by saying as my four years in Venezuela drew to a close, it was clearly time to look for another assignment. Ambassador McClintock nominated me to the Executive Secretary in the Department as a promising young officer to serve on "the line"—the immediate staff supporting the Secretary of State. This was quite an honor. Such an assignment to the Secretary's staff in those days was something sought by the Department's best political officers, and it was usually a mark of a promising career ahead. So, for this very traditional, very old school diplomat to nominate me, and for the Department actually to offer one of those jobs to a USIA officer, that was kind of unusual. I was very tempted by that offer.

In those days there were opportunities to change agencies, to move from USIA to State, as well as to move to other foreign affairs agencies such as Commerce or Agriculture. You could move back and forth if you wished, and if the agency or department agreed. You could actually change employers. But USIA, perhaps knowing of my firmly-

expressed desire to go to Eastern Europe, simultaneously offered me an assignment to Belgrade in Yugoslavia. I've always wondered whether it was in order to keep me from jumping the traces and switching from USIA to State, or was it just a coincidence. No way to know.

In any case, my wife and I had a long think about this. One choice was clearly not only an honor but probably a step up to great opportunity. The other was something we always said we wanted to do. Accepting the State assignment would have meant a Washington tour of several years, and who knows what overseas posting would be offered after that? In the end I turned down the State Department operations center job, and I took the year-long Serbo-Croatian language training assignment at FSI and an onward assignment to Yugoslavia.

Q: And you actually had an offer from State Department to do a job? It wasn't just that you had been nominated but you had...

CARLSON: No, they offered it, and it always made me wonder if this prompted USIA to give me what I'd been asking for.

Q: So you came to the Foreign Service Institute in the summer of '74, early fall. Did you study Serbo-Croatian for the better part of a year?

CARLSON: Yes. Ten months or 44 weeks of it with, as we called him, "Otac Milosevic," that is, Father Milosevic. He was actually a Serbian priest, and he was our main teacher. There was also a younger fellow, Jovanovich, I think was his name. We learned Serbian. I guarantee you that learning one of these East European languages, particularly one with all the declensions, will teach you more about English grammar than you ever understood before. Both of them, but especially Otac Milosevic, were firm anti-communists and anti-Tito-ists. We got a heavy dose of ideology along with the language lessons.

Q: In the summer of '75 you went to Belgrade in what position?

CARLSON: I went to Belgrade in 1975 as an assistant information officer. I was to be an AIO in charge of press and publications. Marcia and our three-year-old daughter Marinn traveled through London and then Munich to pick up a new car at Ingolstadt before driving on to Belgrade.

The first thing that happened upon arrival was a Presidential visit. President Ford was coming in two weeks after my own arrival, and preparations were in full swing. This was my first experience with presidential visits (after Nixon's 1958 experience, no one wanted to visit Caracas), and I was very impressed.

This was also the first visit by an American president to Yugoslavia and perhaps one of the first to any of the Eastern European countries. Yugoslavia in those days very carefully wanted to distinguish itself from the rest of Eastern Europe, that is, the Warsaw pact countries. Yugoslavia followed a policy of "non-alignment" as they called it. Indeed,

Yugoslavia was a founding member of the Non Aligned Movement which included a number of other nations around the globe such as India that wished to be part of neither block in the Cold War. There was a “third way,” between the Warsaw Pact and NATO, and between Soviet-style communism and free market capitalism.

Henry Kissinger was Secretary of State, and Kissinger’s first ambassador to Yugoslavia was Larry Silberman. Silberman is still a Federal judge here in Washington, D. C. Perhaps he’s semi-retired as a judge, but he’s active in Republican circles and was on the 9/11 Commission and all kinds of other things. You may not know that his wife, Ricky Silberman, worked for Clarence Thomas and famously defended Thomas’s reputation in the Anita Hill case. At the time, in the summer of 1975, I did not appreciate that I was witnessing a turning point in history.

President Ford arrived in Belgrade directly from the signing ceremonies in Helsinki, Finland of what came to be known as the Helsinki Agreement, the one that established the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE). If you trace it back, this was the beginning of a new set of relationships between the United States and Eastern Europe, a pivotal moment in the Cold War, and certainly an historic development that eventually led to the breakup of Communism, of the Soviet Bloc.

At the time, some thought this was a poor bargain. We agreed to accept the existing post-war borders in Europe and a lot of other aspects of the relationship between the countries of Eastern Europe and their relationship with the Soviet Union. In return, the Soviets and their allies agreed to honor a “basket” of principles about basic human rights and political rights.

At the time I’m sure the Soviets and many others did not at all perceive the bargain that they were getting into. They did not appreciate that this agreement would open the door to their societies and grant the rest of the world a legal basis to examine and judge their performance of all these basic and fundamental human rights. It opened the way for dissidents to demand the free flow of information, insist on rights to travel, to engage in free speech and political action, and to demand all kinds of basic freedoms that – I believe better than anything else – undermined the Communist bloc.

Q: Certainly one of the factors. No question about it. Let’s come back to your arrival. Ambassador Silberman was there. A little controversial, but I’d like to hear how you experienced him.

CARLSON: Ambassador Laurence Silberman prided himself on being gruff, blunt and plain spoken, but always he treated me well. The more senior officers in the embassy were soon in a state of near rebellion. Here’s this guy, 40 years old, younger than most of the senior officers, a foreign policy neophyte, coming out to be ambassador, and he did a few radical things right off the bat. One act that particularly troubled some senior officers was that he immediately replaced the popular DCM, Dudley Miller, who had been serving in Belgrade under his predecessor, Ambassador Mack Toon. In his place, Ambassador Silberman put his own man, not a State Department officer, to be acting

DCM, a young fellow named Brandon Sweitzer. He arrived as Silberman's special assistant, but soon became the DCM. Sweitzer was about 30 years old, absolutely loyal to Silberman, unschooled in the Department's ways and procedures, and generally regarded as Silberman's "spear carrier."

Traditionally most FSO's believe the DCM – especially with a political appointee ambassador – should be a source of reason and balance and serve as a buffer between the ambassador and the rest of the staff. Brandon Sweitzer made things worse, not better. There was a lot of tension within the country team. Silberman was not a career diplomat, and he wasn't particularly interested in good relations, the standard thing which most State Department people tend to say they're working on: good relations with the host country.

Silberman actually saw his job differently. He said once that he had been told by Secretary Kissinger, that it was his job was to play hard ball with the Yugoslavs. Tito's government continually told American officials privately that they understood our position and wanted to work with us, and then they would criticize us in public and vote against us in the United Nations. Kissinger said, "Every time the Yugoslavs double cross us, kick 'em hard, make them hurt." Silberman found various ways to do that which, in turn, made life difficult for the political officer and the economic officer and so forth.

The Public Affairs Officer (PAO, head of USIA operations) was Terry Catherman. Terry was a very senior USIA officer who had been PAO in Germany, and he managed to deal with Silberman successfully. At least, he survived. I think Silberman appreciated the USIS operation's capabilities. USIS was more likely to be in touch with intellectuals, artists, and dissidents, while much of the embassy was dealing day in and day out with dull government officials and loyal party members. Silberman's ambassadorship was brief and he was only there for about two years – 1975 to 1977. He was there before I arrived. He hadn't gotten there very long before me.

The Ford visit was a great start to my tour in Belgrade. I've often told younger officers that a great way to get to know your new post is to have the president arrive within two weeks of your own arrival. By the time the wheels on Air Force One are off the ground, you'll know everybody in the government and everybody in the embassy and a lot of key people in important institutions, and you will have forged practical working relationships with each of them.

Q: Why don't you talk a little bit about the role that you played in the Ford visit and how that did affect you.

CARLSON: I'm unable to remember exactly what I my assignment was. I was probably made a Site Officer for some of the events. As a site officer, you are responsible for a place where the President will be holding a meeting or doing a speech; you spend days beforehand getting to know all the people who work there as well as the physical layout of the event site. You will practice many versions of the event and in the process learn all the entries and exits, know where the telephones and bathrooms are, and be able to solve

unanticipated problems. I guess I did that well enough because in subsequent years I got called upon to do a lot of presidential visits. I've worked on nine Presidential visits, usually doing the press advance and the set-up. I figure it all started there in Belgrade. It was pretty mundane because it was my first. While I was in Caracas we had a visit by the First Lady, by Mrs. Nixon, but we not have a Presidential visit.

Q: Or vice-presidential?

CARLSON: No, not in those days. During the time that I was in Belgrade, Yugoslavia did host one of the follow up meetings to the Helsinki Agreement. Owing to that, we had a long stay by a delegation for the Helsinki Review Conference in Belgrade from October 1977 to March 1978.

Q: Headed by Max Kampelman.

CARLSON: Yes. Max Kampelman, and there was another guy.

Q: Was it Zimmerman?

CARLSON: Zimmerman was around, but I think the delegation was headed by Arthur Goldberg...former Supreme Court justice, Secretary of Labor and former U.N. ambassador – a political type, not a career guy, led the delegation. There was a guest house on the Residence property in Belgrade, and Goldberg stayed there. The delegation did not have its own press person, so I handled a lot of the press work for Goldberg. It was at that review conference that the U.S. first began to hold the Soviet side to their promises about the Helsinki “third basket” of human rights and other fundamental freedoms.

By that time Larry Eagleburger had become ambassador to Yugoslavia, and his arrival was welcomed by the Yugoslavs. First, he was anybody but Silberman. But, also, they remembered him as “Lawrence of Macedonia” because, as a relatively junior embassy officer, he coordinated U.S. relief operation after the earthquake in Macedonia back in 1962. He returned to Yugoslavia as ambassador, and since he spoke Serbian, he...

Q: Silberman did not speak Serbian, or did he?

CARLSON: No, I don't think he did. Eagleburger had some command of the language. I can't say today how good it was at the time, but he could get along with the people. I don't think he actually did things like TV interviews, but had been in the country enough to know some.

USIA, under Terry Catherman's guidance and Eagleburger's direction, embarked on a project of expanding the network of information centers in Yugoslavia. We had, when I arrived, a couple of information centers--I know we had one in Belgrade and one in Zagreb—small libraries, plus perhaps space where you could have a small seminar or show an art showing or something. We had one in Zagreb at the consulate in the city

center there. But we went on and expanded them with new ones in Ljubljana, Skopje, Sarajevo, Titograd (today Podgorica), and Novi Sad.

This effort represented a relatively far-sighted USG approach to the Balkans. We essentially recognized the distributed nature of power in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The United States was unable to open consulates, both for financial reasons and because the Yugoslav government thought that would be too provocative. We assured ourselves that the government also did not wish to reciprocate by allowing the Soviets to open consulates in all those cities. So, under the Yugoslav information law, we opened these non-diplomatic information centers in the republics of the SFRY.

As AIO for press and publications, I traveled to these information centers, my responsibility having to do with information work. In addition, one of my main responsibilities was putting out a bi-monthly, glossy magazine called *Pregled*, and we printed it in both Serbian and Croatian, that is, in Cyrillic and Latinic alphabets. We published and distributed 36,000 copies every two months.

We drew much of the material from some worldwide USIA publications that were produced in those days, especially *Dialog*, using the articles and photographs, but we did print, bind, and distribute *Pregled* from a print shop/warehouse a few miles from the embassy. We produced some articles locally. Most of the translation work was done at the Regional Programs Office in Vienna, but we did the layout, final edits and printing.

I learned about a whole new aspect of press work – design, layout, colors, type fonts, readability – that I'd never known anything about. I supervised something like 45 people. It was an amazing job for a second tour officer.

I traveled around Yugoslavia, and worked with other officers on setting up these new information centers. Those centers later became, Ljubljana, for example, it was the progenitor of our relationship with the Slovenians. Our colleagues who served in those posts would tell you today that we're still dealing with the people we dealt with in those days. Today they are running their newly independent countries.

Q: Were each of these new information centers headed by an American officer?

CARLSON: Yes. The model was one American officer and three Foreign Service Nationals. Three locally engaged employees, and usually the local employees were a driver/handyman, a press person, and a librarian/cultural specialist. The beauty of this was when Ambassador Eagleburger or anybody from the embassy traveled to Titograd or Skopje or someplace, we had a well-versed and capable staff there, on the ground. Our officer and his Yugoslav employees knew the local political and economic environment, knew with whom you ought to talk about any given subject, knew who was knowledgeable and who was powerful in local society. They could set up appointments, and they had their finger on the pulse of the region.

The officers in these information centers did no political reporting from their posts, and that was one of the constant issues. The question often arose with Washington and within the embassy: to what degree were these USIA posts extensions of the embassy and therefore open to being tasked to do political reporting, and to what degree were they USIS operations intended only to “tell America’s story” abroad . Many USIS officers in those days thought of their press and cultural work – winning friends for America -- as somehow more pure or less sullied than the State Department’s classified reporting and secretive discussions.

The compromise eventually reached between Terry Catherman, the PAO, and Ambassador Eagleburger was that the information center directors would periodically come back to Belgrade. Those trips were sort of for “recharging” – to get information, acquire supplies, talk with their colleagues about upcoming programs, learn about what’s going on at post and in Washington, and even to shop in the embassy commissary. Remember these officers were isolated, usually being the only American in their community, able only to talk by open telephone line or receive mail and newspapers through the Yugoslav post with several days delay. But, during those visits to Belgrade they’d debrief the political section, the economic section, the defense attaché, or whatever. If they felt like writing something, they were welcome to do so. They weren’t specifically tasked with traditional State Department reports or memcons, but they were certainly language-fluent eyes and ears on the ground to what was going on in the SFRY.

When Yugoslavia began to blow apart in the early 1990’s, I think we – all of us who had that experience – were not too surprised. We knew the undercurrents of ethnic tension and regional politics were flowing strongly in those societies, despite the Tito regime’s constant repetition of the *bratsvo* and *jedinstvo* -- brotherhood and unity -- slogans. Supposedly, the new Yugoslav man, under Tito’s leadership, had put all those history-laden animosities and ethnic hatreds out of his mind. We knew that the socialist theory and an economy directed by the workers’ own self-management was not working nearly as well as the party leadership claimed. I guess many of us who shared that USIS experience were not surprised when the American government’s attempt in 1991 to maintain the territorial integrity of Yugoslavia failed.

Q: And unity.

CARLSON: The unity. You could just see the centrifugal forces were already there. I was constantly amazed by the constant backstabbing, rumors, and rivalry among our own FSN staff. It seemed our Serb employees were always picking on the Croats, the Bosnians were denigrating the Slovenes, etc. If the unity ever existed, it was breaking down by the time I was there.

Q: Especially after Tito or even when Tito was still there?

CARLSON: I lived in Belgrade when Tito was still alive and ruling, but I think it got worse after Tito died in 1980. Tito was a strongman, and as so often is the case, when you have a strong, forceful, dynamic leader who consistently removes anyone who might

be a likely successor, well, you don't get a very successful succession. By the late 1970's Tito was not very dynamic. He was old. The diplomatic community was filled with rumors about his health, and some thought he was -- like El Cid -- being kept on life support. We spent an inordinate amount of time in the embassy and in Washington talking about what would happen "after Tito."

Nevertheless, the Tito image was there, the Tito-ist propaganda was there, and I think to some degree it held the country together. But there were indications, such as the poll conducted among Yugoslavs that revealed that most of them self-identified as Serb or Croat or whatever, and very few called themselves Yugoslavs. After Tito's death, the rotating presidency system that he set up resulted in a weak government. When the centrifugal forces of economic decline and nationalism tore the country apart, there was no strong central authority to prevent it. Yugoslavia then went into a period of economic decline in the 1980's -- there was all sorts of mismanagement of the economy and in industry. As is often the case, a declining economic situation breeds a corrosive kind of nationalism. Everybody begins pointing fingers. "It's the Croats' fault." "It's the Slovenes' fault." "It's the Serbs' fault." That type of negative nationalism is particularly problematic when the economy declines; it has a cunning appeal, diverting attention from the real causes. It becomes much more persuasive, and I think that is part of what happened.

Q: When you traveled to these other cities where the information centers were being established or had been established, were you primarily doing so on behalf of the magazine or to establish contacts with press people or did you actually set up one of the information centers?

CARLSON: No, I didn't actually set one up. There were officers assigned to them even before the doors opened. Vic Jackovich, for example, who later went on to be an ambassador, started the one in Sarajevo. Dick Wong was first center director in Skopje; imagine, if you can, a Chinese-American speaking perfect Macedonian! USIA picked these people and they were language trained and sent out there to set these up or get them going, and then after a couple of years, successors were assigned. These were regular USIA Foreign Service slots, although because of the special status of information centers, the officers were not on black passports or on the diplomatic list.

When Yugoslavia disintegrated in the 1990's and the independent nations of Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia were recognized by Washington, those USIS information centers often became the first U.S. embassy in the new country, and their long-serving FSN staff were key to getting the new embassies up and running.

My travel was designed to bring materials -- especially printed materials and window exhibits -- from Belgrade to them. We aimed for a process which made sure that those branch posts were constantly in touch with the central post. We alternated between people traveling from the central post in Belgrade out to the branch posts for one reason or another, and alternately the branch officers traveling back to Belgrade. So I might go

one time, an assistant cultural attaché would go another time. The ACAO might go to conduct Fulbright interviews or plan International Visitor Program travel, and perhaps the Regional Library Officer would go another time. When we from Belgrade visited, we brought new information, new products, gossip, word of what's going on in the embassy, what's happening and so forth.

This is where I learned how hard it is for the people in the central post to imagine how isolated the branch is from all that daily "water cooler" type of communication that goes on among colleagues, and how important robust communication is to good management, especially in a widely distributed organization. The branch officers are out there at the far end of a very thin string. It was wise management for Catherman, Eagleburger and the others to try to make sure that the flow kept going in both directions. We relied on the telephone; we had teletype, the Yugoslav post, and stuff like that. We didn't have email of course – it was long before that.

We worked hard at communication, both internally among ourselves as well as with the Yugoslavs. As different as they were, both Silberman and Eagleburger put a lot of emphasis on trying to understand what Yugoslavs really thought and how decisions were made.

One of the things I worked on in Belgrade was our computer-based distribution and records system. This was an early, ground-breaking attempt to computerize and automate what had been basically a name and address mailing list. We also wanted to combine that contact list with a record of program activity – that is, participation in various USIA programs. An individual might have attended a cultural program, a seminar, a lecture, or some presentation. Maybe they were on an exchange program, had been a Fulbright grantee or had traveled to the U.S. on an International Visitor Program (IVP) – that sort of thing. Maintaining such records and standardizing them from post to post had long been a USIA goal. With the constant arrival and departure of embassy officers, it was difficult to track such participation in our programs over time. We were the first to put this kind of information for a whole country program into a computer, using the Wang computers.

Wang had developed pretty good word processing software, and USIA was one of the first foreign affairs agencies to adopt it and use it overseas. I think our need for languages and different character fonts to suit foreign languages helped drive Wang's international business. In Washington, and at our post in Berlin, some people had figured out a way to make these Wang word processors do rudimentary data processing – in a sense, to store and run a database. In Belgrade, with a half dozen branch information centers, we refined the software and made it a management tool. The PAO was able to see what the branch information officers were doing, who they were reaching with our programs, what subjects they were addressing in their work.

Terry Catherman, the PAO, was very much a supporter of this kind of data-driven management. He had created something similar, using punch cards and spindles, in Germany where he also had a number of branch posts and America Houses. He wanted to

be able to demonstrate what issues his far-flung operation was working on, to review how intensely a subject was being addressed by USIS, and to be able to assess quickly what interaction we had over the years with individuals. Too many FSO's arrive in a new post only to discover that their predecessor, who had a shoe box full of business cards representing four years of contact work and representational efforts, had packed them up and taken them with him on departure.

That was one of the reasons that I traveled: because that database, called the DRS or Distribution and Record System, was my project. It was of course integrated with magazine distribution. We distributed the magazine by mail to 36,000 addressees, so we had to have a database of who those people are, where they receive mail, and how to update our mailing list. This was an outgrowth of that. I should say that I think the State Department and what remains of public diplomacy now inside the State Department are still struggling to keep proper, usable records of who we have dealt with, and what we did with them, and what they did with us, and to strike the right balance between privacy and usability.

Q: Make sure it's current but not out of date.

CARLSON: Yes, this was where I first learned what intensive effort is required to keep a database up to date. And, that an out-of-date database is worse than useless. People move, shift offices, and change jobs, not to mention marrying and dying. Even then, before the European Union, we thought about whether or not it is wise, ethical, or even legal to keep that kind of personal information. You would, for example, have a record that so-and-so gets our magazine every time it comes out, but also that, for example, this person also went on an International Visitor Program trip that we paid for in 1976. They've attended three art shows and they are particularly interested in receiving mailings on the subjects of business, economics, and international trade. Whatever. Pick some subjects. We would have this categorized.

But, this does raise questions and especially after the—this came later—the seizure of our embassy in Iran, is it a good idea to keep such records? Should they be classified? Should they be unclassified? (After the embassy seizure in Tehran, the militants discovered the DRS system and arrested Iranians listed in it.) We needed to have our FSN's, our local employees, our local engaged staff able to use and manipulate the data.

Lots of issues come up, and I think we are still struggling with them today. I know that twenty years later, in my embassy in Latvia, the struggle to keep the protocol database up to date – which we used just for inviting people and keeping track of how to reach them by phone – was a ceaseless effort. And, it still was not integrated with the public diplomacy database or the defense attaché's records of people who had received IMET or other training.

Q: OK. Anything else we should say about your assignment as assistant press attaché? Let me ask you to be sure we understand the structure. You were the assistant press attaché? You were the only assistant information officer or was there a press attaché?

CARLSON: There was a press attaché, technically the Information Officer or IO, Joe Braycich at the time I arrived. He spoke fluent Serbian. I thought my Serbian was okay, but he was really fluent. Joe was a great teacher and he had served in Belgrade once before. During my tour he transferred and Myron “Mike” Hoffman became the IO. The Cultural Affairs Officer was Ed McBride – one of the best CAO’s I ever worked with – and there were two Assistant Cultural Affairs Officers, as well as the Belgrade Information Center Director. I cannot remember if there was another AIO. I think not. Maybe the position had been cut or cannibalized to create one of the Information Center directors in the provinces.

Q: A PAO? A and a deputy, too?

CARLSON: Yes, we had a Deputy Public Affairs Officer, Bob Warner, whose responsibility was coordination of those branch posts, the information centers, and an executive officer, Hal McConeghey.

Q: A pretty good size.

CARLSON: Mike Braxton was the director of the American information center in Belgrade. Featuring a big library, reading rooms, and a gallery for art shows, it was downtown, perhaps a mile from the embassy, on Cika Ljubina Street. I think it was actually burned by an anti-American crowd during the time when we were having our difficulties with the Serbs in the 1990’s under the Milosevic regime.

Q: The USIA staff was all located in the embassy, in the chancery?

CARLSON: The embassy in those days was one main building, an old building at 50 Kneza Miloša, and adjoining it was a smaller building. The annex was not architecturally part of the chancery building, but over the years somebody had cut through ramps and walkways so you could walk from one floor across to the other and into the main embassy.

Q: That’s where you were located.

CARLSON: Yes, we were in that side building at the corner and my office overlooked the courtyard. Along the side street, Vojvode Milenka, there was also a newly constructed set of staff apartments. Down on Sarajevska Ulica, the next street parallel to Kneza Milosa, there was a commissary with a little café and a small bowling alley. It’s been a while since I’ve been to Belgrade, but I think we’re still using those buildings. If we are, we must have done major reconstruction by now. I know one point in the late 1990s, the chancery was threatening to fall back into the courtyard. For years, everybody put these heavy those heavy Mosler classified filing cabinets (called “safes”) along the back wall of their offices. It was the natural place if you were in these offices to put these safes, and the combined weight over the years threatened to topple the building over into the

courtyard behind it. At one point FBO (Foreign Buildings Office, predecessor of OBO) actually put pillars or buttresses up to hold the building up from falling over backwards!

Q: Brian, why don't you say just a little bit more about Ambassador Eagleburger and maybe who the DCM was. You stayed until '78. I think Eagleburger had left before that.

CARLSON: I don't remember working for another ambassador after Eagleburger there. If Eagleburger left, there wasn't enough time to get another ambassador.

Q: I'm sorry, he left in early '81.

CARLSON: Yes, right. He was there during my tour and then beyond.

I don't recall the DCM after Switzer, the one who arrived with Eagleburger. Mark Palmer arrived as the head of the Political Section the same summer as I did. The fact that he was only an FS-01, and had come from Kissinger's staff, irritated many of the more senior officers. But Palmer was perhaps the best political officer I ever worked with. Bill Montgomery was one of the junior political officers at the time, as was Ron Neitzke. The Administrative Counselor was Sheldon Kryss, who later became an ambassador. Ralph Frank was an assistant GSO, I think. The COS was first Dan Wages and then Burt Gerber who later rose quite high in the CIA operations division. He and his wife Rosalie were very good mentors to Marcia and me. It would be easy enough to look it up and see who was there at the embassy at a given time.

Yugoslavia was, I think, a little bit of an incubator for good FSO's. Lots of officers who were there in that time went on to successful careers in the Service and many rose to senior ranks. Poland was this way and perhaps Russia, too. There were several large posts in Europe that seemed to almost generate people who knew each other and who rose to be influential players—at least inside the State Department. Over the years it was surprising how many outstanding people come out of the Yugoslav experience. In the USIA group that I know best, I can name Vic Jackovich and Sam Wunder in Sarajevo, Dick Gong in Skopje, Steve Dubrow in Zagreb, Bob McCarthy in Titograd, and Chris Henze in Slovenia, as well as Terry Catherman as PAO, Ed McBride as CAO, Mike Braxton running the Belgrade and Novi Sad information centers. A lot of these people over the years continued to move up into senior positions.

Q: Jack Scanlon.

CARLSON: Jack Scanlon was there.

Q: He was the DCM?

CARLSON: I think that's right. Jack became the DCM under Eagleburger.

Q: I don't think they were there particularly at that time, but Tom Niles and Warren Zimmerman of the State Department...

CARLSON: It always seemed to me remarkable that these large posts generated such an exceptionally strong group of officers. Maybe it's because they are large posts, so you get a lot of people there, but I would also suggest that we younger officers benefited from watching top senior officers like Eagleburger, Catherman, McBride, and Scanlon at work. We learned from them.

Q: Part of it was the language.

CARLSON: I think you're right. The language is one thing. Serbian is closely related to other Slavic languages, so if you master or get reasonably accomplished in that one, you can pick up Polish or Russian or something. I ended my assignment in Belgrade early in 1978. There was a sudden opening for the PAO job in Bulgaria, just down the road.

The reason, I later learned much later, was that USIA had just changed the tour-of-duty policy so that "hardship" posts became three years instead of two, and "non-hardship" tours became four instead of three. At this point the Department of State had not taken this step. USIA did it in part for budget reasons. They saved some money by not transferring FSO's so frequently.

But also, from the USIA perspective, there is logic to it. If you develop friendships and work constructively in a given country – more than just reporting and becoming acquainted with people – if you need to develop deep relations on which you can depend and count on people to do significant things, well, it simply takes longer to develop those deep personal relations. To pull an USIS officer out after three years, well, that's usually just when the officer is becoming most productive. At least I felt that I got more done after the third year began in any assignment.

That tour-of-duty policy change resulted in the guy who had been assigned as PAO Bulgaria, Tony Chillura, deciding that he didn't want to go. His eldest child's last year in high school year would have been interrupted, so he suddenly didn't want to go. He decided this in the spring while in language training. It was suddenly an out-of-cycle immediate assignment problem. Washington needed to fill a job in a post with only one USIS officer, so they desperately needed somebody. Jack Scanlon at that point was the deputy director of USIA's European Bureau, and he came out to Belgrade on a visit. Obviously, he had some conversation with Terry Catherman, and they approached me and very tentatively asked, "Would you consider going to Bulgaria as PAO?"

Well, to be in charge of your own USIS operation, no matter how small, was a dream come true. The goal of most USIS officers was to become PAO. A friend once quoted from some general who said, "It does not matter how large the tent is, it's the flag with the star in front that counts." That offer looked like a pretty good deal to me.

Q: That would be as a third tour officer still in your 20's.

CARLSON: Exactly, it was a chance to become a Country Public Affairs Officer at age 28, and in Eastern Europe.

I accepted with pleasure, and the planning began. I was soon due for home leave, so it was agreed that my family and I would leave Belgrade, and go back to the States for home leave, and then take some Bulgarian classes in Washington to convert my language skills from Serbian to Bulgarian. Because I was off cycle for the FSI Bulgarian course, it would be a special one-on-one course run by International Language Services, one of these contract language training institutes in the Washington area. USIA was willing to contract for language courses. In part, USIA had to go to commercial institutes because FSI tended to be inflexible about anyone entering off cycle or starting with knowledge of a similar language.

I do remember how differently I viewed this assignment compared to Washington's concerns. My wife and I said, "Look, we're in Belgrade, only 150 miles or so from Sofia." It is an easy drive down the highway. I told Washington that we would like to go over to Sofia and see the PAO residence in order to plan what to bring. To our surprise, USIA was very reluctant to let us go visit the post, even at our own expense. Washington never said it explicitly, but we think they feared that if we ever saw Bulgaria, we change our minds and refuse the assignment. Actually, it was quite the opposite. We were excited about going and wanted to prepare for it.

Q: But you were not able to make an advance...

CARLSON: No, we did go because finally somebody in Bulgaria, maybe my predecessor, John Karch, pointed out, "What the hell. If you want to take a weekend drive down to Sofia, who's going to stop you?"

Eventually everyone agreed, we got country clearance, and we made an official TDY visit for a day or so. I returned to Washington and my wife and I did the language training together with a single instructor for six hours each day for about four months. Fifteen, sixteen weeks, something like that. At the end of it, I passed the Bulgarian test at FSI satisfactorily, so we headed off to Sofia in the summer. (We've often said that if you can learn a language together, your marriage can withstand anything!)

Q: And this is 1978.

CARLSON: This was 1978. We arrived in Sofia in the late summer via Belgrade, where we picked up our personal car and drove down the road to Sofia.

Q: Bulgaria was very different than Yugoslavia.

CARLSON: It was, in the sense that in Yugoslavia there was a lot of ambivalence about America and Americans. A lot of Yugoslavs liked the Americans. Our mutual efforts against the Germans in World War II generated a lot of good will. There were a lot of Yugoslav-Americans—Croatians, Serbians, whatever—in the United States; it seemed

everybody had a brother in Chicago or Pittsburgh. Still, America was a capitalist, free market economy and a NATO country; Yugoslavia was communist, worker-self-managed, and non-aligned in the Cold War.

In Bulgaria, by contrast, we were definitely behind the Iron Curtain. This was the heart of the Warsaw Pact. When it rained in Moscow, they put up their umbrellas in Sofia. The Bulgarians were loyal politically, and they felt a genuine bond with Russians. I found—and this took a while—the Bulgarians actually were very sympathetic people. They had some positive feelings about America and Americans, despite the constant drumbeat of newspaper propaganda and radio rhetoric. The media was overwhelmingly negative. Always.

Bulgaria worked out to be a good assignment to me for a couple of reasons.

Soon after I arrived, in 1979, a long-planned USIA exhibition arrived. USIA used to create and send these large exhibitions to the USSR and other East European countries. An exhibit would stay for three to six weeks in a given place. The one that came to Sofia was called “The Artist at Work in America” and it was set up at the national exhibition center, a large hall for commercial fairs and trade events. “The Artist at Work in America” was a display of contemporary and past American art, sculpture, and painting. The exhibit included an entire library of books about American art – one that would have equal to that of a major American gallery.

The visitors walked through different displays, with educational explanations, photographs and graphics and as well as slide shows and short films – all about how art is taught, created, bought and sold, used, criticized, etc. in America today. We did not have PowerPoint in those days, so we used Carousel slide projectors with a timed audio program. Also, we had contemporary American artists on site. We actually brought over some American artists. One, I remember, was a young sculptor who made modern art “installations” by covering a large white board with little pins, each with little figures and bits of ephemera. He would create one installation right there in the exhibition, and while he worked he started conversations with Bulgarians who were visiting. We had a team of young American translators on hand to talk to the visitors.

An exhibition like this was countenanced by the Bulgarian government under a then-new bilateral cultural agreement. People could come to this because we in turn allowed Bulgarian exhibitions as well as performers to come to the U. S. This was the first such U.S. exhibition held under the first cultural agreement with Bulgaria, something laboriously negotiated by my predecessor. The agreement was modeled on one we had signed earlier with the USSR, something that doubtless made it easier for Bulgaria’s hardliners to swallow.

Q: Not political. It was art.

CARLSON: It was art, but let’s face it: we had a very definite political purpose. We were trying to open the doors, circumvent the propaganda, and show people what life is like in

America through pictures, contact with real Americans, the books, the library, and everything. It was cultural diplomacy with a purpose, and it was phenomenally successful. We had lines of people standing outside the exhibition hall for the weeks that the exhibition was open. Yes, the pictures and the films may have been about art in America, but the real eye-opener for Bulgarians locked behind the Iron Curtain were the glimpses of American life they could see in every image, in every word.

Q: All of this opened fairly soon after you got there?

CARLSON: It was in the first months of 1979. It was fairly early in my tour.

Q: Was it a big burden for you that you had to arrange a lot of the things yourself? Was it pretty self-contained?

CARLSON: First of all, my predecessor had set up a lot of the arrangements in months of tedious negotiations with the host government – everything from customs clearances to shipping arrangements, visas for our Bulgarian-speaking American guides, where publicity would appear, utilities, financial and administrative matters, staff housing, and how many containers would arrive, and a lot of the logistical stuff. One of the things that makes public diplomacy different, perhaps from other State Department work, is the heavy logistics component. Some FSO's disdain such stuff, saying, "That's just administrative work. I don't want to deal with it." But, you can't get public diplomacy done without it. You can't put on a seminar unless you get a space, some lights, chairs and a microphone. You can't arrange a visitor program without thinking about air schedules, medical insurance and hotel rooms, not to mention details like who escorts the person and what they know about the purpose of the visit.

These large exhibitions had a lot of logistics. Washington sent out people who knew what they were doing. This "Artist at Work" exhibit was led by an experienced exhibit director, Frank Orsino. Frank, in addition to being good at managing a complex production, also was legendary for his Italian cooking. On a Friday night after the exhibit closed, he would borrow someone's kitchen and cook a wonderful pasta dinner for all the guides and he would invite many people at the embassy. Frank was himself a legend in USIA circles in Eastern Europe, having led many of these exhibits through the USSR and other Warsaw Pact countries.

What this exhibit really did for me was to enable me – with my newly minted Bulgarian language skills – to meet a lot of people from the Bulgarian arts and *intelligentsia* in a non-threatening context. In closed-off Bulgaria, where foreign travel was a luxury enjoyed only by the few, the public normally got nothing except the second rate artists and poster shows from Moscow and other bloc countries.

This was a big deal! Here was a bit of the outside world--America!--plopped down for a few weeks in the center of Sofia, with official blessing for people to go see it. So, the crowds were overwhelming. So were the interest and the curiosity. The intellectual,

cultural and political elite were fascinated. This was like getting a trip to New York...except they could never get a trip to New York!

I met a number of people through the exhibit. One interesting little anecdote out of this was there was a young artist—an art student at that point—who was very curious about things and came to the library and the exhibit. Even after the exhibit closed, I stayed in touch with him over the time that I was in Sofia. Carefully, because I didn't want to cause him or his family trouble by appearing or being too close to him, but things were loosening a little bit in those days. In the early 1990's after the Berlin Wall fell, this young Bulgarian artist contacted me and we renewed our friendship. A couple of years later, he arrived in Washington – assigned to the Bulgarian embassy as the cultural attaché – representing the new democratic Bulgaria.

There was an almost imperceptible warming towards the West in my years in Sofia, from 1978 to 1981. We thought this might be due in part because the Culture Minister was the daughter of Todor Zhivkov (the long-ruling Communist party boss). She had received some graduate education at Oxford university in the U.K. It was said that she was intensely interested in developments in the West in the arts and culture. We also believed that in the circles of government, she led a group that argued that Bulgaria could earn hard currency, as well as international recognition, by sending its own performers abroad under the reciprocal cultural agreements with Western countries. Bulgaria in those days “exported” a lot of circus performers, opera performers and weightlifters. Things were getting better, and I made contacts at this exhibition. I met people in the academic community and the arts community that I stayed in touch with the entire time I was there and thereafter.

Q: How important did you think the Helsinki Act and the liberalization that was connected with that? Was that a factor yet or not really?

CARLSON: We probably didn't realize it at the time, but I would definitely tie the warming trend to the Helsinki Agreement. First, it was not only proper and right for people to have normal human contacts across borders, but it was legally mandated by an international treaty, the Helsinki Final Act. The Cold War “iron curtain” was softening a bit, a period of détente was underway, and this was part of it. We signed these cultural agreements with the Bulgarians and other East European states including the Soviet Union to enable the exchanges of exhibitions and performers because – fundamentally – we knew that if we could communicate, we would win.

Q: That had been done before you were there.

CARLSON: Yes. The agreement pre-dated my arrival, and I imagine the two governments decided to negotiate an agreement long before the diplomats even sat down at the table. And even once we had the agreement, there were annual bilateral review meetings held first in Washington and then in Sofia. I remember we had at least two of those review meetings. They were a pretty formalistic, but there were some hard issues being decided. The Bulgarians—or any East European—wanted to lock us in with great

precision and detail to what we were going to do each year for the next three or five years. Given the vagaries in our Congressional funding, the U.S. side could never promise exactly what we would do. The other issue was strict reciprocity; we could not promise them some of the kinds of support that they could promise us. The Bulgarians were willing to promise full houses for every performance and asked us to do the same. They preferred to offer us all necessary hotel rooms and meals for the staff and performers, and wanted us to do the same for their staff and performers in U.S. cities.

Obviously a command economy could do some of these things, and we simply could not. If the Bulgarian government wanted to make every hotel room in the city available to your staff, they would just order the hotels to throw out all the other guests. We obviously can't do that. The USIA people worked with a private arts firm, Columbia Artists, to book and arrange the U.S. tours for East European folk groups, orchestras and other performing artists. The people at Columbia Artists were masterful in arranging schedules for these East European groups. They would include a couple of prestige venues like New York City's Carnegie Hall, but also a lot of smaller venues in U.S. cities with large ethnic populations. The East European performers would almost always get a warm reception in smaller cities and towns. We found ways to get around the fact that our two systems worked so very differently.

Q: Why don't you talk a little bit about... You were the PAO, the only American USIA public diplomacy person in the embassy. Why don't you talk about how big your locally engaged staff was and how you fit into the overall country team?

CARLSON: Mine was a small staff. The USIS post was comparable one of those information centers in Yugoslavia. I had three Foreign Service Nationals and an American secretary. Just at the time that I left Bulgaria, in the summer of 1981, they expanded the post to give me an assistant. Phil du Chateau became my first Assistant Public Affairs Officer. He arrived as a junior officer, perhaps on his second tour, but for most of my time the only other American in USIS was the secretary/executive assistant. The locally engaged staff included a librarian, Krasimira, a press assistant, Lyuben, and Stoimen Savov, a driver and general assistant capable of many tasks. Of course, we suspected all along and later (after 1989) confirmed that the librarian and the press assistant especially were actively working for the Bulgarian security service. But, you took that into account, assumed that your Bulgarian staff reported periodically to the authorities, and you lived with it. As long as they did what you asked them to do, and as long as you didn't ask them to do things you knew they wouldn't or couldn't do, it worked.

Q: It would cause you problems and cause them problems.

CARLSON: Exactly. You find there are limits...

Q: You assumed that they...

CARLSON: You knew. I never quite believed that the driver was an enthusiastic member of the Communist party, perhaps because he was such a likeable and helpful guy. But, we assumed that some amount of reporting was required of any Bulgarian allowed to work at the western embassies. The driver, called Savov by everyone, was a particularly lively fellow with limited but functional English and the ability to accomplish almost anything. His specialty was the airport, where he could simply work miracles when it came to picking up visitors, expediting paperwork, and dispatching shipments. He could acquire things on the local market that nobody else could find anywhere in town. He had friends in every institution, it seemed. He was one of those “operators,” and he was extremely useful. Savov was considered the best FSN assistant in the embassy, not so much for his driving, but for his problem-solving abilities. So, the five of us made up USIS Bulgaria.

The ambassador when I first arrived was Ray Garthoff, an arms control specialist. Charlie Magee was the DCM at the time of my arrival. Sofia was a relatively small embassy. I think we had a single political officer (Tom Sonandres, a self-styled fiction writer) and one economic officer (Paul Hacker). The defense attaché office had two officers and an NCO. There was an administrative officer with a GSO and a communicator. The station was small with just a COS and a couple of communicators. Mike Mozur was the first consular officer during my time and he was succeeded by Jim Jeffrey – Jim recently served as DCM in Baghdad and was Ambassador to Albania a few years ago.

Q: He's been their advocate

CARLSON: He's here in Washington now.

Q: He's the Iraq coordinator.

CARLSON: Right. Ambassador Raymond L. Garthoff was the Chief of Mission from 1977-79. He was very much an academic whose specialty was in arms control and Soviet strategic policy. I think Brookings is his home base these days, but he had a distinguished academic background and actually spent much of his time in Sofia producing another academic book that had little to do with Bulgaria. I remember hearing that Garthoff, while working on the SALT talks, had in some way fallen out of favor with Henry Kissinger. And, when the Carter Administration arrived, anyone who was out of Kissinger's good graces was worthy of some reward, so Garthoff was given the embassy in Sofia in a symbolic gesture. In any case, Sofia was considered in those days a “sleeper” – a post which was more interesting and more comfortable than many suspected.

Q: We were talking about the structure of the mission. You talked about Ambassador Garthoff and the DCM.

CARLSON: Ambassador Garthoff, and DCM Charlie Magee. Garthoff was an easy guy to work for, because he wasn't terribly engaged in bilateral relations or the day-to-day work of the embassy. He left things pretty much in the hands of DCM Charlie Magee. Magee was an ambitious officer, and he did a pretty good job, as I remember it, as DCM.

I look back on it now and realize that he had to deal with a pretty mixed bag of staff. There were some who were good and frankly there were some that weren't top performers. Magee had a reputation for re-writing everyone's reporting telegrams and making the communications unit work late on Friday nights "so that just one more message can go to Washington." Many of us suspected that Washington was not exactly waiting breathlessly on Friday afternoons for the latest reporting telegram from Sofia.

Q: You as PAO really in a way started out on a very high note with this American art exhibition which certainly gave you many contacts and opportunities, but overall was it possible to do much? There were a lot of things you couldn't do in Bulgaria.

CARLSON: There were many things you couldn't do, but I guess I've always tried to figure out how to make the best of a situation and figure out the good things. It was fairly clear from the get-go, and reinforced for me in my first few weeks, that the Bulgarian press was hopeless. There was no independent press. The media was a party-controlled propaganda machine that took its marching orders from the Bulgarian Communist Party and thus, from Moscow. There were no independent journalists or room for maneuver. The Bulgarian media were going to put out the party line, no matter what you said to them or what you did for them.

Neither I nor any of my colleagues ever discovered any *samizdat* or underground press either. In this regard, Bulgaria was different from Yugoslavia, where there was some allowance for individual initiative, some freedom of thought, and some differing points of view. Bulgaria's information environment was just government-controlled, party-controlled propaganda. They just pumped it out. There was no way you could put your thumb on that pipe. So, I decided to ignore the press, radio and television. At some point I told Washington, "Don't worry about getting any media reaction reporting from Sofia. Just take Moscow's and put 'ditto'. We're not going to spend much time on this."

Q: Did you distribute the Wireless File?

CARLSON: We did. We sent a few copies around to people. I always joked that if I really wanted to get somebody in trouble, I'd add them to the Wireless File distribution list because that would probably be the kiss of death for anybody who wasn't in the Foreign Ministry!

In those days, a USIS officer had to do a lot of work under the framework of agreements. We had to work through government ministries and organizations that had control over the subject area. Most of my work concerned the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Information and the Foreign Ministry. Everything was tightly controlled. I had lots of sterile, formal meetings with these guys. I used to wonder what they said to each other when the American was gone and they could relax?

