

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

TED FEIFER

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy

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Q: Today is October 8, 2015. This is an interview with Theodore Feifer by the Association of Diplomatic Studies and Training. I am Charles Stuart Kennedy. You go by Ted, don't you?

FEIFER: Call me Ted.

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

FEIFER: I was born in Manhattan, New York, September 28, 1947.

Q: All right, let's get a little bit of background. What do you know about the Feifer side of your family?

FEIFER: I believe my father's family came from the part of Austrian Poland known as Galicia in the late nineteenth century. My mother's parents came from Russian Poland in the early twentieth century.

Q: Let's start with your father's side. What was your grandfather doing?

FEIFER: I know little about my father's family. My father died when he was 38 years old. I was nine months old. My mother didn't get along with his family. They were apparently not a nice bunch. What I know of my father is more or less from documents that have survived. My father grew up in New York City and lived through the depression. He was a cab driver in New York in the 1930s and then a truck driver delivering newspapers. He died in 1948. He came from a large family, which was very common at the time. I never met any of them.

Q: How about your mother's side? What do you know?

FEIFER: My mother was close to her mother, brothers and sisters. I knew many of them well, and several took care of me when I was growing up. My mother had a tough life. She was on very bad terms with her father, who she termed a typical old country bully, hard and difficult to get along with. In contrast, she loved her mother deeply and acted as her defender. One of the stories my mother told me about her parents was fascinating. Her father had emigrated from Poland to the U.S. to make his fortune, as so many others did. Like others, he didn't take his wife or two children. The expectation was that he

would send for his family later on. Well, some did and some didn't. Three years passed and he still had not sent for them. My grandmother decided she would go to America on her own. Now, this is a woman without resources living in some small town in Poland, speaking Yiddish, with little or no formal education. She worked as a seamstress, probably piece work, and had never been outside of her small world. She traveled with her two kids to Hamburg, got on a boat, made her way to the Lower East Side of New York, and went looking for her husband. How did she do it? She went looking for the relevant *Landsmanshaft*, a sort of mutual aid society which helped people from the same part of the old country, and through it found him. So they were together again. They would have another three or four children but he was not, to say the least, a nice guy. My mother had to do piece work on a sewing machine as a 6-year old. Her father saw no reason for girls to get an education. A school truant officer forced him to let her go to school. She couldn't wait to escape. She married at 16 primarily to get away. She was nonetheless committed to finishing high school. She went to night school and received her diploma at 19.

Q: That's remarkable.

FEIFER: Graduating from high school was an achievement for the time -- during the Great Depression --and certainly given her personal situation, amazing.

Q: Amazing it really is.

FEIFER: It showed a commitment to being more than she might have been and a respect for education.

Q: It seems like women in your family had powerful personalities.

FEIFER: My mother was always a working woman. I wasn't born until she was almost 34.

Q: Oh, so almost 20 years. How was her relationship with her husband?

FEIFER: My mother didn't look back very much. I think life was sufficiently challenging for her that it didn't help to look back. She always tried to make the best of the situation and looked forward.

Q: Well your father died just after you were born. What did your mother do, how did she make her way?

FEIFER: I know that she worked for Western Union during World War II. Even though we think of New York as a cosmopolitan town, she told me she often faced anti-Semitism. As a result, since her maiden name was Richman, she went by Richmond as a way to get jobs and avoid prejudice. She spoke with an almost English accent to match her adopted English name.

Q: Ah, yes.

FEIFER: She was working for a society doctor on E. 82nd Street off Fifth Avenue in Manhattan when I was born. That's the reason I was born at Park East Hospital off Park Avenue. Her boss arranged for her to give birth at the hospital at which he treated his clients. My parents were living at the time in a tenement on the Lower East Side in Manhattan.

Q: What do you recall about your early years?

FEIFER: My first home was a two-room apartment at 413 East Houston Street on the Lower East Side. The bathtub was in the kitchen, one of the two rooms. The building no longer exists. The block was demolished and a public library built on the site. It was a few blocks from the East River. My mother told me there were a lot of sailors living there. She said that she and my father were the only ones in the building with a telephone.

I mentioned that my father died when I was nine months old. Things became very difficult for my mother. She had conflicts with her husband's side of the family and had to go to court to defend her interests. In addition, I understand that I was not a healthy baby and that added more stress. That was the situation for my first few years.

Since my mother was a working woman, she hired neighborhood kids to help take care of me. I spent a lot of quality time near my home in Hamilton Fish Park, which still exists.

By the way, my mother mentioned to me that she and my father were planning to move from the Lower East Side to Long Island. They were seeking to move up the ladder from the slums to suburbia. However, my father died when we were still on the Lower East Side, and my mother missed the opportunity at that time to make the move out.