We always met in prim little meeting rooms with two or three chairs, no books or magazines, and bottles of mineral water and juice in the center of the table. Clearly this was not anyone's office, just a place set aside to meet foreigners. I assumed the room

was: a) bugged, and b) purposely empty of anything that would hint what the Bulgarian's rank was, who his colleagues were, what personal interests he might have, or what else he was working on.

The press was hopeless, but the good side was that culture, academics and science were increasingly open to cooperation with the West. One responsibility that was new to me in this embassy was science. I was asked to manage the science attaché role. Now, I was not trained to go out and visit any high-powered science facilities to see what they were doing. The Bulgarians were not about to invite the American embassy people to anything like that anyway.

But, we did have an ongoing program of scientific exchanges, and the Bulgarians were—like all the East Europeans—very interested in learning all they could from us, and interested in taking advantage of anything we offered. The Bulgarian scientists themselves wanted to take advantage of the opportunity to travel and visit colleagues in other countries, and I am sure that many American scientists participated in these programs for the same professional reasons.

I very much took advantage of the cultural role. In fact, I would introduce myself as the “Cultural Attaché” of the embassy in Bulgarian, rather than saying anything about press or public affairs. You could see people wilt before your eyes if you said you were the Press Attaché or the Political Officer, but if you said, “Culture, Education and Science Officer,” why, that opened doors! In fact, the Bulgarians were letting us open the doors.

Things were expanding. We place the first Fulbright scholar ever in Bulgaria. We arranged a one-for-one Fulbright exchange: one American – Professor James Rambeau from Penn State – came to Veliko Turnovo University in Bulgaria and one Bulgarian academic went to the University of Indiana which had a good Slavic studies program. By the time of my last year in Sofia we increased the program to two Americans (one at Sofia University) and two Bulgarians, so these things were going well and gradually opening up.

Because of the science and education role, in which I represented the National Science Foundation and the National Academy of Sciences, I would get invitations to go to events and to places where no American had been since before World War II: to universities, to institutes, to conferences, to meetings with senior academics and stuff. Since I could also understand Bulgarian, this also made me all but unique in the embassy. Most State Department officers didn't get Bulgarian training, and of those few who got training, few actually could depend on it after a few months at post. They tended to speak English to the FSN's and they were so isolated from the local population that they forgot what they had learned. Our economic officer, Paul Hacker, was pretty good with languages. Paul would do things like aimlessly ride the street cars around town in order to strike up conversations with people. He did this in Bulgarian – which he always spoke with a Bronx accent.

Q: Brian, we're talking about the structure, the staff at the embassy.

CARLSON: Yes. We had a relatively small embassy there with the ambassador, DCM, Political Officer, Economic Officer, Consular Officer. We had an Administrative Officer, first Greg McLerran and then Lou Kochanek.

Toward the end of my assignment there, certainly by the summer of 1981, I think we had been sent a security officer. He was what we called an RSO although he was not “regional.” As a result of the embassy hostage-taking in Iran, the Department expanded vastly and rapidly the number of security officers. Some of them had relatively little foreign affairs training, having been recruited from police forces and the military and sent overseas quickly.

Our new security officer was a tough-talking, bald-headed fellow who we called “Bullet” Beckett, although probably not to his face. He seemed to think he was somewhere in the American Midwest. The first thing he told us all, in his first country team meeting, was that one of his first acts would be to go down to the Ministry of Interior and “start talking turkey with those guys down there.” I guess the DCM took him outside after the meeting and sort of started his education about working behind the Iron Curtain.

It was a small embassy of about 15, certainly not more than 20 Americans, including the Marine Security Guard detachment. I remember that at one point we figured out there were a total of 53 American citizens in the entire country, and the embassy staff and family members accounted for most of those. We figured that the host government also knew who all the Americans in country were, too. If a tour bus came into the country it could easily double the American citizen population overnight. Sofia was a good experience for me, and I met a lot of people I’ve stayed in touch with.

Don’t let me forget to tell you the story of the defector.

Q: This is in Bulgaria?

CARLSON: No, this is actually after, but it comes out of Bulgaria.

Q: Anything else about your time in Bulgaria?

CARLSON: Jack Perry came out as ambassador after Ray Garthoff departed. Jack and his wife were really nice people, very much engaged in the embassy and what was going on. Jack had been Deputy Executive Secretary of the Department under Secretary Vance for a year. This was in the waning days of the Carter Administration. From our point of view, Jack was doing a good job. He had a temper, and he could occasionally blow up at people, and I don’t think he even realized how much pain he inflicted with his temper. We often commented that the hurt feelings do not just go away because you later say you’re sorry. But he did a pretty good job as Chief of Mission.

Unfortunately, I think in policy terms, Jack missed the signals after the election of Ronald Reagan. Jack continued to push the human rights agenda that had been very important in

the Carter administration, and he continued using the rhetoric of the Carter administration. Even those of us in the embassy saw that the tone of his reporting to Washington was not going over well in the early days of the Reagan administration. I can't today specifically point to a cable or a message or a speech or anything, but I do remember that we discussed among ourselves the fact that Jack just didn't appear to realize—or maybe didn't wish to acknowledge—the big change in Washington. There was a new, harder line rhetoric in the Reagan administration toward Communism. There had been a sea change in Washington.

In fact, we were far out of the information flow out there. I remember going to bed before the 1980 election and saying, "If I set my watch and get up at 5:00 a.m. in Sofia," calculating the time – I think we were seven hours ahead of Washington, "I should be able to turn on the VOA shortwave and get the beginning of the election results." I did that, only to hear that Carter had conceded hours earlier and Reagan had already accepted, and it was all over! Even though I was carefully following the U.S. election news through shortwave radio and the *International Herald Tribune*, I didn't anticipate how big that landslide was going to be.

Recently, when I watched the 2004 election in an overseas post, we watched NBC and ABC and CBS – all live on our satellite television screens – as the results came in. It's such a difference in how you gather information these days from the way we used to.

Q: Especially at the location where you were in Sofia about as far removed in Eastern Europe as you could be.

CARLSON: Right. Exactly. Nothing but the BBC and the VOA on shortwave.

Q: Before we leave Sofia, did you have many visitors or were you pretty much on your own?

CARLSON: We didn't have many visitors. They seemed important to us because they were so few. I don't think we had any senior Administration officials. We received no Senators. We had no congressmen, no CODELs or anything like that. I think probably a Deputy Assistant Secretary of State was the most we would give the Bulgarians in those days, and darned few of those.

I do remember a couple of surprises. One occurred when a deputy director of the Fulbright program at USIA came out to visit, mainly because we had just started up this new Fulbright exchange. She was just a USIA employee, not high ranking, and she came to visit the embassy. So, we made the rounds and met the usual suspects in the Ministry of Education, visited a couple of the universities, and talked to people. All along the way the Bulgarians indicated that they would be happy to see this exchange of professors expand. They'd be willing to go for more academic exchanges. So she and I went back to the embassy and wrote out a standard cable reporting on all these meetings and mentioning the possible expansion of the Bulgarian exchanges program. That was something that she, being in charge of Fulbright, thought it was a good thing. I think it

was sometime in the middle of the night or the next day that I got a phone call from the European area director at USIA.

He yelled down the phone line, “Carlson! What is this about expanding exchanges with Bulgaria?” This was Len Baldyga, kind of a gruff guy, a legend in East European affairs...I don’t know if you know him. He said, “Carlson! What are you doing?”

I replied tremulously, “What’d I do?”

He said, “You’re talking expanding the Fulbright program with Bulgaria? Nobody here in Washington authorized you to increase the Fulbright program with Bulgaria!”

I said, “Wait a minute, we didn’t promise to expand anything. We were just reporting that the Bulgarians said they’d be willing to. How did this come up?”

He replied, “I just got a call from the NSC. They don’t want any expansion of programs with Bulgaria!”

I was totally surprised and puzzled. “The NSC! We didn’t address that routine telegram to the National Security Council.”

He said, “They read more than you think they read.”

[Laughter]

This had been a simple little routine message back to USIA Washington, really nothing more than a trip report. Who knew that such things would get the attention of people over at the White House? I learned a lesson there.

You asked about visitors. Actually, some of the medium level visitors, especially on the academic side, and the university people who came occasionally for one reason or another, and from the National Science Foundation and the National Academy of Sciences – well, those kinds of visitors were useful. Their presence gave me *entrée* to talk to people, a reason to go call on folks, and a means to be in contact with Bulgarian officials and administrators.

In a world of very limited contact with Bulgarians beyond the Foreign Ministry, these visitors were well worth the time that I spent setting up the meetings, accompanying them, translating, or following up. They had program money. Their visits usually led to more activity. USIA always seemed to have too little money for Fulbright or anything else in Bulgaria – remember Sofia was being fiercely loyal to Moscow in those days, while there were signs of new movement in Poland and Hungary. The science community had funds for things the science community wanted to do, and I think American scientists had genuine interest in some things that their Bulgarian counterparts were doing.

Those visitors did get us out and around. I continue to believe that when we're dealing with hostile, non-democratic societies, we should not cut off the human contact. We should reach out through the soft-power side of culture, science and education. I don't want to give policy advice, but...well, I'll give some policy advice. I think we've been dealing with nations like Cuba and Iran all the wrong way. We should have been undermining those regimes by reaching out to the *intelligentsia* and the people beneath the leadership. We can embargo Castro all we like, but he's going to continue to get all the American ice cream or Coca-Cola that he wants. No embargo will prevent that.

Q: In Bulgaria were you pretty much all the time in Sofia, or were you able to travel outside?

CARLSON: I traveled all over the country. We had enough activities and visitors and people that there were reasons to go to things in the different cities, usually driving in a car. It's a relatively small country to drive across in six hours or something like that. I paid regular visits to the Fulbrighter and his family at the university in Veliko Turnovo, and there were reasons to go to one or another place. One of my more memorable occasions was to deliver a VOA prize to a listener in Varna on the Black Sea coast. I learned that the Air Force attaché needed to make a trip to Varna too. We said well, why don't we drive together? Well, that's fine. He said he had to do a couple of errands along the way. He promised the detours would not be much, and I regarded it as a chance to see the countryside between Sofia and Varna, perhaps a different road that I hadn't been on.

Well, being a defense attaché, he was taking some pictures. Probably he shouldn't have been taking those pictures. We rounded a turn in the road, and there directly in the middle of the road in front of us was a platoon of green uniformed Bulgarian army conscript soldiers under the command of a sergeant. They had got their guns at the ready.

Q: Pointed at you.

CARLSON: Pointed right at us. We were in an embassy Jeep, a DAO vehicle. The attaché slipped the camera under the seat and told me to roll up the windows, lock the doors and don't open them for any reason, no matter what!

Of course the Bulgarian sergeant is demanding we roll down the windows and hand over our papers. We held them up to the windows instead. They tried all the doors. These 18-year old conscripts, holding guns pointed right at us, were quivering with nervous tension. They proceeded to hold us at gunpoint for the next six hours. They tried everything to get into the car. We wouldn't unlock it. They didn't actually try to blow it up or anything, but they tried every handle.

Of course, while we were sitting there, I was thinking that my career as a public diplomacy officer could well be going down the drain. It was a principle in those days that USIA did not mix public diplomacy with covert activities. We argued that if anyone ever proved that intelligence officers were masquerading as cultural officers or press attachés, USIS officers worldwide would find their credibility and viability ruined.

Of course, this was kind of the opposite, because instead of the defense attaché pretending to be a cultural officer, I was pretty clearly in his car, riding along while he did his business. Eventually the Bulgarians got some official out from Sofia to come out, some foreign ministry guy. He read us a protocol, and we refused to sign that either. The protocol was a document stating their version of what had happened. They said that some farmer had spotted us taking pictures as we drove through this valley of some strange device sitting up on the hillside. Probably all true. I thought my career was down the tubes at that point, and all I had to show for it was a distended bladder from sitting in that car and being unable to get out for six hours!

Q: The Air Force attaché was resident in Sofia?

CARLSON: We had actually two officers in the military attaché office. The Colonel at that point was Hank Mosely. I think he was Army, and he had been a helicopter pilot. In military terms, he had been a regular Army helicopter guy. The number two position traditionally was a Lieutenant Colonel who actually came from DIA and was a career intelligence officer. He was the one that I was with. He was a professional, and I've known him over the years. He's gone on to other places with a very successful career. That incident didn't hold him back, either!

Q: You were there at the time of the 1980 election. You've mentioned that, and you also mentioned Ambassador Barry in the early Reagan administration. I know Ambassador Bob Barry came out in 1981, but that may have been after you left?

CARLSON: Yes, Ambassador Barry actually arrived in Sofia after I left. He paid me the great compliment of paying a visit to me at USIA, where I was working, during his preparations before going to Sofia,. He met with me for an hour and a half to chat about people I'd known, institutions, and how things worked. I remember discussing with him the idea that in these sorts of countries that one should not assume always that the state or the party apparatus controls everything with ruthless efficiency. In totalitarian regimes there are many opportunities for coincidence, incompetence, and simple human screw ups. I came away from Bulgaria with a nuanced view of Eastern Europe. One of the things that made it interesting was challenging the system, this monolithic Communist system and all these rules and procedures that you were supposed to follow. The challenge was in trying to find ways to get around the obstacles, to find things that we and many Bulgarians wanted to do together: the academic exchange, contact or sharing information or whatever.

Q: But to do it in a way that it didn't become a major political issue.

CARLSON: Doesn't become a political issue or a diplomatic incident.

Q: Which would force you to leave.

CARLSON: Exactly. You don't want to get thrown out of the country. You don't want your picture on the front page of the party newspaper with the military attaché, accused of taking spy pictures and things like that.

The relationship with Bulgaria went downhill right after I left. I can't remember the exact date that I left, but it was that summer of 1981 that Mehmet Ali Ağca tried to assassinate the Pope. The Bulgarian involvement in that attempt derailed everything. The United States quite rightly said the Bulgarians were behind this, and their fingerprints seemed to be very large on it. The United States just couldn't have a normal relationship with them. I don't know specifically, but I think a lot of things went south, just at a time when we were beginning to see as some positives, some openings. I think all that got cut off in terms of...

Q: ...exchanges...

CARLSON: Exchanges were dialed back

Q: Why don't we stop at this point and we'll pick up at this stage in our next conversation.

We're picking up this conversation on the 21st of February, 2006 after a week off. We're talking about Brian Carlson's assignment as public affairs officer, PAO in Sofia from 1978 to 1981. Brian, we may have covered this already, but when you went there, that was about three years after the Helsinki Final Act Conference of Security and Cooperation in Europe, CSCE, and I think you talked before about some of the benefits, certainly in Yugoslavia, that resulted in that. I'm sure there were other benefits as well in Bulgaria. You talked some about the Fulbright and the exchanges, the international visitor program. To what extent when you selected candidates to go to the United States did they have to be vetted and approved by the government of Bulgaria, and was that a big issue for you?

CARLSON: That's a very good question. In fact, this was a matter of some debate within the U.S. government and outside in those days.

Now, in the Soviet bloc there was no possibility of sending anybody to the United States on a U. S. government invitation, scholarship, or international visitor grant or any other kind of exchange program without having them approved by the host government, the Bulgarian government in this case. The Ministry of Education or the Ministry of Science – whichever – would approve all grantees – without that sanction they did not go.

In fact, in many cases the ministry presented us a list of potential candidates. Obviously, everyone on the list had been vetted for political allegiance and approved by state security before being offered to us. Not all were active party members, but you can be sure no dissidents were offered. We did initiate some grants entirely on our own, but again, they had to be approved by the Bulgarian authorities.

So the debate in Washington was, should we even spend U.S. taxpayer dollars on bringing people to the U.S. who are so loyal to a totalitarian regime that they can get government approval to travel? We also raised the issue of “permission to travel” in our bilateral cultural exchange agreement talks, pointing out the incompatibility of Bulgarian procedures with Helsinki Basket Three freedoms. But, it was to no avail.

Nevertheless, I believe that it was worthwhile, even where the Bulgarians presented us a list of people available for grants — even in those cases, it was worth bringing them to the U.S. Sure, they were pickling people who they thought were “safe,” but they were also picking people who were considered tops in their field or their area of specialization. Just as with their opera singers and weight lifters, they were selecting the best, not the worst. A trip to the West, particularly to America, was a great award from the point of view any Bulgarian citizen. America was, for most Bulgarians, a land so far away they could hardly imagine it.

Some people in Washington argued we should not accept anyone nominated by a Communist government. I however thought that we undermined the totalitarian system by taking the leading people, some of them the children of the *nomenklatura*, and the next generation of Bulgarian society’s leaders—and showing them the truth about the West and about America. One point on which we insisted – we wouldn’t take older people, we had a cutoff of age 45. What these exchange programs did was take the young leaders out of the eastern bloc, and show them the reality of the western world.

I can well imagine the scene in some Bulgarian homes when one of them returned and, at Sunday dinner, said to the father (himself perhaps senior party official), “You know, Dad, the Party is full of b---s---! What they’ve been telling us and what we’ve been reading is just not true.”

I think we undermined the system in many ways. We sparked new ideas in them. Among the very people who were going to be the next generation of Bulgarian leaders, we sparked discussion and new ideas that might not have penetrated had we allowed them to remain closed off from American ideas and the American experience.

Q: I suppose a related question is: Did you ever feel strongly pressured to take somebody that you had doubts about?

CARLSON: Only in a couple of cases where they proposed people who were, by our standards, too old. The International Visitor Program adhered in those days to a principle of selecting rising leaders in society. We wanted to spend our money on people who might be shaped by their experience in the United States and who might affect their own societies in the future. Selecting somebody who is 60 or 70 years old...well, it probably won’t be a life-changing event and benefit the person in the way we hope. Recognition of career achievement is not what the International Visitor Program is intended for.

Q: is there something else...

CARLSON: I was just going to mention. One of the marvelous, unique things of that period was the impact of photographs and video. This was long before the age of Adobe Photoshop and CGI. People could believe what they saw.

The embassy was located on Alexander Stamboliyski Boulevard, right in the center of downtown Sofia. Years before, perhaps in the 1920's, the building was constructed as a department store. It was a building of five stories, right on Sofia's main shopping street in the city center. The topmost floor was the Marine house, including the detachment's living quarters and bar/entertainment room. The ground floor was the USIS library and the consulate, the first floor was administration and general services, and then above that was the "controlled access space," although we didn't call it that in those days. You went up the stairs to go to offices of the political section and the public affairs office. My office was upstairs on the second floor, but my FSN staff was downstairs on the ground floor.

The front of the building had giant display windows, much as all department stores used to have. We filled those windows with photo exhibits. Our Regional Programs Office (RPO) in Vienna produced exhibitions of enlarged photographs mounted on stiff foam boards for us and for every other American embassy or cultural center in Eastern Europe that had such display space. The panels or large photographs had Bulgarian text captions to tell a story – sort of like an illustrated magazine story.

For example, one about student life in America, might followed in six weeks by one about a day in the life of a construction engineer. These were down-to-earth, reality-based portrayals of life and work in America. A photograph might simply show a student studying in a dorm room, but the Bulgarians carefully observed the clothing, the furniture, the books on shelves, the stereo equipment, posters on the wall, everything in the room.

These "window exhibits" attracted an enormous public, and especially when we changed from one set of panels to another they drew crowds of people, spilling off the sidewalk, standing outside the embassy, looking and studying and talking with each other about them.

About the time of the Reagan-Carter political campaign, videotape technology had begun to arrive in USIA. Maybe not in everyone's home in America, but we had videotape as a professional tool. On election day 1980, we set up a television monitor in the display window and hooked it up to a repeating loop of campaign footage, mainly video of candidates Carter and Reagan meeting with crowds of supporters, with all the colorful placards, posters and campaign rallies.

The reaction was stupendous. The crowds absolutely swamped downtown Sofia. They crowded in front of the embassy, the crowd spilled into the street, and blocked all the traffic. People were out there thirty deep trying to get a view of this video. For all I know, they may have thought it was a live television feed from the United States and those

clever Americans had done it again. Actually, satellite broadcasting wasn't yet a reality at that point.

For me it was a learning point – the remarkable impact of visual images. Those glimpses into American reality, into real life, they had a tremendous capability to tell a story. We began to understand the power of television in public diplomacy at that point, and I'll return to that thought a little later.

Q: Did you show films?

CARLSON: No, we had no way to show films to audiences, except I think once or twice we showed a feature film to an invited audience of English-speaking Bulgarians and third country diplomats at the ambassador's residence. In fact, Charlie Magee, the DCM, and his wife entertained other members of the diplomatic corps frequently with 16 mm feature films that came to the defense attaché office under the military's MWR (Morale, Welfare and Recreation) program. I remember that the military people grumped that this was a violation of the agreements under which DOD got the movies from the distributors. Legally the movies should have been limited to U.S. government employees only. But the DoD lawyers were far away and he was the DCM.

Actually, if I may back up to Yugoslavia: one of the memorable events in Yugoslavia was showing the film Star Wars to an invited audience in Belgrade. Star Wars was great entertainment, and the first episode was a special effects marvel for audiences everywhere. USIA had an agreement with the Motion Picture Association of America to borrow first run, top quality films from the studios. MPAA paid the cost of the 35mm print, and USIA would ship them in a diplomatic pouch around the world, and ambassadors could arrange a showing. If the ambassador had in his residence a 35mm projector (which was not terribly common) he could show the film there, but otherwise, you did what we did in Belgrade. We arranged a showing at a downtown movie theater. We booked the theater for the evening, and we invited guests to see the movie followed by a little reception. I remember we had Arthur Goldberg present because he was in the city for the 1977 Helsinki conference in Belgrade.

Q: Review conference.

CARLSON: CSCE review conference. We invited an array of the Yugoslav capital's political elite and cultural elite. We probably had 150 people or so in the theater. Of course, I'm sure most Americans look at Star Wars as pure entertainment. But, if you look at that film and think of seeing it for the first time in the context of a society that is not entirely free, a society ruled by a small elite which limits personal freedom and dictates to what people must think, a society that demands unquestioning loyalty, well, there were some interesting metaphors. In the dialog there is discussion of the "Dark Side" and the "Empire" and so forth. It caused quite a stir among Belgrade's intellectuals and dissidents who saw parallels and hidden meanings everywhere. It was genuinely a political act to show Star Wars in Belgrade or any Eastern European capital in those days!

Q: To go back to Sofia. During the 1980 election campaign in the United States, besides the video tape of campaign events, were you able to cover it in other ways?

CARLSON: Because of the Fulbrighters, there was a possibility. I can't remember if we had one or two at that point—I think we had two by then—one was in Sofia University (Софийски университет “Св. Климент Охридски”) and the other in Veliko Turnovo in the center of the country. They were both teaching in faculties that had English as a specialty, so they were basically teaching American literature and American language. They would invite me to speak from time to time as a guest lecturer in their class. I remember going to both universities and talking about the salient issues in the campaign – information which I, of course, gathered from the Wireless File, the Voice of America broadcasts, and the International Herald Tribune. Those were my sources for my political expertise, but I found that if I knew a little bit more about current developments than the audience did, that was enough. I was able to explain American politics – especially the “how” and “why” – in a way that made it understandable to Bulgarians of that day. That was about the most we could do, except distribute speeches by the two candidates (mainly the rare foreign affairs speech) to our mailing audience, who were primarily government officials.

Q: Did you have the sense that Voice of America and/or Radio Free Europe or Radio Liberty were listened to a lot in Bulgaria in those days?

CARLSON: We knew that both were listened to. It was never possible to get a good figure, an actual number for how big the audience was. We knew there were listeners because the VOA Bulgarian Service would occasionally hold a contest and award prizes to listeners. The radio would announce that, for anybody who sends in a postcard, it would be put it into a lottery, and a winner would be drawn out. The VOA would send these prizes won by Bulgarians to USIS Sofia and ask us to send them on to the winner. On a couple of occasions, I noticed winners living in some town I'd never been to -- people who had won a t-shirt or a book or whatever -- and I would use the occasion to deliver it to the person. It was, in a sense, a chance to do a little bit of audience research of my own, and a pretext for a visit to a city outside Sofia.

This was also revealing about the political situation. Many of my embassy colleagues assumed we were always watched and monitored, that any citizen who had unauthorized contact with us would be jailed as soon as we left, that the post office and telephone system were totally controlled. But I found that, outside the capital city and beyond the circle of politically-engaged people, most Bulgarians did not seem to be terribly paranoid. They were not concerned that an American diplomat was coming to present them a gift from the Voice of America. They were usually first surprised, and then pleased to have won. I didn't do this for Radio Free Europe, but I did do it for Voice of America. The winners did not seem to be afraid, and they obviously had mailed in a card to VOA, and it had reached the Washington headquarters without obvious interference by Bulgarian censors.

Q: They would send it to Washington, not to you.

CARLSON: Yes, they sent them directly to Washington. It was a time when the people were pressing the limits a bit perhaps in the aftermath of the Helsinki Final Act. As I mentioned earlier, we saw some warming in bilateral relations because President Zhivkov's daughter was a minister in the government. It was said that she was pushing for a little more openness to the West in science, culture and education; the softer areas.

Q: Did you ever have any problems with the authorities traveling around or having these contacts or did you try to be reasonably sensitive and careful?

CARLSON: I always thought it was stimulating to press the limits and see how much you could do, but I wasn't, on the other hand, trying to get kicked out of the country. They could always retaliate if they wanted. Most of the things I was doing I guess were not that provocative. The Bulgarian authorities spent more time worrying about what the military attachés were doing than they did about what others of us in the embassy were doing.

I was followed, especially at the beginning of my posting to Sofia, and we always assumed we were watched and listened to. The top floor in our apartment building was very clearly a listening post with regular changes of shifts – despite the sign that said it was the finance office of the Bureau for Services to the Diplomatic Corps. The staff even used the same elevators we did, and they were there day and night. So, we knew we could be recorded, whether they bothered to record every word or not. But, frankly, the surveillance was not oppressive or nor obvious most of the time.

On one occasion the Western diplomatic community gathered for some sort of a party or whatever. The idea was to have a scavenger hunt around town, so people were sent off in small groups to collect certain items or find a particular site. One of the tasks was to come back with a count of the number of windows in the south side of the Central Committee headquarters building. Consequently at about 10 or 11 on a Saturday night, you had all these cars with diplomatic plates pulling up outside the Central Committee Headquarters, people jumping out, pointing with their fingers as they counted all of the windows, and then screeching off in their cars. This resulted in the British and American ambassadors being convened by the Foreign Ministry that next Monday demanding an explanation of what was this activity! Probably the Bulgarians at that point did not appreciate concept of a scavenger hunt.

Q: Probably didn't believe whatever a scavenger hunt was!

CARLSON: I'm sure they thought it was a cover for something else!

Q: You were there in Bulgaria in late 1979 when the Soviets went into Afghanistan which drew quite a reaction from the Carter administration affecting the 1980 Olympics. Did that change the atmosphere, what you could do particularly?

CARLSON: As best I can remember, it didn't actually affect anything in a practical sense. The rhetoric changed considerably of course; it shifted and became much more

negative. The press condemned our actions, largely repeating Moscow's outraged condemnations of American policy.

We worried that things would be delayed or held up, but in fact, our exchanges and other "program activities," exhibits and things like that, continued pretty much on schedule. There may have been some delays as everybody figured out how they were going to react, but apparently the decision was taken not to louse up or destroy anything useful in the bilateral context. After all, it was the Soviet's Olympics, not Bulgaria's.

The thing that really did affect relations and turned things decidedly colder, and which did interrupt program activities, exchanges, and all types of things was the Bulgarian connection to the shooting of Pope John Paul II on May 13, 1981. The Turkish would-be assassin, Mehmet Ali Ağca, was soon linked to Bulgaria. Western intelligence reporting said there were some clear ties to Bulgarian intelligence, and it was not the first time that Bulgarian intelligence had been involved in some sort of assassination attempt or even a successful one in foreign countries.

There had been the 1978 case of Georgi Markov, a Bulgarian writer and theater director who had escaped from the Bulgaria and had gone to work for Radio Free Europe. Once a confidant of Todor Zhivkov, as an émigré he was able to reveal in colorful detail the luxurious lifestyle and abuses of power at the top of the Bulgarian system. He was in London when he was attacked by an unknown person with an umbrella. The umbrella somehow delivered a pellet with ricin poison, and Markov died a few days later.

Q: That happened sometime earlier, I think.

CARLSON: That had happened in 1978. In fact, one of the interesting things as I mentioned earlier, was a new invention: videotape.

We obtained from USIS London a videotape of a BBC "Panorama" program about the Markov assassination. "Panorama" was like CBS "60 Minutes." Panorama does investigative journalism and tells a story, but in the British style. The BBC show aggressively adopts a point of view, much more so than American television journalists. Panorama told the Markov story with powerful reenactments and interviews, and they left no doubt that Bulgarian intelligence was behind the murder. They had various bits of evidence, and I always suspect that British intelligence had encouraged the producers. We kept that videotape in the embassy, and I often showed it in my home to people from the diplomatic community and to visitors.

I never tried to show it to a Bulgarian. I feared doing that would have really set things off. It would endanger the Bulgarian, and I did not want to subject anyone to that. This had no program value for us, but it did serve to remind visitors and others what kind of regime we were dealing with.

Q: You left in 1981 not too long after the election of Ronald Reagan as U. S. president. I don't know if you were there long enough to feel any change in your ability to do programs and the atmosphere that you were dealing with?

CARLSON: Our ambassador was Jack Perry by that point. Ambassador Perry was a career FSO, but a recent product of the Carter administration. He had been, for the year before coming to Sofia, Deputy Executive Secretary in the State Department. He had enormous affection for Secretary Vance, and I think he very much was in synch with Vance's thinking.

With the change in Administrations, there had been a decided shift in Washington's thinking. It didn't really affect me, but several of us perceived that some of the embassy's reporting and communications to Washington was out of step with the Reagan team's approach. (I think I appreciated this difference even more after I returned to Washington myself.) Well, the Administration's tone changed in the way they discussed the Soviet Union, its allies, human rights, trade, arms control, and other things... It was just the tone. Ambassador Perry didn't pick up on that, or he didn't want to pick up on that. He didn't stay long in Bulgaria. The administration decided to make a change, if I remember right, sooner than his time normally would have come up.

Q: He was replaced by another career officer.

CARLSON: He was replaced by Ambassador Bob Barry.

Q: That was probably after you left.

CARLSON: That was after I left.

Q: Shortly after you left.

CARLSON: Yes. Shortly after.

Q: OK, Is there anything else you want to say about your assignment to Sofia '78 to '81 as PAO?

CARLSON: Only that when I returned subsequently in the early 1990's to Sofia, it was marvelous to see the changes in society, the little things. Church doors were wide open and services going on inside. People were going in and out of churches. In my time in Sofia only couple churches, such as Alexander Nevsky Cathedral were open, and only as museums. The rest were simply locked up. News vendors were on the street corners, displaying all manner of European magazines and newspapers. There was a lot of German print pornography on display, something you never saw in Zhivkov's time. In the 1990's I saw people walking dogs, and stores offering items for household pets. That was never possible before. Clearly Bulgarians had the economic means and the freedom to have pets.

During the time when we were posted in Sofia, one day an official notice was sent from the Foreign Ministry saying that all diplomats who had pets such as dogs should get them out of the country for a week. We did not understand why and could not get an explanation. Eventually we learned there had been an outbreak of—I don't know, rabies perhaps—and the animal control authorities went through town spreading poison and killed all the pets they could find. That was the strange sort of cruel authoritarian society that it was in the Soviet days.

Q: Despite that, you were able to have some normal relationships.

CARLSON: I was the luckiest FSO in the embassy. I had more contact with Bulgarians – of all ranks and stations – than any other officer. By the end of my tour there, I actually spoke pretty good Bulgarian. I met, listened to, and talked to a lot of people who didn't speak English. Before 1989 everyone spoke Russian, and some spoke German. Not much English. I thought Sofia was a pretty positive experience. It was also great fun to head up your own agency operations as a relatively junior officer.

Q: I may have asked you this before, but did you travel around the country quite a bit?

CARLSON: Yes, yes, I did. I traveled by car both with my family and visitors as well as for work. Bulgaria was hardly big enough to merit flying, although sometimes we did if going from Sofia to the Black Sea. The trains were too slow to depend on.

Q: Okay. At that point, since joining the U. S. Information Agency in 1970, you had 11 years of experience, and three posts abroad. What happened after that?

CARLSON: Clearly it was time for me to go to Washington. By then, I'd been out in the field longer than most people in their first series of assignments, and the personnel people said I should return to Washington. I really had no idea how to pursue a good Washington job. In fact, one detriment to being in a one USIS officer post was that there was no one else from whom to learn about USIA. Perhaps because of my experience working with computers—Wang computers and the DRS database that I mentioned in Yugoslavia—I was recruited for a job in the technology division at USIA. They wanted some Foreign Service input. As they said in those days, they said, “Most of our people working on technology here in Washington are very good with the ones and zeros, but they don't know that electricity abroad is a different voltage than here in the United States.” Little things like that. Not just electricity, but...

Q: Little things like that are pretty big things!

CARLSON: Yes, but also some of the factors that only a Foreign Service Officer would recognize when you're trying to introduce something that's going to be used in embassies and overseas: impracticalities, impossibilities, and so forth. We were introducing some new techniques, technology and, as we all know, the Foreign Service is not always the most welcoming to change and innovation. The idea was that I should join the technology

staff, provide a field perspective and help bridge the gap between the FSO community and the “techies,” as we would say today. (I don’t think we used that word then.)

The decision to create such a position was, in fact, quit insightful. Throughout my career as a Foreign Service Officer, a recurring theme has been the disconnect between Washington and the field. People in Washington frequently assume they know what will work overseas. Foggy Bottom bureaucrats (and even worse, West Wing know-it-alls) turn a deaf ear to the FSO on the ground, or the experienced officer just returned from the field.

I started off in this job in USIA’s Management Directorate and learned a good deal about Wang word processors and their list processing capabilities. I had been in this for about four or five months when, one day, I was riding up the elevator at the USIA headquarters. The Counselor, the number three USIA official, got in. The agency was headed by Director Charles Z. Wick, there was Deputy Director Gene Kopp, and this was the Counselor, John W. “Jock” Shirley. Out of the blue, Shirley asked me to come see him. Someone else in the elevator said, “You’re either in big trouble or about to have some good luck!”

It turned out that Jock Shirley had been given significantly additional responsibilities by the new director, Charles Z. Wick, to help manage the agency. The Counselor needed to expand his office staff very slightly, adding one more special assistant. This was an honor and an opportunity for a FSO, and so I did leave the technology office. I always felt guilty, because when this happened the technology office had just sent me an around-the-world orientation trip to visit embassies and posts, assess their technology needs and gather regional perspectives. I had attended a conference in New Delhi and then made stops in Jakarta, Hong Kong, and Tokyo. I no more than returned and then moved to another office. They didn’t get much for that trip.

Q: On the other hand they and technology had a friend in higher places.

CARLSON: That’s the way they decided to look at it, which I thought was very positive on their part. The technology office did not stand in the way of my moving to the Counselor’s office.

So, I joined the Counselor’s staff. In these early days, it was a small and closely knit staff consisting of the Counselor, Jock Shirley, a Foreign Service Officer, Candace Cunningham, a couple of administrative assistants, and myself. We later expanded a little bit more... Barbara Haig, the daughter of Secretary of State (and General) Al Haig, joined us on the staff also as a specialist after another six months or something like that. Jock kept the staff small, in part because, as he said, he wanted to “keep the work out of the office.” I thought he was kidding, but now I understand that an office like that should not try to do anything – that’s for the line offices and the posts. The Counselor’s job was to know everything, however.

Mr. Wick came to D.C. with California ideas, Reagan principles, and no idea how a Washington bureaucracy works. He had very close personal connections to the President as well as to other members of the administration. He knew Ronald Reagan extremely well, but the real secret was that their wives had carpooled their children to school together. It was that close of a relationship. Charlie Wick, friend of the President, was a force to be reckoned with in Washington. Even though we had strong figures in the Administration like Al Haig, Cap Weinberger, Bill Casey....

All these guys knew each other. Wick was impatient to energize the bureaucracy and get more action, so to speak, out of USIA and public diplomacy. I don't think we called it public diplomacy in those days, but information and cultural programs and so forth. He was disdainful about the speed of government. He arrived with an outsider's skepticism about several aspects of our work, particularly academic exchanges like Fulbright programs and so forth. To his mind, the Foreign Service was slow to accept new directions, hidebound, elitist and stogy.

At a later point, I was in the room one day when Wick reminisced about the advice he had gotten from friends in California before he came to Washington. They had warned him, he said, that all the "government bureaucrats" were liberal Democrats who would thwart him, challenge his authority, and seek to undermine his and the President's initiatives at every turn. He was told not to trust the career employees. By that time he had learned for himself that such warnings were not true, but I have since had other political appointees tell me they have received the same warnings from their "outside the Beltway" friends who "know a lot about Washington."

I think in that time one of the most interesting developments that I worked on was one of Wick's initiatives. He really revolutionized the way we in USIA thought about television and the possibility of using satellite technology. This was a guy who thought "outside the box" when that was a new phrase, and he could be a bulldozer when he wanted something. He thought of things that caused everybody to say, "You can't do that," and then he'd find a way to do it. Often he would call on his Hollywood friends and connections.

This television initiative developed when martial law was declared in Poland in December 1981. The White House wanted to encourage worldwide condemnation of Jaruzelski's Soviet-backed crackdown on freedom and political opposition in Poland. Ordinarily, when the White House called for a full court press on an issue, the Agency's policy staff would put together a strategy or action plan consisting of all the things USIA could do – VOA editorials, speaker programs, magazine articles, display window exhibits, special exchange programs. To Director Wick, all those traditional activities seemed boring, too quiet, or too slow.

He thought that we should do a television program to be shown around the world via then-new satellite television in support of Poland's independent thinkers and the Solidarity movement. Of course, immediately the USIA bureaucracy began nibbling at the edges of the concept: won't it cost too much? how do we buy satellite time? who will

appear on a USG show? where do we get a screenplay? foreign networks won't show it?
etc.

Wick was undeterred. And gradually the bureaucracy came around. We worked for weeks on the project which came to be called "Let Poland Be Poland." One can smile about whether it was good television or not. Eventually the concept turned to featuring short pro-Poland interventions by various presidents and prime ministers from Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher to Helmut Schmidt and François Mitterrand and on around, as well as Hollywood stars and entertainers known worldwide such as Charlton Heston, Kirk Douglas, Henry Fonda, Paul McCartney, and Mstislav Rostropovich. (Wick had a typical Californian's respect for the opinions of movie stars.)

In the end, we got a lot of well-known people to cooperate: senators and the Speaker of the House, political leaders, authors, artists, movie stars, and Polish émigrés. They all united in condemning the imposition of martial law and restrictions on Poland's fundamental freedoms, but each in his or her own way, in his or her own voice.

When Mr. Wick proposed this idea, that he was going to get Helmut Schmidt and Margaret Thatcher and everyone else to join in condemning the martial law, well, we all thought this was crazy. But, Wick led the way himself by first getting the President's blessing and then parlaying that into commitments from senior officials across Washington. They not only agreed to participate, but they agreed to cajole their foreign friends and counterparts to get involved. On our side, in the Counselor's office, we went to work through the area offices, got in touch with our embassies, overcame skepticism, and in the end there was virtually a rush by notable people to join the project.

I learned from this to appreciate the power of our embassies abroad. When you get them energized, they can move mountains. USIA was much like State: the energy was in the geographic bureaus – they are the part that actually got things done. Both organizations had Washington units that wrote policy, developed materials, and managed programs, but it was really the field officers, the posts in foreign countries, that did the hard work. In USIA, the Counselor, Jock Shirley managed the so-called "area directors." They were roughly counterparts – in jurisdiction and authority, if not in absolute rank – to assistant secretaries for the geographic bureaus State. Working through the area directors individually and collectively, Jock got Mr. Wick's various ideas made into something practical and got them implemented.

Charles Z. Wick himself was a persuasive guy with a flair for drama. He knew instinctively how to get to Congress and make an appeal. He could make a good case when he wanted something. I remember one congressional hearing in which Wick was defending the USIA budget, which in those days included the Voice of America. Usually, of course, USIA's budget didn't get much time at these hearings. But this time Wick appeared at the witness table and placed a large glass object on the table. After he had the members' attention, he said, "Gentlemen, that is a radio tube. Four days ago it was powering our VOA transmitter in Munich when I visited there. I want you to look closely on the bottom of this radio tube. See where it says, 'Made in Nazi Germany'?" This is why

we have to have money to upgrade our broadcasting capability. We are still working with World War II equipment.”

Q: Equipment and technology.

CARLSON: Yes. That kind of a gesture got USIA more money, not only for radio. As we all know, a rising tide lifts all boats, and Wick got more money for broadcasting, for exchanges, for magazines, and for everything else.

Wick learned quickly too. Early in his USIA tenure, when faced with some OMB-mandated across the board budget reductions, Mr. Wick decreed that the best way to save money would be to cut the exchanges budget, reducing funds for Fulbright grants and International Visitor Programs. I believe he regarded it as just money that goes to travel and stipends. Easy to cut.

The reaction of the American academic community was swift and strong. Letters poured in and editorials criticized the Reagan Administration for cutting education and culture. Feeling the heat, Wick began to appreciate the domestic constituency that exists for academic and other exchanges. Out of that experience he learned. He also later returned to use that political power to gain resources for USIA by engaging that same academic lobby in support of USIA’s budget. In the end, Mr. Wick was the longest-serving director of USIA (eight years). He is credited with modernizing the agency with computers, introducing satellite television, creating the Artistic Ambassadors program, starting Radio Marti, and doubling USIA’s budget. The last few Wick years were the high point, if you compare figures over decades and account for inflation, of Congressional funding for public diplomacy.

Q: Had Jock Shirley been the Counselor before the Reagan administration came in?

CARLSON: No. Jock Shirley had been the Acting Director during the period between the Carter Administration—John E. Reinhardt, a State Department officer and former ambassador to Nigeria was the USIA Director under Carter — and the incoming Reagan Administration. I think that Wick, a good judge of people, realized this fellow Shirley was somebody he wanted to keep around.

Q: Certainly it may have been all over by the time you got there because you joined the Counselor’s staff probably late.

CARLSON: I moved up to the Counselor’s office in November, 1981 or something.

Q: ...of ’81 and, of course, Wick came in and presumably...

CARLSON: Mr. Wick actually didn’t get sworn in until June 9, 1981. He was around and finding his way when I arrived in the Counselor’s office.

Q: Maybe six months. But certainly the initial reaction of USIA Foreign Service people in the field was one of resistance for some of the reasons that he had real assets, for others they saw change and challenge.

CARLSON: He was unique. He was an individual. He came from California. There was an enormous culture clash right away with the Washington foreign policy establishment. Someone comes in from California – famed for making movies, and not exactly epics either (think *Snow White and the Three Stooges*, for example) – and the east coast elite was naturally skeptical. Wick was a successful, wealthy American lawyer and entrepreneur who was used to getting his way. He was used to certain prerogatives when he traveled.

Mr. Wick initially did not appreciate the sensibilities of the Foreign Service nor the rules that apply when you work in government. It was hard for anybody, Jock Shirley or anybody else, to explain to Wick, “No, you can’t do that.” I think every Foreign Service officer who has served as a DCM for a political appointee ambassador has had the same experience: trying to explain these mundane and seemingly “stupid little government rules” that are so very different from the way things are done in the private sector.

More than that, however, Charlie Wick was not a product of a corporate career. He was a lawyer and a one-man entrepreneur; he had never supervised a staff of more than three or four secretaries or something. He distrusted a bureaucracy so large and extended that he could not see with his own eyes his instructions being put into action. He was used being able to walk out of his office and see everyone who worked for him. If those people did what he wanted, he kept them; if they didn’t, he fired them. He tried to bring that technique to government. Wick famously “fired” a lot of people. What really happened is that we moved them to another job out of his line of sight. He might have thought he’d fired them. We just got them out of his line of fire.

Q: Probably before too long people realized that he had the ability to get funding that was welcome and could be put to good use, and some of his ideas were probably innovative.

CARLSON: I think the appreciation of Charlie Wick actually came at the end of his tenure, or even more so afterwards. Some of his successors were much less successful.

Q: It took a while.

CARLSON: Yes. While he was at USIA, there was a lot of resentment: resentment of his high-handed style, his self-importance, his name dropping, his mercurial nature, his easy use of his own connections to powerful people.