Q: How long did you live in tenements on the Lower East Side?

FEIFER: We lived on East Houston Street for a few years. In the early 1950s we moved a few blocks to another tenement on 170 Ludlow Street. We lived around the corner from Katz's Delicatessen, which became famous outside the city as a result of the 1989 movie *When Harry Met Sally*. We moved to another apartment at 203 East Broadway near the Educational Alliance a few years later. Passing through the old neighborhood recently I noticed that this building has been demolished.

Q: I grew up in California in a completely different environment, but when you talk about the Lower East Side I think of the East Side Kids and all the movies about tenement living. What was it like for you when you began to go out beyond your mother's threshold?

FEIFER: Everything seemed quite natural. Decades later, when I took my wife and two kids and showed them where and how I lived, they looked like I was talking about the dark side of the Moon. They couldn't imagine my hanging out in the streets all the time.

Q: Stick ball and all?

FEIFER: Exactly. I hung out at the Educational Alliance settlement house with my friends, which reflected every immigrant group in the neighborhood. I explained the life to my kids and it was just so bizarre to them. That sort of tenement life is just beyond comprehension to kids raised in suburban middle class Maryland.

Q: Looking back, with a certain amount of nostalgia, it was very rich. Kids had their own society.

FEIFER: First, we accepted our world as a given. That was the way things were for us. Second, we hung out in the streets. I knew the streets of the Lower East Side like the back of my hand. We were quite an eclectic group of people of every sort under the sun. I'll go back a little bit because that's important. By this time, my mother was working in an office in a Jewish religious school on Henry Street on the Lower East Side. I ended going to the school, presumably out of convenience. I would go to school in the morning and go home with my mother at night. When my mother had to work late, she sent me out to eat dinner at a restaurant around the corner.

Q: How rich was your upbringing?

FEIFER: The Jewish religious school was Orthodox. My home life was Jewish and completely secular, which was a strange sort of dissonance. Although Jewishness was inherent in everything my mother did, she was not someone who ever went to a synagogue; I can't remember ever being taken to synagogue when I was growing up.

Q: How did things go at school?

FEIFER: My mother was pleased that I had the benefit of a good education. At the same time, I was there but in a way I was not there. I was a poor student. I was not interested in the religious side of the program at all.

Q: How Orthodox was this school?

FEIFER: Religious class took place mornings, and secular class afternoons. It was a long day, 9am to 6pm, Sunday through Thursday and a half day on Friday.

Q: Was it like in suburbia, albeit a very modest suburbia, and you came home from school and your mother would say, "Okay, dinner is at 6:30 p.m. be home at that time?" Then you were on your own, and you had your friends. Was that your life?

FEIFER: Not suburbia at all. Travel was by public transportation. When I got home it was dinner and television time. I had dinner in front of the television. That was one of my great connections with my mother. We'd just watch television, especially movies, day and night. Putting me in front of the television was a good way to make sure I was

occupied, starting when I was a baby. It also gave her time to do things, so television became a very important part of our lives.

Q: This was very early television?

FEIFER: Very early. She must have bought a television in 1949 or 1950.

Q: It was just when they were coming into families. Did you sit and watch with other kids?

FEIFER: No, I didn't. I spent a lot of time with my mother watching television. By the way, I haven't so far talked about my mother's family. She had five or six siblings and they were very close. She had a sister who lived in Brighton Beach in Brooklyn near Coney Island, so I spent a lot of time with them. This Aunt had a son who was a little older than me, so it was a convenient arrangement to get me out of the house. It gave me an opportunity to be near the beach and I spent a lot of time with my Aunt and her family. I also had a maiden aunt who lived in mid-town Manhattan, who was close to my mother.

Q: What sort of things did you do when you weren't watching TV and hanging out in the streets?

FEIFER: When I was a toddler my mother took me to museums and tried to get me interested in playing some instrument. I wasn't very interested in playing music at the time. Later, I spent a lot of time reading. I read history, politics, and adventure novels. They gave me a taste for things foreign and conjured up the excitement of the outside world.

Q: I take it you spent a lot of time in the public library?

FEIFER: Yes, I lived very close to a public library. In addition, we always had lots of books in the house.

Q: Did you have librarians who fed you things?

FEIFER: I didn't need anyone to develop my interests or guide my reading. I was interested in history and foreign affairs even as a kid eight, nine and ten years old. I still remember reading high school history review books at that age and thought it was really interesting stuff. When I was with my cousin, we had a very typical city life hanging out, walking the boardwalk to Coney Island, going to Steeplechase Park, playing kick the can, stick ball, punch ball, the kind of things I did in school as well. My cousin wasn't interested in books at all. On the one hand, I did lots of reading at home. I was very interested in exploring the world that way. I watched lots of television, that influenced my way of looking at the world too. I hung out with kids on the street, and with friends at school.

Q: Well then, although you were watching movies most of the time, did you get involved in things like watching the Korean War. It may have been over by the time you started reading.

FEIFER: It was.

Q: The McCarthy hearings?

FEIFER: I don't remember those political events. Television and movies was my prism. New York City at that time had a number of channels, which showed movies on an Early Show, a Late Show, a Late Late Show, and the Million Dollar Movie which showed the same film for a week. You could see movies just about any time of day. I never minded seeing movies over and over, strange that. And to this day, I continue to have a great appreciation for old movies.

Q: What about the neighborhood? Were you spilt up into gangs, Jewish gangs, Irish gangs, Italian gangs? How did it work?

FEIFER: The Lower East Side was in many ways like little villages. Some places were safer, others less safe. But the streets were our universe. I lived in a primarily Jewish environment as I was growing up. Things changed when I became a teenager. I lived in the same neighborhood, but started hanging out, and my world became much more multifaceted, multiethnic. My circle broadened significantly. My friends and I belonged to a settlement house, the Educational Alliance. We had a club, rather than a gang. You could call it a social/baseball team with guys, and the girls who hung out with us. We hung out in a particular park in the neighborhood. You knew where to go to meet up. The kids were Jewish, Italian, Polish, Chinese, American-born and foreign-born. That was the group I grew up with.

Q: Did your reading separate you from a bunch of the guys and all or not?

FEIFER: At home reading seemed natural, but it was something that marked me out as a little bit different. I can't remember ever discussing anything I had read with any other kids. If they were readers, we never talked about it. Sports and hanging out were the important things. My cousin and his friends in Brooklyn were also not readers, plus they were a little older than me. This definitely made me an outsider to them.

Q: How about school? How did you adjust to school?

FEIFER: I was a poor student and quite happy to leave religious elementary school. I had a number of choices. New York City has several specialized high schools, in addition to the regular neighborhood high schools. The specialized high schools have entrance examinations. You may have heard about one of them, Performing Arts (the basis for the movie *Fame*). I knew nothing about that school then. Stuyvesant High School, which was closest to where I lived and then on E. 15 Street off First Avenue, was for the intellectually gifted, specializing in math and science. I had little interest or aptitude for

those subjects, but Stuyvesant was the school every aspiring kid wanted to go to if he (it was boys only until 1969) could get in. I passed the entrance test for Stuyvesant. Despite that, I was still a mediocre student. I was not very interested in the heavy math and science curriculum. It was a funny situation being a poor student in a school for the intellectually gifted.

Q: What was the high school like?

FEIFER: Stuyvesant was at that time about 60 percent Jewish. In New York the population was then about 40 percent Jewish. That, however, was changing. In addition to African Americans, there was a big Puerto Rican immigration into New York in the late 1940s. Parts of the Lower East Side shifted from Jewish to Puerto Rican and the same for other areas which might have been Ukrainian or Polish or Italian; they shifted. Chinatown, also part of Lower East Side, was expanding due to Chinese immigration. Little Italy was shrinking. The children of immigrants were moving out. The ethnic geography of the Lower East Side was changing. The urban geography was also changing, with slum clearance and the building of public and middle income housing projects. Stuyvesant is largely Asian-American today.

Q: Did you learn Yiddish or was Yiddish on its way out?

FEIFER: Yiddish was passed down from my grandparents to my mother and ended there. My mother spoke to her mother in Yiddish. My mother, however, was as Americanized as one could be. She affected an English accent and spoke very, very proper English. Yet she could speak fluent Yiddish, as required. She never felt the need to speak or teach Yiddish to me. I never learned the language. In fact, when my grandmother was in her last decade, I couldn't converse with her. She spoke only Yiddish. She would call on the phone and I knew it was my grandmother and I'd say yeah, I'll have my mom call you back. I couldn't even say the basic niceties in Yiddish. The immigration of Jewish Holocaust survivors in the late 1940s gave Yiddish a slight lease on life, and sometimes survived to the next generation. Ultra-Orthodox Jews, however, have continued to use Yiddish.

Q: Was Stuyvesant a nice school?

FEIFER: It was math and science heavy. Lots of homework.

Q: What were you favorite and least favorite subjects?

FEIFER: Math and science were my least favorite.

Q: Did you ever think you were in the wrong place?