At one point he went to Bill Casey, the CIA Director, and said, “You know, I’m traveling abroad.” Wick had actually never traveled abroad much, aside from the West European capitals, before becoming USIA Director. He was going to several countries, and this was the era of hijackings and kidnappings. He asked Casey, “Do you think I ought to have

protection? After all, I'm a friend of the President." And Casey predictably replied, "Yes, Charlie, you should."

So, Wick became the first USIA director to travel with bodyguards. He was issued a bullet-proof raincoat (which weighed a ton and usually had to be carried by somebody else), and had armed DS (State Department security) agents accompany him on foreign travel. Hosting the USIA director was difficult enough for a PAO abroad, and the logistics simply got more complicated with security agents involved as well as Wick's own idiosyncratic demands. Many USIA officers at the time thought this was simply another manifestation of Wick's ego. Today, we would probably agree that a highly visible Washington official – known to be a family friend of the President of the U.S. – does merit some degree of security protection.

There were all these little stories. Any historian can go back and look at the *Washington Post* of those days and the equivalent of the "In the Loop" column or whatever it was. They missed no opportunity to go after Charlie Wick, and he made good copy. At one point the European area director, Len Baldyga, wrote a memo to a PAO in one of the posts where Wick was going to visit, and he said, "There are some do's and don'ts of planning travel for Director Wick. He likes to ride on the left side of the airplane going out and on the right side coming back."

(That's called POSH: Port side Out, Starboard side Home. It comes from the old steamship days, but it also ensures on trips to Europe that you are seated on the shaded side of the plane. The sun does not shine in your window.)

The memo included all kinds of other things about what Charlie wanted in the hotel room when he arrived. It was a little bit like what they do for a rock star's dressing room today. Be sure the room has bottled water, a bowl of fruit, a portable radio with a list of the best local frequencies for VOA, BBC, etc. Of course, as those of us now know, any list like that is going to end up in the *Washington Post*. Len offered to resign, but after a day or two of tantrums, Wick said, "No, it wasn't your fault." He said, "Actually, it's a good list. I couldn't have added anything to it." [Laughter]

Q: OK. Your role as special assistant to the Counselor was primarily to give Jock Shirley ideas, help him with whatever was on his agenda, or were you trying to coordinate the areas or deal with the State Department or NSC?

CARLSON: I was a special assistant to the Counselor of the Agency. Jock reminded us frequently, the two or three of us who worked for him, that he had no resources to command, he had no legions of officers or posts, no great amounts of money to hand around. He merely was the connection point between the deployed Foreign Service and USIA's Washington establishment. He connected the area directors and the posts abroad to the Director and the political side that wanted things done. My job primarily was to help him manage his own relations with the Area Directors and the posts.

My principal duty was to scan the incoming and outgoing the telegrams, both State and USIA. I paid special attention to telegrams that went to high profile Foreign Service posts or that came in from them; I looked for key reporting cables as well as operational problems and opportunities that would interest Agency management. The other special assistant, Candace Cunningham, watched all the memorandums and traffic related to the broadcasting, information, and exchanges directorates. We sub-divided that some when Barbara Haig came on board. So my duty was to attend meetings, take notes, make sure that if something was decided or an instruction was given or if somebody wanted more information, and that things got done. We basically followed up and made sure that balls didn't get dropped, that "needful" things got done. We also tried to keep our boss well informed, you know, in the spirit of "no surprises."

Doing this in the proximity of Director Wick, who was just down the hall, kept it interesting. People frequently came rolling out of the Director's office, rolling head over heels in a shower of peanut shells and orange rinds, and we'd sweep it all up. It was the special assistants' job to put things back to order and figure out, "How are we going to fix this?"

We'd often return to the office and ask each other, "The Director wants what???"

Then we'd sit down and think how such a thing could be managed. Who could do it? How could it be accomplished? But, as special assistants, we were always working in the Counselor's name, never with any authority of our own. This was a pure staff job, and the two years were very good training in Washington's ways. I began to appreciate the difference between staff vs. line officers, and how things worked at the State Department as well as at USIA. Our office was the principal senior-level liaison between State and USIA; Jock Shirley talked frequently with Under Secretary Larry Eagleburger, and often I dealt with his special assistant Bill Montgomery (with whom I'd served in Belgrade) or others.

I also learned that when the staff people think that they actually control something, when they decide their ideas trump those of the line officers and the people doing the work, that's when things get out of kilter. Sometimes in Washington the NSC staff begins to think they are making policy, instead of just being the honest broker that ensures the President hears all the facts and all the viewpoints. The hard part of a staff job, especially when your office is close to power, is to abjure your own ego and most of your own ideas. You're doing everything in the interest of the institution or, at least, you're speaking for your boss, and you better not speak in a way that he or she wouldn't want done. I found this training very useful over the years.

Q: With everything you just said, did you also work with the Special Assistant or the staff of the Director?

CARLSON: Yes. We were like three peas in a pod. Bob Earle was the one who was special assistant to the Director for the longest time, Robert Earle, followed by a couple of others. The Director had, in addition to Bob, a couple of other people doing

correspondence, writing thank you letters, and following up on requirements. Wick customarily dictated memos and letters, using a little portable recorder. I assume this originated from his legal work, but he also insisted that an answer be sent to every single incoming letter or message that was sent to him, so there were always letters being answered. Most directors would ask other agency officials to answer mail that touched on their area of responsibility, but Wick wanted the reply to come from him.

Candace and I worked with Bob Earle, Wick's special assistant, on our respective subjects – me the posts and geographic offices, she the Washington directorates and their programs. We tried to keep our bosses in sync. We would let each other know if something was going off the tracks, figure out if either we could put it back on the tracks or at least alert our boss. If we could not solve it, we would alert Jock that something needed to be dealt with and needed his personal intervention.

Director Wick would go on a foreign trip and, upon arrival, be shown his schedule including perhaps meetings with second or third level officials. Suddenly he would announce that he had a letter from the President that he needed to deliver to the prime minister or the president of the foreign country. At first people couldn't believe that the USIA director would be delivering correspondence on behalf of the President of the United States but, in fact he did have such letters. He and Reagan cooked this stuff up.

At first the State Department had fits. How could there be a letter from the President to the head of government or head of state in a foreign country and the Department knew nothing of it? Most of the messages were not policy-heavy, but the letters got Charlie Wick into audiences with prime ministers and presidents all over the world. Who knows what the effect was? After we got used to this, my office would track back and let the State Department know what Mr. Wick was up to. Still, there were ruffled feathers over in State's regional bureaus where they were offended by these incursions on their terrain. USIA seemed to be getting into the policy side. "What in the world are they doing over there?"

Q: What level, what positions, in the State Department did you deal with on issues like that, the desk officer or public affairs officer of the bureau ?

CARLSON: Usually more with desk officers and office directors, and maybe even DAS's. I knew a good number of people in EUR from my service overseas. Europe was very much a focus for Director Wick in those days. Eastern Europe as well, so I knew a number of people. I knew how to reach out to them. For example, when Larry Eagleburger was... In the beginning I believe he was...

Q: He was briefly Assistant Secretary for European Affairs, and then he became Under Secretary for Political Affairs, all still in 1981.

CARLSON: Yes. He would have been there by then. Bill Montgomery was his special assistant by then, and Bill and I were old friends from Belgrade. So you see, these sorts of connections were very useful in picking up the phone and getting information.

Q: Jock Shirley later was ambassador to Tanzania?

CARLSON: Yes. Much later. Jock is a unique individual. He grew up in Europe during and after World War II, and attended boarding schools in Yugoslavia and Hungary. I've never fully understood his family's history, but Jock is an amazing linguist and the finest Foreign Service Officer I know. He is Europeanist, one would say. He speaks fluent Hungarian as well as Polish and French, and I think his Italian is pretty good, too.

Jock had always seemed perfectly suited to be U. S. ambassador to Hungary. For the extraordinary efforts that he made in behalf on Charles Wick and what he did to get Wick's goals achieved over a three or four year period, one would expect that at some point Wick would feel some sense of indebtedness or loyalty to Jock. The appointment to the ambassadorship in Hungary came up in 1983 on the list for openings, and Larry Eagleburger was very supportive of Jock, as were others. Shirley was chosen as the State Department's choice to be Ambassador to Hungary which, as I say, was his lifelong ambition. He would have been perfect for it.

Unfortunately, a guy named Nicholas Salgo, a Republican donor of Hungarian background, who was the chief operating officer of the hotel-apartment-retail complex Watergate, also wanted the nomination. He came to Charlie Wick (who lived at the Watergate) and sought Charlie's support at the White House. Now, Jock had already spoken to Charlie and been promised his support. If you are up for one of these nominations, you reach out to anyone who can or will speak up for you.

Today, if I'm charitable, I'd guess that Wick didn't fully appreciate the gravity or the seriousness of this matter to Jock. Even so, I think it exposed a serious character fault in Wick's makeup, a hole in his ethical values and disrespect for those who have given you total loyalty. Instead of speaking with the President on behalf of Jock, Wick supported Salgo's candidacy. Salgo got the job. Wick did not even admit to Jock that he had switched his recommendation. It just seemed like a crying shame to most of us, and frankly Wick never regained the respect of many FSO's who knew about this.

Eventually, later on, Jock did get an ambassadorship to Tanzania, but it was not the best or most appropriate assignment for his talents. He did the job well, but he should have been in Budapest instead. When I was being considered for some ambassadorships, I said to myself, "I don't want to go to a part of the world where I know little or nothing about it. The people who spent their entire career in that part of the world should be the ambassadors there." I don't doubt my ability to learn and adapt, but I don't want to go someplace just for the title. That's not the point.

Q: I don't know exactly when Shirley went to Tanzania, but I don't think he stayed too long. I think he retired fairly soon after that.

CARLSON: Ambassador Shirley went to Tanzania in 1984 and returned in 1986. He retired soon after that. His wife, Kathy, was appointed Ambassador to Senegal in 1991. He did take Bill Montgomery along as his DCM in Tanzania.

Q: In Tanzania?

CARLSON: Right. Let me tell this one little anecdote just because I think it's cute and unique. I was sitting in my office, in the Counselor's suite one day. We were still at that point in USIA's old headquarters at 1750 Pennsylvania Avenue which was contiguous to the 1776 Pennsylvania Avenue building on the corner. These were the nicer offices, in a more modern building.

One Friday afternoon there was a call saying that there was a visitor for me down at the front desk. They gave the name, and I could hardly believe it, and I said, "Well, send him up!" In comes Ivan Ivanov, a man I knew well from my Bulgaria posting

Ivanov had been the director of Sofia Konsert during my time in Sofia. That was the official concert bureau for all Bulgarian performers, a state agency that served as a counterpart to Columbia Artists. Sofia Konsert focused on booking Bulgarian performers into theaters and shows, especially in the West. Bulgaria produced in those days—it seems strange—a lot of circus performers, Olympic weight lifters, acrobats and gymnasts, but also ballet dancers, ethnographic dance groups, and a good array of opera singers. It was Sofia Konsert's job to place them in venues in the West where they would earn hard currency.

Q: Including clowns?

CARLSON: Yes, clowns, too. When there was an international tour by the Bulgarian national dance ensemble (much like all those East European dance ensembles), Sofia Konsert would manage the bookings, travel, hotels, etc. If a western performer or group came to Bulgaria, commercially or under a cultural agreement, they managed the local arrangements.

I had worked Ivanov during my time in Sofia. By the end of my tour, he had left Sofia Konsert and had been sent to New York to be a cultural attaché or something in their mission at the UN. An assignment to New York was, for any East European, a big deal. Being sent abroad as a diplomat meant better pay, access to Western goods and ideas, and opportunities to travel.

So, I wonder, why is he in Washington to see me? He even had his wife along. We sat down and I got him coffee, and we chatted about old times. Finally I said, "So, what brings you to Washington?" He said, "Well, I want to defect."

After a stunned silence, all I could say was, "You can't do that here!"

Q: Not in my office! [laughter]

CARLSON: Not in my office! We were trained, of course, to manage such things overseas. In embassies, we had a “walk-in program” specially designed to deal with potential defectors who walked into embassies. There was a routine and a plan.

But, nobody ever thought of anybody defecting, or at least I had never thought of anybody defecting in the USIA headquarters in Washington, D. C., a block from the White House. But, indeed, that was what he wanted to do.

After collecting my wits, I began trying to seek advice. Did anybody else in the office have any ideas on this? Is there anybody in the building? They guys down in security? Somebody suggested, “Well, you better call the State Department.” Yeah, that’s a good idea!

So I called the Bulgaria desk at State. They were equally flummoxed. They had never thought about anybody coming in and defecting in DC. It just didn’t happen. I don’t know where defectors go when they jump ship in the United States, but not usually to USIA. Nor, apparently, to Main State.

I eventually was put in touch with the CIA, somebody over there, and they said, “This is all very interesting,” and they made careful notes. “We’re going to get right on it, but the other thing you’ve got to do is get these people (the Ivanovs) in touch with INS (the Immigration and Naturalization Service). They are all set up to handle this.”

CARLSON: Okay, INS. Right. Somebody gave me a number, and I got in touch with INS. They said, “Well, it would be best if he could come down here.” I said, “Well, OK, I guess I could bring him down there.” So, we left my office and drove to INS. The offices we were going to, were at Third and Constitution or just a block from there. Just behind the U.S. District Court building. We went down there. My car was in a parking garage, and his car was parked on a meter outside the building. So, I suggested we go in his car, partly anticipating that the INS people would whisk him and his wife away somewhere. “Sure, okay,” he said. He explained that the car was actually not his, but belonged to a colleague at the Bulgarian mission in New York.

So down at INS there was a certain amount of filling out forms and interviews. It seemed terribly bureaucratic to me, really. No one seemed to see the drama in this. I was thinking about tomorrow’s *Washington Post* headline: “Bulgarian diplomat defects!” The CIA guys had asked me whether he was a Bulgarian intelligence officer, and I said, “I have no idea. I only know this guy in his cultural capacity. I have no idea what else he knows or does.”

At any rate, he filled out all these papers, and then we came to the end of it. The INS people said, “So, you’ve got to come back on Monday.”

I said something like, “Come back on Monday? What do you mean? He’s defecting! He can’t go back to the mission!”

Well, after some discussion of that idea, it seemed that maybe he could. He and she could go back to New York, return the car he had borrowed a car from an unsuspecting mission colleague, and pretend nothing had happened. They would then arrange to return to DC the following week. Ivanov took this all rather well (better than I did!).

Part of the tension in this was that their children were still in Bulgaria, because when diplomats and officials were allowed to travel abroad, they were not allowed to take their children along. It was sort of a guarantee that they would return.

At any rate, all the papers having been filled out, he was going to come back the following week. So we went back downstairs, and walked outside. But there's no car! Where's the car? A DC police officer pointed to his watch and reminded us that it is five minutes after four o'clock, and the tow truck has towed away the borrowed car!

This drama seemed to keep going on and on! We went back up to 18th and Pennsylvania and got my car. I had no idea where they took towed cars, but it's somewhere out on Bladensburg Road or someplace. We went out there, and he was about out of American money. I paid to bail his car out of the impound lot.

We bid farewell, and I headed home about nine o'clock that night. I was emotionally exhausted and I could only imagine the swirl of emotions and fears the Ivanovs were facing on their drive back to New York City. Frankly, I wondered whether they would come back to DC the following Monday and go through with it. It seemed to me that the American capital had not been very welcoming to someone who wanted to abandon Communism and join Western democracy.

In fact, as it turned out, that was more or less the end of my involvement in this defection. I asked how this was going to be handled and was told that when Ivan and his wife he returned the next week, they were going to be met by people from other agencies. They would take it from there, and I would not be needed.

Q: It all eventually worked out.

CARLSON: The nice part of this story is that I did hear from him periodically. We stayed in touch. I was later told that he didn't actually contribute much that was useful to our intelligence community. He and his wife were allowed to stay in America. After about two years the Ivanovs got their daughters out of Sofia, out of Bulgaria, and they joined their parents here in the United States. Today he is teaching...I haven't checked on this in a year or so...but he was teaching music at a university in Ohio. Another immigrant succeeds in America.

March 15, 2014 at 1800

Q: Anything else we should talk about in this assignment? This was 1981-3, right?

CARLSON: Right. I think that's about it. Let me explain how it ended.

John Hughes, former editor of the *Christian Science Monitor*, had been the Associate Director of USIA for Programs, which meant the Wireless File, magazines, exhibits, and all that sort of stuff. Then he became Director of the Voice of America (as well as being the Associate Director of USIA for Broadcasting). When George Shultz became Secretary, he asked Hughes to come over to State and be both the Spokesman and the Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs. A Welsh-born journalist who had worked in South Africa and elsewhere, he was in good standing in Republican circles. After a few weeks at the State Department, Hughes called Jock Shirley and said, "I need somebody who could be the Director of the Press Office here. Do you know anybody who could do that?"

I happened to be in the office when Jock took the call, and he asked me, while he was still on the phone, "Would you like to be the head of the Press Office?" I think Jock believed that he was about to get an overseas assignment and was planning to phase out. I said, "Well, of course? So Jock told Hughes, "I'll send Brian over to talk to you." It worked out that I was paneled into the job as director of PA/PRS, the Press Office of the Department of State.

Q: That was in 1983? You were there for two years or so?

CARLSON: In the late summer of 1983. Yes. I stayed in that job two years, which was the norm for Washington assignments at that time.

Q: So, until 1985?

CARLSON: Right.

Q: The press office... Why don't you say a little bit about what that office does and how big is it?

CARLSON: The Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs was responsible in those days—and still is today—for a lot of things: the department's information programs, the historian's office, brochures, publications, State Magazine, and so forth.

Q: Speakers programs.

CARLSON: Speakers programs, too. But the fact is, the Assistant Secretary, if that person is also the Spokesman, has no time to do anything but be Spokesman.

John Hughes told me that when he came over to meet with Secretary Shultz, that he only asked for one thing of the Secretary before agreeing to take the job. "One thing I ask is, that I may join in any meeting you're having, that if I wish I can sit in the back of the room just witness." Hughes said he believed he needed not only to have total access to everything that's going on, but for it to be known that he had total access. Hughes said he

told the Secretary that he needed to know everything to be his Spokesman...they could discuss later what he would and would not say to the press, “but I have to know it all.”

Hughes explained that in a similar way, it would be my job to know everything I possibly could about what was going on inside the Department. He promised that I would have intelligence clearances and access, and that I should never hesitate to press even senior officials to tell me the whole story. We might not tell the press everything, but we could not be accurate and honest with the press unless we knew the whole story.

The Press Office supported the Spokesman in this capacity as Spokesman. We had nothing to do with any other part of the Public Affairs Bureau, but we were in constant and intense contact with all the geographic and functional bureaus of the department.

The principal activity that we carried out was every day to put together the “daily press guidance.” That meant we needed to review the print media, watch television news, and listen to the radio news constantly, try to anticipate questions, and ask bureaus and offices for the answers. If we succeeded, we had the answers in hand before the Spokesman came down for the noon briefing.

Thereafter, during the rest of the day, my staff and I answered the reporters’ questions, dug up more information, and directed reporters to other offices and people in the building for more in depth information as necessary. If a reporter asked about something that we already had approved guidance on, we would give it to the reporter ourselves without having to bother. You develop a sense for how long your guidance is valid, and when you need to check back with the desk or the embassy to get an update.

In the afternoons, after the noon briefing, the Spokesman spent time both with senior officials around the building and with key journalists, doing what we called “background” and “deep background” briefings. He pointed them in the right direction, turning them off of stories where they had the wrong idea, and confirming things that he should. This called for a lot of judgment and confidence, because while you don’t want to betray confidential information, nor do you want the *New York Times* giving misinformation to the American people.

I began to appreciate the importance and the power of *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*. Bernie Gwertzman was the *New York Times* correspondent based in the Department, and he was as thorough about checking a story as we were. Before he went with a story, he had gone to all the same offices and people to check it as we would have if we were getting clearances on a piece of press guidance.

I quickly learned that if there was a question about something going on with the *Contras* in Nicaragua, asking the ARA bureau (responsible for Latin America) was perhaps the first thing to do. But, in fact, you’d better also go check with the human rights bureau (DRL) and maybe the people in INL dealing with drugs, or PM, the Political-Military Affairs Bureau, because a single issue would have different facets, depending on who was looking at it. You could be seriously misled by listening only to those who *thought*

they were in charge of it. Others would almost certainly tell you that's not the whole story or shed more light on where the decisions were going.

Q: How big was your staff to do all this?

CARLSON: The professional staff, we were twelve. We had six Foreign Service Officers and six Civil Service. We basically answered the press phones for the department 24-hours a day, seven days a week. We supported the Spokesman and the Secretary. We produced all the transcripts of any public statements or addresses by the Spokesman and by the Secretary. If the Secretary walked out in front of the building with a departing visitor and happened to chat with the reporters, we would turn out a transcript. That's part of the official record of the government of the United States. If he talked with the press on background on the airplane traveling someplace, we would do a transcript of that, attributed to "a senior official traveling with the Secretary," or whatever ground rule had been agreed.

If the Secretary had a planned event such as a speech, a chat with a citizens group, or a scheduled press conference, we had a small team of stenographers, and we would have one or two of them there. Stenographers transcribed the noon press briefing and the Secretary's speeches, but many times it would be spontaneous, or relatively *ad lib*, so one of our officers would record it. We tried to have one of our press officers present at any public event—but in extremis, the Spokesman always had a little pocket recorder with him and he would attempt to get down exactly what the Secretary said. Once in a while, we produced a transcript from notes in the Spokesman's hand of what the Secretary had said. Then, that might require a decision whether this was going to be released or not released, or held for a time. If the Secretary gave an exclusive interview to a journalist, we held back releasing the transcript until after that publication had a chance to publish or broadcast it.

Q: I assume the spokesman would travel with the Secretary generally?

CARLSON: The spokesman generally traveled with the Secretary, and that left the Deputy Assistant Secretary who was the PDAS, the Principal Deputy, that left him as the spokesman doing the briefings in the department when the Secretary was out of town.

Q: You generally did not do... Did you ever do a briefing?

CARLSON: Yes, I did a couple of briefings. If the Spokesman and the Deputy Spokesman were both away, then it fell to me. I was the number three in line, but that didn't happen often. As press office director, you got your fair share of time with the press. When things happened out of cycle, before a briefing or when the answers had to be gotten at night or on a weekend, many times it would be me or one of my press officers who would be the one quoted as "a State Department spokesman says." I think they've changed this practice now. You don't hear anyone but the spokesman or the deputy spokesperson being quoted or questioned on the air.

Q: Would you have a duty roster arrangement? You mentioned there would be 24-hour coverage. There would be someone on duty.

CARLSON: Yes, we took phone calls from home. The Op Center would put the caller through to your home phone. This was before the days of cell phones. We had a beeper, so the Op Center could reach you. But, if possible, you always let the Op Center know a phone number where you would be so they could find you. If you went to someone else's house for dinner, you could give them that telephone number. The only place they really couldn't get you was in the car except by beeper, and then you'd have to stop, find a pay phone, and call back.

Q: Besides the press officers on your own staff, you worked very closely with the public affairs advisors and each of the bureaus.

CARLSON: Yes, each bureau had either an office with several press and public affairs people, or at least someone designated to handle such matters. They varied in quality. Some could be trusted that they would get it all right. Some others, well, you found yourself having to go back and talk to office directors, individual desk officers and even DAS's and assistant secretaries in order to get something ironed out.

Sometimes what the office first gives you is an answer that you look at and say to yourself, "That'll never work. We won't get away saying that." One of the benefits of being read in was that you had access to a lot of information. I had the special compartmented clearances, and every morning went up and read the morning digest. As far as I knew, it was pretty much the same information that the secretary received, at least as far as the written product. As John Hughes said to the Secretary, "I have to know everything you know, and I have to know what you've been doing and what you think about it." In a similar way, we in the press office had to know enough so we could sense what might not be accurate or what could be misleading. That made it interesting.

Q: Let me ask about two categories of the press and whether they were a particular challenge of what. One is the foreign press. They obviously come to the State Department noon briefings. They're very interested in certain subjects. Was that a problem, or did you see that as kind of a normal... They were professional and so on?

CARLSON: There were two categories of foreign press. There were those who didn't come to the State Department briefings. They had the option of watching it on a video feed at the National Press Building where USIA operated a Foreign Press Center. There they could sit and passively watch, although of course they could not ask questions. Many of the European journalists and others did that, or perhaps they read our transcripts a few hours later. The European media especially have deadlines about the time of the Department's "noon" briefing – which was often late in any case.

There was a small group that came to the briefing virtually every day. A couple of them, Reuters was there every day, along with the Chinese, the Japanese, and a couple of news agencies such as DPA (Deutsche Presse-Agentur).

But the principal foreign journalists, or the most active ones, were some reporters from the Middle East: Lebanon and other newspapers in the Middle East. Two or three of them were extremely aggressive in their questioning, pointing out contradictions in U. S. policy in the Middle East, of course. Sometimes I thought their questions bordered on the polemical, and some came closer to speeches than questions. It was as though they forgot the Spokesman is not up there to debate the policy, but rather to provide the Department's viewpoint. But, they would keep asking their questions repeatedly.

On the other hand, I learned from some of the American reporters, you don't ever want to cut those guys off. Sometimes they will push on something, and they'll get something, an answer, an insight, an angle, that others had not thought of. All the reporters, among themselves, were surprisingly tolerant of long-winded questions and persistence. I began to understand they never wanted anybody to be shut down or cut off, because it might be them the next time. And, everyone profited from the briefings, too.

Of course, the smart reporters did not ask their really good questions in the public briefing. If they were working on a scoop or some story line no one else had discovered, they would call the spokesman later or ask one of us. We had rules to protect the reporter's equities. We understood the ethics: if somebody asked you a new question, or opened a subject nobody had asked you about before, obviously you didn't let any other reporters in on that. *The Washington Post* doesn't want to be beat by the *New York Times*.

The journalists fell into categories for us, because they had different needs. You had the television correspondents such as Bob Schieffer, for example, was at that point covering the Department for CBS News, but Bill Plante would sometimes come over from the White House beat.. CNN's Ralph Begleiter was extremely good and helped me understand what the television guys were looking for. The trouble was their medium never let them show how good they were. The television reporters knew this foreign affairs stuff and could ask questions as penetrating as anybody else. But, when you watched the end product, the network news in the evening, it simply didn't measure up to what the *New York Times* or *The Washington Post* or the *Los Angeles Times* had done on the same subject. It's kind of a shame, but it's still the same way today. You watch the evening news and they give a few words to a subject that deserves far more to even be properly understood.

We had the two principal American wire services, AP and UPI, based in the building and they were very good and always on top of the news. The wire services have a vast client base, including in foreign countries, and they were interested in everything. No subject was too small, no announcement too arcane, for them to cover.

Then you learn to really watch what, especially the *New York Times* guy (Bernie Gwertzman) but also *The Washington Post* (Don Oberdorfer) and a couple of others, were working on. They were agenda setters. *Newsday* had a very good reporter, Roy Gutman, and a few others who were always on the edge of something new.

Q: Once in a while a story would develop where there'd be a particular angle that would be beyond the beltway, so to speak: beyond the New York Times or The Washington Post or the Los Angeles Times either because a particular individual was involved or some other reason, so if a paper, say in Seattle, Washington, was very interested in something and didn't have anybody to come to the noon briefing, they would deal with you?

CARLSON: They'd call the office and get me or one of my press officers, whoever caught the phone call. Often the out-of-state papers would be working on some angle or some subject that was, as you say, only of particular interest to them. It may never have even gotten to the point of being guidance at the State Department. I at least tried, and I think all the good press officers would try to help those reporters find their way through the department's bureaucracy. The Department is complicated, has lots of arcane ground rules, and nobody on the outside understands it at all. So if you're asking a question and perhaps you're told that Consular Affairs will have the answer. But, they won't give it to the report because of the Privacy Act or something. So we would suggest that if you ask it this way, they'll tell you this much about it. So we'd either steer them in the right direction or sometimes go and get the answer for them.

In John Hughes' time the press officers and I were encouraged to do radio and TV – that is, to respond on tape for radio and television outside the major media markets. He thought that it is in the Government's interest to use the media to help explain U.S. policy to the American public. We were not supposed to do television or radio for the national media without the approval of the Spokesman or somebody else. The issue is that the Department does not want some press officer upstaging or contradicting what the Secretary or the President might plan to say on a given subject. So it depended very much on what the questions or what the subject was, and who was asking.

Another function of the press office was to support the Secretary of State when he or she—in this case it was a “he”—when he traveled. The Secretary and the traveling party needed to know what was in the American press every day. (This was before the Internet and before email.) The process I inherited was that every night about 10:00 p.m., one of my press officers or I would—we rotated equally on this stuff—go down to Union Station here in Washington, D. C. and pick up all the newspapers, the earliest editions, of the *Washington Post*, *New York Times*, and *The Wall Street Journal*. You could get these about 10:00 or 10:30, something like that. We covered all the press pretty thoroughly but the fact is you can flip a lot of papers real quickly and find the stories of interest to the State Department leadership.

We'd race through all those papers, mark them up, cut out the foreign affairs stories and, of course especially those which resulted from something the Secretary had done on his trip or something that the State Department was working on. Secretaries from throughout the State Department who volunteered to earn some overtime would come in to the press office about 10:30 p.m.. They would then type the text of the news reports verbatim into telegrams which we would dispatch to the traveling party. We sent them through the Op Center, the usual way telegrams reached the traveling Secretary.

Now, I had just come back from Eastern Europe in 1981, but even then in Eastern Europe all our embassies had fax machines. They were relatively expensive and not as fancy as today, but they certainly worked. They were just a box that sat on a table connected to a phone line. I said, "You know, we don't have to do all this re-typing. We could fax the stories to them." There was great disbelief, first in my own bureau, but also in the Op Center and the Secretary's staff office...

Introducing a new idea, new technology, was extremely difficult. I was amazed at how difficult it was to convince even fellow Foreign Service Officers. I had to convince John Hughes, and the Deputy Assistant Secretary in PA. Then, I had to convince the people in S/SS who traveled with the Secretary. This was the staff that supported the Secretary on his travels and they were scared to try anything new. This was a lesson in managing a government bureaucracy – there is safety in routine and innovations are risky.

I said, "Any place in the world that's got a telephone, and all of our embassies overseas, have fax machines." There can't be one that doesn't, I argued. If an embassy doesn't have a fax machine, you can take one on the airplane from Washington. S/SS already was taking along a large Xerox copier on the airplane with the Secretary as well as a transformer to make sure it would run in 220 volt countries, so why not carry a little fax machine? It's not that big, I said. Enormous resistance.

Finally, I got them to begin trying this idea out on a very tentative basis and, of course, by the second trip, they were sold. The advantage of fax was not only do you not have to read telegraphic text which was all upper case in those days, but you have the pictures, the size of the headline, and impression of what the page looks like. We would indicate the position placement. Later we learned to reduce the newspaper's front page to an 8x10" sheet of paper and then transmit that as a fax so they could see what the front page of *The Washington Post* looked like that day. Great innovation.

Q: It was your idea!

CARLSON: Yes, and I guess the Department's secretaries hated me ever since because they all lost all that overtime.

Q: There were probably people around the globe that also got copies of the outgoing telegram that had this press summary, and it seemed...

CARLSON: Yes, and they got cut off.

Q: ...reading all those different U.S. newspapers..

CARLSON: They didn't get it any longer. No. When I was overseas, we got those press briefing telegrams, and it could be useful if you had the time to read all of it.

Obviously, the Pentagon was already making the... what do you call that thing? The "Early Bird?" They had a set of daily clips on defense and military subjects that they

circulate in DOD. Subsequently, the State Department began doing this, not only when the Secretary was traveling, but it became an Op Center function to produce a set of foreign affairs clips every day for the use of the Seventh Floor. That then, as time went on, got distributed around the Department. The whole process developed out of the one we were doing in 1983.

This was a case where the technology – the fax machine – was adopted faster overseas than in the United States. In a similar way, cell phones spread far faster overseas than they did here.

My first few weeks in this job were exhausting. In fact, I thought about resigning after three months. It began, when I had been in the job probably about three or four weeks, one night I got a call from the Ops Center saying, “You’d better come in.” So, I’m driving in to DC from my home in Reston. The watch officer wouldn’t even hint what it was. I usually turned on WTOP (the 24-hour all news station) in the car in those days, and you’d hear about a bomb going off, a hijacking somewhere, a coup, or something. Nothing. There was, however, a report about a missing airliner somewhere out in the Pacific. This turned out to be the Korean airliner, KAL-007, that was intentionally shot down by the Soviets. I got into the Department, went to the Ops Center, and the first thing the watch officer handed me was this highly classified transcript of the Soviet pilots talking to each other as they shot down the airliner. We knew exactly what had happened from the beginning. There was no question. It was just amazing to watch the Soviets dissemble and lie to the world. They lied until the point where Secretary Shultz went to New York and played that tape at the United Nations for everyone to hear.

Q: This was September of '83, I believe.

CARLSON: Yes. Another event that put us on a 24-hour schedule was the invasion of Grenada – a carefully held secret until it happened. The first indication that something was up, happened in the State Department. A reporter, if I remember right, it was CNN’s Ralph Begleiter, came to me, quite quietly, as someone did when they thought they had a lead on a story that nobody else had. He said, “One of our guys down in the Caribbean said he’s seen guys in uniform doing something out of the ordinary. Is there something going on?”

I said, “Not that I’ve heard of. I’ll check.” That was the standard thing. I’ll find out. I went up to the Ops Center to see if anybody knew about anything going on in the Caribbean. I happened to run into an Assistant Secretary. I said, “CNN is seeing some kind of troop movement or something. Helicopters flying around in the Caribbean. Is there something going on?”

“Who said that?” he replied. I should have understood immediately that that response wasn’t the right one.

He then told me, “No. No, there’s nothing going on.” I went back down and told Begleiter, “No, nothing going on. I asked the Assistant Secretary. He said there’s nothing going on.” Of course, that was not true.

That came along just a couple of days after I had gotten a call at home again in the middle of the night, 3 a.m. or something. The watch officer said, “You better come in here.” It was usually about 1:00 a.m. when this would happen. That was the bombing of the Marine barracks in Beirut, which resulted in the deaths of 241 servicemen and women. Each time these crises resulted in days if not weeks of continual press activity, staffing the office around the clock, almost never leaving the building. Both John Hughes and Alan Romberg the deputy assistant secretary were there almost all the time, so I felt I should be there too to support them.

I tell you, after three of those sorts of things within a few weeks, I was beginning to wonder if I could really keep this up. It seemed like I went weeks without seeing my family. It becomes a marathon. The story starts with the facts of the incident – what happened, how many dead, and then it shifts to names and identification. The next stage is the tick-tock story of how it came about, minute by minute, who did what, who knew. Then following that comes the policy question – could this have been avoided or changed by different policies, were mistakes made, who shoulders the blame? And throughout, the details get refined and more information comes out. Secretary Shultz would always remind us, “The first reports are always wrong.”

Q: Was it the burden, the pace, as much as the fact that it was very difficult for you to be put in a position by an assistant secretary that you were basically given bum information and encouraged to disseminate it.

CARLSON: Yes, it didn’t make me want to resign as much as it disappointed me. I never anticipated that a senior official of the State Department would mislead me or anybody else. If he wants to say nothing, that’s fine. I should have realized that something was wrong by the way he responded when I first asked the question.

Q: How he reacted.

CARLSON: As you get more experience, you get better at picking up such signals.

The press office was a good job. It was a good place to work. It was a lot of fun. I went from being a staff officer in the Counselor’s office to suddenly having something that was mine to run. I supervised several clerical staff as well as the press officers and we managed mountains of paper. We had one of the biggest collating Xerox machines in the State Department at the time. This thing took up an entire room on the second floor. We used it to produce copies of the daily press guidance, the noon briefing transcript, speech texts, and all kinds of other documents for the Department. It was virtually a print shop in there.

Being responsible for a busy, visible office and staff was fun, but I have to admit that until I left the job to begin taking Norwegian language training, I had not realized how consuming it was. Departing PAS/PRS felt like having a tremendous weight taken off your shoulders. My wife said, "It's like the phone company cut us off! We don't get phone calls anymore." It used to ring all night long and all day long on weekends.

That's when you begin to understand that the media never sleeps. Somewhere in the world—and they do call you from all over the world—the news cycle was 24-hours a day, even in 1985. You have the American television morning news shows, so at four or five a.m. NBC is calling you up to provide the "Today Show" personalities with the latest information and get our official reaction to whatever it was. There's another burst of activity before noon because many radio networks do a midday newscast. In the afternoon everyone is getting ready for drive time and the evening network news. And so it continues through to the late evening, the 11 o'clock news. Every hour, the radio networks and AP Radio are updating their stories, and then you get in sync with the rhythms of the Sunday talk shows and all the specials. The Spokesman's office also worked with the White House press office on setting up Department officials to appear on the Sunday talk shows. That was done out of our office as well. There's an intricate dance during the week among State, Defense, and the NSC about who will appear on Sunday talk shows like "Meet the Press" and "Face the Nation."

Q: I'd like to have you talk, Brian about the procedure for the daily press briefing, a normal day, not a big disaster, big crisis. A normal day. What would you do to prepare for it, would you attend the briefing? Talk that through just a little bit.

CARLSON: I felt like I needed to be part of this process because it was the key thing that our office did. Asked to list our Number One task, I would say it was to make sure the Spokesman was ready for that noon briefing. I came in early in the morning and was usually at my desk certainly by 6:30 a.m. The newspapers were delivered to the building for the press office. One staffer, Sonja McCarty, for years carried the main burden of this first review of the printed press. She paged through the newspapers, with a good sense of where foreign affairs and Department news would be found. She had a knack for picking out of lengthy stories the key sentences or the paragraphs that were likely to cause questions. She read very quickly, and taught me to do so too. We'd focused first on *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* and then moved on to the *Wall Street Journal*, *Baltimore Sun*, and some of the others. We scanned the AP, UPI and Reuters wire service reports. We had a summary of the national television network newscasts.

We were alert for subjects on which the State Department spokesman would likely get questions. Questions tended to fall into three categories: does the Department (or the Administration) have a comment or an opinion about some development? Did the Department do something? Or can the Department confirm that something happened? The Department (and therefore, the U.S. Government) only confirms that a coup took place, or rockets were fired, or that a person died, if an embassy officer has verified it and reported back to Washington. If something terrible happened someplace, they'd ask, "Do

you have anything on that?" So we'd go to the desk, and they in turn would reach out to the embassy.

By then, it is 7:30 a.m. The Spokesman has been in his office looking through the press too. At about 7:15, or 7:30, we consult with the spokesman or whoever is going to do the briefing. We tell him what we think needs to be tasked to bureaus, and he would say, "Yes, right," or "Go to Europe for that," or "Tell so and so to give us some guidance and feedback." He would also often throw in a new subject, "You'd better also ask EUR about this," or "See what the Japan desk has about that," because he had been, of course, talking to *The Washington Post* or the *New York Times* reporters and had a sense of what they working on. The reporters usually don't tell you exactly what they have, but the Spokesman often senses where trouble lies and figures we ought to be a little ahead of it.

Then, about 8:00 a.m. I would join the Spokesman on a conference call with Larry Speakes at the White House and whoever was handling the Defense Department. The CIA listened on the line, but they rarely ever said anything useful. They had a press office, but they did not answer questions, at least not in those days. And the NSC press person was also on the line. Basically, Hughes and Speakes reviewed what everybody was going to have to deal with in sort of political, military, and foreign policy spheres. It was important to decide who would talk about what.

Speakes would say, "OK, well, State will answer everything on that subject," or "Defense will take this part of it, and State will take the negotiation part of it, and the White House doesn't want any part of it." Or it might be, "Oh, that's going to be a White House question, so we'll deal with this over here at the White House, and you guys buck it to us." You'll see this if you read transcripts. You'll see the State Department spokesman saying, "I think the White House has something for you on that." The government was basically trying to keep from stepping on each other's toes or confusing the press with contradictory or incomplete information. Let those who know best answer the question.

Armed with that information, by this time it's 8:30 or something like that. We send our requests out to the functional and regional bureaus in the State Department. We would say, "All right, this is what we need from you." We wanted to know not only what the Spokesman should say, but also what's actually happening, the background information, the back-story. Once we began to receive the draft guidance back a couple of hours later, about say about 10:00, that's when the negotiation begins. A lot of times the desk officer wants to tell you what to say, and you want to know what actually happened. We need to be sure, and the Spokesman's perspective on how the Department wants to present an issue may be different from that of a desk officer. The Central America desks, the ones handling the Contras and human rights issues, those folks knew pretty well what was needed. A bureau or an officer unused to having their work in the spotlight might find it intimidating to suddenly be getting a lot of probing questions.

Q: Would there be cases where, for example, the European bureau or maybe the Cyprus desk knows that a Greek journalist is going to ask a question about Cyprus that would

have not have come to your attention, to the spokesman's attention, to anyone's attention?

CARLSON: They'd let us know. Bureaus could offer guidance without being asked. They could say, "We know something's going on here, and you ought to have this and be ready." The beauty of that was, once we have it in the book, then we keep that in the book for 24 hours, it's alive, and if anybody calls us we'll use that guidance unless there is a reason to think it's not still valid. We did not approve of "planting" questions, although I think some bureaus did that from time to time in order to get something out that they were interested in. On occasion we would make something into a Department statement rather than a response to questions. The spokesman could always come out to the podium at the beginning of the briefing and just start talking.

Q: Announce something.

CARLSON: He could announce something if he wanted. We would also "post announcements" on the bulletin board in the press office, but not read them out in the briefing. That was one notch down. There are various ways to get information out and to determine how much attention you give to it. I don't think we ever played the "Friday 4:00 news release" game to bury a story, although the White House would do that. All of the journalists had access to the press office on the second floor, so they frequently walked in to see what we'd posted on our bulletin board.

During my time in PA/PRS we began to deal with the security issue: that is, who is a journalist and where can an accredited journalist go in the building? For many years there had been a gentleman's agreement that the reporters accredited to the Department were given a building pass, parking space in the basement, and freedom to move around the Main State building. There was an understanding that journalists would not simply wander into offices where they didn't have an appointment, nor could they loiter outside offices on the upper floors to waylay people.

About 10:30 or 11:00 the bureau press officers would begin arriving in our office with their guidance, having obtained all the necessary clearances. Each guidance is written in a *Q* and an *A* format, perhaps with a paragraph of background information and sometimes with a telegram or other support document attached. Each subject gets its own page or pages. My staff and I assembled the pages into a tabbed book, following a logical, geographic order, usually of geographic geography or something statements to be made at the beginning that the secretary's going to be traveling or whatever, and then prepare for the questions. We'd take that book up to the spokesman at – hopefully – eleven o'clock. We'd often slipped. The noon briefing rarely begins at noon.

The spokesman would begin reading through it. If he was unhappy with an answer, maybe he knew more than we did, he might call the Assistant Secretary and say, "This won't work. I know this doesn't accurately answer the question. I've got to have something more." Then they would talk. He might say, "Here's what I'll say," or he

might say, “Well, I’ll “take” that question and we’ll work it out this afternoon.” Sometimes he would insist on another clearance that had not been requested earlier.

Q: To what extent would the spokesman clear guidance in advance with the Secretary?

CARLSON: Once the Spokesman was happy with the book, then he himself, sometimes with me along, would go to the Seventh Floor and meet with either the Secretary, the Deputy Secretary or the Under Secretary of Political Affairs. It depended on their availability. Eagleburger was always very available. When he was Deputy Secretary he was often involved. I only did the review a couple of times with Secretary Schultz. John Hughes usually went alone if the review was with the Secretary himself. They reviewed, not everything in the book, but the subjects and the answers most likely to come up and be of interest to the Secretary – the most sensitive stuff. Something where the Department was in disagreement with the NSC or Defense would definitely have the Secretary’s interest.

Q: Last question for today: Did you then attend the noon briefing?

CARLSON: Oh, yes. I and all my press officers attended the briefing itself, first of all because at least one of us somewhere would be involved in editing the transcript afterwards to make sure it was accurate.

We also attended for our edification. Questions might come up and the spokesman might answer – drawing from his own knowledge – something we didn’t even have in the book. The way that he phrased it may reflect the fact that he’s been sitting in meetings with the Secretary or other people. He went, of course, to the 8:30 or whatever kind of daily staff meeting that the Secretary had, so he had a great deal of knowledge.