FEIFER: I liked history. I took Hebrew as my foreign language because I had absorbed some in religious school. I had a Hebrew teacher who tried to spur my interest in the subject,

Q: When you were in high school did Israel attract you as a cause or goal or anything?

FEIFER: Because I was interested in history, Jewish history was of particular interest to me. I understood that Jewish history was a way to understand my antecedents. How did Jews by the name of Feifer or Richman, German names, end up in Poland? So, trying to understand something about myself led me to Jewish history, not only two thousand years ago but even more over the last centuries. What was the situation of Jews in various parts of the world? What happened in the decade before I was born? Because my grandparents had come to the U.S. from Eastern Europe, whatever family there we might have had were not close relations. It is likely that my grandparents had brothers and sisters, uncles and aunts, and other family who were lost in the Holocaust. But these were not close relations.

Q: Was the Holocaust something that hung about your neck. Was the Holocaust something people would talk about?

FEIFER: When I was growing up I had many friends whose parents had survived the Holocaust and concentration camps. Their families had come to the U.S as refugees, as mine had come a half century earlier. New York absorbed a great many Jewish and other refugees after World War II. Many kids I knew had been born in DP Camps and had come to the U.S. as young children.

Q: DP stands for Displaced Persons.

FEIFER: Many of my friends had been born in Germany, Austria, or Italy, and then emigrated to the U.S. They were my peers, and in school with me in elementary school, high school and college. I looked at my high school year book last night. I graduated early, in January 1964. Of those, 25 that graduated at the same time, maybe 20 were Jewish and half of them were the children of refugees.

Q: What were you getting from your mother? Was it pressure to study hard, so you might make something out of yourself?

FEIFER: She had a very interesting approach, which was to urge me to stay in school as long as I could. She didn't tell me what to study. She didn't say I want you to be a doctor, a lawyer, or some sort of professional. Neither did she urge me to make money. She didn't say: I want you to be this or that. She consistently said to stay in school as long as I can, that was her guidance.

Q: In high school did you get involved in extracurricular activities?

FEIFER: Well, in high school I had a strange kind of existence. On the one hand, I was living on the Lower East Side, hanging out with a group of kids going to the neighborhood high school, Seward Park. On the other hand, I was going to Stuyvesant High School, a special school for the intellectually gifted, drawing kids from all over the

city. So I'm hanging out in my free time with one group of kids less interested in school, and going to school with kids who were high achievers.

Q: What about girls? I would imagine Stuyvesant wouldn't be overflowing with girls.

FEIFER: Stuyvesant was male only until 1969. It didn't go coed until six years after my graduation. The girls I hung out with were primarily from the neighborhood. Stuyvesant also had a brother/sister arrangement with Hunter College High School, which was then all female. The two schools had periodic dances. I also had met girls during the summer at Camp Edalia, a sleepaway Jewish Federation camp. Later on I started going up to the 92nd Street YMHA, an uptown Jewish community center. I'd go there to play basketball, go to a dance, and then go home on the subway.

Q: How about standing room at plays and the artistic life at the museums and all?

FEIFER: When I was growing up my mother made an incredible effort to introduce me to culture, to music, to play an instrument, which didn't take. She'd take me to museums. She wanted me to have as many opportunities as possible. She certainly wanted me to be exposed to what New York City had to offer in terms of culture, given the limits of her financial situation.

Q: Did you develop a love of theater or go to the downtown movies, museums or art galleries or what on your own?

FEIFER: I can't remember ever going to a play until I was an adult. It was just too expensive for us. Going to a museum, on the other hand, just involved a subway ride. Museum entrance was free. That may have been one reason why I didn't develop an appreciation for theater. I didn't go to Carnegie Hall or go to hear classical music; all these things cost money. Movies, on the other hand, were a neighborhood thing and inexpensive. I still remember when I was about nine; I went to a movie at Loew's Canal Theater (which no longer exists) on a Friday afternoon. The main feature was run over and over. A patron could stay as long as he or she wanted. I liked the movie so much, Danny Kaye in *The Court Jester*, that I watched it three times. My mother didn't know where I was and was frantic!

Q: Any movies particularly stick in your mind that really grabbed you?

FEIFER: Well, I really liked Danny Kaye. Watching TV I memorized the dialogues from all the film noirs, all the mysteries, Humphrey Bogart, Charlie Chan, all of them. To this day I still love that type of film.

Q: Did you have any particular interest in foreign affairs?

FEIFER: I have my eighth grade graduation autograph book. One page asks "What profession would you like?" I'd written diplomacy. I think diplomacy had an aura of magic about it and this is what world leaders did to change the world, to have incredible

influence on developments. It was the magic side of history. Of course, I learned later on I hadn't the slightest idea what diplomacy was, but that was later. So, I apparently felt early on that I wanted into diplomacy.