Then, at the end of the briefing, they turn off the cameras and the microphones, and there’s a sort of “background session” with reporters, and often the Spokesman will expand on some subject as “a senior government official,” but not on the record for attribution. So you wanted to hear that as well so that you had that background information. The scramble for a good press officer is that you spend at least eighty percent of your time finding out what’s up and what’s going on, and only twenty percent of it talking to the press.

Q: Basically, this same procedure with some change would be followed if the Secretary were to have an on-the-record press conference?

CARLSON: Yes. Very much so. Exactly the same process. We’d try to focus it a little bit differently because we know that at Secretary of State press conference, the reporters are not going to bother him with mundane questions. They respect his time, and it’s their shot at a senior administration official. So, we could be a little more focused about what the Secretary’s going to be asked about. We would also be very careful to go back and look: What did they ask the Secretary the last time? Are there any unanswered questions still hanging from before? What came up in his last congressional testimony?

You also had to listen closely to Secretary Shultz. Since George Schultz spoke in sentences about three pages long, it took some skill to edit them so that they read as what he meant. His transcripts were very logical, but the stopping points were not clear.

Q: OK. Why don't we stop here? In 1985 you began Norwegian language training, preparatory for an assignment as the Public Affairs Officer at the embassy at Oslo, Norway, and you were there till '89. So we'll pick that up next time.

Q: It's the 27th of March 2006, and we're picking up our conversation after about five weeks or so. When we finished our last, chat, Brian, you were just about to talk about your assignment first to Norwegian language training and then to the Public Affairs Officer in Oslo, Norway.

CARLSON: My assignment to Oslo was paneled in the late spring of 1985. Because I was by that time off-cycle for the normal FSI Norwegian training, the Agency arranged for me to take it from a commercial institute. The institute found a teacher named Hannah Klock, an older woman who happened to be here visiting her granddaughter and family. She got hired to be my Norwegian teacher. By this point I had experienced FSI's language training three times for Spanish, Serbian and Bulgarian, so I worked at it and learned Norwegian well enough to pass the test, get a 3,3 and head off to post by summer.

Q: How many months of Norwegian did you have?

CARLSON: It was more like about three to four months.

Q: That's pretty good, three months!

CARLSON: Norwegian was easier than Serbian and Bulgarian. It falls, I think, about halfway between German and English. On the other hand, people in Oslo later told me that I spoke like somebody from the northwest of Norway, so I guess I picked up some mannerisms or something from her because she was from the town of Ålesund which is up on the northwest coast of Norway.

Q: Let me ask you before we get to the content and substance of your position there, just in terms of the language. I've never been in Norway, never served in Oslo, don't know very much, really, but my sense from knowing many Norwegians is that English is very widely spoken. To what extent was the language useful to you, and how essential was it?

CARLSON: Indeed, you're right. Most Norwegians do speak English. You can find people, even in gas stations and supermarket clerks, who speak English quite well. In a small nation of four million people, they learned long ago that Norwegians need to learn another, or several other languages in order to get along.

Nevertheless, the media in Norway is in Norwegian. The radio, the television and the newspapers are in Norwegian. To be able to do the Public Affairs job, you are certainly

are significantly advantaged if you have the Norwegian language. To understand and appreciate the media without having a translator in between is a plus. It gives you an insight into the character of the people and the way they think. That is one of the most valuable aspects of the language training that we give Foreign Service Officers. It makes FSO's more than parachuted Americans who happened to have arrived in a foreign country overnight. By studying the language, you inevitably have had time to read some books, to appreciate the history, and to become acquainted with the people in a much deeper way than if you did not.

Q: Why don't you talk some about the job, the position? You had been a Public Affairs Officer previously in Bulgaria. I'm sure you did many of the same things, but the environment was obviously different. Why don't you talk maybe about how big a USIS post it was and how you related to the ambassador and so on?

CARLSON: It was a larger post by some measure because we had an Information Officer and a Cultural Affairs Officer and myself, so that was three designated American officers. Most of the time, we had a junior officer trainee, an over-complement position, as it was done in those days. They didn't fill an actual position on the staffing chart, but the junior officer belonged to the training complement in Washington. So, usually, we were four Americans.

There were on the order of 20 FSN's, some drivers and clerks, but also higher level Foreign Service Nationals – locally engaged staff – who were really good at providing advice and counsel. They knew the local environment and knew what had been done two, three, ten years before, and that type of thing.

Norway was a different environment, because going from the Eastern block and all the aspects of the Cold War, now I was in the land of a NATO ally and very much a First World country. Norway is a country which, by most measures, has a higher standard of living than the United States, a country that is rich because of oil. Norway was investing, contrary to what many countries do, the Norwegians were investing their oil money in education, in educating their people. All Norwegians were entitled to free education through in their own country, but with minimal qualifications could go on and get graduate educations in foreign countries including the United States.

In USIS, we had a full range of program activities but it was adjusted for being in a First World country. We did less in terms of producing our own publications and worked even harder on providing information to and influencing the Norwegian media, attempting to make sure that the American viewpoint was heard. In Norway I really learned that the key is to get information into the hands of people who are either sympathetic to or supportive of our point of view, or at least not unalterably opposed to us. We must use those intermediaries as stepping stones to the broader public. You need to make sure that your allies and supporters in the host country have gotten good information because they're the ones doing the real heavy lifting in public affairs work. You can't do it all yourself from the American embassy. In fact, you can't do very much at all by yourself from the embassy.

Q: To what extent was everything that you were trying to do centered in Oslo, or were you doing much in another part of the country?

CARLSON: We tried to be responsive to the rest of the country, but a significant part of the population lives in the Oslo area and, in fact, 90% of the population lives within something like 15 kilometers of the coast. That says something about the geography of the country. It's a very large country in terms of square mileage, but very spread out. Very few people realize that if you pivot Norway around on an axis of Oslo, the top of it will reach below Turkey. Travel distances were significant. There is a social and political compact in Norway that people living even in the remotest villages will have the same political, educational, social and other services as people in the capital city. So, the U.S. embassy tried to be sensitive to that egalitarian sensibility too.

We had an advantage: There was a small post run by the embassy, a State Department operation, in Tromsø, a city in the far north above the Arctic Circle. A single State Department officer was stationed there. The post had been open for a good 12 to 15 years before I arrived. There were often suspicions among the locals, of course. One lone American, a State Department Officer, not a USIS officer, way up there? Many suspected this was some sort of a covert information gathering operation. In fact, it was the embassy's recognition that there was a significant population up there in the far north and recognition of the strategic importance of the northern part of Norway to the United States.

That is the gap – across from Greenland and Iceland – where Soviet submarines used to depart their northern bases and come down into the Atlantic. It's no secret today that we had significant listening apparatus and that Norwegian intelligence was a major contributor to allied security, one of *the* largest and following not far behind the UK and Australia as far as the quantity and quality of contribution.

Norway has a border with Russia—Russia today, then the USSR—and was one of the few NATO members that did share a border with mainland Russia. The NATO alliance, political-military security issues, and the entire business of arms control negotiations were front-line subjects in our dialogue with Norwegians at that time. The government was fully supportive and worked hand in glove with us to maintain public support for these policies, but there was skepticism among the public. There was, among many Norwegians, a willingness to trust, and certainly a desire to avoid offending, the Russians. We had a significant job to do in terms of explaining our positions so that the Norwegian people would understand them.

We believed that public understanding and agreement were crucial if the Norwegian government were to continue to support U.S. and allied positions. Even in an allied country, an American diplomat must pay attention to how the public is reacting to what their own government is doing.

There was a significant opposition to Alliance policies in Norway. There was an organization, a popular movement, called “No to Nuclear Weapons.” They rejected all things nuclear, including nuclear power, and favored declaring Norway’s ports as “nuclear free zones.” (Since Norway has a lot of hydroelectric power, they don’t really need any nuclear power plants.)

One of the things that I remember about my tour in Norway was the effort our embassy made to go out and actually speak to these groups, speak to the opposition. Many small towns around Norway would organize town hall meetings or public fora, and they would invite the embassy to come speak. Often they would have somebody from the “No to Nuclear Weapons” movement present to argue against nuclear weapons...it often boiled down to nuclear weapons were simply evil and should be done away with. We argued the “realpolitik” argument.

Sometimes the local committee would invite a representative from the Soviet embassy and a representative from the American embassy. We had some debate at the embassy about this because Larry Eagleburger, who had been Under Secretary for Political Affairs, had said that we shouldn’t allow moral equivalency between ourselves and the Soviets to be implied. After some debate and discussion within the embassy, we decided that, “You won’t get to make your argument out if you don’t show up.” Woody Allen’s catchphrase about “Ninety percent of success is showing up” was cited. That’s certainly true in public diplomacy.

So we did accept invitation and participate. Many of these sessions outside of Oslo were conducted in Norwegian, so, to come back to your earlier question, I could not possibly have done this without having studied the language. I didn’t do it in my first year, but by the third and fourth year I was able to go out and do these debates. It was always a challenge because our Soviet counterparts were usually area experts; that is, they had been trained in diplomatic school and specialized in a specific area, in this case Scandinavia. Many had served multiple tours of duty in Denmark, Sweden, Iceland, and Norway. All of those languages are somewhat akin, and the Soviets usually had a good language capability. They were able to defend themselves without any question.

Nevertheless, I wouldn’t say the audiences were entirely negative. This was a very intelligent and well educated population. Something that struck me about public diplomacy work in Norway and other “first world” countries, if you will, or Western Europe, is that as an American diplomat you are dealing with extremely intelligent, well-educated people who may have read the same articles that you have. Even though they live in a foreign country, they’re reading *The Atlantic* and *Aviation Week* and even more specialized journals. They’re seeing the same articles in the European and the American press, and they are extremely well informed. Those who think that diplomatic service in Western Europe is a cake walk misjudge the intellectual challenge. I think for the American diplomat who is out there engaging with elites and the public, you will find yourself more intellectually challenged, and more intensively engaged, than in other parts of the world -- simply because of the nature of the issues and the sophistication of the audience, as well as their economically enabled awareness. I’m sure that in the years

since I was Norway that's only gotten more so. With the Internet today, this really opens up even more challenges.

Sorry, I got off the track. We were talking about Tromsø. I did actually, just for my own satisfaction, look closely at the previous officers who had served in Tromsø. I knew a couple of them, such as Charlie Sylvester. A good colleague and friend, Dick Norland, was there during my time, and I satisfied myself these were all State Department officers. They were simply doing a State Department job with a bit of USIA work thrown in. Their duties included representing the United States in that part of the country, meeting local officials, going to political events, getting to know local institutions and leaders – much the same as I was doing as PAO down in the south of the country.

Dick and I arranged to make sure that USIS supplied the usual public diplomacy materials, publications, videotapes, information, and so forth, so that Tromsø would be as well-equipped as Oslo to do the same kind of work. The political officer who was stationed up there routinely contributed to the embassy's political reporting. He would come back to Oslo periodically and perhaps write an analysis of the politics of the north or something else, some other issue. Whaling was a big issue up there, the people were very pro-whaling and, of course, the United States Government was supporting the international boycott of whaling and whalers. That was an additional communication challenge.

Q: Is Dick Norland currently DCM in Kabul?

CARLSON: Yes. He came out to Riga as my DCM, and after he left Riga, he went to Kabul with Ambassador Ronald Neumann.

Q: And Dick's father Tom Norland was several times an ambassador in Africa.

CARLSON: Exactly, and his sister Kit is an FSO currently here at FSI. How's that for a family act?

Q: Who was the ambassador when you were in Norway?

CARLSON: The ambassador during the entire time I was there was Robert D. Stuart, Jr. from Chicago. Bob Stuart remains a friend to this day. He was an executive from the halls of corporate America. Fundamentally, Quaker Oats was a family company before Bob Stuart took it public, and they issued shares. He was primarily responsible for the growth of Quaker Oats into a multi-faceted, international company that also owned Fisher-Price Toys and many other product lines besides oatmeal. Bob Stuart and his wife made excellent representatives of the United States in Norway. They were simply very nice people who really got along well with Norwegians. Bob could disarm almost any audience with his charm.

Ambassador Stuart always had difficulty understanding the leftist tilt in Norwegian public opinion and how they could ever reach the opinions they did. He would shake his

head, more in wonder than in anger. He found it hard to conceive that well-educated people could take the positions that some Norwegians did, but he remained good humored about it. He was very supportive of USIS work.

I wrote lots of speeches for Bob Stuart, and I learned that I shouldn't feel bad if he didn't deliver them exactly as I had written them. He often rearranged them considerably and delivered them in his own voice. He took out of my drafts what he needed, usually the facts, statistics and data. As a corporate leader he had done a lot of public speaking, and he delivered a speech far better than I'd written it anyway. Speechwriting for Stuart was good training for me.

Q: Sounds like a good ambassador to work with and as PAO or probably in any position at the embassy.

CARLSON: Yes, I think everyone who knew Bob Stuart really liked him. We had a reasonably happy embassy in those days. Oslo was in some ways a difficult post for Americans because the city was so incredibly expensive. It usually comes in somewhere around the first or second or third most expensive city in which to live in the world. For those who like entertainment such as going to nightclubs, restaurants, and bars, it was prohibitively expensive. Even in 1985 this was the land of a pizza and a beer costing \$30.

IQ; Norway has a long winter, too.

CARLSON: Some people worried about the deprivation of sunlight, Seasonal affective disorder (SAD) . Of course, you make up for it in the summer time. One of the delights was that it was a great country for sailing. We had a little sailboat and were able to dock it about ten minutes from our house. So, we could walk to the boat after work and still have six hours of daylight.

I met during at that time another FSO who had retired in Norway, a fellow named John Ausland. John had been DCM at the American embassy, and he met and married a Norwegian lady and was resident there. John was a wonderful interlocutor for me, and served as sort of a guide to Norway and Norwegian thinking. He helped me understand a lot about Norwegian political culture, Norwegian sociology, and the Norwegian character. He had simply lived in Norwegian culture a long time and, like any good political officer, he had observed and analyzed Norwegian attitudes and why things happened as they did.

I found that, in subsequent diplomatic assignments and foreign postings, it is a good idea to look for somebody like John. You benefit enormously from somebody who could, with an American's point of view, help you appreciate and understand what's going on. At a minimum, it's invaluable to know some of the local gossip, just so you that don't seat two people next to each other at dinner who in fact hate each other! I found that very useful.

Q: Certainly as we come and go at the embassies, one of the things we always lack is some sort of long-term perspective, sense of continuity.

CARLSON: Exactly, and we diplomats have very little sense of what was going on more than a couple of years ago. Our institutional memory in embassies is amazingly short. I've had people say to me, "Well, I did this and such at the embassy six years ago. Surely you can get it out of the files." Shucks, we can't find things we did barely two years ago!

[laughter]

Q: Let alone remember them!

CARLSON: Right! Exactly. You have to trust your FSN's, and you have to trust some good people in the community that you can count on, and John was certainly one. He and I shared several interests, or hobbies, sailing being one, and computers being another. John introduced me to email and CompuServ, and things like that. John was a published author who had written many articles and even three or four books on Alliance security policies and arms control.

Q: Particularly in the Nordic...

CARLSON: His writing particularly related to the North, explaining the Nordic point of view and how it fit with NATO's and American policy. He argued that we and the Norwegians didn't have to come to blows over differences in our points of view.

Q: Anything else about your assignment to Oslo from '85 and '89?

CARLSON: Let me mention one other thing regarding Ambassador Robert Stuart. Toward the end of my time in Norway, which was also going to be about the end of his tour of four years as ambassador, Stuart said to me that he wanted to do something for Norway and Norwegians to mark his time there as Ambassador. He of course had some financial means. He was thinking in terms of buying a piece of art and giving it to a museum or something like that. He wanted my advice.

I came back to him a few days later suggesting that he consider establishing some sort of an internship or some other sort of working experience in the Washington, D. C. area. It should be directed particularly toward young people interested in political science, economics, government and things of that nature. We soon agreed that it would be ideal to aim such an effort at the rising young Norwegian leaders, those engaged in or likely to be engaged in public policy – the shaping of government decisions and society's directions.

We had to find a mechanism for managing such a fellowship, as both of us would be gone. We asked a gentleman named Elmond Ellingson who was the head of the Norwegian Atlantic Committee (Den Norske Atlanterhavskomiteé—something like our Atlantic Council) to manage the selection process and disburse the funds. Now Chris Prebensen, a former NATO official who had returned to Oslo from Brussels, manages the program. We spent a good deal of time working on the selection criteria. That's the key,

obviously, in a program like this. Those two people who have been in charge of the process have done a good job. Today, the Stuart Fellows number among them a number of high government officials, members of the parliament, political party leaders. It has been very successful in identifying rising leaders—women as well as men—in the Norwegian political and public environment, giving them this rather unique American experience, and then getting them to return to Norway. It really is considered an honor in Norway. Ambassador Stuart has continued to fund it and he gets involved with the fellows during their U.S. stay.

Q: It's under the Fulbright in some ways?

CARLSON: No. Actually, the Fulbright concept was in our mind at the outset, but we did not turn it over to the Fulbright. I frankly doubted that the Fulbright Commission in Oslo, with its requirements to compete everything, to select on the basis of objective standards, and to give grants unrestricted as to field of study—that that was a little too bureaucratic, I guess you might say. We wanted the idea of being able to basically pick people and identify them as a future leader. We never publicly said that in the publicity, but I think it's pretty well understood now. We were definitely looking for future leaders. We were not looking for arts, music or philosophy majors. This was aimed at the rising political class so to speak.

Q: It was an initiative by Ambassador Stuart and you that has been sustained over the years. The current ambassador and the current public affairs officer, are probably not directly involved?

CARLSON: They are kept informed. They know all about it and what is it, and in many cases they have suggested names, either to us or to the person doing the selection in Oslo.

Q: What is the duration of the program? How long is the fellow at the Wilson School?

CARLSON: They are usually at the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs (at Princeton University, Stuart's alma mater) for about three months, it amounts to an academic quarter, and that is followed by five or six months in a work environment. It can be on a senator's staff, in a federal agency, perhaps a private institution in Washington. One wanted to work in some part of the White House.

Q: Who arranged that? Who finds those positions?

CARLSON: Bob Stuart has done most of that himself. He's got quite a network of friends, so he's done a lot of that himself. And, of course, Chris Prebensen has good ties from his days in the Norwegian defense ministry and as a former senior NATO official. It has worked out pretty well. It is small in scale, and perhaps it would be difficult to expand or replicate such a program in other countries without adding more staff and getting more bureaucratic about it. But, I think there is a model there for something that could perhaps be done in other places.

Q: Good. Anything else about Norway? I'm glad you mentioned that program.

CARLSON: No, I think that is enough.

Q: So 1989 came along. The president was George H. W. Bush as the administration of Ronald Reagan came to an end. Where did you go from Oslo?

CARLSON: I had dreams about going back to Eastern Europe and had been paneled into the position of Public Affairs Officer in Poland. That was a larger post, of course, than Norway, and it was an exciting time.

Q: Very interesting period.

CARLSON: Very interesting. Unfortunately, the officer who was there decided at the last minute that he wanted to extend for a fifth year. He was part of a tandem couple and they may have found it convenient. Over the objections of the USIA personnel system, he received an extension. He had once worked for the director of USIA, and I believe he lobbied the director to be extended a year. This suddenly left the...

Q: Was this the director at USIA that you worked for, Charlie Wick? Was he still around there?

CARLSON: I didn't pursue that route. I always thought that was unethical to ask the political appointees to intervene in career officer personnel decisions. Anyway, in May of 1989 I'm suddenly without an assignment and with no place to go. People in Washington called me and asked me to go to London as deputy public affairs officer. I resisted because I didn't want to be a deputy; having been in charge of a USIS post, I didn't want to be number two. Finally, at the point that one of the Agency's most senior officers was calling me up and all but begging me to take the London assignment, I realized that I might burn some bridges if I didn't acquiesce.

Let's face it, agreeing to London wasn't that hard of a thing to do, so I did. That was the one time in my career that I had no preparation for a foreign posting. Of course, you don't need language training. Literally, I worked one day in Norway and got on a plane and worked the next day in London.

Q: It was a direct transfer.

CARLSON: The most direct transfer I ever had! In fact, I suffered some culture shock. You don't realize how much even a few weeks of time to think about your next assignment enables you to acclimate yourself to where you're going to be working and what you're going to be doing. The British think differently than Norwegians, and they also think differently from Americans.

The good part of the London assignment was the fact that the Public Affairs Officer was a senior officer on his last tour, so by and large I got to manage the post. Of course, I

didn't get the big house. I didn't get the car. But, I got to a lot fun work and certainly found satisfaction in many of our programs. Ambassador Henry Catto had just arrived as the new American ambassador to London, and he was an excellent Chief of Mission, especially in the British environment.

The American Ambassador in London is a special position. It's a very public position in terms of the British media and of the British society. I think it's a hard for any American to play the role entirely successfully. There are many different communities in England, segments of the UK society, that have expectations. They each want a piece of the American embassy's attention and a piece of the American ambassador, and few people ever satisfy all of them.

Q: ...all the time.

CARLSON: If you spend too much time with the nobility and the chattering classes, you'll probably not have enough time for the American business community. If you satisfy those, you won't have time enough for the military who can consume a lot of your energies. The U.S. military branches had, at least in those days, a major presence in England and Scotland, so there were a lot of relationships.

London is a visitor-burdened post with over 18,000 U. S. government employees arriving each year on TDY. They all need hotels, an embassy control officer, and meetings set up with British counterparts. Add to that number all the congressmen, senators, and cabinet secretaries, not to mention governors, presidential candidates and all the rest who come to and through London. I often joked that all we do at the embassy in London is "make reservations." There is, unfortunately, some truth to it.

The U.S.-U.K. relationship is such that most Americans in the higher levels of the U. S. government know a lot of people in higher levels of the British government and vice versa. They went to college together: either the Brits came to Harvard or Yale or whatever, or the Americans went to Oxford or Cambridge at some point. We obviously all speak a common language. The time zones are not so far apart. People pick up the phone and call each other routinely. They trade email messages and all the rest. It's even not such a long flight. Washington Dulles to London is not much over four hours, especially with a little tail wind. Of course, London is on the way to everywhere because Heathrow is such a busy airport, so people find reasons to drop in all the time. We had a lot of visitors.

Q: Fortunately in the period that you were there, there was a very efficient visitors' office in the embassy that could do some of these things.

CARLSON: Yes. We had a very efficient central visitors' office and they took care of a lot of logistics. I think that's a model that other embassies should look at. I recently led an inspection—I'm jumping way ahead—of our embassy in Tel Aviv and the consulate general in Jerusalem. There's another pair of posts with an incredible flow of visitors, and

I think the two missions should move together to find some kind of a way to manage the administrative aspects of visits and unburden the political officers

But yes, that visitor unit had it down pat. They could order up motorcades, they could order up West End show tickets, they had a variety of hotel rooms at various prices pre-booked, whatever was needed, and it worked extremely well. We employed extremely competent staff in London, and you begin to get accustomed to that. You count on them for an awful lot.

Q: Another aspect to London and the American embassy is throughout former British Empire, the former British colonies, the British are still very much involved and knowledgeable and engaged. I was ambassador to two former British colonies, Cyprus and Ghana, and in both cases even before I went to the country, I stopped in London to consult.

CARLSON: And with good reason.

Q: In both cases several more times in the course of my time there.

CARLSON: Around the world, American ambassadors find their British counterpart to be one of their key contacts, a good friend, and a true ally.

Q: I certainly did in both of those instances. So there's a lot of media in London for the Public Affairs Officer and Deputy.

CARLSON: We were drowning in media. Think of it: seven distinct, first class daily broadsheet newspapers. It's like having seven *Washington Posts* or *New York Times* to digest every morning. And then, you have all the lesser print media, both mid-market dailies and tabloids, not to mention all the television and radio. The BBC alone can come at you so many different ways. They had so many divisions doing different things: language divisions, domestic services, the World Service, and all the rest – with 26,000 employees at the BBC alone.

So yes, dealing with the media was a major part of our work at USIS London. I had a couple of good information officers there, especially Charla Saylor Hatton and Chip Barclay. Washington counted on us for a summary of the British media every morning – press as well as the broadcast media: the radio and the TV. Producing the so-called media reaction report, which might be a small part of one FSN's job at most posts, this was a major thing for the London USIS post. So many departments and agencies, not only State, but others such as DOD and Commerce, all wanted to know what was in the British press, what aspects of an issue were being highlighted, what positions the various columnists were taking.

The British media scene does not feature a single “newspaper of record.” Unlike in America, there is no single journal that is like our *New York Times*. We begin, perhaps incorrectly, to think that if it's in the *New York Times* then it is news, and if it isn't in the

New York Times it probably doesn't count. With the British media, you really had to read them all, because each paper comes with different perspectives. One will cover a story intensely, and others will not even mention it. You would find news, real hard news, in some places and not see it in another. So you couldn't read just one paper or two papers and think you've covered all the news and all the viewpoints.

Q: There are probably interesting editorial and analytical perspectives?

CARLSON: Right. All across the board.

Q: What about the American media? Were they...

CARLSON: Well, about 160 American correspondents were based in London, and that's another group that the American ambassador better pay enough attention to. If he does not, they'll find reason to criticize him in print. The American reporters were easier for us to deal with in some ways because they didn't need news from the American embassy. They had their own sources in the British government if they wanted something about U.S.-UK relations. What the American reporters mainly wanted was access to some of the many USG visitors who came through London: American senior officials, especially the ones there on something that was in the news. They wanted interviews, information about schedules, who they were seeing, where they were going next and when.

As a USIS post, we of course used those visitors intensely. This was the other side of the coin. Yes, the endless visitors were a burden, but they were also an asset few posts have to draw upon. We had a ceaseless array of America's leading lights in every field – not just government officials, but businessmen, artists, educators, scientists, sports people, and actors. All Americans come to London for everything, so if there was any subject on which we thought we should address it by putting out a genuine American point of view, odds were we could dig around and find somebody coming through town who would agree to an interview, a lecture, dinner with some key people.

What I had not anticipated, and I don't think I've ever seen it anywhere else in the world, is the intense pressure on the American embassy by the British public. We were inundated, every day, with written mail, letters to the embassy about American policies, and telephone calls. Often they concerned things going on in America that had nothing to do with England, or the U.S. government. If someone committed a murder in Idaho, we would get letters about that. When the murderer was found guilty and executed, we got letters and calls about that. When a tornado struck the Midwest, we would get calls asking for victims' names. We got inquiries about missing relatives, visa cases, consular matters, the death sentence, the Second Amendment, and so forth.

People called the American embassy to share their opinion about all kinds of stuff. The telephone call flow was often so heavy, and such a burden on our staff, that I finally suggested set up a special line for "British opinion calls." We told the embassy operators that when they detected someone wanted to tell us what they thought about something, they should connect them to this line. That line went directly to a series of about 18

answering machines that recorded the message. We did review them, because we needed to pay some attention to public opinion. Sometimes official visitors or Washington offices wanted to know how the opinion on some subject was running. The staff learned to review the tapes pretty rapidly, making a tally of yes or no, or pro or against.

We were very nearly overwhelmed at times. The British people in some ways, the English particularly, regard the American embassy as an extension of their own government. They seem to feel they have every right to ask the embassy for services, help, advice, and information. People would call up asking the distance from Chicago to New York, or the population of Santa Fe. I've never been in a foreign country where our embassy was as approachable – and as approached – as it was in London. It literally presented USIS with a staff management issue to be solved.

Q: How did you handle the correspondence, the letters. I don't know if you were getting emails in those days.

CARLSON: We did not get much email in those days. I'm sure they've had to learn to deal with that since. A couple of clerks opened all the mail and sorted it according to what it was and what needed to be done with it. We had some standard responses, especially on major policy issues, but we did not attempt to answer every letter. Decisions had to be made, and we simply could not respond to every incoming piece of mail or phone call.

For a short time, we tried using reply cards acknowledging a communication, but after about a week we gave that up. It was just too burdensome and costly. Postage was one thing but staff time was a costly resource. We simply could not devote staff to this.

Q: One place that I've been that had to some extent a comparable problem and maybe some of the same factors to reply was Tokyo where the Japanese... I was there a long time ago. They had a lot of opinions they want to express, often done in Japanese which caused another problem.

CARLSON: The principal issue that arose during my time in London was, of course, the first Gulf War. It was, much as with the recent war in Iraq, a very contentious issue. There was a lot of public debate, in the United States as well as in England, and around the world about it. Major demonstrations were held on weekends in Hyde Park and in the Grosvenor Square in front of the embassy. Literally tens of thousands and even on a couple of occasions there were over a hundred thousand people demonstrating for and against the war.

The diplomacy and preparations for the Gulf War also stepped up our visitor traffic. In a single twelve month period, we had three Presidential visits, nine Secretary of State working visits, virtually every U.S. cabinet secretary at least once, and most of the sitting senators and congressmen multiple times. At one point in the winter, the Secretary of State's hotel – The Churchill – agreed to simply lock off one entire hotel floor. They left

it set up with desks, chairs and telephones as S/SS wanted it – for four weeks. He was coming back that often.

London is home to a significant Arab community. Some are full time residents there, and others are transient. After Beirut became a battle zone in the 1980's, a lot of people from the Middle East began looking for someplace to go, especially in the summer when the Gulf is so hot. London was an attractive vacation and shopping destination, at least for those who speak English. There's a significant population from the Gulf region that comes to London for a short time in summer and then return in the fall.

The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait happened in early August, on August 2, 1990. Now, Ambassador Catto has a house in Aspen, Colorado and, it happened that the Aspen Institute was giving an award to Margaret Thatcher. She was there to accept the award and, I believe, was scheduled to have breakfast at Catto's home with President George H.W. Bush. A press availability had been scheduled, and this was the first morning after Iraq had invaded Kuwait. I watched this live on British television, and you can go back and look at the tape to verify my account. It is obvious that President Bush had been given talking points – I can almost write them myself – to take a cautious stand, wait for more information, hear from our embassies in the region. To paraphrase: "This is not a good thing, but we're examining it."

Margaret Thatcher, however, in her characteristic way answered a reporter's question by saying along the lines of, "We will not allow this Iraqi invasion of a small, sovereign, and friendly nation to stand. Right, George?" And President Bush, looking slightly surprised, said the only thing he could: "Right!" You saw policy being made right there, and I think it was a little further than the NFC expected us to go. And that was in Henry Catto's back yard!

Q: I don't know if that was the day she said, "Don't go wobbly, George."

CARLSON: Yes. She did say that. Exactly.

Q: Very firm.

CARLSON: Yes, she was, and she was a courageous leader. Thatcher had a knack for public diplomacy because she understood the value of synchronizing your words and your actions. She could be colorful in her speech, and she followed through with actions. I admired her a lot. So that encounter led up to that war. But, that was the very beginning of it. It took a long time, about a year, to debate what to do, build the coalition, and organize the troop buildup.

In USIS London we noted this sizable population of people from across the Middle East. It included many Kuwaitis who were caught out of their country because they'd come to London on vacation, and they couldn't go back. We began identifying the Arabic language media that's based in London, that works out of London, that circulates in London and the Middle East. There is broadcast media that transmits back to the Middle

East, but people who are in London can watch and listen. I think our staff always had known that media was there, but for the first time my staff put together an analysis of who is in London, and who did they side with, who they are affiliated with, where is their audience. We began to reach out to them. We asked USIA Washington to send us the Arabic language Wireless File, figured out how to get it printed, and began to deliver it daily to these people. Washington began to take interest. People came out from the Department and elsewhere to meet with these Arabic-language editors. It was really a start of something entirely new. It had been nothing ever done before in London.

Q: The other thing that happened in the period that you were there was in Europe itself was the fall of the Berlin Wall, changes in Eastern Europe, the decline of the Soviet Union. To what extent were you involved in those matters?

CARLSON: Really, not very much. It was exciting to observe it, to watch it, to read about it in the British press. If you want to know what's going on in the world, London is a great place to be, because you have tremendous access to information there. But it wasn't central, not at least to my part of the relationship of the UK. We and the British largely looked at these developments in a similar fashion. We did have a G-7 Summit in London at Lancaster House in the summer of 1991 and Gorbachev attended as a guest. So we had contact with the developments in Eastern Europe.

My boss at the time Charles E. "Sam" Courtney, the Public Affairs Officer, was visiting the embassy in Bucharest on a private trip at Christmastime. It turned out to be the very time that shooting broke out in the Bucharest streets and Nicolae Ceausescu was driven from office, tried and executed. It was the only East European revolution that turned violent. That was dramatic enough. In terms of our work I don't remember that we in London had much to do about Eastern European events. The fact is, a public affairs officer spends more time on the problems and the differences, not on the things where there is general agreement.

Q: I think the British were maybe a little more cautious than we were on the prospects of German unification. Probably not a big public...

CARLSON: German unification was a subject seen in the diplomatic traffic and in the *de marches* at the Foreign Office, but not so much out in public. First, I don't remember any significant public resistance to reunification in Britain. It just was not an emotional issue for the British citizenry. Secondly, at that time we were trying to buttress and bolster Gorbachev and help him continue his *perestroika* reforms in hopes that we were going toward something better.

Q: Anything more about your time there, '89 to '91. You were Deputy PAO the whole time?

CARLSON: Deputy PAO which largely means in most posts, it means operations manager or chief of staff, basically a person who operates the post. The PAO has the rank

and the public *persona*. He or she does a lot of the public events, although as I said, Sam Courtney was willing to delegate a good deal of that to me.

One other thing I'd mention is that we were at that point also in a period of budget constraints at USIA. As a result of pressure from Washington, we were changing our library, which had been open and accessible to the public, to a computer-based, email and Internet based service to researchers, to journalists, to ministry staff, to politicians, and so forth. It was a time of change. No one likes change, least of all the British, so it was hard on the staff.

Q: Closed down the reading rooms.

CARLSON: Yes, we closed the reading room. We donated the book collection, stopped the periodical subscriptions, and turned ourselves into more of a research and reference center, hopefully aimed at an important, elite audience. It was also the time when, at least in USIA, we led the way in breaking free of the WANG tyranny. USIA had depended solely on WANG Technology's Word Processing System for years. I mentioned earlier my own role in the 1970's in helping develop a database process with this technology which was still being used for our Distribution and Records System (DRS).

In London, in order to shift to this more modern Internet-based reference system and to deal with the outside world via computers, we really had to abandon Wang technology and change to the world of personal computers and Microsoft. I remember actually receiving a telegram from USIA Washington in which the central technology people finally acquiesced in our disposing of our Wang equipment. They gave us permission to buy PC's and to set up a local area network of the PC's. This was nothing radical in the business world in either the U.S. or England, but it was an earthshaking decision in State and in USIA. I wish I had saved that telegram because the text fairly dripped of indignant bitterness, saying more or less, "All right. You are authorized to abandon the WANG and go over to the PCs and local area network technology, but don't expect any help from us."

Q: You're on your own!

CARLSON: Right! Of course, it was only about a year or two later that USIA and State abandoned WANG entirely – something they both probably should have done ten years before.

Q: Let me ask a similar question to what I asked about Oslo. To what extent were you engaged and actively involved outside of London.

CARLSON: Hmmm. First of all, I personally was perhaps less active outside London because, in my role as Deputy PAO, I did not get out much. Once in a while I would snag one of the many invitations to go speak to an audience or do an interview or pick up on some small project. It was more common that audiences would invite from the cultural attaché or the press attaché or the Counselor for Public Affairs (the PAO). For my own

sanity, I did try to take on some assignment or project that was not obviously on someone else's turf. The embassy and USIS had more invitations and opportunities than we could accept..

I tried to meet and get to know some people in British society outside of politicians, journalists, and so forth, but without stepping on the toes of my colleagues who might have considered some of these to be "their" contacts.

The post as a whole was far too London-centric, but we had our hands full in the capital. There was intense public pressure on the embassy that I already mentioned. The British journalism and media establishments were ceaseless. We have a vibrant private sector cultural relationship with England which requires the U. S. embassy's involvement. Often it is a matter of, "You need to show that the U.S. Government cares about the relationship." We had everything from museum loans to university semester abroad programs and joint science and technology research. There was a robust American studies program and what *The Economist* lauded as the best talent scouting operation of any embassy in London (the International Visitor Program).

The USIS post, which had been considerably reduced for budget reasons had—if I remember right—three assistant cultural affairs officers and the cultural attaché (CAO), two assistant information officers and a press attaché (IO), a full time speechwriter, plus the PAO and myself. We were all based in London with no outside USIS officer. We did our best to work with the consulates in Edinburgh and Belfast, but it was not as successful as Tromsø. We tried to work with universities as a satellite resource centers, but I'd say we were far too concentrated in London. London is, however, one of the world's premier centers of politics, government and finance. Whenever anybody in Washington wants to cut the budget, they always suggest cutting London and Paris.

Q: That would happen on the staffing side as well. They were cutting positions and moving them to other areas. But it was a big post.

CARLSON: It was a large post. We had 700 people working in the embassy.

Q: Total.

CARLSON: Yes. Total embassy. Maybe 300 were Americans, mostly direct hires sent from Washington. We had 36 U. S. government agencies in the embassy, everything from the American Battlefield Monuments Commission and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and the Coast Guard.

Q: Some of which, of course, had regional responsibilities.

CARLSON: Exactly. Agencies wanted to put their people in London. First of all, their employees like to be there, but also it is a very convenient place for travel to other cities. Also, once a number of agencies locate their regional offices in one embassy, the other agencies want to be located in that embassy too. We supported various operations in

Africa and elsewhere because airlines traveled in those directions. London was the evacuation point for many State, USAID, and USIA personnel with medical problems in the Middle East, North Africa, and Eastern Europe. It was a busy embassy.

Actually, probably because of the inside nature of the DPAO job, I began letting some colleagues in Washington know that if my services were needed somewhere else, I would be happy to stay less than four years in London. Sure enough, in the summer of my second year, a colleague in Washington called me. He wanted to accept an assignment overseas. He had everything arranged to get himself paneled into this job—it was in Berlin, I think—but his boss insisted that he find an acceptable successor first. I replied, “Well, I’d be interested in that.” It was the Deputy Director for Europe in charge of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.

Q: At the U. S. Information Agency, USIA.

CARLSON: Yes. Counterpart to a DAS position at State. So in the late summer of 1991 I found myself heading back to Washington. Another decision point arose. My wife had just passed the Foreign Service exam. It was a time when government agencies were opening up to women, and there was much greater acceptance in American society of the two wage-earner family. Many women were returning to work after some years of absence. Marcia had taken the test and passed it with high marks. Then she took the oral and passed that. She was offered an appointment about the same time I had been told I would be going back to Washington. The junior officer program at State was no more flexible than it is now, and they said to Marcia, “Well, as a new officer, the first thing we’re going to do is assign you overseas to one of the visa posts.”

We thought about that for a long time, and she eventually decided that what she wanted the most was to know that she could pass the Foreign Service exam and could get an offer! But she didn’t really want to go off to one of those visa line posts, and we didn’t want to be separated. So she passed on the job offer and we both returned to Washington.

Q: You missed the chance to be a tandem!

CARLSON: Exactly. We missed that opportunity.

Q: ...and all the difficulties of that! Visa stamping is the normal practice for a first tour Junior Officer abroad. It hasn’t always been that way.

CARLSON: I, of course, had to find somebody to take my place in London. Technically, that wouldn’t be too difficult though we were late in the annual assignment process. It all came up in late spring—May or June—of 1991. I was lucky to find a colleague, Bill Kiehl, who was part of a tandem couple, he was at grade, and his wife either had been paneled into or was able to bid on and be qualified for a second tour job in the administration section in the embassy in London. There were lots of jobs in the administration section and it was headed by a good officer, Chris Runckle. Bill had been planning to take a year off and study at the London School of Economics or something

like that. I called him up and said, “How would you like to be paid and be in London?” He reluctantly gave up on the year at the university.

Q: He would have gone to the university in the UK?

Yes. Bill was planning to take a year of leave without pay and study. And enjoy London. Anyway, that worked out for both of us.

Q: OK. You came back to Washington. You were Deputy Director of European Affairs,. You were very much involved in all things in 1991 that were going on in the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe?

CARLSON: Yes, I came back intending to be in charge of ten countries – basically the USSR and the former Warsaw Pact countries plus Greece, Turkey, and Cyprus is the way it was divided at the time. Within about six months, my remit had grown to 27 countries because the USSR imploded.

Q: Suddenly it became 15 countries.

CARLSON: Right.

Q: Yugoslavia contributed...

CARLSON: Yugoslavia was spinning out of control. In fact, the summer when I came back, the first thing I confronted was the Yugoslav violence was just getting worse and worse. About the time I arrived in Washington, they were shelling Dubrovnik. Having served there in Yugoslavia and admired the country’s history and architecture...well, to see these places under shell fire was terrible. We hadn’t seen artillery shelling European cities for quite a few years. And the ethnic violence, indiscriminate killing. That was extremely disappointing.

In we had younger officers who were supposed to be heading out to go be our branch public affairs officers in Sarajevo and other cities. They clearly weren’t going to be allowed to go out while gunfire was raging in those places. At the same time or soon thereafter, I noticed developments up in the Baltics. Basically we were on the verge of—or we were presented with an opportunity—three new countries in the Baltics where the United States had not had a diplomatic mission since before World War II.

In early September we took two of the officers – who should have been going to the former Yugoslavia – and reassigned them to Estonia and Latvia. The third was, we found a Lithuanian speaker in the FSO ranks and reassigned him to Vilnius. We were creating the foundation of our new embassy in each country. It was entrepreneurial diplomacy, and I think we showed that government can be nimble. How are you going to pay for things? We don’t have a B&F office, there’s no embassy there, we have only a theoretical official relationship. During the Soviet period FSO’s from St. Petersburg (Leningrad) had

been allowed on occasion to travel to the Baltics, but not always were our travel requests granted. The Soviets refused internal travel permission about two out of three times.

So, we put these officers on airplanes with laptop computers, gave them each a ten or fifteen thousand dollar cash travel advance and said, "Go forth and do good!"

Q: This was before the embassies were established?

CARLSON: Yes. Virtually simultaneous, but we did not specifically coordinate timing with State. Every agency was on their own. I mean, the U.S. Government didn't actually have facilities or buildings, of course, and the State Department was doing virtually the same thing: sending out people to take up residence in hotels. State had very limited communications but they were secure; our people used the internet and were able to receive information and send requests for support to Washington.

Q: PAO was, in effect, under the chargé, I suppose?

CARLSON: Yes, but I'd have to go back and ask exactly how much coordination they did. They were in touch, of course, but everybody had their hands so full that there wasn't a lot of bureaucracy. People were largely self-directed, but they also helped each other. Sandy Kaiser went to Estonia and Jim Kenney moved to Riga and Victor Sidabras went to Vilnius. Every single one of them will probably tell you it was the best time of their lives. You're basically on your own, you're able to make your own decisions, there are not a lot of constraints, and it's exciting because you're breaking new ground all the time.

No one knew what would provoke what reactions. We were cautious about provoking the Soviets. It was certainly evident to the people of the Baltic region that the United States was slow off the mark in recognizing their recovered independence. Most other countries in Europe restored formal diplomatic relations with the Baltic states before us. We delayed – I think – because Secretary Baker worried about Gorbachev's survivability and was trying to not antagonize his political foes. It seemed to me sad after all those years of standing up for "the captive nations," never recognizing the Baltics' forced absorption by the Soviet Union, that we did little to help the Baltics' new governments in their face-off with Moscow. That was a moment when we should have acted and should have gotten more credit, but we were slow off the mark...

Q: It all happened and probably would have happened anyway without our rallying to find it.

CARLSON: Just a small point at which we missed being on the right side of history.

Q: Is it fair to say that much of your responsibility as Deputy Director for European Affairs at USIA, in this period of three years, was the broad area of management and resource allocation and staffing, as opposed to policy?

CARLSON: Oh yes, very much so. My tenure was characterized by two major efforts. One was the whole business of standing up new posts, and considerable time and energy was spent finding people and digging out resources and making arrangements to get new USIS posts in the new embassies going. Remember that the Soviet Union dissolved in December 1991 and new nation states emerged from the USSR. So we needed to get a USIS program out there and get someone out there to manage it and do it well. We were desperate for people with appropriate languages, especially people who had any experience with program management, who knew how to do things.