Q: By the way did you grow up in a Democratic or Republican type household or anything?

FEIFER: Very Democratic with a capital D.

Q: I would assume so coming from your background.

FEIFER: It was natural.

Q: Well, when it came time for college, I assume your mother wanted you to continue in school.

FEIFER: Of course. But I graduated high school with a very, very low average that wouldn't get me into most colleges. We didn't have the resources to pay for a private college. So I spent a year at Bronx Community College. I either woke up or the expectations were lower than at Stuyvesant. I got an A- average in my first year and transferred to City College of New York, which at the time cost \$18 a term.

Q: Alright, let's talk about CCNY, City College of New York, what was the system like and let's talk about your impression of it.

FEIFER: City College of New York. The student body has always been a reflection of New York. It was and continues to be the vehicle through which new immigrants and their children became Americanized, receive educations and get a chance for a better future. I followed a well-worn route.

Q: What was your experience of the student body where you were? What were they like?

FEIFER: The student body at the time was, I'd say, half Jewish. Today it is probably half Asian-American. CCNY was often termed the proletarian Harvard. It was tuition-free. It was a subway school; there were no dorms. Students lived at home. My best life-long friend was a guy who I met at CCNY. His closest friend at the time knew me from elementary school, so he introduced us. Both of them were the children of Holocaust survivors from Poland. We lived a few blocks from each other in the Bronx, where my mother and I had moved to in the mid-1960s. We met as sophomores in college and have stayed friends to today.

Q: Did CCNY, when you were there, have an active political movement going on or movements?

FEIFER: It was an interesting place in the second half of the 1960s. City College sits on a hill on top of Harlem. Most students took the subway and got off at either the 145th Street

or 125th Street stations, and then walked through Harlem to the City College campus. We passed through Harlem, but were not a part of Harlem life. This was the height of the civil rights movement, the assassination of Martin Luther King, and riots in various cities. The politics and issues of the time were all around us.

Q: What was the attitude those around you toward the civil rights movement?

FEIFER: It was all around us. I remember watching on television what was going on during Freedom Summer, the burnings of Black Churches in the South, and the murders of the three civil rights workers in Mississippi.

Q: While the 1960s civil rights movement was going on there was also the youth culture of never trust anybody over thirty. Many college students got hooked into the spirit of rebellion and all of this. How about you?

FEIFER: I was somewhat different. I was looking for fun, travel and adventure. Where was I going to find it? I was fascinated by the conflicts going on in the world. The Viet Nam War had been going on for a decade, with the deployment of large U.S. combat units just starting. I was an avid reader of the history of the conflict, but in retrospect understood far less than I thought I did. I joined ROTC, the short 2-year Reserve Officers Training Corps two-year course. In the summer of 1966 I flew -- my first plane ride -- from New York to Louisville, Kentucky, to Fort Knox for six weeks basic training.

Q: What was Fort Knox like?

FEIFER: Fort Knox, besides being the site of the Federal Gold Depository, is one of the U.S. Army's basic infantry training centers and home of the Armor School. The deployment of major U.S. ground combat forces to South Viet Nam in 1965 led to a sharp increase in the numbers of recruits pouring into training centers like Fort Knox. I went through basic training before returning to City College in the fall, where ROTC was one of my courses. This made me a little different from a lot of other kids. If the 1960s was a time of rebellion, I was going my way.

Q: And it also got you out of the draft.

FEIFER: In a way. I did the two years ROTC course, including a six week advanced training at Indiantown Gap Military Reservation in Pennsylvania in the summer of 1967. The February 1968 Tet Offensive, however, turned me around. I finally understood something about Viet Nam and the nature of the conflict there. I had a good friend in ROTC who had his feet more firmly on the ground. I finally realized that this was not a game, this was real. Both of us went out canvassing for the anti-war candidate Gene McCarthy as the Democratic nominee for President because we realized the war was a loser, what we had heard about it was wrong.

Q: How did you find basic training?

FEIFER: What I remember was the opportunity to meet people from every part of the country. Everybody was a college student, but there were also striking regional and social differences. One day a guy picked a fight with me for no reason. To this day I can't imagine why. The last thing in the world I wanted to do was get into a fight over nothing with who knows what sort of consequences. I got out of that situation as quickly as possible. However, I continued to wonder what it been about. Why was this guy picking on me? Was it my background or personality? Did I do something to irritate him or was it something I represented? Fortunately, we had had no real contact and lived on different floors of the barracks. Did he have a problem with someone from New York? What was going on? I never found out, but I stayed far away from that guy.