The other big effort, and it tied in very much with that, was that USIA found itself more and more since 1989 also serving as an USAID contractor. We were funded by State from the SEED program it was called, the 1989 Support for *East European Democracy Act*. It provided a significant amount of money, a hundred million or more, to promote democratic and free market transitions in Eastern Europe. USIA got a share of that money to step up the quantity and quality of our programs like exchanges which weren't so much "exchanges." They were primarily means to bring promising people from Eastern Europe to the United States. It might be for an academic year of learning, but equally it might be for a shorter term experience. We tried to avoid the word "training" because that word set off alarm bells in parts of the old USIA. Some of the staff there adamantly said, "We don't do training." But, the fact was that USIA/USIS had the experience and the existing mechanisms, as well as a network of partner organizations, that could be used to bring people to America and to inculcate values and new ideas. In a number of cases, what we were doing was not too far removed from training programs.

We focused on democracy and free market economics – drafting constitutions and other basic documents, public administration, good governance, building political parties, how to manage fair elections, setting up non-governmental organizations (NGO's), accounting practices, operating a for profit newspaper or radio station, judicial training, property law, and things like that. We were using all of USIA's well-established program tools, but applying them America's new goals in Eastern Europe. There was not much of a template for this kind of thing, because the last time America faced such a challenge was the birth of African nations in the 1960's after decolonization.

After December 1991, with the breakup of the Soviet Union, Congress passed the Freedom Support Act (FSA). The 1992 Freedom Support Act was a roughly comparable act with more money for the countries of the former Soviet Union and all those new embassies in the former "republics" of the USSR. We had a pressing need for people capable of managing those programs in the field. They had to speak Russian and they needed work experience.

To do it, we actually resuscitated an old personnel vehicle. My idea was to go back and look at the Foreign Service Act of 1946 for the category of Foreign Service Reservists. It was a personnel category I had vaguely been aware of in my very first days in USIA. That specific category had been abolished in 1980 but we worked with USIA personnel to find a way to hire people quickly, but for a five year maximum term. They were hired because they had special skills, languages, and experience. We gave them a minimal

amount of administrative and logistics training (USG grants management, for example) and sent them out to get things done.

Q: Talk a little bit more about these people in that Foreign Service Reserve. Were they retired Foreign Service Officers or academics with a functional practicality, or what?

CARLSON: The shorthand I used in explaining our need was: we need somebody who speaks Russian and has run a gas station for six months.” We needed people who show up every day, who can do the administrative paperwork, and who are persuasive with people and who can thrive in a difficult environment. We did not need a Russian linguist who has spent years in the university library but can’t read a train schedule or wrangle a permit out of city hall.

We did not recruit many retired FSOs. First, we did not have so many to draw upon with the right qualifications, and also we had to be somewhat concerned about health. If someone wasn’t in excellent health with a Class I medical clearance, we didn’t dare send them to parts of the world where our embassy barely functioned and we were far from the regional medical officer. Remember: we’re talking about places like Yerevan, Tashkent, and Dushanbe.

Some of our best people were former exhibit guides who had served in the USIA exhibits in the USSR. We found a number of former grantees; that is, people who perhaps had gone on a Fulbright or something like that. But again, we tried to winnow the field, looking especially for people who had some kind of operational experience. We wanted people who had run a small business, or at least had been in some position of responsibility in a small business or an NGO or something. We were leery of academics and analysts because USIA work didn’t require a lot of analysis or writing. The traditional career Foreign Service Officer spends a lot of time in embassies around others, and learns by doing. We didn’t have time for that. We needed people ready to perform and ready to go. We hired them on a two-year contract that could be extended and renewed.

Q: And you wanted to put those people in places. Was a decision taken to try to have a public affairs person in every new embassy.

CARLSON: Yes, early on there was a discussion in Washington about a regional approach, placing a person or two in one embassy to cover several neighboring capitals. I argued that we should continue with the principal of universality. USIA had followed that formula pretty much all of its existence. If the State Department thought that the country was important enough to have an American embassy, then there ought to be a USIS presence. We would try to put BPAO’s in consulates if we could, but at a minimum we would try to be present with a PAO in every country where State had an ambassador. No embassy should be without the tools of public diplomacy – cultural affairs, exchanges, press and information. Ambassadors were our greatest supporters, by the way. They wanted USIS people. They wanted more people, more programs, and more resources.

Q: They wanted them soon.

CARLSON: Yes. Right away!

Q: What about Moscow, the embassy in Moscow, the Public Affairs operation there. Was it large? A lot of history? Russia was still an important country? Was there temptation to draw from that to staff some of these other places, or was the feeling that Russia was still important and needed to continue to have a good, strong program there?

CARLSON: Yes. Russia was still important and, perhaps, the most important. We realized that whatever Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan brought to the game, Russia and Moscow were still the most important in the region. There was, if I remember correctly, there was some downsizing of the Moscow post – for both State and USIA – in order to staff these new posts. Secretary Baker made the decision we would not go to Congress and ask for more money for staffing these new embassies. We say Secretary Baker made that decision and, I don't know, maybe OMB made it. So largely it was done out of our hide, so to speak, and in USIA we took positions out of Western Europe and from other regions. The few we took from Moscow's staffing regional positions that had been devoted and expected to travel to remote parts of the USSR. We were fortunate to already have USIS posts in all the Warsaw Pact countries except for the Baltics and the new nations formed out of Yugoslavia. There had been plans on the books to open a consulate in Kiev, so we had people ready for that one.

Q: For Ukraine.

CARLSON: Yes.

Q: Former Yugoslavia pretty much the same thing?

CARLSON: The former Yugoslavia became sort of a source for us. Because of the fighting and the war and safety concerns, there was much less public affairs work to be done in Yugoslavia. So, we cannibalized some of those positions. As I said, we moved a position from Sarajevo to Estonia. We understood as new embassies opened in Sarajevo, Ljubljana, Zagreb, and Skopje we would have to figure out how to staff them.

Q: So you tried to fill these new positions that had been moved from somewhere else with language qualifications officers and some cases Foreign Reserve people that you could bring up as essentially...

CARLSON: Customarily the Public Affairs was a career FSO, somebody who had been around Eastern Europe some. Many times we were trying to give them a second officer to help, or somebody to staff a branch post. Those might be one of these Foreign Service Reservists. And we agreed that some of those people would have the opportunity, if they wanted to, to join the Foreign Service later on. And, several of them later converted to FSO's.

Q: As career officers.

CARLSON: Right.

Q: What did the agency...

CARLSON: And some also failed out.

Q: ...agency increase junior officer intake in this period or was that.. I know that would take longer to be able to fit in those positions.

CARLSON: I don't remember. I don't know whether we were actually increasing junior officer intake. I do know that I was asked to address one entering class of junior officers and I discovered in the class a Russian-speaking officer who had been assigned to Lagos. As soon as I got out of that meeting, I went right down the hall to the personnel office, to the head of USIA personnel and said, "You can't send anybody who speaks fluent Russian to Lagos, and I don't think she wants to go there anyway!" We got that turned around. That officer has gone on to serve several tours in former Soviet countries.

Q: Probably time to go to Lagos!

CARLSON: Yes, right!

Q: OK. Anything else about this time in Washington? Did you travel a lot?

CARLSON: I did travel to the posts, both because they were new and we wanted to get them established correctly, and because I had a supervisory relationship to the PAOs. In the USIA sense, the regulations stipulated that Public Affairs Officers got an evaluation—an EER as we called it—from their ambassador, but they also got one from the area office in Washington, and both would go into their personnel file for promotion consideration. So first of all, I needed to observe these people in their work environment at least once a year in order to be able to say something reasonable about their performance in the EER. Secondly, because many of these were brand new posts, it seemed responsible to get a first-hand impression of their progress. For the first time in my life, I was actually testifying before Congressional committees and briefing congressional staffers on our operations and possibilities. Our progress on democracy and free markets was a subject of interest. Everybody wanted to know what was going on, and they all had ideas to share with us.

I remember Senator Bill Bradley, former basketball player and Rhodes Scholar, had an idea for bringing – each year – 10,000 Russian and Eurasian youth for a year of high school in the United States, and he put this in the Freedom Support Act. Anyway, one of the things we discovered was that almost every Russian grantee or ex-Soviet country grantee who came to the United States had to have dental care.

Q: Dental care!

CARLSON: So, as soon as they get to university or something, they'd be in the dental chair. We had to build that into the budgets.

I traveled to a lot of interesting places in those years. Some of the travel itself was challenging, sometimes by vehicle between posts where the airlines weren't going. Today I probably would not take some of those flights on some of those airlines that I did then. I was on a plane once with three goats because some peasants came on the plane and had the little baby goats that they were holding in their arms.

[crosstalk]

Q: Smoking or non-smoking?

CARLSON: I think it was economy. It was a government ticket. The entire plane was all smoking section, I guarantee you. I had some interesting experiences too, in Dushanbe for example, going out to the Silk Road. It was interesting.

Q: Maybe it was a row somewhere.

CARLSON: It gave me great faith in FSO's. We sent these people out to the far ends of the earth, with the barest communications and even less in the way of instructions or support. We had the most jury-rigged communications using email, because telegrams weren't working and telephones were awful.

You arrive at a post and amazingly enough, the Americans had it operating. They had it all working, they had hired and trained local staff, they had figured out how to get things done. They were in touch with the local elites, the political players, and power brokers, and they had a finger on the public pulse. Our FSO's just have an enormous amount of resilience and creativity.

Q: You were Deputy Director, European Affairs. Who did you report to?

CARLSON: I reported to the Director for European affairs who was first Victor Olason and later Len Baldyga..

Q: Who covered all of Europe.

CARLSON: Yes. Covered both West and East .

Q: And there was another Deputy Director for West?

CARLSON: Right. Jack Harrod was my counterpart with responsibility for Western Europe. His wife was a Commerce Department officer in the Foreign Commercial Service. By 1994 Joe Duffey had become the director of the agency. He was an academic and had been Assistant Secretary of State for Educational and Cultural Affairs in the

Carter Administration. It was said that Bill Clinton worked on Joe Duffey's unsuccessful 1970 campaign for Congress. Joe wanted to increase the number of women officers in senior, visible positions. Len Baldyga and I thought Anne Sigmund, who had been our PAO in Warsaw and had done a good job there, was the right person.

Q: To take your place.

CARLSON: Yes. To take my place. Potentially I could have stayed a little longer, but we thought this was a pretty good arrangement.

Q: You were there about three years.

CARLSON: Right.

Q: Before we leave that job, let me ask you about Greece, Turkey, and Cyprus.

CARLSON: Oh, yes. My first trip in the job to visit posts and look at what was going on was a trip to Greece, Turkey, and Cyprus. I remember spending a couple of days in Cyprus, including going over to the north side and looking at the Turkish occupied zone. We had a small public affairs operation up there, with locally engaged staff, managed jointly by the embassy and USIS together.

Q: A man named Jaghan.

CARLSON: Right. Exactly. I think Bob Callahan was the PAO in Greece, and I think Helena Finn was the PAO in Ankara. I returned to these countries again later, so I get a little confused sometimes, remembering who was in what place at what time.

Q: Compared to what was going on in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, it was not a...

CARLSON: Well, after I had been in Washington a few months, the Soviet Union broke up and all these new embassies were being created. Jack Harrod and I agreed that a more equitable division would have him take Greece, Turkey, and Cyprus. They were definitely Western in outlook and conditions, compared to some of the ones I was getting on the other end, and that evened out the numbers of posts and officers on whom we had EER writing duties. As Deputy Director, Jack and I really wrote the EER's for all these PAO's. I was routinely confronted with writing 30-something EER's in a season. I had all those PAO's plus the desk officers who worked for me EU in Washington. EER season was truly horrible.

Q: They would be reviewed by the director for Europe?

CARLSON: The Director for Europe was the reviewing officer on each PAO. Right. He got away with just a paragraph. I had to fill pages! In the end, I concluded that the dual EER system worked for USIA. It brought two kinds of discipline. In other words, a good

PAO has to work for and support the ambassador, but as head of an independent agency, he or she also has to pay attention to what Washington's goals. We governed our PAO's with a light hand, but a firm hand. The good ones did not take much of my time.

The PAO will always do what the ambassador asks. That is as it should be and it happens pretty automatically. But when Washington wants something to happen or wants to direct attention to a particular policy issue, in USIA, we had additional resources. We could help a struggling PAO or support one in a crisis situation with more people, money and programs. We could encourage field posts to work on a specific subject or issue by offering additional resources to the posts with the best ideas. That has a quiet incentive effect on people – most of us are motivated to do more, do a better job, and gain recognition – and additional resources enable all of those.

This is where, if we want to talk about the integration of USIA into State, I think the Under Secretary, the Assistant Secretary and the regional bureau do not have the flexibility or resources to reward or to encourage posts. We don't have that kind of transactional relationship today between Washington and the posts, and I think it's part of what's broken about public diplomacy in State. Instead, State will levy requirements, issue instructions, and demand reports.

Q: One of the problems, though, in terms of evaluating personnel, Public Affairs Officers, of course, is if you didn't travel for whatever reason or if there had been other circumstances, sometimes you had a pretty slim basis for any kind of an opinion.

CARLSON: You had to make it a point to visit a post every year. Either the area director or I went to each one. He might visit a post and tell me his impressions, share with me his notes. Moreover, we made it a point to listen to what agency and other visitors to posts said about the operations. In the end, you write an EER based on facts and observations, so it's important to have a pretty good sense of what's going on at most posts, to know what their problems are, how they are solving them.

Q: Direct contact. To what extent would your desk officers help you with drafting aid?

CARLSON: I asked the desk officers for input, mainly evidence of post accomplishments, quotes from host country nationals, and their own observations. Our desk officers usually visited the post at least once every two years. I did not ask the desk officer to draft the EER, but some people probably do that. Instead, I usually had a conversation with the desk officer after I'd written my first draft to see if my own impressions seemed similar to his or hers. Kind of a reality check, you might say.

Q: What problems...

CARLSON: What problems they have dealt with. I didn't think there was anything ever wrong with pointing out that somebody had had a problem and had figured out how to solve it. It's good news.

Q: OK. Anything else about this period, or do you want to go on to your next assignment?

CARLSON: We could go into the next one if it's all right with you.

Q: We can do that. You went to Madrid.

CARLSON: I was assigned to Madrid. This was more an assignment of convenience than anything else. As I say, Joe Duffy wanted to put women officer in high visibility positions, and mine was one of the highest visibility you could get because of the focus on Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. I needed an assignment, PAO Madrid was coming open, and I was at the right grade and had Spanish on my record, so that worked out.

Q: You went there as Public Affairs Officer.

CARLSON: I went there as Public Affairs Officer. Spain was in those days a large USIS operation. Let's see. We had four officers in the cultural section, we had three in the press section, plus the Washington Irving Center director, myself, and an executive officer, as well as a branch post in Barcelona with one American and several FSN's.

Madrid had been a large USIA post ever since the end of the Franco years when the whole U. S. government made a considerable investment in Spain. The policy was to ensure that the Spanish democracy turned in the right direction after the Franco years and to avoid a swing toward communism. The Spanish always harbored a higher degree of skepticism about the United States than most of our NATO allies. It was always interesting me that the most "anti-Americanism" that we ever measure in opinion polls occurs in the two extreme ends of the NATO alliance: Spain and Turkey.

It was hard to explain and we spent quite a bit of time trying to figure out why this sentiment persisted in Spain.. We funded some focus groups. We brought Spaniards in and asked them why they felt as they did? Contrary to our expectations, people did not cite the defeat by the U.S. in the Spanish-American War, the liberation of Cuba, our chummy relationship with Franco, or any other often suggested causes. All the historical events or globalization issues that we thought might be causes, they were not the things that people mentioned.

What they did say were things related to America's social image or perceived characteristics. One example, from one focus group: "The terrible thing about Americans is they have no principles. They just don't stick to anything. They change all the time, like leaves driven by the winds." Then, later in the same focus group, we asked them for something they admire. "Well, I admire Americans' willingness to change and adapt to new things, to innovate." Every single perception or trait seemed to be cited both positively and negatively, often by the very same people. Everything came up with a flip-side. I really wished USIA would do a little bit more investigating why people think what they do. We should use research to probe, and learn, and figure out why they think as

they do, rather than sitting around the embassy conference table speculating. Unfortunately, USIA research rarely went beyond just measuring the public opinion: what percentage like us, what percentage don't.

Q: Would you speculate? Is it possible that the Spaniards have a certain insecurity, a certain feeling about Europe itself and their position in Europe? That they sort of came late to Europe and weren't part of the core?

CARLSON: Well, that would be true of Turkey, too. Both are on the European periphery geographically, and many Europeans joke that Africa begins at the Pyrenees. The history of Spain is the history of whether Islamic North Africa or Christian Europe would dominate.

Q: Could well be.

CARLSON: Yet, Spain is also one of the countries in Europe that has the deepest and most fundamental trans-Atlantic ties. I think that England, the Netherlands, and Spain are the most "trans-Atlantic" countries in Europe. All European countries have some ties to the U. S. through exploration, migration, language, investment, and history, but these three are nations that not only have those ties, but they actually find it important to put out an anchor to westward. They value and nurture their North American ties more than most of the others.

Q: They always had the Western Hemisphere to reach, too, historically, with the language, culture, throughout the...

CARLSON: Exactly. In addition we have a significant Hispanic and Spanish-speaking population in the United States. More today even than when I was in Spain ten years ago, you can do business, get government services, be educated – speaking Spanish – in many parts of the United States. So it was always a puzzle why this undercurrent of skepticism and negativism about America and American policy persisted in Spanish public discourse and politics.

Q: Anyway, you were there from '94 to '98. You were PAO. We've talked about what a PAO does. You did all those things, I'm sure.

CARLSON: All the usual things.

Q: Why don't you talk a little bit about the special considerations about the embassy, the ambassador?

CARLSON: Well, I was warned before I went that I was in for a challenge. The newly arrived ambassador was Richard N. Gardner, who had been U. S. ambassador in Italy during the Carter administration. He had a reputation, at least in USIA, of being particularly difficult to deal with. He was his own PAO, so to speak, having unique ideas about what an ambassador should do and what the press and cultural sections should do.

Q: He was an academic, right? An economist?

CARLSON: Yes, while he was a law professor and a member of the bar, he was really an academic specializing in international finance and economics. He had written a book called *Sterling-Dollar Diplomacy* on the British and American efforts between 1941 and 1947 to rebuild the international financial system.

I believe Gardner actually was given the appointment to Spain because he had been an early and strong supporter of Al Gore. He was a foreign policy advisor to Gore (doubtless there were many), so he was closer to Gore than he was to Bill Clinton. His wife, Danielle, was a very socially active and demanding ambassador's wife. I actually found that, aside from his self-centeredness and some idiosyncrasies, Gardner performed well as an ambassador to Spain. He took the Spaniards seriously, which I think always was their concern. Spaniards always seemed ready to believe that they're not being taken seriously, their vote gets pocketed, and they don't get any respect for being loyal allies and doing their part.

Gardner took the Spaniards seriously on an intellectual level, and he worked very hard on the things that they cared about. He used his personal connections in the American academic world and in the Washington and New York political worlds to the embassy's advantage. A Rhodes Scholar who had Harvard, Yale, Oxford and Columbia in his resume, Gardner invited everybody he knew to come to Spain, and do public events on behalf of the embassy. These guests were many of America's leading academics, authors, political leaders, artists and creative people. He had a heck of a Rolodex and he was not reluctant to use it.

Each year we had a Supreme Court justice come and lecture. He invited people like Woody Allen, Samuel P. Huntington, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Governor Bill Richardson, and others. He would call them up and propose they visit Spain on their next trip to Europe, and he would offer to do a dinner in their honor at the embassy. They were big, gala sit down dinners, often for 60 or 80 people. The *quid pro quo* was the guest would speak and take questions at the end of dinner, or perhaps do some lectures for USIS afterwards. Gardner was good about letting USIS insert people into the guest list. He wanted the most prominent and famous people there, while we inserted key intellectuals, editors, academics, and other embassy contacts.

We in USIS benefited from these sorts of things. Spain was a case where the two countries are in the NATO alliance and largely in those days saw eye-to-eye on most things, but there was a continual need to reassure the Spaniards that we do take them seriously, that we are listening to their point of view. Equally, we needed to explain our own viewpoints to them. Gardner played his part of the role very well, and he used public affairs a lot. In turn, we had many opportunities to engage with our contacts at these events and to include them. On the other hand, the agenda was set, obviously, by the people who accepted Gardner's invitations. We had to fit standard USIS program activities around the COM's schedule.

And let's be clear, Ambassador Gardner believed that embassy public affairs meant "Gardner public affairs." If he was not at the center of an activity or program, it was unimportant. He did not oppose or interfere, he simply had no time for it. My challenge as PAO was to keep the ambassador interested in USIS programs, to show him how our program goals linked to his goals, or to keep our programs out of his sight.

One of Ambassador Gardner's initiatives was setting up a U. S.-Spain Council. He had an enormous capacity for sitting in seminars, conferences, lectures, and discussion groups, and he seemed to believe they were always worthwhile. The fact was however that there was a lack of contact between the two countries at senior levels. One simply didn't see in Spain the same depth and breadth of relationships with the U.S. that you do, for example, between the U. K. and the United States. In the U.S.-U.K. case people have all gone to school together, the leading business people all do deals together, the government people all know each other, all the public policy institutes invite each other, and the personal bonds stretch across the Atlantic. There was far less of that than we would have anticipated for a country as big and important as Spain, with forty million people and the world's eighth largest economy. Many Americans were unaware that Spaniards do a lot of business in both hemispheres. Spaniards were well aware that the Hispanic population in the United States was growing stronger economically, and the use of Spanish language was growing, and so forth. There was a genuine interest in Spain leadership circles to find ways to relate to that and make those ties closer. So, Gardner's idea was to convene a new group of about 75, I guess it was, total—maybe the first time it was only 50—leading Spanish business people as well as government and academic leaders to meet with counterparts from the United States. Gardner used his connections and so forth to get the right political and academic and business people involved.

Q: This was unofficial.

CARLSON: This was something we started at the embassy and got it going with the help of the Spanish government as well. We talked to Spanish government officials and worked out the idea over a period of about a year. We decided not to set up an expensive structure or standing organization, but rather to keep the focus on the meeting itself. One of the things Gardner taught me was how easy it is to raise money for something that's obviously above board and is perceived as prestigious. Business people love to be associated with government when you're doing something that's good and beneficial. So we looked for American companies that had interest in Spain, or a potential interest in Spain.

One of the other things I admired was Gardner's willingness, when he was sure he was in the right, to tell the Office of the Legal Advisor back in Washington to go fly a kite. He did not seek permission to set up this U.S.-Spain Council, and the ethics eagles in Foggy Bottom began to question it, he just proceeded right ahead. He didn't violate any laws, and he never got in any trouble. But it was one of those cases where if you had asked for permission, you never would have gotten it.

Ambassador Gardner raised \$100,000 in five phone calls in order to put on the first U.S.-Spain Council conference. It brought these top Spanish and American people together for about two or three days. The first meeting was held in Spain and we got a couple of wealthy Spaniards each to host a dinner in their homes, I particularly remember one evening in a lovely estate near Toledo with a breathtakingly beautiful home decorated with artifacts and art dating back to the fifteenth century.

Q: And then the next year it was in the United States?

CARLSON: And then we did it in the United States.

Q: In Aspen or something like that?

CARLSON: No... Let's see. We did the second one here, it was hosted at Georgetown University. That was a little harder because we had to fund things taking place in the U.S. which, as you know, is normally not within the embassy's capability. But, it worked out, mainly because Ambassador Gardner was relentless in calling favors. Also around that time the Aznar government came into power, and that was a government that was fundamentally more friendly to the United States than had been the Felipe Gonzalez from the Socialist Party. So, I mean it was a time of sort of a rising tide in U. S.-Spanish relations.

Q: You mentioned that among those who participated in the conferences and the council were government leaders. On the U. S. side, what sort of person came?

CARLSON: On the U. S. side we had Bill Richardson who was then the Secretary of Energy, if I remember right. We had a couple of Senators. We had Lloyd Bentsen, from Treasury, people of that ilk, the Deputy Secretary of State, and so forth. Richardson, for example, at Energy was a natural choice. His name wouldn't indicate it, but he is of Hispanic background.

Q: He speaks Spanish.

CARLSON: Right. We had the president of Coca-Cola, Roberto Goizueta and people like that. It was a good cross selection of people from both countries, and it had some staying power, at least as long as we pushed it along and provided it an organizing impetus from the embassy. Javier Solana, foreign minister and later NATO Secretary General, was a major supporter.

Another Gardner project we worked on was raising funds for scholarships.

Q: The scholarship program. Who was that for?

CARLSON: Ambassador Gardner believed that there were far too many young Spaniards coming up through the ranks without an American experience. He believed that the Fulbright program, good as it is, was not enough. In fact, Gardner argued that the

Fulbright program had become so diluted that it had become one of the least sought after fellowships on American university campuses. I don't believe that was as true for the foreigners who sought a Fulbright grant to come to the U.S., but we did not in those days get a particularly outstanding set of American Fulbright scholars coming abroad. Fulbright grants were so small they simply had to be supplemented by another grant or private funds.

Anyway, we basically designed a scholarship program that was one way. We would take young Spaniards to the United States. We asked the Fulbright Commission to do the selection. We sent the grantees to the United States for a one-year academic grant in the fields such as political science, economics, law, and public administration.

Q: Somewhere there's a program in Norway...

CARLSON: In this case, though, we used the Fulbright Commission, headed by Maria Jesus Pablos. The beauty of the Fulbright Commission in Spain was that it had legal standing and it could receive money and spend money. So, so nobody had to give money to the American ambassador or to the American embassy, or to any government. And the Commission was like an NGO, with tax-free status, and so forth. So, for a number of technical reasons, this worked very well. The Commission ran the competition out of which grantees were selected, and we found a surprisingly willingness on the part of Spaniards to contribute to this. We raised some money from American companies and organizations in Spain, but the bulk of the scholarship funds came from Spanish organizations.

One of the great little things that we discovered was that there is, in Spanish banking law, a requirement that savings and loan banks—which were a special category of banks largely dedicated to personal savings and to home mortgages—must devote 1.7% of their profits to “charitable activities” benefiting the autonomous community. That percentage amounted to a lot of money, because every province and many communities had their own *caja de ahorro*.

This requirement was an enormous pain in the neck for the managers of these savings and loans banks. In the Spanish culture, with its dependence on connections and personal relationships, people were always asking the bank's general manager and other executives to help their kid with a scholarship. So we managed to restructure our scholarship program slightly so we could accommodate the requirement that the *caja's* money stay in and benefit the community. We guaranteed that the funds raised in a given community would be dedicated to scholars from that community at least in total amount, not directly any given person was sponsoring one scholar, but rather the total amounts would work out.

I had some very able staff in Madrid—Tom Leary was particularly a strong manager of this program. He researched these savings institutions, learning who was in charge, who made decisions, what were some of their criteria or concerns, and then we would bring the ambassador together with the right person, usually the head of the bank. Ambassador

Gardner would put his arm on their shoulder and remind them how much this mattered to Spain's future as well as America's future, and he you might say he picked their pocket with the other hand. Gardner was very sincere, so this worked quite successfully. Our program offered a way that the bank manager could say "we have turned our charitable program over to the Fulbright Commission." The bilateral Commission was famed for an above board competitive program based on academic excellence. We raised over \$4,500,000.

Q: So that was a significant augmentation to the Fulbright program in Spain!

CARLSON: Yes. At this time, we in USIS were under pressure from USIA to "do more fundraising" for Fulbright. There was a relentless effort to decrease the amount of U. S. government support to Western European programs, in part because they needed money for Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. More important, I think, was the Washington predilection to decrease West European public diplomacy operations in order to spend the money in other parts of the world. It was a constant refrain in State as well as USIA.

Q: And other parts.

CARLSON: Yea. So we did our part in Spain. And I noticed that Ambassador Gardner remembered to repay the people who helped him with his initiatives. When Vice President Al Gore visited Spain and the ambassador gave a reception at the residence, he remembered—we remembered—to invite the people who, for example, supported the scholarship program or the U.S.-Spain Council. When they came through the receiving line, Gardner would say, "Mr. Vice President, I want you to meet so-and-so. He's been one of the stalwart supporters of our U.S. Spain scholarship program." You could see that people appreciated being remembered and singled out that way. And, of course, Gardner was drawing the Vice President's attention to one of his initiatives!

Q: OK. Anything else about those four years in Spain? You were doing a lot throughout the country or mostly in Madrid?

CARLSON: We were active throughout the country. I've obviously concentrated on Madrid so far. We had a vibrant operation in Barcelona. Spain is increasingly a federal country, with increasing degrees of self-governance in the regions. Foreign policy and foreign affairs were still managed by Madrid. We found ourselves working on a much broader variety of issues in Spain than in some of my previous assignments. The USIS was relevant to or contributed to almost every embassy objective – political, economic, commercial, military, humanitarian, and so forth. After a time I set up a system in which each USIS officer was "connected" to a different section of the embassy. One officer's responsibility, for example, was to work particularly closely with the economic section on European Union issues. By concentrating on a narrow set of issues over a period of time, the USIS officer began to know the issues really well, to know the people and institutions involved in the issue, and to pay attention to the public diplomacy aspects of those subjects.

Q: So in addition to his or her Assistant Cultural Affairs duties, the officer had an additional responsibility to you, also.

CARLSON: So an officer might have a special duty to be the USIS liaison to the economic section or on a specific subject that is a priority for the embassy. For example, we had a lot of work on competition policy in Spain. There was a long tradition of socialist-style, government control over economic life in Spain.

For example, the USG was trying to get an Open Skies agreement with Spain. The goal was to deregulate the airline traffic between Spain and the United States and allow the airlines to open up new routes to new cities with much less bureaucracy and delay than the bilateral aviation agreements allowed. Initially, the embassy spent a lot of time presenting our arguments to the civil aviation regulators in Madrid. Regulators do not believe in deregulation. It just goes against their grain.

We were discussing this issue in a USIS staff meeting when one of our FSN's pointed out that the power in Spain lies with the local governments of the autonomous communities. The presidents of the autonomous communities in Spain are like governors in the United States and they actually swing quite a bit of power, both locally and with the central government. Our FSN memorably called them the "barons" of modern Spain, the power behind the throne. We began to address our arguments to the autonomous communities, pointing out that in a deregulated environment, it would be easy for, say, American Airlines to open a route from Chicago to Barcelona, or from Los Angeles to Seville. Instead of being forced to all land in Madrid, they would have the flexibility to open a route when there are customers (as in summer) and close it when the traffic dries up (in the winter). Existing rules and slow-moving Madrid regulators didn't allow such agility. We did not get the Open Skies agreement signed until after I left, but I think we actually were making some headway with that regional strategy. For me it was not only an example of collaboration across embassy sections, but a lesson in how you need to figure out who your allies might be, and then go find them, and arm them with good arguments that will help your cause.

Q: Work with them. OK, anything else or should we maybe...

CARLSON: I probably just pretty well exhausted it.

Q: Why don't we stop there.

Q: I think we may have missed a little bit there. Let me just say again that this is the 12th of July. This is an interview being picked up after four months with Brian Carlson. We're talking about his time as a Public Affairs Officer in Madrid, 1994-98, and we're particularly talking about the exchange program and how Ambassador Richard Gardner was recognizing the importance of higher education as a professor at Columbia University, a little bit skeptical initially of the Fulbright program, but you were able to persuade him that it still had prestige and honor and value in Spain in terms of U. S.-

Spain relations and were able to raise some money, and that's what you're talking about now. I'm repeating all that because we may have missed some of it.

CARLSON: OK. Can we continue from where we were?

Q: Yes. Continue on.

Q: You mentioned earlier that while Spain had a very much an Atlantic outlook, that there was a certain distance from the United States in the sense of people knowing each other and a coarseness of contact. Obviously, that was partly a question of language. It was also, I suppose, partly that Spain has always been seen in Europe as a little bit of an outsider, a fringe European nation...?

CARLSON: Right. Africa begins at the Pyrenees.

Q: Also, I think there is a residual legacy of the Franco period.

CARLSON: No doubt. I think in parts of Europe there remained stereotype that the impoverished Spain of Franco's time was still around. I found, in fact, during my time that Franco's Spain was long and well buried.

Old ideas die hard. In Spain, in those days, every 20th of November there would be a small gathering at the only statue of Franco in the entire country—certainly in the City of Madrid and maybe in the entire country—and about five or ten old Fascists would put on their ancient uniforms and their medals. At the monument they would salute on Franco's birthday in front of the statue. This of course drew the counter-protestors who came in large numbers, far more than the few Fascists. All this would be a good peg upon which *The Washington Post* and the *New York Times* could write stories about how "Fascism is not quite dead in Spain yet" I thought that was shoddy journalism, but it plays to a stereotype and the journalists got a colorful story published with little effort on their part. Later on I used this as an example with the Latvians who have a lot of history to live down – it takes a long time to overcome some of these images from the past.

Even today Spain is a country that struggles with the role of religion and a colonial past and things like that. But I always thought that the Spaniards were amazing for having gone through a civil war as divisive and truly brutal, and yet at the end of that period, the country moved on. There was no retribution; neither did they have truth and reconciliation commissions. They simply put that difficult past—that civil war—behind them and looked forward. The leadership of Juan Carlos, the king who at that time was a very young king, was important, but there was little desire to settle old scores. There are divisions in society even today: left and right, secular and religious, north and south, and so forth, but they are no worse than divisions here in the United States.

Q: How about the role of regionalism, particularly both Basque and Catalanian, and to what extent did you as Public Affairs Officer pretty much stay in Madrid or did you have a role across the country?

CARLSON: As Country Public Affairs Officer, the official title of the position, I did have a role across the country, and a mandate to manage U.S. public diplomacy in every part of the country. In those days we had a consulate in Barcelona. There was one USIA officer with three FSN's in Barcelona, with responsibility for Catalonia. The Branch Public Affairs Officer was a Catalan-speaker which I always thought made sense -- that we had assigned somebody there who had actually learned the language. Language was very important in all of Spain, not simply for conversation but because language was a significant political issue and an important aspect of cultural identity, particularly in Catalonia and the Basque Country.

The Department closed the consulate in the Basque Country (*País Vasco* in Spanish and *Euskal Herria* in Basque) during my time there. It had been headed by FSO Larry Martinez, a very effective officer who had made himself indispensable in Bilbao. We moved him and his position back to Madrid and attempted to cover the Basque country from the capital, as usual not very successfully. There's always a myth that we can do everything from some central place, but diplomacy requires being on the ground. We learn that lesson over and over. Unfortunately, nobody ever remembers it when budget cut time comes.

As an aside, one of the interesting little innovations that Larry developed came in the way we managed the Running of the Bulls in Pamplona each year in early July. The local government was anxious to have an American official presence there. There were practical reasons too because a lot of young Americans come to Pamplona for the San Fermin Festival in early July. The government of the Basque Country offered us an office in the Pamplona City Hall out of which the consulate could operate. As a starting point they said, "You have the use of this office with telephones and facilities when your consul needs to come here to be here during the Running of the Bulls." This is when many young Americans enjoy the festival made famous by Hemingway. They are either getting drunk or gored or both." The consul had his hands full that week. The Basque government would have happily given us that office on a year-round basis for free, just to keep the American presence.

We USIS officers did travel, and we tried to do programs and take our program activities around the country, but it was hard to get out of the capital. Despite our efforts, it was a largely Madrid-centric operation. We understood the importance of the regions, and the ambassador traveled, and we tried hard to pull people from the other major cities into our programs. One of the most successful programs in terms of representation and local knowledge, were the honorary consuls. The Bureau of Consular Affairs—and the Department in general—is skeptical of honorary consul designations, I suppose because there is a potential for abuse. An honorary consul is an American citizen who lives and works in a given community usually as a business person or an academic. Selected by the embassy, they get designated "honorary consul" and paid a small amount—between \$10,000 and \$20,000 annually. The compensation is primarily to reimburse them for staff costs and office space devoted to USG business. An honorary consul could not issue visas or passports, but they could answer questions, provide forms, take the applications

and forward them directly to the embassy. The honorary consul was also available to help American tourists who lost a passport, ran afoul of the law, or died. The embassy got a lot of value out of them, especially because when the ambassador or embassy officers came to visit, we had someone on the ground who knew the local power structure, who could set up meetings, who knew their way around the local bureaucracy, who actually knew local society and business. I thought it was an enormously valuable program, and we in USIS used those consuls in many ways, including helping us set up meetings and to identify people for exchange programs.

Q: roughly how many Honorary Consuls were there in Spain at the time you were there?

CARLSON: I think on the order of six or seven. We had one in Marbella, we had one in Seville, one in Valencia, if I remember right, somebody was down in the south near Rota. I'm trying to think if there was somebody in San Sebastian.

Q: The islands?

CARLSON: Yes. That's right. There was one out in the Canaries. Anyway, there were several around.

Q: Anything else you want to say about your time in Madrid?

CARLSON: I think that sort of covers it. It was an interesting time to be in Spain with ETA terrorism in full bloom, a major change in government from socialist to center right, and a big, active embassy. I personally learned from Gardner about ways to tie our interests together, to engage the local community, and to make good use of the American business community, something I hadn't much experienced in other countries.

Q: OK. In 1998 your time as Public Affairs Officer in Madrid came to an end. Where did you go from there, and how did that come about?

CARLSON: The agency wanted me to stay on until summer, but I felt like four years was about enough, and for some personal reasons having to do with family, I wanted to get back here to the Washington area, so I insisted on departing on time. That, however, meant that I was coming out of Spain off cycle.

Q: This was early in the year?

CARLSON: I think we got back to DC in early January. So at first I was a bit at loose ends, and about the first thing that came up was the then-Director of Personnel at USIA Jan Brambilla had a desperate need for somebody with experience in presidential visits to go out to Africa and advance President Clinton's trip to Africa. There was a fear that the...a concern, anyway, that some of those embassies had not dealt with many senior level visits, and that a modern presidential visit would be a whole new challenge for them. Both State and USIA found people who had seen these things before, and sent them out to assist ambassadors, DCM's and PAO's. I had done several presidential visits

in Spain and elsewhere. Clinton came to Spain, in July 1997, for seven days. At the time, that was the longest time that a president ever spent in one single country. In a word, it was exhausting. We all know presidential visits are bad enough if they last 24 hours, but when they go on for seven days, it wears you out.

Q: What did he do?

CARLSON: President Clinton went everywhere. He was in Granada where he had been as a student. He was, of course, in Madrid for the two-day, 44-nation Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council, and he was also in Majorca as a personal guest of Spanish King Juan Carlos. Those were of course delightful places, high on everyone's tourism list. But, when you're working on the president's visit, especially as it gets close to the time of the arrival of the president, you don't have time to enjoy it. You get intimately familiar with the back entrances to hotels, pathways through kitchens and so forth, but you don't get a lot of beach time! But President Clinton and the King of Spain got along very well, and the King invited him and Mrs. Clinton to be their personal guests in Majorca for two or three days. That was fairly easy, because the White House limited media access and there was no public program.

Q: Was it vacation or mainly vacation?

CARLSON: It was sort of vacation, really. There weren't too many public events while we were there.

Q: It was not a vacation trip to Africa.

CARLSON: No. The trip to Africa was the first trip by a U.S. president since Jimmy Carter had made a very brief trip to Africa. So this was the first trip in about twenty years and it was a very big deal in Africa. President Clinton was going to be in Kampala and then later in Botswana. There were other stops, but I was asked to work on those two. So I was out there for about six weeks all together, making preparations for the visit.

Indeed, Africa had its challenges because just infrastructure. In Uganda many roads are merely red dirt tracks, and electricity could be a sometime thing. I was particularly looking at the press aspects of the visit, but I worked closely with the people doing the staff side of the visit. We all determined that we must have some backup electricity in Kampala. Eventually the solution was to bring in generator trucks from elsewhere in Africa. And, sure enough, about ten minutes after the President's entourage arrived, at about midnight, when they all got to the hotel, and just as the press were plugging in their computers, the power went down.

It made for an interesting scene, because you could look all around the horizon and see nothing but darkness, except for two bright spots: the press hotel and the staff hotel were all lit up. Everything else was darkness. In the end the visit worked out very well, and the Ugandans could not have been nicer to work with. While I didn't know anything about Africa before this trip, I learned a lot.

Q: You were present for the actual visit itself?

CARLSON: Yes, I was there for the actual visit, and then moved down to Botswana for that one. I went back and forth helping on the preparations and so forth.

Q: In Uganda and Botswana.

CARLSON: In Botswana the Clintons took some “down time” after the official visit and went up to Chobe for a few days’ stay in one of the game parks. I didn’t do that part. They didn’t take any press along and virtually no staff, so we had no reason to go up to the game park. So that took up a bit of the spring of 1998, and when I came back USIA’s head of personnel asked me to take over the agency training operation. So, on a short term basis, I took over managing that office. And then, in the summer, I became the director for Europe of USIA, succeeding C. Miller Crouch in that position.

Q: Was that was all of Europe, or East Europe?

CARLSON: At that point USIA had separated East Europe, Russia and the former USSR states as an area office from the Western Europe area office. An area director’s span of control and management responsibilities simply required two offices. However, my predecessor, Miller Crouch, had begun some early conversations with EUR Assistant Secretary Marc Grossman about public diplomacy in Europe and the need to align USIA’s European operations as closely as possible with State’s priorities.

Q: I was just going to say Marc Grossman at the time was Assistant Secretary of European Affairs.

CARLSON: Yes, he was the Assistant Secretary for European Affairs. Marc and I quickly discovered that we agreed on a lot of things, such as our beliefs that – in Europe especially – U.S. public diplomacy in a given country really must be closely knitted to the political-economic objectives and other goals that State sets in our bilateral relationships. Perhaps in other parts of the world, USIS may justify operating at some distance – both physically as well as intellectually – from the embassy presence, but certainly not in Europe. Our main job there is policy explication and building the foundations for public support of American policy.

So Marc and I began talking about a closer philosophical as well as physical union of USIA and State in Washington. This took quite a bit of discussion, of course, with people at USIA. Importantly, the then-director of USIA, Joe Duffey, was not opposed to this concept and began to see some benefits to the agency. There was a lot of concern at USIA about maintaining “institutional sovereignty” and stuff like that. But we did eventually make a plan to do this.

Assistant Secretary Grossman was able to identify some space in Main State among the EUR bureaus to put our liaison office. We began working on this in the early summer, in

June, and we started using the offices over there in July. So, by the end of that first summer (1998) we had transferred a lot of our European Area Office operations from the USIA building in southwest Washington over to the Department at 22nd and C. It was a gradual process, first bringing over a couple of desk officers and having them operate from State while keeping our principal office at 4th and C Streets SW. Fairly quickly, though, we saw that you can't be in two places at once, and we soon moved our entire Western Europe office to the suite at State. Only a few of us needed to return often to USIA for meetings.

And again, maybe drawing on the Madrid experience, I asked my desk officers to pair off and associate themselves with their counterpart EUR country affairs office. At USIA we had a desk officer for, let's say, three countries. At State, in EUR, you might have two or three officers dedicated to a given country, and an office director was responsible for three or four countries. We asked those USIA desk officers to become intellectually attached to, and frequently physically present in, the respective country affairs office. We wanted them to be perceived as an adjunct member of the team, somebody who would be included routinely in staff meeting and who could be tasked appropriately. I promised to back them up when they made commitments to EUR's office directors and encouraged them to seek ways to contribute and to cause all our resources to all pull in the same direction. Marc treated me as if I were a deputy assistant secretary, including me in his meetings with the DAS's, involving me in personnel and other sensitive discussions, explaining how EUR synchronized with other parts of the Department, and introducing me to key Department officials. We had just gotten into this in a fairly serious way when one night – unbeknownst to anybody and with no warning – Senator Jesse Helms and Secretary Madeline Albright agreed on to merge USIA into the Department.

Q: What year was this?

CARLSON: This would have been 1998. We had no idea this was going to happen. Of course, there had always been talk about merging USIA and State, there was certainly no prospect that it was likely, and Marc and I didn't do what we did with any idea of forcing a change or even anticipating one. We just thought it was a good idea. It was an experiment in how to cause our two agencies to work better and more closely together. We knew there was no prospect of ever bringing all of USIA over to State. There simply wasn't space for the number of USIA employees.