Q: I had four years as an enlisted man during the Korean War. I leaned very quickly to steer clear of people from the south. Although I lived in Maryland, I found some with hair-trigger tempers. I don't fight so I stayed clear from them.

Before I forget it, what did you major in at CCNY?

FEIFER: Political Science -- but that was not what I had thought. I considered myself a History major. I took mostly History and some Political Science courses. I had always been interested in Asia and started homing in on this area. During my senior year I took several Asia-related courses and started studying Japanese language. I also took a course on Viet Nam and America, although I have no recollection now of the content. I heard about a program to take a group of Americans students to Japan for summer study. I thought that would be great. I tried to figure out how to make myself an attractive candidate. I went to my interview and tried to convince them I wanted to immerse myself in Japanese culture, I wanted to be part of it. I didn't want to speak English or associate with other Americans for three months; I wanted to speak only Japanese and interact only with Japanese. After I was rejected for the program, I found out that I hadn't done enough research. The program was to take a group of American students to Japan and have them share their experiences as a group living in a foreign culture. I had said all the wrong things. I was so irritated I stopped studying Japanese.

In my last year I went to the Registrar's Office and said, I'm planning to graduate, please check my file to make sure everything is okay. The person told me, Mr. Feifer, you didn't take the half credit Historiography course which is required for all History majors.

Q: For what?

FEIFER: Historiography, the study of History. Are you kidding me? I replied. I've taken ten courses in History but can't graduate as a History major? No, you have to take this course. You must stay another term to take it. I said: That's crazy. Then I asked: Do I have other options? She looked at my file and said: You've taken enough courses in Political Science to graduate as a Political Science major. I said: Sounds good to me. That's how I became a Political Science major.

Q: I think of CCNY, maybe back in an earlier era, as very left wing, socialist?

FEIFER: That would be more the 1930s. When I was at CCNY during the second half of the 1960s, the Viet Nam War was the major issue -- yet at the same time it was a subway school, students going home after class, no one living on campus...

Q: No sitting around the dorms.

FEIFER: No dorms at all then. Students hung out in the cafeterias between classes and then went home after their last class.

Q: There weren't student movements like at Columbia University.

FEIFER: Columbia was a mile down the road. It wasn't very far. If you wanted that sort of action, you could always go down to Columbia. It was less so at City College. I don't have a great recollection of what was going on. There were protests of every sort going on in the city, and all over the country. There were also demonstrations going on at City College as I was leaving in 1969. Black and Puerto Rican students were striking for open admissions and had taken over buildings. That would lead to a transformation of the student body at the City University.

Q: While you are a Second Lieutenant let's talk about your military career.

FEIFER: I had a truncated military career. In September 1968 I requested and was granted a delayed entrance on active duty to continue my studies "for the good of the service." In contrast, several of my ROTC friends decided to get their service obligation over with. They went on active duty within a few months and were in Viet Nam within a year. I was in no rush. I continued my studies and requested another delay from active duty.

Q: Where were you at this point?

FEIFER: I was taking graduate courses in Political Science at the City College campus in Harlem and at Hunter College in Manhattan. All my classes were in the late afternoon, so I looked for a day job to make some money. I was hired by Bankers Trust as a branch auditor. I had never taken a course in accounting or business, but I seemed to have what they wanted. I traveled around to various bank branches in the city and tried to pick up what I was expected to do on the job. I kept at it for a few months. During the summer of 1969 I went off with a few friends to the Woodstock music festival. We made it there and stuck it out for two days. The music was great. Back in school in the fall, I started thinking about what to do next. Should I continue at the City University of New York for a Ph. D in Political Science or go elsewhere? I felt that if I continued at the City University I would never leave New York. So I decided to check out schools elsewhere and sent out bunch of letters. The University of Maryland accepted me in its Government and Politics program. I received my M.A. from City College in January 1970. I said goodbye to New York and off I went to find a place to live in College Park, Maryland.

Q: You started your Ph. D. in Political Science when the quantitative stuff was in fashion. For those of us working in diplomacy, it seemed to be alien to what we were doing, all this fascination with computers and statistics.

FEIFER: You caught the period well. All my work at City College and Hunter College had been with traditionalists in the field. I had never seen a computer or taken a course in statistics.

Q: What happened when you got to the University of Maryland?