There was concern within USIA that if the "area office," that is, the European area office, was located over at State, would we lose too much in terms of contact with the USIA program elements. They are the ones that do the information work, what is today called International Information Programs (IIP), and the cultural and exchanges offices in Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA). We believed that our officers were smart enough and energetic enough that they would be able to move back and forth between buildings and to communicate effectively by phone and email. Email, of course, had become popular at that point. We saw a lot of advantages. Obviously it was an extra burden and me and all the officers, but it was worth it in terms of getting some benefit.

So, we in European Affairs were actually ahead of the curve when we woke up one morning and found out that the legislation had, indeed, been passed to merge USIA into State. We had laid some of the ground work, and we had done some practical things. Because of my office's needs, a big electronic circuit had been established between USIA and State Department. It was leased from Verizon so that we had the same computer services and speeds on our desks over at State that we had back at USIA. In those days USIA's computer services were considerably ahead of State's. They were certainly more flexible and capable in terms of facilities and possibilities than State's computers which didn't even have access to the Internet. We insisted we had to have that kind of fast, high capacity connectivity on every officer's desktop. That T-1 circuit is still carrying the traffic between southwest Washington and Main State today.

Q: How did it work in terms of your relationship with the Assistant Secretary of European Affairs, Marc Grossman, at the time you arranged this? He already had a small public affairs staff, EUR/P I think it was called, and then there was you. How did that work, at least in the initial transition period?

CARLSON: In the initial period, we left the press operation for EUR untouched. EUR/P was basically devoted to dealing with the American press and providing press guidance to the spokesman each day. We simply left them alone. There was no conflict. We were doing overseas; they were doing domestic. We needed to talk to each other, but we always had done so in any case. In fact, many times that EUR/P job has many times been filled by a USIA officer on loan to State. In fact, I believe we did have at least one USIA officer in the EUR press office at the time.

Assistant Secretary Grossman treated me as a DAS. He insisted from the beginning and established with all of his staff, that I was invited to all the meetings he held with his deputy assistant secretaries, and that included everything: personnel meetings and everything else. Marc Grossman understands the empowering aspects of information. He appreciates that people are more capable when they know what is going on and when they understand the objective. They will find ways to support the goals. He treated us that way, and we tried in every way to reciprocate. We tried to let our State colleagues know what capabilities and assets we had, what we were capable of, what resources we could bring to bear on a problem, and so forth.

I think it was a revelation to many colleagues at State. The amount of money, and the kinds of flexibility that we actually had, if they asked for something, was surprising. That was our attitude: "We can do that!" I think it set actually a pretty good model for the eventual integration of the two organizations. Obviously, a lot more work went into the merger of USIA and State under Evelyn Lieberman as the first Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs.

Q: How much in the initial period? You talked primarily about how things changed in Washington. How did they change in Europe? Abroad? At all? Less?

CARLSON: Much less. Well, I would say our pre-merger initiative made much less difference abroad in any physical sense or in any obvious way, except that it did send a message, a signal, that USIS officers in Europe should coordinate and collaborate closely with their embassy colleagues. We were not like the Peace Corps, you know, running something that was separate and distinct from the embassy. Clearly, they received that kind of a signal. In general that was not a characteristic of USIA posts in Europe anyway. More that in some parts of the world, USIS in Europe tended to be co-located already in embassies. Most of the time the PAO was in the same building with the ambassador or certainly very close. In London, Madrid, Oslo, and Sofia in every case I was a few steps from the ambassador's office.

I don't think in any practical way it changed anything because we still controlled our own budget, made our own personnel assignments, and had the flexibility that comes with an independent agency. When Marc Grossman held a chiefs of mission conference, I was invited participate and talk about what we were doing and about how ambassadors could draw on public diplomacy resources. If COM's were not getting the right answers from their PAO, we tried to make sure they did, and we worked out little problems here and there.

There was a particularly difficult situation in Romania with a political appointee ambassador who created problems. He did a number of things that were judged by the Inspector General and the Department to be wrong. One of them was the misuse of public affairs and public diplomacy resources. When a PAO was in difficulty with an ambassador, it was always useful to learn what the Department thought of the ambassador's performance.

In the State Department, Europe was still all of Europe. In fact, EUR was 54 countries at that point, stretching all the way across Central Asia. There was a logical move to be made on the USIA side. By the point the merger had been ordered by Congress, we realized that having two distinct organizational structures was not practical. When my colleague, Bob McCarthy, who had been the USIA area director for East Europe and the former Soviet Union, was due for reassignment, my office absorbed the East European and former USSR offices. As a result, I had two deputies – one deputy for West and one deputy for East – and we put EU back together again. It was where it had been.

The separation had been decided in the wake of 1989 and 1991 (the fall of the Berlin wall and collapse of the Soviet Union) at a time when there were enormous USG resources pouring into the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe for democracy building and free market economics. USIA had become a grantee, in many ways, taking money from USAID through the Freedom Support Act and SEED (the South East European Democracy Act). USIS posts were carrying out programs that looked more like training and economic assistance than public diplomacy. So, it seemed appropriate at that point to separate the east and west European offices because their jobs were becoming very different. Eastern Europe was doing something very different from what you were doing in Western Europe. Later, when the money dried up, the two came back together.

Q: There was also a period in the State Department where the former Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, while it was still part of the European bureau, was also handled some ways separately in the...

[crosstalk]

CARLSON: There was a time early in the Clinton Administration when the Department created something called S/NIS which was the Secretary's advisor for the Newly Independent States.

Q: Which reported to the Deputy Secretary...

CARLSON: Yes.

Q: ...who was Strobe Talbott.

CARLSON: Yes. There was a time there when I was in Washington in early 1991, and I attended Strobe Talbott's morning meetings and served as liaison to USIA. At the time we were also dealing with Rich Armitage who was in charge of SEED and FSA assistance funds. So, that which gets changed, gets changed back. That's the way it goes in Washington.

Q: OK. Besides the bureaucratic and the organizational aspects and, of course, human resource aspects, do you want to talk some about what were the main issues? Were you working mainly with the press on summits and things like that?

CARLSON: Yes, there were the usual summits and so forth. We were, in that period, dealing with the question of NATO expansion, NATO's 1999 Washington Summit, the bombing of Yugoslavia, and the admission of the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland to the North Atlantic Treaty and so forth.

I think one of the surprises for many State Department officers was to find how much grunt work – logistics and so forth – is involved in public diplomacy work. The fact is that a lot of public diplomacy-type work does involve spending money, moving people, moving stuff into place, ensuring that everything is in place. If you're going to put on a concert or arrange an exchange program, there's a lot of practical detail that gets done, and you do end up managing people and resources to do that.

Q: It's especially the case in Washington where the desk officer used to primarily backstop and try to organize resources so that they can get used in the field to good effect. I often in my experience thought that for kind of a mid-level state department Officer, they often really were involved in some really interesting policy problem issues whereas the USIA kind of part was a little bit more on the management side.

CARLSON: Exactly. Management, administration and so forth.

Q: In the field that often was just the opposite.

CARLSON: A lot of the USIA officers preferred to be in the field. That is where you deal with foreigners, and where you get the satisfaction of making things happen. Many of those things result in real impact, at least at the local level. You also do a lot of that logistical stuff. That's also how you get in touch with foreigners. A public diplomacy officer is down there talking about when their airplane was going to go or what they were going to do when they got there and so forth. For the mid-level officer at the Department in Washington often it is merely grinding out another paragraph for yet another policy paper, often a paragraph that begins to look like the one you wrote last week.

In my experience State Department officers often felt like they had greater influence on policy if they were in Washington than if they were in the field. In the field many complained they were receiving instructions, carrying them out, and sending back "I said, then he said" reports, unsure if anyone read them. By contrast, we had to bludgeon USIA officers to get them to write reports, because few saw the value of sending reports to Washington – except for occasionally tooting your own horn. And, they rarely wanted to serve in Washington.

Q: Some avoid ever coming back to Washington assignments, unless for family or personal reasons that they wanted to be here for awhile.

CARLSON: I had an officer in Latvia who is still overseas, and has never yet served a Washington assignment.

Q: And is probably proud of it!

CARLSON: Oh, she is!

One of the things we worked on that I particularly remember was the 1998-99 war about Kosovo. As the conflict worsened, Washington began to realize there was a real disconnect between our view of developments in Southeast Europe, and that of the Serbs and other people that lived there, other populations in the region. As a result there developed a very big push to get information out to the region. Milosevic was popular, at least among certain people in Serbia. Washington was surprised to find out how popular he was in his own land among some of his own people. Many in DC jumped to the conclusion that there must be a terrible information gap somewhere. So we were instructed to deliver a bigger, better world view to southeastern Europe and especially to the Serbs. This turned into the so-called "Ring Around Serbia" in which the VOA and Radio Free Europe set up a network of radio broadcasting stations around the region. Of course, then the Rambouillet peace talks began and we provided support to that operation. We all remember the difficulties. You get a lesson in crisis management when your country bombs the Chinese embassy in Belgrade. There's nothing I can particularly cite about that time except that that was a fairly intense period that we certainly worked on a lot on those issues.

Q: Mainly with the American press?

CARLSON: No, our effort focused on trying to get truthful information into Serbia and into the region. We wanted to make sure the Serbs and others were getting an accurate, balanced picture of U.S. and NATO policy, why we were taking certain actions, and how we saw the conflict. You remember, perhaps, that was a time when many of the facts were in dispute. Who attacked whom, where were the atrocities against civilians, and developing news stories. That kind of information management. We set up a very intense, round-the-clock information operation to counter disinformation. We needed to find out the facts quickly when the U. S. military (or some part of the NATO military) bombed some area or got into a firefight with some forces. We needed to find the truth about what actually happened, and we needed to get it to the media before the story could get distorted, or put to rest the distortions that did get out. We are doing the same things today in Iraq and so forth. We never seem to learn this lesson: you can't just count on truth, facts, and good news to bubble to the top. It won't necessarily do so, at least not in the short term.

Q: We'll get back to the bureaucraties a little bit. At the time of the actual merger or takeover of the U. S. Information Agency by the State Department, did things change for you or the model that you already had established pretty much continued or...?

CARLSON: In the end, the model that Assistant Secretary Grossman established with my office, became the model structure for most of the other regional bureaus after the merger became official. There was however a lot of discussion of different structures. Some people proposed, "Let's take the USIA area office staff and desk officers and divvy them up and we'll send one to the Greek desk and one to the French desk, and they'll just become extra desk officers," and so forth.

But the counter-argument eventually prevailed. There was utility in keeping a unified public diplomacy core operation to coordinate public diplomacy from the Washington end. You need to draw those Washington-based resources—information, exchange and cultural resources—and make sure they are applied to the posts and the issues where you want them applied.

What was lost in the process, bureaucratically, was control of the money. None of us realized how that slipped away, but the resources that had been once distributed by the Washington area offices of USIA, such as the European area office, were no longer at our disposal.

USIA area offices had two sources of power: money and people. We wrote annual evaluations on the PAO's, and we also could allocate or increase or decrease resources such as program funds, grantee allocations, TDY staff, grant money, and so forth. That made the area director a fairly powerful position. The area office was in a strong position when negotiating budget and program allocations with IIP and ECA, because they respected the area office's priorities and views of field conditions.

One USIA practice that made sense to me was our use of EER's, the annual evaluations written on each PAO—Public Affairs Officer—by the ambassador and by the area director in Washington. Those EER's were used in the assignments process, as well as for promotions. When the assignments panel was looking at somebody to be assigned to a given position, they could look at the last five years of the officer's EER's. That meant that you might have as many as ten EER's from various ambassadors and area directors (if the officer had been a PAO all that time). You could see where the person's strengths were. Is this person good at dealing with political appointees? Is this person really good in a war or conflict situation? Is this person going to put a traumatized staff back on the road to stability? Is this a strong internal manager, or an outside officer whose forte is contact work and languages? As we all know, jobs in embassies change over time, and you need different skills at different times, even in the same position sometimes you want one thing, and then you want something different. In my view the Department's system in which we spend so much energy writing EER's every year, and then use them only for promotions wastes a wonderful resource. The D Committee could look at what people have been doing and how they did it, that would be much more informative.

Q: Having had some experience some years ago in personnel areas, I think evaluation reports are used a little more broadly than just in the promotion process.

CARLSON: But you can't use them for assignments.

Q: ...not in a formal way.

CARLSON: An ambassador who's trying to pick a DCM doesn't get to read the candidate's previous EER's.

Q: Somebody else might read them and give the ambassador advice. On the other hand, you as the area director probably had in some ways more influence – at least with the State Department and with the assistant secretary – than you had before where you were from a separate building five miles away.

CARLSON: Sure. I had a wonderful relationship with Mark Grossman and the rest of his team, all the DAS's. We all got along well, and I thought it was a quite effective arrangement. Who knows to what degree it depended on personality, of course, and I hear there are cases today where such relationships aren't as strong.

I've talked a lot with Beth Jones who is Marc's successor as Assistant Secretary for Europe. Her frustration comes from being unable to shift resources around and get increased emphasis on a particular problem or directed at a single country or a couple of countries. She just couldn't get the kind of responsiveness that she was looking for. Perhaps part of the reason is that after the merger the regional bureaus lost that control over the two big engines of USIA program activity: the information programs and the cultural and educational exchanges programs.

Frankly, in my view, they operate as though they are on another planet down there in southwest Washington. They're not very connected to the Harry Truman Building at all, and what they do isn't very useful to or understood by the Department's people.

Q: Even though they're supposed to be merged and integrated and all part of the same agency, they...

CARLSON: They have neatly managed to sort of create a ghetto there in the old USIA building which...

Q: ...is more separation...

CARLSON: ...more separation than ever before.

Q: Let me ask you a little bit about public diplomacy and public affairs, public affairs doing the U. S. press and guidance to the press spokesman and so on. Gradually did you become responsible for both aspects to the extent that you were in the European bureau even though you didn't have...

CARLSON: Yes. We eventually merged the functions. If I remember correctly, we merged the offices so I became supervisor of the press operation. But in many ways, nothing much changed. Press guidance in the Department is mainly developed for the Washington audience and the American media. It's used worldwide, and we send it out to everyone, and it's the basis for what we say everywhere. But we know that your average embassy spokesman is not going to find it that useful to read a piece of press guidance to a local journalist. A good local journalist is going to ask his or her question with a local angle. The embassy press officer will have to get more information, or will have to adapt Washington's words to make them useful overseas. But you need the Washington guidance nonetheless. You need to know what Washington is saying so that you can properly inform everybody, not just the press.

We did gain from State's focus on the American media and American opinion. PA does a daily summary of the American press, occasional reviews of American public sentiment, summaries of public opinion polls and so forth. USIA never spent much time on that, and I found it useful to know those kinds of things overseas, too. We often are asked, "What do Americans think?" You're able to speak from some authority rather than just guessing. So I think those things are useful.

And we all know that the American press leads the rest of the world's press. If the American media open up a story and begin to focus on some subject, then it will soon become an important subject all around the world. So, you well off to know what is going on in the American press, what's being written.

Q: OK. Anything else you want to say about your period in the European bureau?

CARLSON: No. I'm a little unsure of the exact date, but Marc Grossman was asked to become the Director General of the Foreign Service and move over to that job. Soon after I was asked by the Under Secretary, Evelyn Lieberman, recently installed as the first Under Secretary of Public Affairs and Public Diplomacy, to come up and join her staff. She wanted to apply some of the things we had learned in EUR to helping her pull the USIA parts into the State Department.

Q: She had been the last director of the U.S. Information Agency? Or, was she was the first Under Secretary?

CARLSON: She was the first Under Secretary. She had not been Director of the U. S. Information Agency. Joe Duffey was director to the end, and then...

Q: Joe Duffey had been the last USIA Director.

CARLSON: Then Evelyn came into that job on October 1. She had been at the White House as Deputy Chief of Staff.

Q: And this was at the end, basically, of the Clinton administration.

CARLSON: We were approaching the end of the Clinton administration. This was maybe two years before the end, I guess. October 1, 1999 was the official date of the merger. She had actually come on board at State a little bit earlier before the official date... I moved up to join her office in about May.

Q: Of 2000?

CARLSON: Yes...

Q: So, you didn't join her right away.

CARLSON: Not right away. Evelyn came out of the political environment at the White House, and she was somewhat skeptical at first about Foreign Service officers. She was not sure she wanted any FSO's in her front office staff. But, as time went on, she began to understand public diplomacy and to see that she needed someone connected to this overseas environment. She needed someone to explain the USIA operations overseas, the Foreign Service, how things work. Because of my background with Grossman and EUR, as well as earlier with PA/PRS, I knew the Department pretty well. She thought or was told I could be useful.

So I basically joined an office that had all political appointees except me and one other guy, Rick Ruth. Rick was career Civil Service and had served in USIA. I guess we had two career secretaries. But anyway, Rick and I were career and the rest of the office were political appointees who knew nothing about USIA, not to mention virtually nothing about the State Department either. These were people who had not worked at State before arriving with Under Secretary Lieberman.

Q: Was your main focus on the overseas aspect...

[crosstalk]

Q: ...service?

CARLSON: We divided the responsibilities. Rick Ruth handled Washington matters because he had been doing that as a special assistant to the USIA director for a number of years. He knew where all the bodies were buried in ECA and IIP. I took on the overseas issues, brought the area directors together, and tried to improve her relations with the overseas posts, ambassadors, regional bureaus, and all that sort of thing.

I also handled the Broadcasting Board of Governors for her. It's no secret that she went to one meeting of the BBG and decided she never needed to do that again. The Secretary of State is an *ex officio* member of the Broadcasting Board of Governors, and the Secretary designated the Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy to represent her there. Somebody had to be aware of what was going on at BBG, and deal with the Department's relations with BBG, so it fell to me.

The Under Secretary's office was the conduit for policy guidance to the BBG. For example, if Somalia is becoming a big problem, and we need more shortwave broadcasting into Somalia, then someone has to convey the Department's views to the BBG. That kind of guidance then arrives at the BBG where they figure out how they might increase U.S. international radio in that area.

Q: Do you want to talk a little bit more about this, because the Broadcasting Board of Governors was quite separate, autonomous. The Voice of America had been part of the U. S. Information Agency but was not covered by the merger.

CARLSON: Actually, it was. In 1991, the International Broadcasting Bureau was set up inside USIA as one of four bureaus or four sort of big divisions at USIA. They were the information programs, education and cultural exchange programs, management, and broadcasting. The International Broadcasting Bureau (IBB) consolidated three broadcasting services – the Voice of America, the Television and Film Service, and Radio y Televisión Martí – in one umbrella organization.

Q: Both radio and television.

CARLSON: Broadcasting at that time was both radio and TV: WorldNet TV and VOA radio. Then, legislation in 1994 created a Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG) with oversight authority over all non-military U.S. government international broadcasting. The reorganization act in 1998 (the Foreign Affairs Reform and Restructuring Act of 1998) merged USIA into State but broadcasting was kept outside. That law made the Broadcasting Board of Governors an independent agency, actually The BBG directly operates the Voice of America and the Office of Cuba Broadcasting (Radio Marti and TV

Marti), and is a pass through vehicle for grants to fund Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty, Radio Free Asia, Radio Farda, and Middle East Broadcasting (Radio Sawa and Alhurra television).

So, the Broadcasting Board of Governors is an independent agency. The nine governors are the “director” of that agency, which employs some direct hires at VOA and Radio TV Marti, and non-USG employees at RFE/RL and the other grantees. So at that point in 1999 U.S government civilian international broadcasting does become separate and independent, even though the Secretary of State is a member of the nine-member board. That is, she is one of the nine governors on the Broadcasting Board of Governors.

Q: You were saying before that that while the responsibility is often delegated to the Under Secretary of Public Diplomacy/Public Affairs, but the first one didn't particularly like...

CARLSON: Well, she found the meetings to be tedious.

Q: So did you attend?

CARLSON: I attended the BBG meetings on her behalf. I could not vote and I could not speak for the Secretary of State, but I could carry messages back and forth. I had a good sense of what people in the Department were thinking, so I could provide a reaction on the spot or else take a question back and find out what people wanted. A lot of my liaison work was done outside of the actual meetings. There were always issues and questions to be resolved. We had a big tussle over broadcasting in Thailand because the BBG wanted to broadcast from there to China, and the Thais were reluctant. The BBG station there was a very powerful one, and we really wanted to be able to use it, so BBG was asking State to negotiate with the government of Thailand to allow this. There was a lot of back and forth, as you could imagine.

Q: Was the liaison, the question of guidance, negotiations like you mentioned pretty much as far as the State Department was concerned, coordinated through you, your office, or other ways?

CARLSON: Mostly through our office. BBG did not want Department officers making contact with the language services or editors at all levels. It usually sets off alarm bells if the desk officer at State calls up the service chief of some broadcast language service and says, “We really think you ought to say ‘X’.” That will get everybody very excited about freedom of information and the firewall between government and journalistic objectivity. So everyone preferred that communication between State and the BBG be kept at the upper levels, so that’s why that was done.

We also had a certain amount of discussion about VOA editorials. Dating from the VOA Charter (Public Law 94-350) the Voice of America presents differing points of view on foreign policy and international news. They are described in the intro and in the closing, as “the opinion of the government of the United States,” so they have to be approved by

or cleared with the relevant office in the State Department. There often were arguments over those editorials. I did not negotiate the actual wording of editorials, but I certainly brokered the process, often getting everybody to agree whether a subject needed to be editorialized about or whether we had to get more clearances before it could be put on the air. State had a veto. If you couldn't get State to agree, the VOA couldn't use it, couldn't broadcast it.

But BBG was actually relatively minor in the total scope of my duties. I probably spent ten or fifteen percent of my time BBG business and much more on just trying to work out merger issues. The area offices from USIA that were now part of State needed to sort out various administrative problems, make agreements with administrative offices, dispose of vehicles, integrate property records. The humorous line was, "Who lost china?" because USIA's public affairs officers, as heads of an independent agency in the embassy, traditionally were provided with official china and silverware for representational entertaining. That china and tableware had to be transferred over to the Department, because in State's tradition, only the DCM and the ambassador have official tableware provided to them. Residences, stationery and lots of other things that had to be changed over, but also just program focus. You know, the Under Secretary had priorities was involved in decisions both in Washington and abroad.

And then, there was one major project. Under Secretary Lieberman had proposed to President Clinton and to Secretary Albright the idea of a White House conference on culture and diplomacy. This was meant to, in many ways, remind or educate people on the role that culture has in diplomacy and statecraft. How does it fit? It was interesting, and encouraging, I thought, that the White House agreed to do this. The President very much liked the idea, and his senior staff agreed to do it – but only after the election. They didn't want to talk about "culture" before the election.

Q: The election of 2000.

CARLSON: Yes, the 2000 election. Even though President Clinton was not running, it was a concern for Gore, I guess. In the end it was a great conference with a lot of interesting people, Nobel Prize winners, and so forth. It was international. We brought in people from the outside but as well as three-quarters were Americans. Some of the initial focus was the importance of projecting your culture – not just your talking points – abroad. As planning went on a second theme regarding the importance of recognizing and understanding a foreign culture grew in importance. It feels like a shame that, obviously, any benefits or gains from that conference slipped away after the election. A whole new team came in, and you had no continuity, and it would be hard to say that the conference sustained any impact anywhere.

Q: When was the conference?

CARLSON: November of 2000.

Q: Two thousand.

CARLSON: Two thousand.

Q: So right after the election.

CARLSON: Right. It was held right after Thanksgiving, I think it was November 28. Right after Thanksgiving.

Q: While the election probably was still...

CARLSON: Still bubbling. Yes. Exactly.

Q: But you helped arrange that, and...

CARLSON: Right. Right.

Q: ...it took place at the White House?

CARLSON: It took place at the White House, in the East Room, and it was a whole day conference, televised on C-Span. We had some events before and after as well. So that was a major organizational effort to put on such an event. As you may know, the White House never has any money for anything. We used a lot of State Department resources and others to bring it off, but it was interesting.

Q: All right. I think we're...

CARLSON: And I think the president really liked it, actually.

Q: He participated?

CARLSON: Oh, Yes. President Clinton, opened it up, participated extremely actively, stayed there for the whole thing, and Mrs. Clinton did as well. So did Secretary Albright. They were there throughout the entire conference. Well, the President would get going on these things, and then he couldn't be stopped, so he really enjoyed the discussion. We had Nobel Prize author Wole Soyinka, U.S. poet laureate Rita Dove, actress Meryl Streep, actor John Lithgow, Senator Patrick Leahy, cellist Yo-Yo Ma, the Aga Khan IV, and quite a glittering assembly.

Q: Anything else you want to say at this period as Senior Advisor to the Under Secretary of Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs?

CARLSON: No, except to say that I owe two people I've just talked about quite a debt. I owe Marc Grossman and Evelyn Lieberman for their sponsorship and encouragement in my getting an embassy in Latvia. I think they were obviously major factors in that D Committee selection process. It was, of course, at the end of the Clinton administration, so I could always say that, while I was selected by the State Department in the Clinton

administration, I did not get appointed until President Bush agreed and nominated me. I sort of crossed the partisan divides.

Q: OK. That sounds like a good place to stop, and we'll continue with that important part of your career next time we get together.

CARLSON: OK.

Q: Good.

Q: OK. We're resuming this conversation on the second of August 2006 on a hot day in Washington. Brian, we were just saying at our last conversation a couple of weeks ago, you said that you were selected to be the Department's candidate for U. S. Ambassador to Latvia with the help of Evelyn Lieberman and Marc Grossman. Why don't you take it from there and talk about how that process took place in Washington?

CARLSON: A little bit about the process? As I remember, on a Saturday morning in September, 2000 I got a phone call from Marc Grossman who congratulated me and told me that I had been selected and approved by the Secretary to be the Department's choice for Latvia.

Q: He was then Director General?

CARLSON: He was Director General. Now, this was in 2000, a couple of months before the election. He pointed out, of course, that particularly in an election year, there were no certainties. The current White House would probably not act on this, so it would depend on the next President signing off. He advised that the smartest thing that one could do would be to say absolutely nothing to anyone. If you start talking about things like this, you may awaken the interest of people outside the Department. There may be a campaign contributor who had not even thought about the fact that there could be an ambassadorship to Latvia available. They may think they could be a likely candidate for that. So, best to keep one's mouth shut.

Q: It could even happen within the Department.

CARLSON: Yes. So it would be well to keep one's powder dry and so forth. Actually, my wife and I didn't tell anyone, not even my mother, for many, many months – until the following spring. As it worked out, we had the long delayed election process, and then even once the Bush administration was taking form, the Department had to go to the White House Office of Personnel and find out how this president wanted to handle these things. There's no ground rule. Each President sets up his own routine. There are some established procedures, but they're not established in anything other than custom. I believe Marc Grossman did go over and had a series of conversations with White House Personnel. You can imagine the Department had some higher priority posts than Latvia that they wanted to get filled first, or that they thought needed to be filled early.

Q: The White House probably had its priority list as well.

CARLSON: Yes, but I mean in the sense that the Department may have had some vacant posts. Let's take Moscow or Beijing, for example, where you really want to get a chief of mission in there as soon as possible, whether he be political or career. But yes...

Q: What did you do during that period, September to April?

CARLSON: I continued working in the office of the Under Secretary. In the fall of 2000 we mounted—we covered this earlier—we mounted a White House Conference on Culture and Diplomacy. It was something that Evelyn Lieberman and Madeline Albright wanted to do. Whether or not a Democrat was elected, they believed there was some importance to the fact that USIA had been absorbed into the State Department. There had to also be an intellectual absorption or merger of the two cultures, you might say. It was important to have the President put a stamp or put a mark out there to signify and underline that culture is part of diplomacy, and that diplomacy has to take into account culture: ours, theirs, and the meeting of the two. So that was the essence of the White House conference, and it was a pretty significant event. We worked on preparations for that over a period of six or seven months with full White House support. The only way that White House support was tempered was that the Clinton White House staff indicated that they did not want to have the conference before the election. They did not want the President talking about culture before the election, but rather after it. I guess that is a reality of American politics.

Q: This was held in December?

CARLSON: This was held just after Thanksgiving in November, the twenty-eighth, I think, of 2000, in the East Room of the White House. We had President and Mrs. Clinton, Secretary Albright, an array of other Administration figures, the chairman and people from the National Endowment for the Arts, all the usual suspects you might think of. I remember we had a very precise number of 278 guests. We wanted to fill every chair but yet not leave anybody standing outside. We had a number of Nobel laureates and people like the American Poet Laureate, Oscar and Pulitzer Prize winners and so forth, both American and a few foreigners to enliven the discussion. I thought it was a good conference.

Obviously, of course, with the change in administrations it had less impact than perhaps than had there been a continuity or some sense of continuity in the administrations, but it was worth doing and worth laying down that marker.

Then after the inauguration, Rick Ruth and I were sort of “holding the fort,” so to speak. We managed the Office of the Under Secretary for Public Affairs and Public Diplomacy for a couple of months until Charlotte Beers was nominated by the President, but at the suggestion of Secretary Colin Powell, to become the next Under Secretary for Public Affairs and Public Diplomacy.

Q: Evelyn Lieberman had left fairly soon after the election, after this conference?

CARLSON: After the conference. Actually I think she left on the 20th of January. She stayed and worked up to the last day. There was sort of an understanding that people shouldn't – well, some people did leave early – but there was a sense of duty to keep the government functioning and make a smooth handoff, but without taking decisions that rightfully belong to the next administration.

Q: You say that Charlotte Beers came in after a couple of months into the new administration while you were still there?

CARLSON: Yes. While I was still there. A good part of our spring was spent on briefing her, preparing materials to get her ready for her confirmation hearings, explaining to her what public diplomacy was all about. Charlotte Beers was a Madison Avenue advertising executive with an extremely successful career behind her. She had been a vice-president at the JWT advertising firm, then CEO of Tatham-Laird & Kudner, and finally CEO of Ogilvy & Mather. And she had a knack and was known at least in the advertising world for using television and images to get ideas across. So I think it...

Well, with hindsight, it wasn't a successful appointment. I think at the time there was some logic to what she was trying to do. We had not done anything innovative or interesting – neither at the State Department nor at USIA – with television since Charlie Wick's days at USIA. That was 1985 when he introduced satellite broadcasting to USIA and interviews by satellite. But since then, absolutely nothing had been done with the television medium. I thought, and I think most people would agree, public diplomacy still could do a lot more with video than what we do even today.

So, that particularly was what she was brought in for. She was a little bit of a reluctant hire. I think she had just decided to retire from advertising, and she sort of had her arm twisted to come join the State Department and take on this task. It was a difficult task and a task that, of course, became much more difficult after the September 11 tragedy in New York, here in Washington, and in Pennsylvania as well. It seemed that the ground shifted. Everyone would like to say a paradigm shift. That day just changed all the rules and put a whole new dimension on public diplomacy. That is when we began to realize the implications of 9/11: what it stood for and what it signified. People began to explore the terrorists' motives, and that could be a whole another...probably is...several more books.

Q: Why don't we come back to getting you ready to go to Latvia. Did you continue work in that office?

CARLSON: I stayed in the Under Secretary's office until around June. In late the ambassadorial process began moving forward. In fact, in June the President announced his "intention to nominate" which basically puts it out on the record. At that point I planned to leave the office and begin concentrating on going to Latvia, which I thought might be in August or early September at the latest. Timing depends on congressional hearings and things like that if the Senate approved, and I wanted to take a little bit of

time to try to learn some Latvian language. I knew that as a language it is not related to anything else and is somewhat difficult. I also knew that perhaps, more than many other countries, the national identity is wrapped up in the language in this country. It is important to them. I thought it would be worthwhile to at least learn a little bit to be able to get by. So, I arranged to come over here to FSI and take classes.

Q: You didn't have Russian.

CARLSON: I didn't have Russian. I had Serbian and Bulgarian which are related, and so I can kind of understand some Russian. Not what would get you a good score here at FSI, but I can sort of manage to survive in Russia.

Q: So you did come to FSI to do some Latvian. How much were you able to do?

CARLSON: As it turned out, I got to do considerably more than I had ever planned. We were doing, I think, three hours a day, something like that. It depended on my schedule in the Under Secretary's office and what else I had going on. Extracting myself from the Under Secretary's office also took some time because she did not bring any staff assistants with her and we had to recruit her office staff.

But I had a very good Latvian teacher here at FSI who only had one other student – it was summer – so it was possible to work out a tutoring plan for the prospective ambassador. Diana Brante-Bicevskis was the Latvian instructor, and she also taught my wife some. Unfortunately, Marcia, my wife, was working at the time and couldn't take as much training as I did. FSI did work out some classes for her as well, and she made an effort to learn Latvian which was useful in the end.

Of course, I was here at FSI the morning of September 11. Someone called into our room and said, "Have you seen what's on TV?" I just saw either the actual or an immediate replay of a plane flying into the World Trade Center towers.

From my personal point of view, one of the things that 9/11 put in some doubt was whether, with this attack and the response in Afghanistan and so forth, would Bush Administration still pursue its stated goal of bringing Latvia and the other two Baltic nations into NATO? Would this still be something that we would attempt to accomplish? There was opposition to further expansion of NATO both within the Alliance and here in the United States. The President had indicated that he favored NATO enlargement in a June speech in Warsaw. He made a very clear statement about not allowing the Soviet Union's imposed borders to persist, that NATO must be open to new members, and so forth. Of course, new members must qualify for membership. And Latvia was certainly one of those countries in line and hoping for an invitation to join NATO. Latvia had undertaken considerable reforms, changes to laws and regulations, and so forth to qualify.

But the question was – politically and resource-wise – did the State Department, the Pentagon and the Administration have the energy to do two things at once. It was one of the questions I needed to be prepared for in Senate hearings. In early October, just before

my hearings, Dan Freed and Walter Andrusyszyn who were both in the NSC staff, had gotten the question to the President. He said, “America is a big country. We can do two things at once.”

Q: So that was still an objective for the United States?

CARLSON: Yes. And it was important to know whether this continued as an objective or not, because this was probably *the* primary issue the new ambassador to Latvia would have to deal with. Had the answer been “no,” then that would have been a whole other issue to deal with.

Q: I’m sure we’ll get into this some more, but did we always think before and during this period that all three of the Baltic states should come in together?

CARLSON: No. No. No, there was quite a bit of difference of opinion about that. I remember a NATO summit in Spain, and so that must have been 1997, where we talked about maybe one of the Baltic states, but not all. There was concern about offending Russia and upsetting the balance of power, the balance of history, in that part of the world. So there had been discussion of maybe one, maybe two, but not all three. I’m not sure I could say the Administration view coalesced completely by the time I left Washington for Riga. It did soon thereafter become American policy that, “If all three are qualified, then bring them all in. If the Russians are suffering pain over this, they only have to suffer it once.”

Q: One of the reasons why it was so sensitive was that this was the first time that NATO was coming to the borders of Russia.

CARLSON: Well, NATO actually did border Russia in Norway and in Turkey already, I guess, but nevertheless...

Q: Those were longstanding.

CARLSON: Those were longstanding borders, and this would be the first expansion that actually brought NATO right up against Russian territory. And also, from the Soviet point of view, the three Baltic republics were part of the Soviet Union. We didn’t accept that, of course, but the Soviets did, and generations of Russian school children were taught that. So here was NATO in essence taking over a territory that was once considered part of the Soviet Union.

Q: And all three have some proportion of Russian population.

CARLSON: They do. In fact, Latvia has the largest proportion of Russian ethnics in its population.

Q: How large a percentage?

CARLSON: In Latvia it is about thirty percent. I think in Estonia it's about 20 percent. And in Lithuania it's about 6 percent. It's much less. In Estonia the Russian population is concentrated in a specific area in the east of the country. In Latvia the Russian population is spread throughout the country. While there are both good and bad aspects of the ethnic question, you can say the Russian population is rather well integrated and dispersed in Latvia. The ethnic Latvians and ethnic Russians do exist somewhat as two separate societies, with different newspapers, television, and social groups.

Q: And the Russian population in Latvia has been there a long time.

CARLSON: The Russian population in Latvia consists of at least two separate groups. One group has been there a long time and dates back to the Russian Empire taking over the Baltic region from the Swedes and the Germans back in the 1700's. So that part of the population is indigenous and has been there for a long time.

The other part is the population that was introduced by Stalin's effort to create the "new Soviet man" and his repopulation to create a single Soviet people. These were exchanges of population where he sent people from the Baltics—Latvia and the other countries—to Siberia and brought in Russians to construct and staff the factories, hydroelectric dams, military bases, and power plants of the Soviet industrialization period in the 1940's and 1950's. It was an enormous amount of a sort of population exchange, and you have a lot of Russians today in Latvia who are there as a result of having come in as a work force or retiring as military. Latvia was a major military area for the Soviets with submarine bases and aviation schools there. And, Latvia was considered a delightful place to live. It borders on the Baltic Sea, the winters are mild compared to Moscow or central Russia, and agriculture is productive by Soviet standards. So, by Soviet standards you ate well and lived well, so people stayed and retired there.

Q: Why don't we back up and get back maybe to your hearing you said was in October.

CARLSON: Yes, it was in October. It was delayed, of course, by the events of September 11. Then, as it happened, the very day of my Senate hearing they discovered anthrax in the Senate office buildings. We were very lucky to have gotten that hearing taken care of and out of the way, because had it not got done that day, probably it would have been another month or two because of the anthrax scare and cleaning the office buildings. It did delay the business session by the committee which is needed to get the nomination formally approved so that...

Q: By the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

CARLSON: By the Committee. They have to hold a business session to deal with nominations, so it was actually the end of October before they did approve, the 31st of October.

Q: Were there several others, candidates, nominees that were heard?

CARLSON: Yes. I was there with Joe DeThomas who was going to Estonia and John Ordway to Armenia. Also, we had with us Bonnie McElveen-Hunter who was going Finland. She was the only political appointee of our group of four. She was a good friend of Senator Helms and a number of other senators. A leading businesswoman, she started a company named Pace Communications which, if you look in the small print, produces virtually all the airline magazines. I'll come back to her because she'll reappear in the story later.

But because of her at the hearing we had Senator Jesse Helms and Senator Thad Cochran of Mississippi and several others who showed up for the hearing. Senator Lindsey Graham came in briefly.

Q: Senator Helms chaired your hearing?

CARLSON: Yes, he did. So we had a pretty august group for one of those hearings. As it happened, the only questions—we all read our statements—but the only real questions were asked of John Ordway going to Armenia. That had to do, of course, with the Armenian question that the Turks and Armenians dispute.

Q: As far as you were concerned...

CARLSON: I got no questions on Latvia. No questions at all. So that was sort of a disappointment after all that preparation, but so it goes, and that's all right. But the nominations went forward. Once we had the vote by the Senate that approved everything, then we could plan on actually departing and arrange a swearing-in ceremony.

Q: When did that take place?

CARLSON: It took place on November 20, and Colin Powell presided. He was making it a practice to swear in all ambassadors, which I thought was a good idea. I believe it stemmed from his military philosophy and his sense that ambassadors are his "field commanders." So he did that whenever he could. If he could not preside, then usually Rich Armitage did it.

Q: ...the Deputy Secretary?

CARLSON: Deputy Secretary Armitage did that. We had a nice reception and then planned to take off a week later, right after Thanksgiving. By arriving after Thanksgiving we would not upset the embassy staff's plans for the holiday.

Q: And got there well before Christmas.

CARLSON: And we arrived before Christmas. We arrived I think on November 27 or 28. I stopped in Brussels on the way through to do a day of consultations at NATO and EEU, just to get up to date with our missions at both organizations. So that got us to Latvia.

Q: OK. We can discuss Latvia any way you want, but you might maybe talk first in terms... You mentioned NATO enlargement, membership for Latvia. Do you want to talk some more about that or some other policy issues, or we could talk about more the mission if you want. Either way.

CARLSON: Well, I guess the... Well, maybe they did take on some of the policy issues and so forth. I did, as it happened, but since I had so much time I prepared a little arrival speech in Latvian to deliver and...

Q: What level Latvian did you finish at FSI?

CARLSON: They said I had between a two and a two-plus. It was an informal test, not the full formal one they would normally do for a full time student. They were estimating but it was probably about right. I hadn't had enough time to learn everything properly. Latvian is normally a ten-month language course, but on the other hand I got individual attention, and I had some language learning skills from previous FSI courses. By the time I left Latvia in 2005, I might dare to think I had a three or a three-plus.

Q: So you continued language study at post?

CARLSON: Yes, I kept working on it. I found that I could give speeches in Latvian, of course, with a prepared text. I could answer questions in an informal setting with a newspaper man or something like that. To be on television or radio was too difficult. That is how I judge whether you have a four or four-plus: when you can deal with television questions without stumbling. Then you're at a higher level.

Q: To what extent is English spoken?

CARLSON: Actually, in that regard, Latvia is a lot like Scandinavia. English is widely spoken. In fact, I was surprised at how widely spoken it is. English has completely overtaken German and French as the western foreign language of choice, and it begins to rival Russian as a prevalent foreign language. The embassy staff comprised about 160 FSN's, and every single one of them spoke English, Russian, and Latvian. Some had a couple more languages. Even the guard force was tri-lingual, and I found this was, of course, very useful. It reflects in some ways Latvia's position as a financial, tourism, travel, and transportation nexus: a place where a lot of things go through.

I was amazed at one point to talk to my COM colleague in Estonia who had succeeded Joe DeThomas. His successor, a woman political appointee, said that she couldn't communicate with the embassy's contract guards at the Residence, around the house. They didn't speak English, and she didn't speak Estonian or Russian. I was amazed because, by contrast, I could have a substantive conversation with every one of the Riga employees. They could all speak English.

Q: While we're talking about language, I'd just like to ask: In terms of the American staff of the embassy in Riga, did several of them have language proficiency in Latvian?

CARLSON: Yes.

Q: Was it really useful? You mentioned giving speeches and dealing with the media.

CARLSON: Yes. It's useful. I've often found the primary use of having some language capability is to be able to understand the media, understand what people are saying around you, and understand what's going on when you walk into a room. To have that appreciation, that understanding of the culture and the way people think is invaluable to a diplomat. Even if you are not capable of standing up and giving a speech or free-wheeling without a text in front of a crowd of people, or converse colloquially with people, you nevertheless come away from language study with a sensitivity that you won't get any other way. It's simply that language training amounts to immersion in the culture. Language opens the door. Everybody we dealt with at the Foreign Ministry—in all the ministries—spoke English. If they didn't speak English well, sometimes you'd have a minister or somebody who was not confident of their English. Their English was probably about as good as my Latvian, so then they'd have a translator or somebody at hand to assist.

Q: You'd usually do business conversations in English.

CARLSON: Yes. Normally we did business in English, and by far most politicians and principal contacts spoke English quite fluently, certainly understandably. Most of them spoke it well enough to be interviewed on American and British television.

Q: And how about others on the American staff of the embassy?

CARLSON: On our American staff, we had at least three to four officers who could speak Latvian well, FSO's who had been through the FSI training here and had Latvian. At virtually all times, our public affairs officer and our political and economic officers and one of the consuls would speak Latvian. We also had people on the staff who spoke Russian. Many times, because of the difficulty of the language and the yearlong language training, while a position was designated for Latvian, we would grant a waiver to accept an officer who had Russian. We knew they could be very effective and able to do things. Some agencies intentionally train people destined for Latvia in Russian, but our defense attaché spoke Latvian. In fact, the defense attaché was actually a Latvian-American who had not spoken Latvian as a child before being trained in it, but who really got into it and spoke it well. His children went to Latvian schools, so they really got the language!

Q: Why don't you talk a little bit more about the size of the...

CARLSON: OK. Just to put it into perspective, throughout my time it was a mission of just under 35 American direct hire people. I mention that because we were always conscious of the fact that Riga was designated a SEP post, a Special Embassy Program post. In theory that meant our embassy had to do a little less of the standard Department reports, and in turn it was understood that the embassy would not have as much staff to

do administrative things as bigger embassies. In fact, we thought that we did everything everybody else did and simply got starved for resources. I strongly believe that the SEP program was used by the M Bureau back here in DC as an excuse. It enabled them to deny posts resources instead of dealing with real criteria. Anyway, we had about 35 American employees throughout my time, plus a continual flow of TDY personnel. We employed around 160 locally engaged staff or host country employees. Most were Latvians.

Q: You mentioned the defense attaché. There were other agencies there?

CARLSON: We had the Defense Attaché and one NCO staffer plus a couple or three FSN's. The Commerce Department had an officer with three FSN's. We had an Office of Defense Cooperation which managed training and equipment programs for the Latvians. That was headed by a full colonel. The defense attaché was a lieutenant colonel. While I was wary of potential competition between DAO and ODC over rank issues, we never had any problems. It was well understood that the defense attaché was the primary DOD representative even though he was not as high ranking as the ODC chief.

Q: Those officers were just responsible for Latvian. There was no regional responsibility.

CARLSON: No. These were responsible just for Latvia. Well, the Commerce Department person was also responsible for Commerce Department activities in Estonia and Lithuania. She did have a multi-country responsibility, but she had separate FSN staffs at each post. We had an agricultural office staffed with one FSN. He was supervised out of Stockholm. We saw the attaché from Stockholm so infrequently that we made complaints to the Agriculture Department about it. We had a U.S. Customs and Border Protection office, but they were actually running a training program under the Special East European Democracy Act—SEED.

Congress had stipulated that each year, five million dollars out of the total SEED appropriation would be dedicated to programs in the three Baltic countries. Using that, we had a program that had brought in U. S. Customs and Border Patrol officers to work with the Latvians in establishing and improving their customs and border patrol operations. That funding provided some equipment and a lot of training. The idea was to detect the transfer across Latvia's borders of drugs, laundered money, illegal immigration, WMD, human trafficking, all those sorts of things. Remember, here is a country that had once only had unprotected internal borders with the rest of the Soviet Union. Now Latvia has sovereign national borders and needs to establish the whole border and customs process and bring it up to western standards. As a prospective member of NATO, Latvia is going to become the eastern border of NATO, and NATO would like to hope that you can control your borders. The European Union had the same attitude and had similar programs. We tried to make sure we didn't overlap but rather complemented each other's programs. The European Union did a lot of construction with their money, building border stations, putting up fences, and stuff like that. We mainly trained people and provided small hand held equipment for like detecting contraband inside tires, inside the gas tanks of cars, and things like that.

Q: I have a couple more questions about the management of the post as an institution. Your DCM... Did you have a DCM at a special embassy post or whatever?

CARLSON: Yes. We had moved to a point where Riga had both a DCM and a political section chief. At one point, the SEP program envisioned that those would be in one person. My DCM was Tracey Jacobson, a very able officer who had been there a year when I arrived. She really knew the country, knew the mission and was doing a very good job, so I was delighted to have her stay on. That was one of the early decisions that I had to make. I was surprised to be asked about it, but obviously it is a prerogative of an incoming ambassador to change DCM's. I said, "No, if Jim Holmes (my predecessor) liked what you were doing, and he says he does, then I'd like you to stay and help me as well." So Tracey stayed for the first two years of my tour. Then she was herself selected for an embassy and went off to Turkmenistan as an ambassador.

Q: And you had a voice, then, in selecting the new DCM?

CARLSON: Yes, and then at that point I suggested that I'd really like to have Dick Norland – with whom I'd worked previously in Norway – come as DCM. He agreed, and that got worked out. He came out and did an excellent job, too.

Q: And he's currently DCM in Kabul.

CARLSON: In Kabul. Exactly. Dick comes from a good Foreign Service family. His sister is here at FSI now. They are great people.

I thought I was particularly blessed. Of all the Foreign Service posts I've worked in and been closely associated with, particularly those I've been posted in, I felt this was sort of the happiest and most problem-free place I'd ever been. So often small embassies are afflicted by various interpersonal problems and petty rivalries, or you have someone who is not performing well or whatever. The embassy community is small, and there is not much privacy. By and large I thought we really had an excellent team the entire time I was there. Every time anybody left, we got somebody just as good. It was amazing good fortune.

Q: And you don't feel like you can take the main responsibility for that!

CARLSON: No, morale was good when I got there! If we kept it up, that was good. I've always paid attention to management and leadership, and tried to do a good job at that, but the situation was good when I arrived. I can't claim that I reformed anything by any means.

Q: It certainly helps when you have good people to work with and all.

CARLSON: One of the things that helped, too, was that this was an embassy that had a very clear objective as to what it was that our government wanted us to do. Fortunately,

that rather nicely coincided with what the host government wanted to do. That is, they wanted to get into NATO. They wanted to regain their historic place in the community of western European nations. They wanted to be a good ally to the United States. We wanted Latvia to be a good ally, to be a prospective member of NATO. And so, we didn't have too many disagreements.

Where we had problems was when Latvia's own domestic issues and domestic politics simply led them in a way that was not the way that would get them where we wanted them to be the fastest. And there were problems. The whole issue of dealing with the Russian minority in Latvia was a continual problem throughout the time I was there. No question that there were political forces, people in Latvia who felt, "The Russians stood on our necks with their hobnail boots for 50 years. Now, by golly, we're going to treat them badly in return." Of course, we argued that that is not a way to successful, cohesive social relations in a society. There were people who wanted to make it extremely hard for non-citizen Russians to get citizenship. When the Soviet Union went away or "imploded" on the 31st of December 1991, suddenly there were a lot of people living in Latvia—legally living in Latvia for a long time—who were Soviet citizens. They had never had a claim or wanted a claim on Latvian citizenship, and they suddenly with the restoration of the Latvian state, they became non-citizens. That was the term that was used for them. Their country had gone away, leaving them stateless. Their status in Latvia was that they were non-citizen residents. They got a travel document from Latvia that looked like a passport, but it said, "Non-citizen resident of Latvia." It guaranteed they would be allowed to return, so the problems that many stateless people face, that you think they are going to become refugees, did not come up. These people had a home, a job, equal treatment under the law, but they were also without political rights in Latvia, the right to vote and so forth.

And so this was a continual issue in our discussions with Latvian government officials as to how these people should be treated. And many Latvians realized that the path to a better future for the country was to incorporate all these people, bring their skills and abilities into society and make use of them. But there were also those who wanted vengeance or something like that. So we struggled over those kinds of things.

Q: To what extent did the Russian Federation, your colleague the Russian ambassador, take an interest in all of these issues including NATO membership and the status of the Russian...

CARLSON: They took an intense interest in it all, and I would say generally it was an unhelpful interest. The Russian embassy did everything it could to stimulate and support and identify with the Russian ethnic part of the population and especially the minority that were non-citizens and not participating in the political system. The Russian government took up that cause and used every opportunity in international organizations to declare that the Latvian government was not performing its responsibilities as a member of the Council of Europe, was not adhering to human rights and other standards. They made difficulties everywhere they could. At the same time Russia continually whispered that Latvia's independence was somewhat shaky, that this wouldn't last, and

that someday everything would come around, and the Baltic states would all rejoin Russia or something.

And, let's be clear, there are factions in the Russian *duma* or parliament, Nationalists and similar sorts of revanchist groups, led by people like Dmitry Rogozin and others, who are absolutely nutty on the idea. They're going to take the Baltics back. They're going to re-occupy that land and turn the clock back. Clearly there were a good number of people in the foreign ministry and the armed forces in Russia that shared those views.

Q: Foreign ministries in Russia or in Latvia?

CARLSON: In Russia, people who thought that they could reverse the independence of the Baltic states and reincorporate them into what today would be the Russian Federation, instead of the Soviet Union.

Q: Was there any feeling in that direction on the part of anybody in Latvia other than the Russian, maybe some in the Russian...

CARLSON: Some in the Russian community would have welcomed that, I think. Particularly some of the older folks, the pensioners, the unemployed, and some people we called the "National Bolsheviks." They were skin-head motorcycle rockers who could always be counted on to stimulate a demonstration over the slightest offence or turn a political demonstration into a violent one.

But there was no widespread sentiment in favor of rejoining Russia or the Eurasian Economic Community. If you put that to a vote, I could guarantee that 98% of the Latvia's Russians would vote against any formal political association with Russia today. What you did have was a number of Latvian politicians who argued that we should never ignore that segment of Russian politics and that kind of Russian rhetoric, particularly if you suffered what Latvia suffered in the last half of the 20th Century. "You don't ignore people who talk like that. You have to take it seriously," Latvians said. And they would compare it to why the Jews are so sensitive to any symptoms of anti-Semitism. They argue you have to be conscious of what happened before and make it clear that you don't want to ever let it get anywhere close to happening again. So there was sensitivity on that issue.

We Americans were fortunate in Latvia's leadership throughout the time I was there. The president of Latvia, Vaira Vike-Freiberga, was a Canadian-Latvian. She had left Latvia as a child, at the age of seven, as the Russians were marching back into Riga in 1944, at the end of World War II. Her family fled to first Sweden and Germany, then to Morocco and to France, and finally to Canada. She had grown up in Canada, and had become a distinguished professor of psychology at University of Montreal in Canada. Much of her studies have been in linguistic psychology and so forth.

In 1998 she had retired from the university and had returned to Latvia. Vaira Viķe-Freiberga had a lifelong interest in Latvian folksongs and folklore and so forth, and had

returned to Latvia to become the Chairman of the Latvian Institute, a British Council sort of organization designed to promote and distribute Latvian culture around the world. And she was in Riga in that capacity when the Parliament deadlocked while trying to select a president. In Latvia the president is not elected directly, but rather is elected by the Parliament. And they selected her as a compromise candidate, a dark horse, out of nowhere. She once confided to me, "I think they thought they could get some dumb broad that they could push around." Well, Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga was more like Margaret Thatcher than any other woman I've ever met. You will not push her around much!

Q: Had she been president for some time when you got there?

CARLSON: She had been president for a couple of years, when I got there. She was a genuine force for good on a number of levels.

She was an articulate leader of the country. She spoke, of course, native-level Latvian. She spoke perfect English, perfect French, and she could converse comfortably in German and Spanish. Like many academics, she's got several languages. And she was learning Russian while I was there. In English, at any rate, she certainly has the capacity to turn a phrase in a colorful way. CNN and all the other television networks really love that. She projects well on television, and is a dynamic public speaker. I heard her many times give 30-, 40-minute public speeches without a note. Yet they come out as though they were written in perfect paragraphs. It's an extraordinary ability that makes her an articulate representative of the nation in international fora. She admits that she works at that, but I believe some of it is innate.

She also had, of course, because of her upbringing in Canada and her education...she understood the democratic principles and the moral values that we have in mind when we talk about a society that incorporates all of its members, integrates them into the political process, that gives them equal rights, and is careful not to discriminate.

Q: OK. You're talking about the president's strengths and personalities. I guess an immediate question is you had a good relationship with her.

CARLSON: We had an excellent relationship. It started from the very first meeting that I had with her at the Castle, as they call it. It actually is the castle first built in the 1300's by the Livonian Order of the Teutonic knights on the Daugava River's edge. It is still today the headquarters of the president of the country. We had a good audience that first day and we continued to meet frequently thereafter. I thought we developed a firm and fast friendship. Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga is an excellent leader, and I think when she finishes her second term as president, which will be next year (2007), she is a good candidate for some sort of international position – because of just her personality, character, and experience.

Q: She served two terms as president?

CARLSON: Yes. That's all she can do in Latvia. She's among those people being talked about as the successor for Kofi Annan (as U.N. Secretary General). I don't know if that's realistic, because she could probably count on a Russian veto, but maybe not. Who knows?

Q: There used to be a lot of talk of an Asian, too.

CARLSON: Yes. Exactly. The only trouble is, the Asians have not come up with good candidates, and she is a good candidate. Everybody agrees on that. Some say it is time for a European in that job again, but anyway...

Q: Were there American Latvians active in Latvia when you were there?

CARLSON: That's a good question. Yes.

Q: You talked about Canadian Latvians.

CARLSON: Right. And there were many American Latvians around. In my experience, working with Eastern Europe after the fall of the Berlin Wall, we saw a lot of ethnic Americans who returned to the region, bent on helping, wanting to show how things are done in the United States, interested in helping these countries catch up and recover quickly, to make up for lost history, lost time. In many countries where I saw this phenomenon repeat itself – in the Czech Republic, Poland and so forth – the reception these ethnic Americans got was sometimes mixed. Perhaps they came with “know it all” attitudes. You have to respect the fact that the people who lived there through the Communist period, they paid their dues, and they feel like they have some sense of how things work. They are not just untutored pupils waiting to be told how to tie their shoelaces.

So, sometimes the attitude of the Americans—the ethnic Americans—who came back grated a bit. And some of the Americans discovered that, “Hey, this may be the homeland of my father, but it's not my land, and I'm going to go back to where I grew up and pursue a career in the environment I'm used to.” Others were willing to put up with some of the hardships. Obviously, hardships were relative: in the early days the plumbing, electricity, and everything else didn't work nearly as well as it did in America.

By the time I got to Latvia in 2001, much of this had been sorted out. The Latvian-Americans who remained by then were people who had decided to commit themselves – with a good attitude – to the country. For the most part, they were valued and respected by the Latvians, the ones that had been there all along. They were good resources on how to get things done, many times with good ideas, and with resources to invest. I have to assume the ones who were difficult to work with had already left. There was a very strong Latvian-American community that played a positive role in business, in politics, and in government at various levels. There were Latvian-Americans as ministers of the government, as elected members of the parliament and, of course, in the business community. Many had invested and started up businesses. They had credibility. They

could attract money from New York, from elsewhere, into investments with a persuasiveness that perhaps a native Latvian could not do, at least in the early days. That was positive.

The other half of that is that the Latvian-American community in America was very, very supportive. Let's face it. This is a small country of just two and a half million people. It's not that big, and yet it got more than its share of mention in the United States Congress and elsewhere in the federal government. That was because of: a.) Latvia's history, and b.) because that Latvian-American community, part of the greater ethnic American population, has always played a strong role. The Polish-Americans and others worked hard to help the Latvian-Americans and the Estonian-Americans and the Lithuanian-Americans promote and advocate for NATO membership. So, that was a strong resource back here for the embassy to depend on.

The Baltic-American Caucus in the U.S. Congress comprises a surprisingly large number of representatives and senators. It must be something on the order of forty representatives and at least a good two dozen senators who are on it. We had steady interest from the Congress throughout the time I was in Latvia because of the pending NATO membership, but also because it is that part of the world. We saw lots of Senator John McCain, Senator Lindsey Graham, and Senator Susan Collins and Senator Trent Lott. We received visits by many from the U.S. Senate, but also the House of Representatives congressional delegations came frequently. Representative Roy Blunt and all these people that you see in national politics. We certainly got our fair share.

However, we didn't get many administration officials. The Deputy Secretary of State, Rich Armitage, came while I was there, but we never had the Secretary, and during my time we didn't have the President in Riga. We did a lot of work to prepare and get a presidential visit organized, but it actually took place a couple of months after I left. But we had a lot of congressmen. We used those congressmen well with the Latvians. They had recognizable names, they had visibility, and the press and everyone else recognized them for who they were and so forth. I have found that, most of the time, the traveling congressmen and senators are quite willing to support U. S. foreign policy. After all, it is U. S. policy, not just administration policy. At least, we didn't have any differences, Republican versus Democrat, in Latvia's case. So congressmen could help us the same way an Assistant Secretary of State or DAS visit might do.

Q: I want to get on to NATO membership, but before we do that, let me ask a question about the size of the diplomatic community? Was it large Russian embassy? What other embassies were there?

CARLSON: There was a very large Russian embassy and a very large Chinese embassy. The Chinese were there in a major way, primarily focused on trade because of Latvia's position as a shipping port and transit center. Trade was rapidly increasing. The Chinese ambassador told me that the previous year Latvia's trade with China had increased 70% in one year. I found that striking.

We had the normal array of West European embassies and, I think, a total of about 20-25 foreign embassies resident in the country, a good number more represented from Stockholm. The Japanese were there with a couple of lower level people and the actual ambassador was in Stockholm. But, they had an office in Riga that focused on economics. Our closest allies were the ones that counted. They were there and active, and we talked a lot with the British, the Germans, Italians, Israelis, Swedes, Finns, and the French too, despite the fact that the Bush Administration was having difficulties with the French during much of this time. I never had any problem working with the French ambassador, Michel Foucher, a very perceptive diplomat. Of course, all the newly independent East Europeans were there: the Czechs, Poles, Slovaks, and so forth.

Q: Any Canadians?

CARLSON: Canadians were there, yes. The Canadian ambassador, Robert Andriago and I had a good relationship. Actually I had a pretty good personal rapport with the first Russian ambassador Igor Studennikov who was there during most of my time. We had a friendly relationship on the surface and could talk quite freely. My DCM said it was healthy for the Latvians to see the Russians and Americans being civil to each other, sort of setting a standard. Studennikov and I occasionally even had sort of private meetings at his embassy or mine to talk about current issues. I thought that, maybe, if they had a little better understanding of what we were doing, it might help. I'm not sure it ever did. He was always totally loyal to his government's positions of course, but it wasn't difficult to talk to him. His successor, who arrived at the very end of my time was a guy named Viktor Kalyuzhny; he was like a bear in a china closet. He was just an obnoxious SOB. There's no other way to put it. He made himself immediately disliked by most everybody in Latvia.

Q: Not just by you.

CARLSON: No, no! He called the Latvians "a bunch of peasants with straw for brains." That was a public comment to the press in his first week, and it went downhill from there. His comment to me when he called on me privately was—he made one of those introductory diplomatic "calls"—was along the lines of, "Russia is a great power. America is a great power. The two of us ought to get together and tell these stupid Latvians how to behave and teach them a lesson or two." I would have never heard that out of his predecessor. There you go.

Q: Let's talk a little bit more about NATO enlargement, NATO membership for Latvia. You mentioned that President Bush had reaffirmed in a speech in Warsaw that that would continue to be United States policy objective. What role did the embassy play, and was it accomplished? Did it happen while you were there?

CARLSON: It did. In fact, it was one of the first things that came up after I got off the plane. There was a proposal in OSCE, the Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe, to close its missions in Latvia as well as in Estonia. This had been on the books for some time. The mission had been established in the 1993 to observe, report on, and

encourage the proper treatment of the Russian minorities and citizenship questions. That was the principal reason. It was stated in more diplomatic terms, but essentially the mission was part of the effort to make sure that Latvia and Estonia adopted democratic reforms in a sensitive and fair way. The issue that arose was that the Russian delegation at OSCE in Vienna asked that the missions in Riga and Tallinn be extended because, they argued, sufficient progress hadn't been made. They pointed particularly to Latvian laws that set requirements for people to get Latvian citizenship, including the need to pass language tests.

Of course, the State Department and the NSC recognized that we weren't going to get Latvia an invitation to join NATO if it still had an OSCE observer mission operating in the country. This simply wasn't going to happen. The existence of such a mission indicates the country is not fully compliant and so forth and, therefore, not ready for a NATO invitation. So we needed commitments from the Latvian government on citizenship laws. They needed to be good enough that Peter Semneby, the OSCE mission chief, and our NATO allies could all say that we were satisfied with Latvian progress. I spent much of my first December in Riga working on getting satisfactory statements out of the Latvian government. What we needed were statements committing them to change their election laws and give more opportunities to the Russian-speaking non-citizen minority to become citizens. This was pushing the conservative wing of the Latvian political parties to be more flexible and accommodating than they had ever been before. They didn't have to actually make the changes in the law by December 31, but they had to promise they would or else we weren't going to get enough of our allies to vote with us to overcome the Russians and their allies on the question of closing the mission.

This was one of these intense diplomatic actions—I'm sure you've experienced it, too—lots of phone calls back and forth to Washington, to our mission at OSCE Vienna, to other embassies in Riga to see what they were saying and what they were hearing from their capitals and, of course, with the Latvian government officials at the foreign ministry, but also the president's office. This was really the first time that I began to appreciate President Vīķe-Freiberga's power as president. While many of the politicians, especially on the right, didn't understand the importance of this, she did, she understood what was at stake, and she was a powerful force for leading the nation to do the right thing.

Eventually we got, grudgingly, the commitment that we needed, and it was enough to win the day on the 28th of December in Vienna. It was agreed to close the OSCE mission, although with a two-month delay to allow Semneby to phase out and transfer programs to other organizations. The OSCE mission had been funding training programs on things like ethnic sensitivity, voter rights, and organizing political parties. They had to transfer those over to other organizations like the International Organization for Migration (IOM) or the UN Development Program (UNDP) to run them for OSCE after the mission closed. I became good friends during all this with Peter Semneby, Swedish diplomat and head of the OSCE mission. He went on from Riga to take over the mission in Croatia – an even a more difficult situation, I suspect.

Anyway, that was my first introduction as chief of mission to the multilateral battles that often beset a bilateral mission. This question of citizenship and language rights is one of those problems that will never make the front page of *The New York Times* or *The Washington Post*. Nobody will ever know about it, you need to make amends for bruised feelings afterwards, and you are wrung out at the end of it. But we got it done, and the OSCE mission closed, and that cleared the way for a NATO invitation eventually to be delivered. And in the space of three or four weeks I met virtually all the key players in the local political and foreign policy scene.

Q: Was that the one remaining major issue, or was it one of several?

CARLSON: Looking back on it, it was probably the big remaining issue. The other thing we had to do was to get the U. S. Senate on board, and there had been such... You may remember, there had been quite a bit of opposition in Congress to the expansion that brought in Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary. Some people believed that accepting new members into the Atlantic Alliance would offend the Russians, and there was concern in the Department and the NSC that such opposition would arise again. It never did, perhaps because that battle had been fought once. Nobody needed to go fight it again.

I think the other thing was that our embassy, the EUR Bureau, and some private organizations did a pretty good job of getting a lot of the key senators out to the Baltic region, and what they saw they liked. These three countries basically adhered to American values, and we made sure that when the senators came, that the government officials and leading members of society did a good job at explaining what they were doing and how they were doing it. Latvia, for example, embraced the free market to a degree that it would make Milton Friedman proud. They had low tax rates, they encourage investment, there's no capital gains tax at all, there's a flat income tax of twenty-five percent. Corporate taxes are fifteen percent, going down to twelve and a half next year. The economy grows steadily at rates between eight and ten percent per year. People were enjoying ever increasing incomes, home ownership is increasing, and you've got a political system which is democratic and becoming more so, especially in this issue of incorporating the non-citizens. That issue of citizenship and the non-citizens is one that largely time is going to cure; the old folks and Soviet military retirees who have no interest in political participation will eventually die off; the younger generation is participating and signing up and becoming citizens, and they'll be active. I genuinely think this issue will take care of itself.

Q: I suppose it also helped that through the partnership for peace and perhaps in other ways the military such as it was of Latvia had established a good reputation or relationship with other NATO aspirants.

CARLSON: It did. Remember that these three Baltic states were countries that had no military between 1939 and 1991, unlike Poland or the Czech Republic which had national armies and ministries of defense. They followed Soviet military doctrine as Warsaw Pact member, and so they had to be reformed. But at least they existed.

In the case of Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania, there was nothing—they started from scratch in 1991. Yes, some Latvians had served in the Red army, but most of the Soviet-era officers did not choose to join the new republics' military forces. They were largely training from scratch. That has disadvantages and advantages. At least you don't have to unlearn old habits. On the other hand, you have absolutely no idea how to do things.

But you're right: The Partnership for Peace and the training programs that we provided and our allies provided did a lot to speed the process and educate them in western military doctrine. Latvia basically developed a military that was very much in the style of ours, but adapted for their particular needs. It's a light infantry that is quickly and easily deployable. The Latvian army doesn't have a lot of heavy equipment. We early on told the Baltic states, "Don't buy jet airplanes! Or tanks! We've got plenty of both in NATO. You don't need to spend your defense dollars that way." Eventually, as I'll say later, that came back to us again in another way. So they didn't buy any of the heavy equipment, jets or tanks or anything like that. They were very conservative about using their money. In fact, the defense minister liked to take people out and show them the barracks where the Latvian soldiers live and sleep because they had been so improved over what Soviet barracks looked like. He did this not just for visiting U.S. senators and so forth, but he also invited Latvian citizens to come see. He would go to bases and have Open Base Day so that mothers and fathers could come, and they could see with their own eyes that these are modern barracks equipped with air conditioning all the sorts of modern accoutrements, and they looked clean and nice. Many of them were rebuilt out of old Soviet barracks, but he understood the importance of showing that this is a new and different kind of army, not an army that you hated to be in. This was one that you could be proud to be in.

Q: I guess there were a couple of other things that smoothed the way for Latvia and the other Baltic states to become NATO members. One was the—and I'd be interested if you think this is right—is that the experience with Hungary and the Czech Republic, Poland, probably went better than certainly the critics had anticipated, and they said some of the supporters feared that it might. Secondly, of course, with 9/11 with attention to Afghanistan, later to Iraq, "New Europe" as some called it, was among the supporters of the United States in a way that Old Europe was more skeptical.

CARLSON: I think that was very much the case. First of all, the incorporation of the first three new countries did go smoothly and successfully. There were no problems and integration was seamless. So yes, there was less opposition to new members, even though there were some people who worried about upsetting the Russians by moving NATO's eastern borders to the border with Russia. In fact, even today there still is not a fully settled border agreement between Latvia and Russia, and Estonia and Russia. That is basically because the Russians will not come to the table and sign the treaty. The Latvians even have ceded a section of territory—several hundred square miles of territory on which they have a very strong claim—they've actually ceded that to Russia in order to ease the process. But still, the Russian government has not signed on, arguing that they can't get it approved by the *duma*, the Russian Parliament. There is opposition from some

radical nationalists who proudly refuse to give up anything. They want the whole of Latvia.

But I think you're right, the process was easier than expected for the first three allies. The second thing was the post-September 11 solidarity that these countries felt with the United States. Not only did they express solidarity after September 11, but in the effort to go after the Taliban in Afghanistan, Latvian troops did join us. In fact, Latvian troops also are serving or have served in Bosnia, Kosovo and so forth. They are now in both Afghanistan and in Iraq.

Latvia was forthright in speaking up and lending its support to the American point of view, especially when we were having difficulties with French president Jacques Chirac, German chancellor Gerhard Schröder. Latvia's President Vīķe-Freiberga was very forthright in saying that Latvia would stand with the U.S. The Latvians had learned in the last century that you have to stand up to dictators. The Latvian government didn't base their participation with us in Iraq on weapons of mass destruction. Instead, it was on the idea – it might sound trite -- but “evil dictators” need to be stopped early. There is a lot of suffering if you allow tyrants to go on. The Latvian people lived through a pretty lousy 20th century, and they remembered Hitler and Stalin.

Q: Why do you think Russia did not object more strenuously to NATO enlargement for these states, as some anticipated they would?

CARLSON: I think that they saw that the die was cast, that we made clear that we were going to do this. At the top levels, they said, “We don't like it, but there's not much we can do about it.” There was really no question that joining NATO (and the EU) was genuinely popular in these countries. There were voices in Russia – on the right – who ranted and raved and thumped on the table, but they actually had no way to oppose this. There were no legitimate legal or other grounds on which to oppose it. Russia had recognized the Baltic states' independence back in 1991.

And, I think we played it carefully enough. We never explicitly said that we wouldn't put bases in these countries, but we assured the Russians that we will not be provocative. Yet we also made it clear that we would adhere to principles in what we do.

For example, the issue of CAP or combat air patrol came up at the point that NATO membership came into effect—this was in the spring of 2004. NATO has a longstanding policy that its air space will be defended 24/7. Normally this is done by the air force of the member country. Over the United States territory, we exercise air superiority and turn away any unauthorized intruder. Over Canada, the Canadians do the same, and so forth. Now, the Baltic states were the first countries I believe ever to come into NATO that didn't have their own air force, so the question arose how to handle CAP over the Baltic states. The solution at NATO was to provide a rotating deployment of F-16's. They would be based in northern Lithuania and would be able to provide quick response air cover over the entire region. They would fly daily patrols and so forth.

One of the reasons this was important is a history during the last fifteen years of Russian aircraft violating Latvian, Lithuanian, and Estonian air space on a regular basis. Apparently, with increasing regularity, Russian military planes would overfly Baltic territory, cut across corners, fly in and out, while simply failing to get permission, seeking a clearance, just cutting across the territory.

Q: Going where?

CARLSON: Going back and forth to Russia and Kaliningrad or wherever they were flying, but not requesting a clearance or permission. Often they cut the corners and made minor incursions. But it had begun to happen on such a regular basis, and more frequently as 2004 approached. The Russian foreign ministry rejected or ignored protests and diplomatic notes. Once or twice, it might be accidental or poor navigation, but after a time you begin to think it's deliberate. And I'm told there is a principle in international law, just as there is in the conventional legal world, that if I walk across your land every day for 25 years, I've created a *de facto* easement, whether you formally granted it to me or not. In the law, a precedent can be established.

So there was a bit of debate about CAP over the Baltics in the spring of 2004. Some of the allies were not in favor of dedicating air force assets to this task, citing the cost and the strain on scarce resources. Some people in the Department suggested that defending NATO air space might aggravate the Russians. Fortunately, both General Richard Meyers, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, and General Jim Jones, SACEUR/EUCOM, stood very forthrightly for the principle that we do control NATO airspace just as vigilantly as we do our own. Nick Burns, head of the U.S. Mission to NATO was wonderful on this issue, standing side by side with me and my colleagues in Tallinn and Vilnius. I think it was Burns who was eloquent in saying, "This is NATO's policy. We do not change the policy just because we brought in some new members. If at some point we want to change the policy for the whole Alliance, we'll do that—at our own speed and our own time—but we are not going to make an exception under duress." So we did deploy the CAP. We've deployed those aircraft ever since.

Q: Where were the aircraft from?

CARLSON: The first deployment came from Belgium, and later the Americans have participated, but they were the fourth or the fifth deployment to come in.

Q: Not permanently stationed.

CARLSON: No. So they're not permanently...

Q: But there's always somebody there.

CARLSON: There's always somebody there. There are four aircraft that can respond and so forth. The air incursions, I understand, have been reduced or stopped. It was an

enormously encouraging decision for the Latvians and other Balts who saw that NATO membership has meaning. They may be new members, but they are equal members.

Q: NATO enlargement to the Baltic states was implemented, took place, in 2004.

CARLSON: Right. Yes, in April, 2004.

Q: When was the decision made?

CARLSON: The decision to begin the accession process was taken in November 2002 at the NATO Summit in Prague. President Bush came to Vilnius after the Prague meeting, and we had all three Baltic presidents there together with President Bush in Vilnius.

Q: And you were there for that also?

CARLSON: Yes. I'm trying to keep the years straight. I think I've got that right. 2002.

Q: Then there was kind of a transition period.

CARLSON: That was the date of the decision to extend the invitation, and then the actual membership, raising the Latvian flag at NATO headquarters, took place in April 2004. Then, as it happened, on the first of May, the same Baltic countries were taken into the European Union. They had sort of a double birthday party, if you want to call it, that spring of 2004.

Q: So the enlargement of the European Union to cover Latvia and the others was the same time.

CARLSON: The same spring. Right. I don't know if they said it to make me feel good, but a lot of Latvians told me that the EU membership was "nice," but the NATO membership was what counted—because it meant that World War II's horrors and the terrible 20th century subjugation would not happen again. That is what really matters to Latvians.

Q: Back in the time of enlargement to Czech Republic, Poland, and Hungary, there was a lot of argument whether NATO should go first or the European Union should go first.

CARLSON: You're right. I had forgotten about that.

Q: The EU kind of lagged behind in terms of thinking about...

CARLSON: And they kind of caught up, after a slow start. I forgot to mention that there was a very effective European Union mission in Riga, of course. We worked closely with them on a lot of things. They had training and education programs going on like we did, especially focused on customs, imports, health and sanitary standards, banking, and

finance, and so forth. But, by comparison, the EU mission spent gobs more money than we did, as usual.

Q: This may be a good time to stop unless there's something else we ought to say on the NATO enlargement thought, and then when we come back the next time, we can talk about some of the other activities.

CARLSON: Sure. We did our part on the U.S. side. The Latvians, of course, did the major part to get themselves ready. There were many, many changes made.

I always thought it was important to recognize that Latvian politics did not align in a traditional left/right ideological way. It is more a politics based on individuals and their friends. Most of the population is united on a pretty clear point of view about what their country should do. They want to be a country with a free market economy like that of the United States or Western Europe. They want to be members of NATO. They want to be members of the European Union. They want the freedom to travel and so forth. They're pretty much agreed on all of these goals. They like freedom of religion and freedom of speech and so forth, and there's not much division about how to go about this transformation. There's a general consensus in the country.

One of the things that I believe happened was unity of purpose. By stating as a national goal "membership in NATO" and as a second national goal of "getting into the European Union" and continually talking about what those things meant, you basically got a unified national effort in a single direction. That helped. It helped them qualify. It helped them do the things they had to do.

Many times some interest group or political party would object to something. Somebody didn't want to spend money on highway standardization, or they didn't want to grant some rights to a minority group, or change something in the school system. Then, the proponents would say, "This is required for NATO membership," or "This is the way the EU countries do it." That would often end the argument. If the European Union says the highways have to be four and a half meters wide, well, that settled it. The highways will be four and a half meters wide. In so many ways, Latvia is a country that is coming out of the stagnant Communist period, and could jump over intermediate stages of technology and of social organization. They could leap right to where the rest of us are today without going through the intermediate stages or the pain and suffering that we did. For example, they jumped from a cash economy to internet banking, without going through writing paper checks!

Q: How important did you think that the United States policy decision to support NATO membership for Latvia and the other countries, how important was that in terms of accomplishing the goal but also encouraging them to think in those terms as far as NATO was concerned. And when was that taken? You said that President Bush reconfirmed it.

CARLSON: I particularly dated it to that June, 2001 speech in Warsaw. That was a particularly clear indication that we saw no reason that Latvia should not qualify if they

did the things they should do. The President said, “I believe in NATO membership for all the European democracies that want it and are ready for the responsibilities of membership.”

Q: Before that it hadn't been so clear?

CARLSON: I think in the Clinton administration, from the 1994 NATO summit, there had been some statements about NATO “should enlarge steadily, deliberately, openly,” and that no country in Europe should be *a priori* denied the possibility of membership. The Bush policy statement was welcomed. First of all, here was a new president coming in, so it's important that he reiterate that enlargement policy is still okay, and he even sort of broadened it a bit in the way he phrased it in Warsaw. So that was important.

Q: That was certainly a period of the Clinton Administration where it wasn't maybe quite so clear that if the Russians had really objected whether we would have gone ahead?

CARLSON: Oh, yes. In the early days, Strobe Talbott was seen as a powerful player who was very concerned about the Russian point of view. It was not at all certain that he was any friend of the Baltics on this issue. In the end, I think Talbott paid some visits to the Baltics, and I think he came to be very much a supporter of NATO enlargement, including the Baltics. But in the early days, no, of the Clinton administration I'd say up until, say, 1997 or 1998, it was not all that clear that there would be a second expansion, when it might happen, or that it would necessarily be a broad expansion.

Q: As you indicated, the first expansion was controversial both in terms of the Congress, the Senate, but within the Administration.

CARLSON: There was a very active debate in the Administration. A lot of those issues were debated at the time and then, when problems didn't develop, it went very smoothly. When the Russians accommodated to it, the countries played a properly restrained role in their relationships with their neighbors, and that took care of it.

Q: But even so, the Baltic states were always kind of in a special category because of their history and their proximity not just to Russia but even to St. Petersburg, Moscow.

CARLSON: Yes, I agree. We look back on Baltic accession today and say, “Oh, that's a given.” But it was not nearly such a “given” in those days. It was something, an idea that moved along and became more and more obvious, more and more acceptable. I felt much better after that vote of confidence from the President where he indicated we could do two things at once, go after the 9/11 terrorists and expand NATO. The other encouraging thing was Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott and a large delegation of senators came to Latvia in the first days of July 2002. They were very impressed with what they saw in the Baltics and in Latvia especially. Senator Lott's statements – and those of some of the other senators as they left – reassured me about Latvia's chances. He said to me, “This is not going to be a problem. This is going to be okay. These are people like us.”

That counted, I thought, quite a bit – to know that the Senate leadership was on board. We figured by then we had the Administration on board. It was clear to me, anyway. I was hearing plenty of signals that this is what the President wants, what the Administration wants, what the Secretary wants, and so to hear that the Senate was not going to object was very encouraging. I felt we were basically “there” if we could keep our noses clean.

Q: OK. We're continuing our conversation with Brian E. Carlson on the 9th of August 2006. Brian, we were talking about your tenure as United States Ambassador to the Republic of Latvia, 2001 to 2004, and we've been talking about Latvia's participation in NATO which took effect while you were there.

CARLSON: Right.

Q: We talked before about the stationing of NATO aircraft, a small number, in the Baltic countries. I wondered—was curious—to what extent were you personally involved in negotiating the arrangements for those aircraft, and secondly I assume the aircraft related to the three Baltic countries. Were they stationed in Latvia or elsewhere?

CARLSON: What happened was, this was an issue that sort of came out of nowhere. It was not something that I had been briefed on or warned about. Suddenly it came to our attention that, in fact, Russian military aircraft and ships were violating Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian airspace and waters with increasing frequency in the winter and spring of 2004. At first it was discussed in military channels but pretty soon the foreign ministry brought it up. And, I learned about this policy where all NATO territory will be defended 24/7 by what's called “Combat Air Patrol” or “Airspace Policing.” In other words, there should be an air response capability, a set of aircraft that can launch quickly enough to go up and investigate and warn off any intruders into the air space of a NATO country.

Now, we had always counseled the Balts that they should not spend any of their precious few defense dollars on expensive things like airplanes and tanks. So, they didn't have an air force of any sort. I think the Latvians do have four or eight helicopters, but that is about the extent of the Latvian air force.

So suddenly the question came up: how to extend air coverage to these new members of the Alliance. This was the first time, I guess, any members had been taken in to NATO who didn't have some kind of air force of their own. There was some debate at NATO headquarters because some militaries and some diplomats did not want to take on an additional burden. They simply didn't want to do this. They thought it was complicated because since there were no bases—existing NATO bases—close enough to the three Baltic states, so that you could cover from those existing bases. You were going to have to do some sort of deployment. Deploying NATO assets – military aircraft – to the western border of Russia was seen as provocative. It might cause some concern in the Russian political establishment. This all came up rather quickly, as I remember, in the January or February 2004 timeframe. People began to focus on this issue.

In early February, General Richard Meyers and General Jim Jones, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs at the time, and the SACEUR Commander in Chief for Europe, came on a visit together. It was a long planned visit and this subject was not on the official agenda. As part of the visit, I had them to breakfast. I had no instructions, but it seemed a good time to get some clarity, so I raised the subject with them both. And it was immediately clear to me that the military—at least the American military—had no problem with fulfilling this requirement. In fact, they thought that we should do it.

Both Meyers and Jones were forthright, saying there's no reason the Alliance can't do this. "We've got plenty of airplanes, there are plenty of pilots looking for air time. There's no reason that we can't do this." In fact, Myers explained, it's good practice to deploy to unfamiliar air fields and this is such a small number. This is going to take about four planes, and it should not be hard to do. Maybe it will take a hundred airmen on the ground to support the aircraft and that sort of thing.

The Baltic states were, by that point, indicating that all of them collectively, individually, or any way you want to mix it, were willing to provide the ground support, fuel, security perimeters, housing, whatever, that might be needed. So with the U.S. military's view in hand, I talked to Nick Burns in Brussels, our ambassador to NATO. He assured me that he thought we were going to win this, but it had to be argued through a little bit among the Permanent Representatives. Washington was pretty much on board, after some initial reluctance in the State Department. I think our military kind of carried the day by saying that this was not a problem from our point of view, that we could participate ourselves, and that we could support others participating.

Q: The hesitation, I assume, was related to Russian aspects and whatever understandings existed at the time that Latvia...

CARLSON: Right. Simply the sense that it was yet something else that was going to irritate the Russians and that we should be concerned about their irritation and so forth. My own view was that they had already grown to accept the idea of NATO membership for the Baltic states, and this went with it. It might be a visible sign of membership, but it was not going to hurt Russian feelings any more than they had already been hurt. Indeed, in the end, that is what happened. The planes are usually about four aircraft, with about 50-100 personnel, and they stay at a base near the northern Lithuanian city of Šiauliai for about three months, and then a group from another country rotates in.

Q: Near the Baltic Sea?

CARLSON: Near the Baltic Sea. From there they are able to fly, of course, up to Estonia's northern border and down to Lithuania's southern border. In fact, I think they can probably cover all the Balts in a few minutes once they hit their speed! They did begin to fly in early April.

Q: 2004?

CARLSON: 2004. One little incident happened on the day that NATO membership became official. I believe it was April 2. Word got around that the four planes – four Belgian F-16's – would do a flyover of the city of Riga, and maybe the other two capitols as well, that morning at a specified time. Well, as it happened, the time came and went and no planes appeared on the horizon. This was more than a little bit embarrassing, because the Latvian president's office had quietly let the media know that this was going to happen. Well, nothing happened. That was followed by a certain amount of frantic telephone calling and trying to figure out what had happened. In the end, the story given out was there were some marginal weather conditions, and it wasn't deemed important enough to make this flight—symbolic flight—on the first day. There was frankly some suspicion that somebody somewhere did not sort of want to make a statement with that flight display on the first day because it would irritate the Russians. Certainly what I told the president of Latvia was that it was cancelled for weather reasons as it was not deemed mission-critical. Personally, I question that the Belgian air force can't fly in cloudy weather.

Anyway, the accession to NATO was celebrated in Riga on a beautiful spring morning. The ceremonies were conducted on a square in front of the castle in Riga, the site of the original founding of the first fortress on the river in 1201. It was a spectacular sight with all the flags on the flagpoles around the castle, the diplomatic corps gathered, military bands, ceremonial honor guards, and speeches and so forth. It was a very pleasant day, and many, many Latvians came up to me and told me that this was the most important day since regaining Latvia's independence in 1991. They said this act reassured them that their children would not have to live through what they had gone through.

Q: It was probably a day that some of them anticipated would never happen.

CARLSON: Yes. It was not hard to remember that, maybe just a couple of years before I arrived in Riga, there was considerable doubt that we would take all three countries into NATO. Many people thought that maybe one would make it, or that it would be much delayed or something, but certainly not so many so soon.

Q: Or that there would be some second tier or third tier, sets of participation.

CARLSON: Exactly. Second class membership and things like that.

Q : OK. You were there to celebrate and usher in an important moment in Latvia's independence. Before we talk about some of the cultural business, bilateral connections that you were involved with, why don't we talk a little bit more about the extent you were involved in Latvian and U. S. cooperation in third areas: such as in Iraq. You were there during the good part of the lead up to and then the actual battle in Afghanistan, maybe some other areas.

CARLSON: In many respects this was a matter of pushing on an open door. From the moment of their independence, of course, the Latvians had a warm and positive feeling toward the United States, principally because we never recognized their being forcibly

incorporated into the Soviet Union. Certainly on September 11, 2001, the public's outpouring of sympathy and support was remarkable. Latvia is a country that is very fond of flowers, and they give and receive flowers at all occasions. The Latvian people simply swamped the front of the embassy an enormous, ever increasing bouquet of fresh flowers. Individuals just walked up day and night and placed flowers in front of the embassy. Those were in the days immediately following September 11, 2001. The sentiment was genuine. I think the Latvian people, if you took a vote or something, on the order of 80% would be sympathetic to the United States and to our goals.

So, when it came to asking for support from allies and would-be allies in first Afghanistan and then later in the Iraq situation, the Latvians were more than willing to participate. Obviously, they had a limited military. Latvia has a very small military of about 5,000 total troops under arms. They are equipped as a light infantry, quick response group, so there are many things they are not capable of. But they did contribute. We generally had somewhere on the order of 70 and 80 Latvian troops in Afghanistan. When Iraq came, they committed about 130 troops there, which meant that Latvia had proportionately more troops in Iraq than the United States did (as a percentage of total population).

We had no trouble getting parliamentary support for the initial deployment. That permission to deploy troops abroad was granted by the parliament without any delay whatsoever. Latvians were quite proud to be part of the coalition. As you may remember, there was a lot of debate—internationally—in those days about going to war. The French were reluctant to take military action. The Latvian president did a very good job of explaining why Latvia was participating in this effort. She put it against the backdrop of Latvia's suffering in the 20th century from the actions of dictators and tyrants whether you start with Hitler and end with Stalin. She reminded people of the various things those tyrants had done and the way Latvians had suffered as a result. She said, as member of the community of free and democratic nations, you have to stand up to tyrants. You have to do something about them.