FEIFER: I signed up for a course in something called International Relations Theory. I sat there in the first class in a state of shock. The professor, named Jon Wilkenfeld, spent the first half hour talking about statistics and writing equations on the blackboard. I thought I was in the wrong class. I didn't understand anything he was talking about. Nothing he said had anything to do with the things I had studied or was interested in. I walked out in the middle of the class. I quickly dropped it. I was awarded a teaching assistantship and assigned to a Professor of Political Theory, Thornton Anderson. I continued to stay away from quantitatively-oriented courses. I had one professor who tried to convince me to go to India and continue some work I had done using census data to compare traditional and modern violence. I decided that I did not like the subject that much to spend several years risking my life in rural India. I ended up coming back to Professor Wilkenfeld, whose course I had dropped. He became my dissertation advisor for a computer analysis of escalation in the Arab-Israeli conflict, and a lifelong friend. I had come around full circle.

Q: What turned you around?

FEIFER: The most practical way to do a dissertation was to use existing data, rather than spend years developing your own. This professor had collected a set of Middle East events data. I was fortunate that he was generously willing to share with me the data he had collected. My dissertation defense was great because my dissertation director spent as much time defending the data and my research as I did.

Q: When did you get your doctorate?

FEIFER: June 1974.

Q: By this time the Vietnam War was pretty well over?

FEIFER: Not yet. But I still had a two year active duty military obligation.

Q: Yeah.

FEIFER: Let's go back to late 1972. I was completing the maximum period allowed for delayed entry on active service. I received a telephone call from a clerk at Fort Benjamin Harrison, the Reserve Personnel Components Center. She said to me, "Lieutenant Feifer,

We have to bring you on active duty.” You have a two year active duty military obligation. I plan to send you to Fort Ord, California, as a basic training officer.” I said, “You know I’m getting my Ph. D. I put in a request for a branch transfer to Military Intelligence a year ago. It would seem to make more sense to use my education in Military Intelligence than to spend two years as a basic training officer.” She responded, “You know, I’ve got a lot of problems.” “First of all, we’ve lost your file. You may have put in for a branch transfer, but the only thing I have in your file is that I have to bring you on active duty. There is not enough time to do a background check on you for Military Intelligence, so that’s not in the cards. But let me tell you, I’ve got problems. It’s really tough, I’ve got so many officers that I’ve got to handle, so many guys who were helicopter pilots in Viet Nam who want to transition into the regular Army. How would you feel if I brought you on active duty, sent you to the three month Basic Infantry Officers Course and then discharged you into the ready reserve?” I agreed. So in January 1973 I went to Fort Benning, Georgia, attended the Basic Infantry Officer Course, and was discharged into the Ready Reserve. Fort Benning was a strange place then. The base had expanded during the war and was half shut down now that the U.S. combat role in Viet Nam had ended. Half the base seemed like a ghost town. The troopers were Viet Nam veterans and hated the leaders and army that had sent them to war. The atmosphere was weird. While there I ran into two guys who had been with me in ROTC at City College. Both had gone on active duty immediately, had gone to Viet Nam, and had really, really bad wars. They were taking the mid-level infantry course and had opted for military careers. We had similar backgrounds, but they had become very different guys.

Q: What did you decide to do when you finished graduate school?

FEIFER: What was I going to do? I was on track to get my PhD in a year. The market for newly-minted PhDs was very tight; universities weren’t hiring unpublished people like me. I remember walking through a corridor in one of the university buildings one day. I saw up on the wall a poster “Join the Foreign Service” and another one “Are You Interested in joining the National Security Agency?” I thought: “Why not?” I applied for both agencies.

My first interview was with NSA. The interviewer noted that I had studied Japanese and Hebrew. He asked me if I was interested in being a linguist. I suggested that I didn’t really think much of my abilities as a linguist. I tried to shift in another direction, saying that I thought I would be better as an area specialist. I apparently was very effective in convincing him that I was not right for his agency. At the end of the interview he said, “Thank you very much Mr. Feifer, we will get in touch.” They never did.

I passed the Foreign Service written exam and then came the oral interview, which at the time was done before a panel. The panel seemed to want to see how I handled things I didn’t know. Rather than ask me about things I had studied, they asked me about other fields. They asked about economic policies in Europe, which I hadn’t a clue about. Whatever they asked, I gave an answer, even if it didn’t make much sense. I didn’t get rattled. They asked questions, I gave answers. A Cultural Affairs Officer asked me to talk about some novels I had read. I thought for a second and said, “I just finished my

dissertation and before that studied for months for my comprehensive exams. I haven't read a novel in years, and to be honest with you my mind is completely blank. I have whole shelves filled with novels at home but I can't think of a single one. Sorry." He was a little bit shocked, but I didn't get excited. I didn't get nervous. At the end of the interview, I was told that I had passed. The Cultural Affairs Officer added, "Mr. Feifer, try to read some novels." Within three months I received an offer of appointment to the Foreign Service.