She never based her rationale on finding weapons of mass destruction. I really don't have any idea how they felt about that argument, but that wasn't a motivation for the Latvians. For them, it had to do with tyranny and standing up against tyranny early. Latvians believe that had the European nations come to their aid at several points in the World War II timeframes, history for them could have been much different, especially after the war in the late '40s and early '50s.

So, eagerness to be on the right side of history and to do what's right, those were the key points. As time went on, a year after the invasion, toward the end of 2003, a renewal of the parliamentary mandate to send the Latvian troops was needed. There was a bit more debate that time, but again, we got the required permission. It passed. Even today, Latvian troops are still there in Iraq, and there's no deadline for their withdrawal at this point. They've been solid allies on that score.

I should mention, perhaps, that the Latvian troops sent to Iraq were more than just a token contribution. The troops themselves are actually much valued, as I understood from American commanders that I talked to, because of their skills. The Latvian troops were primarily trained as explosive ordinance disposal—EOD experts. They were especially valued for destroying explosives and disarming bombs. Part of the reason was the Latvian troops all spoke both Russian and English, as well as Latvian. When they encountered Russian-manufactured or even Soviet-era war materials that Saddam Hussein's army had, the Latvians could actually read the labels and were often familiar with the ordinance. They knew the characteristics of them and how to disarm them. So Latvian EOD specialists were considered particularly valuable. Many U.S. troops wanted to have at least Latvian with each group!

Q: I can see why they would be very much in demand, not only their knowledge of the Russian ordnance but the fact that there's so much.

CARLSON: Exactly. They continue to make a valuable contribution. We were concerned when we had the first Latvian casualty. We knew that it was inevitable that at some point there would be one, and wondered how the public and opinion leaders would react. I mean, this is a small country. If you lose one soldier, it's quite likely that a lot of people in the country know that person or know someone who knows him.

Q: Or knows the family.

CARLSON: Of course, that is true. However, the public response and the military's response was quite solid, and they bore it very well. There was never a lack of troops willing to go to Iraq. There was always a line of people who wanted to be in the next deployment.

Q: OK, let me divert for a second and ask you a question that has nothing to do with Iraq or Latvian foreign policy. History, a little bit. As you have said, the United States did not recognize incorporation of the Baltic states into the Soviet Union. There had been a U. S. embassy in Riga. Is that the building which you were using?

CARLSON: No. The pre-war embassy building does exist, and we know exactly which one it is. In fact, it has a plaque on it. It's a little closer to the port area. It is the very building where George Kennan served when he was posted in Riga. The U.S. embassy in Riga in the 1920's was an observation post for watching what was going on in St. Petersburg and Russia in the time after the Bolshevik Revolution and before we reestablished an embassy in Moscow. I think Kennan was there in 1925—it is in his memoirs. He talks about being in Riga and so forth. But no, that building was of course subdivided into apartments by the Communists. Today it remains an apartment building in a nice area facing a park. In fact, the park in front is called Washington Square. But the building is too small to serve as an embassy for us. I'm not sure, but I assume in the 1920's we had an embassy of two or three people or something like that, so it was big enough for that.

When we first returned to Latvia in the fall of 1991, our staff were lodged in what is today the hotel that's right next to the embassy. That hotel property was at that time a Communist party guest house. It has since been renovated by a Norwegian hotel chain and is a commercial hotel today. In 1991 and 1992 we sent out Nick Salgo, a Hungarian-American businessman who was designated by Secretary Baker to go out and find embassies for us throughout the former Soviet Union.

Q: the former ambassador to Hungary?

CARLSON: Yes, the same. The Latvians at the time offered him any of several buildings. A boulevard, Raina Boulevard, runs through the center of Riga and traditionally has been the site of many embassies. Starting from the principal corner in downtown Riga, you had the German embassy on one side, and then you had the French embassy, then High School No. 1, and today we are next along the block at 7 Raina Boulevard. That building had been originally constructed in the 1860's as an eye hospital. You see the distinctive building in old photographs of Riga, sitting out in a field on the edge of the town. We accepted that building from the Latvians when they offered it to us. They gave us a very good deal on the rent. I think we're still only paying about \$250,000 a year for it. It served our needs quite adequately up until now, but the chancery is getting more crowded as more agencies come in and so forth. During my time we moved the Office of Defense Cooperation out of the embassy and over to the Ministry of Defense; we did that with some reluctance because I hate to see them not be close at hand. I knew however from experience in previous posts that locating ODC with their clients does work well. They are doing training and supplying defense materiel to the host country military, so having those guys in the Ministry of Defense was logical. We did a lot of things to make sure that we stayed in close touch. I went over there and held meetings with them and, of course, they came back and forth a lot.

Our embassy on Raina Boulevard is walking distance to the Ministry of Defense. That's the advantage—it is right in the center of town. You can walk to the president's office; you can walk to the prime minister's office, to the foreign ministry. The only reason to take the car is because you want to fly the flag, otherwise it's more convenient to walk.

Q: Are there security set-back issues with the current building?

CARLSON: Yes. It was selected before we had the setback standards for embassies. It does sit right on a main street. We have a fence, and we have some bollards today. In my time we installed a set of reinforced bollards around the exterior. Our administrative and security officers worked very carefully with the city architects to do something that was architecturally acceptable on this historic boulevard, a major street that fronts onto the main city park. We didn't want to make the chancery an obnoxious, ugly building.

Q: Fortress.

CARLSON: Yes, we still wanted to be safe, so we do have a blast wall that is about chest height, and then outside of that these bollards. So I think we've made it as secure as one

can. Frankly, I think it's secure enough given the threat levels in the area. As you know, an ambassador's nightmare is never being sure how much security is enough. They'll blame you if anything happens. I think we're actually at the right level. But, there is a plan to build a new embassy in Riga, if they can find a suitable property. It's been a long struggle that continues to go on.

Q: When you were there, were you charged to try to find some possibilities?

CARLSON: We were on occasion asked to look at...to try and identify some suitable properties, and we did go through an effort at one point and found six possible properties that we thought could work. I wouldn't say there was a heavy pressure. Nobody in the EUR bureau was pushing us hard on this. Frankly, in the Latvian real estate market during my time, the economy was growing at seven and eight percent a year. Real estate has become increasingly valuable. Even though we identified properties that met OBO's technical criteria, by the time they got a team out to have a look at them, two had already sold. Another one went while the team was there. They settled on one that the team liked, and the price went up. They thought it had gone up too much, so OBO pulled back, so we lost that one. So, now they're out looking for a whole new set of properties further out from the center. Our slow, bureaucratic approach to the real estate business is incompatible with a vibrant economy where things are going up in value faster than the Department can react to them. It's going to be a hard slog to get something suitable.

I spent some time working with the mayor to identify some property that belonged to the city that would fit in with city development plans and where we wouldn't be so susceptible to the vagaries of the market. If the city owned a property and they could designate it for us, we could buy it from the city at a negotiated, fair price. That would mean we would not be out there competing with every commercial developer. I thought that had some possibilities, but I gather that initiative did not prosper after my departure.

Q: Would there be a possibility of a long-time 99-year lease for property chosen?

CARLSON: Yes, that kind of thing would be a possibility. We could do it that way or outright purchase. Either one. But the attractive locations that are in close proximity to the city center are going fast.

Q: Why don't I ask you kind of an open-ended question about were there any issues, problems, conflicts, between the U. S. and Latvia that you really had to address, or was it more looking for opportunities to build and develop and nurture and broaden and deepen the relationship?

CARLSON: I was thinking about this, and I think there were especially two areas where we spent a good deal of time, maybe three that come to mind as being important.

One was, of course, the situation, the condition, the rights, and prerogatives of the Russian minority in the country who are not citizens. Obviously, I think we all recognize that over the long term having something approaching 30 percent of the population being

non-citizens, ineligible to participate in the political process, is not a good situation. That is not a recipe for the future. Some of my colleagues reminded me that Father Time will take care of some of this because a good portion of that thirty percent are elderly Russian pensioners. They retired from the Soviet military in Latvia or perhaps came with the construction brigades. They are now in their 70's and 80's, and they will eventually pass on. Their children are and will continue to be much more engaged in society and more active in terms of citizenship.

Q: Can the children of those people who are presumably born in Latvia even though they're from the Russian minority, could they acquire citizenship?

CARLSON: They can, and Latvia has a naturalization process that looks a lot like ours. The biggest hurdle is the requirement that you have some competence in the Latvian language. For people born in and growing up in the country, it will not be hard to demonstrate language competence. In fact, several diplomats—the Swiss ambassador and others—actually took the language test to prove how easy it was to pass it.

Q: In Latvian.

CARLSON: In Latvian. They scored well enough to become Latvian citizens! So, we believed the language test was not too great a hurdle.

But, citizenship was a perennial subject raised by parachute journalists and foreign delegations. There was much discussion in OSCE and other fora about minority political rights. Were the Latvians setting the bar too high? We had to speak up occasionally and point out to the Latvian government officials and political parties where we thought they were going in the wrong direction. At one point, for example, one of the ministries decreed that in order to have a license as a barber, a beautician, a dentist, and a couple of other things, I think a taxi cab driver, you had to be a Latvian citizen. We went to them and said, "Wait a minute. Why is it important for a barber to be a citizen? Does cutting hair require some political skill?" After some cajoling and arm twisting and so forth, they decided not to implement that regulation.

Q: To use that example, is this a case where you as the ambassador and the embassy pretty much engaged in these conversations and discussions, or were you doing it under instructions from Washington, or was it done more within the context of the OSCE?

CARLSON: We were doing it in Riga, and reporting to Washington...

Q: Bilaterally.

CARLSON: Bilaterally, and informing Washington more than being instructed. There is not much attention being paid in Washington to these things, except if the some complaint was lodged by the Russians at the OSCE meeting in Vienna, the European Human Rights Council or someplace like that. Generally speaking, we knew what was needed and rather we would tell Washington what we thought we should do. Often,

having gotten Washington's acquiescence or being sure of the Department's approval, we would enter into discussions with our German, British, and French colleagues in Riga. Then you had the key NATO and EU friends of Latvia urging Latvia to do the right thing. The Dutch under Ambassador Nicolaas Beets were particularly helpful in working with us.

Q: On an issue like that or any issue involving Russian minority, to what extent were you in contact, hearing from the Russian ambassador?

CARLSON: I talked to the Russian ambassador, I suppose, three or four times a week in sort of social settings or something diplomatic reception. We'd also occasionally have lunch and have an extended conversation. We were one time instructed to go have a conversation with the Russians purposely. Washington wanted us to have one talk with them on security.

Q: Security for...

CARLSON: For border security, basically transnational threats and so forth and how organizations were all working to observe and be aware of what types of people were traveling around. Latvia is basically a very safe place. I and all my staff walked freely around town, drove our personal cars, went wherever we wanted. There was no curfew; there were no "off limits" areas. You had to be, perhaps, a little cautious in the summertime about pickpockets, but they couldn't hold a candle to Madrid's thieves.

Q: They were probably more interested in people who were obviously tourists as opposed to...

CARLSON: Yes. But occasionally a diplomat would get pick-pocketed or something, because they were looking for foreigners with money. So, personal security was really not a top issue. We were not under the kind of security threat that people are in some other parts of Europe, and I did not have a bodyguard. I walked back and forth to work from my house to the office, a very pleasant seven-minute stroll across a park. But we did have a few occasions where we detected foreign government surveillance; I'll just call it foreign surveillance of our embassy. With help from the Latvian government, we were able to identify these people and discover they had connections to Iran. They were not resident in Latvia, but came from third countries into Latvia. They were surveilling our embassy and so forth. We paid attention to that sort of thing. There was always an awareness that Latvia's location, its status as an historic trade port on the Baltic Sea, the amount of rail, trucking, shipping, and finance moving back and forth, all created a certain potential vulnerability.

We also had concerns about corruption, money laundering, and illicit financial flows. That was an area where the government was willing to cooperate with us. Particularly in the post-9/11 environment, the "war on terror" called for a watch on suspicious financial flows. Frankly, when the recent headlines came out about our work observing the international transfers of funds among banks and so forth, I wasn't at all surprised. We

were telling people publicly, while I was in Latvia, that we were doing this and we were demanding that the banks cooperate and assist. Latvia had been a country where banking had been a bit in the Swiss style: banking secrecy, undisclosed accounts owners, large cash transactions, and so forth. We put a lot of pressure on the entire banking industry and the government regulators. We got some of the bigger banks to begin taking the right steps, and then many of the others followed suit thereafter. I think, even in my short time, we made a big difference in the way Latvian banks approached the question of knowing your customer and trying to sort out and identify illegal behavior. We did have to get a message across.

Latvia had an unfortunate reputation of being one of the places where credit card fraud, identity theft, and eBay scams originated, not to mention pornography and so forth. Those criminals did their banking and finance through Latvia. So the FBI had an office in Tallinn, but in fact they spent more time in Riga cooperating with Latvian authorities. We got a lot of help from the Treasury Department, Secret Service, and others back here to work with the Latvian banking system. We convinced the Latvian government to tighten up their laws which helped, because at first there was no legal basis for some of the things we wanted to do. So we got those laws and regulations put into place, and then we got better cooperation. I think we really did change the attitude of the banking community. Basically, we got across the idea that government does have the right to look at your bank transactions—not to take advantage of you or help your competitors—but simply to know what is going on. If government is honest, why should it not be able to observe the financial system. Of course, this was kind of a new idea to some people.

Q: OK. You had a regional security officer in the embassy, just to come back to security for a second, who was comfortable with all these things, the freedom that you and the staff had to move around. Didn't see any threats.

CARLSON: No. All this was done in concert with the regional security officer, the RSO. I think that, like all regional security officers, he would have been happier if we had all stayed locked in the embassy, but that wasn't going to happen. We never had any real disagreements or arguments. I was reluctant initially about the bollard project. I thought this was a tremendous expense for not much gain, but eventually I allowed the RSO to convince me. Our compromise was that we would work it out in a way so it was a little more attractive. At one point, before we did the bollards project, we had some ugly concrete blocks around the embassy, and I didn't like those.

Q: Anything would be an improvement on those.

CARLSON: One of the problems was that when he placed the concrete blocks, he placed them so close together that you couldn't get a baby carriage between them the street corner. This was a street down which the people were always walking back and forth to the shops and so forth, with up-scale housing nearby. Of course, it cost a good deal of money to get the crane back out there to move the concrete blocks a few inches so a baby carriage could get through.

Q: You were in support of the baby carriages.

CARLSON: Yes. I thought we could afford enough space that you could get a baby carriage through. So when we did the bollards, we allowed for baby carriages. You also have to think about things like snow and ice removal in winter. In Estonia, the embassy tried putting in some pop-up bollards. Of course, they broke down the very first winter because no mechanism you put below ground could withstand the freezing, thawing, ice and everything else. So we knew that that wouldn't work.

Q: OK. Well, we've talked about the Russian minority, corruption, money flows.

CARLSON: The interruption of illicit money flows was, I think, an accomplishment. As I said, over a period of time we did make some good progress on that. One of my officers, Mark Draper, was outstanding in working with the banks, with the securities regulator, and the national bank. They had a combination of SEC and banking regulator in one office. Working with that office and the Association of Banks, Mark engineered real progress. To be fair, it was both carrot and stick. We had the Treasury people come out a couple of times.

Q: From Washington?

CARLSON: Yes. We threatened a 301 sanction on a couple of banks, and the bankers did understand this. Under the Patriot Act, there's a section called 301. If Treasury declares a foreign bank to be in violation of Section 301, doing things that may lead to terrorist vulnerabilities that could affect the United States, then all American banks have to cease all transactions with that bank. Very few banks anywhere in the world want to be entirely cut off from the New York financial market, even if they only have tenuous or third or fourth generation ties to the American banking system. Having that kind of club over your head will also cool your relationships with banks in Europe, because they won't risk dealing with you either. So that had a good effect.

Q: I think you used the word corruption before. Do you want to say any more about corruption as opposed to banking and money and financial transactions? Corruption in the government?

CARLSON: Corruption can be found throughout any society. This was a country, however, that emerged from a Soviet-style government and economy where, since money had little value itself, value was placed in other things such as connections and relationships. Trying to establish Western ethical business practices and legal reforms was a continual struggle. We spent a good deal of time working with the Latvians on these issues.

The Latvians had adopted a commercial code, and throughout my time there, we worked on getting the criminal code amended so it would feature western-style provisions, such as plea bargains. If you catch a petty criminal, you might convince him to rat out the boss; then you can prosecute the big boss and give a lighter sentence to the petty

criminal. This was important to being able to roll up any organized crime activities because there was no incentive for small-time criminals to work with the prosecutors. So getting those kinds of changes in place, which we finally did just as I was leaving, made a difference. We spent a good deal of time talking about reforms, and we also used small grant programs to help organizations that would encourage reforms.

We sponsored a good deal of judicial training. In the old Soviet system, being a judge was not a particularly respected position. So we organized a lot of training for judges as well as other court personnel. One good thing was the prosecutor general, Janis Maizītis, was a real force for good. He was a real stalwart, despite coming under a lot of political pressure at various times from various groups. He continued to try to do the right thing, to pursue corruption and other cases. We had a long-running case involving Proctor & Gamble which had a packaging operation in a small town in Latvia. They were paying a local printer to produce their packaging. The printer and several of his employees had defrauded Proctor & Gamble out of close to a million dollars through false billing, fraudulent invoices, and that sort of thing. Now, this printer was a big wheel in local economic circles, and the first couple of attempts to prosecute him failed because the judge wouldn't convict him, the local prosecutors would not bring a case against him, etc. We kept pursuing this matter with government officials—simply on the basis of fair treatment before the law—and at last the prosecutor general's office got on it. Eventually the prosecutor got a conviction and even began to get some of the money returned to Proctor & Gamble. That was a three-year effort over what should have been an open-and-shut case.

Q: OK. Any other problems, issues before those which we've talked about?

CARLSON: Well, I should mention one of the things that the embassy spent a good deal of time on. Latvia in World War II was the place where some of the worst aspects of the Holocaust began. When the Germans invaded Latvia in July, 1941, they basically started rounding up the Jews. They marched them out of Riga and executed them around these open pits, shooting as many as 25,000 at a time, one by one, with bullets. Besides the awfulness, the one thing that it proved was that this was a very inefficient and difficult way to kill large numbers of people. They killed the local Jewish population so they could ship even more people from the Czech Republic, Germany and Austria to the ghettos in Riga and some other Latvian cities.

Q: Jews?

CARLSON: Jews, yes. They needed to get the Jews out of the ghettos in Riga, so they were making space to...

Q: Getting rid of the Latvian Jews to make space for the Czech Jews..

CARLSON: Make space to send the ones out of the Czech Republic or other parts of Europe. Of course, as we all know now, they developed the idea of the crematoriums and death camps where they incinerated people in great numbers. Efficiency.

The whole history of the Jews and the fate of the Jews in Latvia was distorted in the Soviet period. Soviet textbooks attributed all the blame to the Germans and ignored any Latvian complicity in this. Now, in fact, it is clear from the historical records that there were Latvian sympathizers and collaborators who helped the Nazis. These were Latvians who enthusiastically went after the local Jews and so forth. Some were bullies and “skinheads” or whatever you call them these days, but, you know, participants. So getting Latvian society and officialdom to recognize this history, put it in perspective, and change the way the Holocaust is taught was one of our objectives. We wanted to make certain that Latvians did not exculpate themselves by saying, “Well, it was just the Germans.” This was a subject that we spent time on throughout my stay. My predecessors had done so, as well, and I think it continues today.

As an example of how it comes up to the embassy’s attention, there was an effort to erect a monument at one of the killing sites where the Nazis and their henchmen had killed and buried a lot of Jews from the Riga ghetto. There was to be a plaque. In the original design the plaque should say, “Here the Nazis and their Latvian collaborators killed 25,000 people on the days of...” whatever it was, the fourth and fifth or so of July, 1941. Some local officials objected to the language on the plaque; they didn’t want the words “Latvian collaborators” or “local collaborators.” This got very contentious.

Frankly, this question of an honest reconciliation with history was one area where we realized that if Latvia was to get an invitation to NATO and, for that matter, to the European Union, there had to be honesty. There *had* to be recognition of their own history and some forthrightness about it. If the government and civic leaders were in denial and refused to acknowledge any Latvian participation, well, this would raise the ire of the American-Jewish community and many others. People would question whether or not such people ought to be in NATO. We saw that this was an issue with ramifications beyond doing the right thing. After a lot of time talking to people, and with the help of the President, this turned around. I’m not sure what convinced all the members of the committee that they had an incorrect view of their own history, but it is only by taking such things seriously, and making an issue of it, that you do awaken people how the world evaluates the past and how history is regarded.

Q: To what extent is there an existing Jewish community in Latvia now?

CARLSON: It’s very small. There may be today three to six thousand ethnic Jews in all of Latvia. Most of those are actually Russian Jews who immigrated into Latvia during the Stalin period. They are ethnically Jewish, but not religiously active. There were 90,000—at least 90,000—Jews in Latvia before World War II, and virtually all were killed. The active Jewish community today is small. There were two active synagogues in the country: one in Riga which has maybe 150-300 active participants who come frequently, and another in the regional town of Daugavpils which has about 25 or 50 active participants. That’s pretty small.

Q: OK. Do you want to go on and talk maybe some about either trade, economic matters? Or do you want to talk about cultural first or something else?

CARLSON: Let me say a little something about business. One watched this economy growing and this country doing so well economically as it progressed. Latvia was a little like a greenhouse. You plant the seeds here, then you fertilize them and give them light and water—all the ingredients of free market economics, individual rights and property ownership—and look how it works! “The plants grow, green and strong.” That was sort of the way it seemed to me that Latvia was for the business community.

It was truly a land of opportunity growing from a very low starting point. In the housing sector, for example, people were moving out of small, cramped one-room apartments and getting larger apartments or moving out of the apartments and getting single family homes, or even building new homes and renovating older homes and so forth. All that kind of activity just generates more economic activity.

In Riga we had a store that looked every bit like Home Depot (I think it was actually a German chain), and there were several other home improvement competitors around, all of which were doing a land office business. Grocery stores looked very much like a Safeway or something here in the Washington area. They were expanding all over the country and providing the kinds of services, including even the ready prepared food aisles. Frozen pizza and things like that were becoming popular. So the economy was growing.

I observed quickly that the Swedes and the Germans were getting most of the profits. This is a small market, and it is a long way from the United States, so there were relatively few American companies in Latvia. Kellogg’s had been there in the early 1990’s with a cereal producing plant, but they eventually consolidated all of their cereal production into a factory in Poland. We had no large American company in the local economy.

Some of my colleagues say that’s actually a good thing, because if you have one big American corporation in a country, U. S. policy sometimes gets a wrapped around their little finger. We certainly saw something of that in Lithuania where the Williams Oil Company was much involved in a refinery there. The U. S. government lobbied long and hard for Williams to get a concession to buy the refinery in Lithuania. Then there was some turn in the company’s fortunes, and they sold the refinery to a Russian company—much to the disgust of the Lithuanians. But that’s business. When they want out, they sell. So maybe we were better off in Latvia not to have one big American firm. We had a lot of small entrepreneurs and investors and so forth, a good number of companies doing real estate investment and development and that sort of thing.

Q: Mostly in Latvian-American...

CARLSON: No. There were a few Latvian-American companies, but far more small American-owned enterprises with no particular family connection to Latvia...

To be sure, there were companies with a Latvian-American connection, and in some cases that may be why they started there. The leading law firm was founded by a Latvian-American lawyer who had come back and got started. Today that is one of the leading law firms, with correspondent relationships with prestigious American law firms. Also, companies such as Ernst & Young and accounting firms and others were supporting the financial industries. There was a company named Jeld-Wen, out of Oregon, that makes a lot of doors and windows. It's not a household name because they do not advertise, but Jeld-Wen is a major producer.

Jeld-Wen started a factory in central Latvia producing interior doors and discovered that their products began to sell well in western Russia, Ukraine, Latvia, and the Baltics. With all the renovation of homes and buildings, there was quite a need for doors. When the company decided to expand their production of particle board and were looking for a place to put a major factory, it came down to Spain or Latvia. They decided to make the \$50 million investment in Latvia because they had been treated well in their first investment, tax-wise and otherwise. The economic environment is very favorable to new investors, a flat 15% corporate tax rate. Income tax is a flat 25%.

Q: The problem is the market is small. To what extent were they serving the Baltic market or beyond?

CARLSON: They wanted to put this new factory within the European Union so they could serve the EU market. Because of the nature of the product, production could be almost anywhere as long as they could ship from it. The place where they decided to make the investment had good rail connections to the port of Riga, where you can both get the raw material in and ship the finished product out.

We also saw some American companies coming in to join the financial markets. GE Capital is there. Some of the large insurance companies like AIG are now in the market. They are using it as a base for the regional market at that end of Europe and western Russia, Ukraine, and some of the other areas that are developing fast. You probably have, within a radius of 600 miles or a thousand kilometers, some 260 million people. For most of them income and quality of life is improving and getting better. They are coming out of the old days. A lot of people are replacing their lousy Soviet-era refrigerator with a nice new one.

We tried to figure out how to attract more American business into the market and to let American business know about opportunities. One of the things we did at the end of my tour was a Baltic investment trade mission. We figured that what we needed to talk to the American capitol in Europe. If you go to New York and start talking about Latvia, nobody knows what you're talking about and their eyes glaze over.

Q: It's very small.

CARLSON: It is a very small market, very far away. It's really not worth New York's time. If you can find the American money that is already based in Europe, at least they know where Latvia is. You start from some basis of understanding and can talk about comparative advantages. We came up with the idea of a trade and investment seminar in London—because that's where the American money in Europe is to be found. We got together with the Estonian and Lithuanian governments through our embassies in those countries. In December 2004 we put on in London a major one-day trade and investment seminar featuring the presidents of Latvia and Lithuania, and the prime minister of Estonia. The reason for that slight adjustment was the president of Estonia didn't speak English. The prime minister did.

The seminar featured the senior government official from each country, as well as some representative American business people from each country. The idea was to have some U.S. business people who could tell their personal experiences: what difficulties they had run into, where they found opportunities, where they got help from local or national government. They could answer questions. We knew not to have too much of government people talking to the investors. My experience is that business people get bored very quickly listening to government people, but they like talking to fellow businessmen.

We carried this out, and I think it was quite successful. It's hard to measure the actual effect of these things because you can't say, "That deal came directly from that event." We did stimulate some interest. One example is Dell Computer. They started much of their repair call servicing out of Latvia. If you're anywhere in Europe and you have a Dell computer, and you call with a problem about it, they switch to a respondent in Latvia. So some of that kind of thing is beginning to develop.

We see some evidence of increasing investment interest. One of the major Latvian banks is today trying to offer an equity fund—basically an investment fund for a hundred million Euros—in the United States and some in Western Europe as well. I think Latvia's economy will grow slowly, and it will never displace a lot of other, more attractive investments. But, if you are interested in an 8-12% annual return, you can't get that in New York. But, you can get it in Latvia, having in mind the relative security of dealing with a country that has the same laws as the rest of the European Union. You can go to a lot of places in the world where the returns are higher, but the risks are very high, too.

Q: Latvia entered the European Union along with the other two Baltic states?

CARLSON: Yes, on May 1, 2004.

Q: About the same time as they entered NATO.

CARLSON: Yes, just a couple of weeks later. They will adopt the Euro. That's a somewhat flexible decision. The Latvians intend to do it as soon as possible. They have to live within the Euro-zone convergence criteria on debt ratios, inflation, exchange rate

stability, and all that stuff. They're doing fine on those scores, so they should be able to adopt the Euro on schedule. Latvia had a good, solid currency all along.

One of the interesting things was the man who headed the Latvian Central Bank for about nine years and eventually became prime minister, Einars Repše, was a physicist who had no real background in banking. As so often was the case in Latvia, the less tainted and yet very able people who emerged from the Soviet period – often those people came from the sciences. Not so much from political science or economics, but rather from the hard sciences such as mathematics and physics. A surprising number of people running the government today used to be in the hard sciences. I guess if you were a bright young person in the communist days who did not want to get mixed up in politics, but you wanted the privileges of foreign travel and success, one of the ways to get there was to put your efforts into science or mathematics. Sports was the other way to get foreign travel and other privileges, without getting involved in politics.

Q: We talked about Russia and the other two Baltic states. What about Belarus?

CARLSON: Yes: the sick man of Europe. Europe's last despot...

Q: Did you get involved with that at all?

CARLSON: We did in the sense that first of all, there are certain U.S. interests in Belarus, and it is right next door. We were often hosting U.S. groups coming through on the way to Belarus. Senator John McCain and some of his colleagues were in Riga several times to meet with dissidents from Belarus who came out to Latvia or to other countries to meet with him. McCain could not go into Belarus. He would not have been welcome at any point. I think all of the meetings took place in Latvia or Lithuania. The Latvians themselves were very supportive of the democratic opposition in Belarus and were both providing aid and support and, of course, a refuge across the border, and help for people when they came across.

The Latvians also actively helped the Georgians with their transition. There was a sense of obligation on the part of the Latvians that, having managed a successful transition, they could help show and share with their neighbors. They had relevance that maybe we Americans couldn't have to a country that was coming out of the Soviet experience. Our revolution was 200 years ago; Latvia's was 15 years ago. They emerged from similar kinds of structures.

Both countries must deal with things like, what do you do with the records that indicate that some of your citizens collaborated with the KBG? The Latvians were still struggling with this, as were a lot of other countries. How do you deal with the restitution of property? In the Latvian case, what they decided to do probably turned out for the best; it was an immediate and full return of all state-owned property to its private owners. If they couldn't determine who the private owner was, they sold it. It was a radical privatization approach in the early 1990s to do that, but it quickly put the economy back in the hands of private owners.

I think if you really believe in the free market, in the free enterprise system, then that is the way that works best. The record shows that it worked better than the Polish option where they tried to keep these big, inefficient steel mills in state hands, thinking that they were going to clean them up and then sell them and get more money for them. All that time and effort was wasted, while the state continued to try to operate factories.

Q: Particularly with your background in public diplomacy, how much of your time and energy did you put other public diplomacy? That is, if public diplomacy is broadly defined as relations with media and cultural areas, university exchanges?

CARLSON: For an ambassador, many of these things happen anyway. Public diplomacy is a central part of the job description. You don't have to do much, except show up and lend them your support and make sure they have the resources they need.

Q: And provide your presence.

CARLSON: Yes, you provide your presence, show up, smile, have your picture taken. I did encourage it and try to make sure we had the resources for these things. We used some of the money that Congress had allocated to Baltic programs. We used some of that for exchange programs that enabled people to come and study in the United States. I guess we should call those "education programs" because they were Latvians going to the U.S. We weren't sponsoring many Americans to come to Latvia, although we did some of that with lecture programs.

Many of those things would happen on their own. As Ambassador I we obviously took an interest in them, paid attention to them. I didn't have to do it. One of the things that became clear to me—I'm not sure I realized it before—is the ambassador is about the only person in the embassy who represents the whole United States. Most of the other Americans in the embassy work for and represent the Defense Department, the State Department, the Commerce Department, the Agriculture Department, or some other department. They think of their job as doing what their own Department needs done. If you go to them and you say, "There's a group of American missionaries downstairs, and they want to talk to somebody..." -- well, nobody thinks it is their job to deal with missionaries. The ambassador, however, realizes that these are American citizens whom he represents. All those people are paying the bills.

I think that understanding that the ambassador is representing the whole United States, not just the government agencies, was something that colored my approach to the job. I don't know if my staff always understood why I did it, but often I was willing to accept an invitation to go to some event or show up to something. Other employees may have said, "Well, I don't have to do that." "It's not my job."

Q: Or meet with the group.

CARLSON: I tried to make sure that we did. I learned this from London when I served in London. There are many different groups in the host society, American as well as foreign, who believe they have a stake in the embassy, who wants some attention at the embassy. You need to keep checking and make sure you're touching all those bases. When was the last time you met with the military, or went to the Navy League event, or whatever else? Have you been seen with the business community recently, such as at the American Chamber of Commerce or some other group that brings them together? Have you paid attention to the schools and the teachers and the parent-teacher associations?

Q: The school being the International School or American School?

CARLSON: I mean the American school, but there could be others. In Spain there were over 70,000 American students in "semester abroad" programs at Spanish universities. At the embassy in Riga we also did spend some time on the Latvian school system—mainly because of Holocaust issues and the right of Russian non-citizens. I dealt with the minister of education and various other ministers on those things. We had two American schools in Riga, so it was a healthy competition there. One went from kindergarten through high school, and the other was only through fourth grade. One was close in, the other further out of city center.

Q: Both established in the last 10 years or so.

CARLSON: Since independence, 15 years. All of that led to it being a fairly happy embassy community. We had good housing for our embassy staff. Everyone lived in an apartment, but all the apartments were within a perimeter patrolled of the embassy local guard force. We prevented a number of petty thefts and robberies, and we provided some security that way. We knew where our staff was. They got large, light, airy, well-equipped, modern apartments, and the kids had good schools to go to. In that sense, I think we had a relatively happy embassy.

One of the things I spent some time on, partly from personal interest, was the arts. I learned from the ambassador in Spain the value of demonstrating a decent respect for the talents and the chief accomplishments of the host country, and I wanted to do that, too. One way to do this is by paying attention to what they value in the arts, particularly the plastic arts in this case. But, Latvia also has a wonderful musical tradition, including composers, performers, beautiful voices, and choirs.

There were several ways we manifested this interest. First of all, we used the Art in Embassy program to the fullest. Before departing Washington, my wife and I made a selection of American artists, maybe the lesser works of greater artists and the greater works of lesser artists. We tried to pick artists and works that would have some appeal and meaning to Latvians. There had been a major Andy Warhol exhibit there a couple of years before, so we made sure to bring a Warhol. Latvians do a lot of glass work, so we brought a piece by Dale Chihuly, the noted American glass artist. They also do sculpture in wood, so we had a nice wood piece. But also, we included some things they would recognize. They was a Julian Schnabel, Roy Lichtenstein, and a Jim Dine—things

knowledgeable people should have heard of. We had a reception when we first had the art all installed in the house. We invited one of the artists, Valentina DuBasky to visit Riga. We had two of her works in the collection, in part because she is a southern California artist of Russian background. We invited her over to do some master classes.

Throughout my tour we paid attention to the local arts community. My wife and I would often on a Sunday afternoon—if we didn't have anything else to do—go downtown and see what the galleries were showing or simply attend the openings of artists' shows. It doesn't accomplish any great U.S. national purpose, but it is fun, and people appreciated that you cared at least a little bit about what they were doing. And, it is a great way to meet politicians, businessmen, journalists and academics.

We learned that the American artist Mark Rothko had been born in Latvia, although it was part of Russia at the time. He was born there in 1903. I did not know, when we were preparing to go to Riga, that we were going to be there during the 100th anniversary of his birth. After we were in Riga, some people approached us, talking about this, and wanting to do something to mark this fact. They wanted to draw some attention to Rothko and his connection to Latvia. It sounded to me like a won-win situation.

Here we have an American artist's life story. A Latvian Jew, whose family fled the persecutions and the pogroms of that time, Rothko left Latvia when he was 10 years old in 1913. He came to the United States, moved all the way across the country to Oregon. He ends up going to Yale: a first generation immigrant child later goes to one of the finest universities in the United States, and becomes a highly successful artist. You can argue about whether or not you like Rothko's work, but he was the first to do it. His use of color fields was fundamental to establishing or starting abstract expressionism. His art is still much valued today. It sells for some of the highest prices of any modern artist. And, there is this connection to Latvia. This seemed like a natural.

I wished I had the good sense to have included a Rothko work in our Art in Embassies collection. We asked about it, but we were told it would require so much insurance, a visit by a curator, and special security to protect it because of the high value of Rothko's works—that it simply was above the budget. Now, knowing that it was going to be the centenary of Rothko's birth, I wish we had actually pursued that more and perhaps gotten flexibility on those rules.

When we started talking with Latvian curators and culture ministry officials, we hoped to put on an exhibition of some reproductions of Rothko's works. As we worked on this, the possibilities grew. We worked on this virtually from the time we arrived in Riga. My wife put in a great deal of time on it. She and the public affairs officer made the project come together.

We did manage, in the end, to get an exhibition of 21 Rothko originals sent from the National Gallery of Art here in Washington, D.C. The exhibition came to Latvia for a two-month showing. The exhibition then went on to tour elsewhere, with shows in St. Petersburg and Mexico City. As this was one of the first major Rothko retrospectives in

some time in Europe, we managed to organize an international conference with a lot of experts on Rothko's work from Switzerland, England, and the United States. The conference was held in Daugavpils, in eastern Latvia. It was the first international conference held in the city of Rothko's birth since the restoration of Latvian independence. Merely holding the conference there had its own meaning, because Daugavpils is a city filled with ethnic Russians, many of whom immigrated to Latvia in the late 20th century. It is the second largest city in Latvia, but the people there feel very much in Riga's shadow and that they do not get as much attention as they deserve.

Q: Were Jews concentrated in Daugavpils?

CARLSON: There's a small but significant Jewish community there. That's where the second synagogue is. In Rothko's day, it was "within the pale."

It was important to do something there. It was useful for the Americans to bring the Latvians and Russians together in Daugavpils. That had a nice touch to it. The whole Rothko centenary played on a number of embassy themes in a helpful way. We did not revise world history, and it was one of those things into which you invest a lot of energy, but I thought it actually paid off. People remember.

I think public diplomacy does not just mean giving a speech or writing talking points for the press. Public diplomacy is engaging with the people of the other country and beginning to educate each other about each other. You learn about each other. It is only when you get that level of engagement that you get any traction. If we just stand there and talk at each other using our talking points, that's really not public diplomacy. You need to work together on projects and activities.

This is an example of public diplomacy that really brought us together. We worked with the foreign ministry and other ministries, we dealt with political leaders at all levels up and down the country. It's amazing the number of people that get involved in something like this.

Q: It's also one of those areas where a diplomat or ambassador could make a difference. If you didn't do all those things, it wouldn't have happened.

CARLSON: That's true. If you had not had somebody pushing it along, especially at the beginning, it might never have happened. I don't underestimate that because the American ambassador was taking an interest in the project, it was taken more seriously and probably got more interest and support from the Latvian government.

Q: In terms of the National Gallery of Art and its participation, was that something you also worked on, arranged, or...

CARLSON: With other people helping, I did. One of the things staff drafted were telegrams. I communicated with Patricia Harrison who was the acting Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy to get a small grant to help support sending the exhibition over

there, to pay the travel costs. The National Gallery of Art itself put together the collection and provided the curators and developed the catalog. Two curators from the National Gallery must have spent six or eight months on this project, so this was no small commitment on their part. A lot of people got involved in something like this. I argued for that.

We also went through a change in the ministers of culture in Latvia, so I was much involved with the first one to get this project all set up. Then, seeing that they were going to have a change of government, we schemed a bit to get a document signed to make sure this project would go forward no matter who was elected. There was a little bit of political strategy in that.

Q: You'd get some continuity.

CARLSON: We had the President's and other people's support of the concept. And we did some fundraising. We raised the money for the conference to pay for travel expenses and conference arrangements.

Q: Were they done in Latvia?

CARLSON: Primarily in Latvia. We got all the money from within Latvia. We did have contributions from the Rothko family that came from New York and Washington.

Q: Some of the members of the family came?

CARLSON: The son and the daughter. Mark Rothko had two children. Rothko himself committed suicide in 1970, but his son and daughter and their respective families came to the conference. They have been back since. That even led to something else.

At the end of the conference, when everything was winding down, the Rothko children said that they would like to do something in Daugavpils to commemorate the fact that this is their father's birthplace. They were thinking a monument or something. Now, we had actually taken them to visit the synagogue their father had attended as a child. It was rather run down. Beginning in the Soviet period, the synagogue got no attention whatsoever and was allowed to deteriorate. The ceiling was falling, books were mildewing, and everything else was in ruin.

I said, "I understand your father was not especially religious, but what better way to memorialize him than to do something to help this small Jewish synagogue and its congregation? They are not going to be able to do much restoration work on their own. Probably a few dollars would make a big difference." They agreed, and we got working on that.

That led to the question of how to do this. Even if the Rothko family were able to provide the money, who would they give the money to? And, how could they be sure it was well spent? I knew about a USG entity called the United States Commission on the

Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad. It is a congressionally-established organization that raises money to restore cemeteries, historic sites, and whatever will memorialize America's role abroad. A lot of their work tends to be Jewish heritage sites in Western Europe. Knowing Warren Miller, who heads the commission and some of his members, I put them together with the Rothkos. Another benefit of working through this commission is the tax deduction for gifts. As Christopher Rothko said, "Even better."

Next Warren Miller called me and said, "Now, I've got this wonderful contribution from the Rothkos, but how am I going to restore a synagogue in eastern Latvia?" After more thought, we put him in touch with an American businessman in Riga named Jerry Wirth who owned a real estate and construction company. I said, "Why don't you guys talk?" Wirth is an ex-Peace Corps volunteer and his company had done several Art Nouveau restorations in Riga's historic area. He had some excellent craftsmen who were able to do restoration work in stone and wood. They worked it out and got it done.

In the end, the project wasn't \$15,000. It ended up more like \$95,000. Of course, it is a beautiful restoration. We went back this past April for the synagogue's dedication ceremony. It featured the President and many leading government and social figures. The result is beautiful, and meaningful.

Q: They probably said something about Mark Rothko.

CARLSON: Exactly. I am sure the Rothko family will continue to travel back there and maintain ties with Latvia. A lot of good things come out of these things once you get them started. You never know where it's going to go.

Q: Anything else about public diplomacy? I want to ask you about the League of Women Business leaders' summit?

CARLSON: How could I have forgotten it? I should have mentioned that when talking about business.

As I mentioned earlier, when I had my confirmation hearing, one of the other people appearing before the Senate sub-committee was Bonnie McElveen-Hunter from North Carolina, the ambassador-designate to Finland. Bonnie is a real dynamo, a business woman who has been quite successful. She founded Pace Communication, a publisher of many airline magazines. She knows a lot of people in business and finance in the South, and she was long a supporter of Libby Dole. In Finland she held a conference of Baltic and American women business leaders. It was one of these things that she became very engaged in, and she used her U.S. connections to invite top American women business leaders, CEO's, and owners of businesses to come to Finland and meet counterparts from Finland. She did that in the summer of 2002 or 2003.

It was not limited to Finland. She involved the Baltics and some of the neighboring countries, and one of the people she invited was the president of Latvia, Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga. The two of them hit it off. The Latvian president suggested a second such

meeting be held in Latvia. With that for an impetus, I saw the opportunity to bring 50 top-level American CEO's and owners of businesses to Latvia as a good thing. They'd all be women who know a lot and talk to a lot of people. Bringing them to a part of the world they have never seen before, and give them a couple of days of interaction with Latvian and Baltic counterparts. I thought it was a good idea. With Bonnie's help and with the President's help, we organized this in the late summer of 2004, in September. We invited a slightly different mix than the ones who were in Helsinki the year before. We involved 35 Latvian business leaders and a sprinkling from Lithuania, Estonia, and a couple of Finns, a couple of Swedes, a couple of Russians as well, a couple Ukrainians. The idea was to match expertise and industry or field. If somebody was the owner of a travel agency or a chain of travel agencies, then we got a travel industry person from the other side. We linked bank presidents to bank presidents.

Q: You tried to pair them up.

CARLSON: The idea was to share experiences on things like raising capital, dealing with boards of directors, marketing, all the things that business people come up with and have experience with. I think, frankly, that women are better coming together, sharing, and talking openly about their experiences. President Vīķe-Freiberga said, "Four women will tell each other more about each other in the first five minutes than four men will tell each other in the course of five years." There is a greater willingness to share. It certainly worked: for example, the vice president of Marriott introduced some invaluable new thinking on the Latvian travel and tourism market.

You would not do a project like this everywhere, but this is unlike talking about Germany. A lot of people have been to Germany. In this case, you actually introduced the Americans to the product, a country and a market they have never seen before. They have no idea what it looks like until they get there.

Q: Or what the people are like.

CARLSON: It makes all the difference in the world to bring people to the site.

Q: Why don't we stop at this point?

CARLSON: Okay.

End of interview