Q: Well then, what happened?

FEIFER: It's June 1974, I had just got my Ph. D. and I planned to give myself a treat. During the past three summers I had hitch-hiked from the UK to Turkey; travelled to Western Europe, Israel and Egypt; and driven across the U. S. and back. This time I decided to take a Trans-Atlantic crossing on an ocean liner, travel again through Europe and the Middle East, and have some fun. A week before I was scheduled to sail on the SS France from New York to Cherbourg, I received my Foreign Service offer of employment. I wanted to give the Foreign Service a try, but the offer was not timely. So I called up the Board of Examiners and asked, "you've offered me an appointment, presumably that means I am at the top of the list. Is that correct?" The answer was yes.

Q: Yeah.

FEIFER: "Well, when is the next Foreign Service class?" "We're not sure, probably another two months." "What's the likelihood, if I ask you to wait; will you consider me for the next class?" "We can do that." So, I had my Trans-Atlantic cruise and holiday in Europe. I gave the Board of Examiners addresses where I could be reached. When I reached Israel in July I found a letter from the American Embassy with an offer of appointment for the Foreign Service class beginning August 1, 1974. I went into the Embassy, the first time I'd ever been in any Embassy. I went to the Personnel Officer and said I wanted to accept the offer of appointment.

Q: Before we stop for today, what did you get out of this trip? It wasn't your first time overseas?

FEIFER: It wasn't. I had traveled to Europe in 1970. I had worked with a British guy while we were both staff at a summer camp in New England in the late 1960s. I camped out at his place in London for a few weeks, and then hitchhiked around England. Then I met a friend and we visited with some Americans we knew studying in Brussels. We hitchhiked separately to Amsterdam, and then from Amsterdam to Copenhagen. Then we split up. I made my way to Berlin, showed how acute my political sense was by going to the wrong route to Berlin. Instead of going to the international crossing at Helmstadt, I went with the Germans giving me a ride to the crossing for Germans only. So I had to backtrack, finally making my way to Berlin. I also visited East Berlin, which was still gutted by World War II damage. Many buildings were derelict and had bullet holes in them. I went from Berlin to Munich, where I had my duffel bag stolen at the train station. I took a train to Klagenfurt in Austria, where I connected with a girl I had met hitch-

hiking. She took pity on me and gave me some of her father's clothes. I then took the train to Belgrade in Yugoslavia, and after a few days to Istanbul. I made a big mistake there. I thought I could live like a Turkish student. I stayed at a Turkish student hostel and ate street food. Within three days I was so sick I was barely conscious. I got on a fly-by-night bus from Istanbul to Graz in Austria, where I had another friend I had met on the road. I was really, really ill. I spent a week with his family recovering. I took a train to Paris and then back home.

My second trip during the summer of 1972 took me across Western Europe, and then to Egypt. It was a fascinating time in Egypt because this was between the 1970 War of Attrition and the 1973 War. The Egyptian authorities were acutely suspicious of foreigners and saw Israeli spies everywhere. Much of Egypt was off limits to foreigners. I was hanging out with two other backpackers at a pension in central Cairo. We bought a guide book and followed the directions on how to get to the Sakkara Step Pyramid. We went to the train station and bought tickets to the nearby town of Al Badrashin. When we arrived the town looked like a disaster area; like no foreigner had been there in years. We couldn't find a taxi or even a donkey cart to take us to the pyramid. Then a car drove up to us and the driver said to us in English, "Can I give you a ride?" "Sure." So we got in the car and asked, "Who are you?" He said, "I'm the Chief of Police of Al Badrashin." We were picked up because we had entered a forbidden area for foreigners, like most of Egypt at the time. He took us to the local police station. Remember, this was 1972, and Americans were not the most popular people in Egypt. Was he was going to send us to Cairo for breaking the law, or let us go and say don't do this again? We could see he was having an argument with a plainclothes man. One of the people I was traveling with interjected herself into the conversation. She pointed to a photo on the wall and said, "Look, Gamal Abdel Nasser. The police chief was very impressed and said, "Ah, you know our President." "Yes." "Oh." He felt so pleased that she recognized Egypt's late leader that he told the other guy to shut up and said, "I'm going to take you to the train station. Welcome to my country. Don't come back here no more." So we left. A few days later I flew to Athens.

Q: You had a taste of the Middle East. Does it still intrigue you?

FEIFER: Yes, it was an exciting episode. Especially because it ended well!

Q: How about Israel, did you go to Israel?

FEIFER: I went to Israel after stopping in Athens in 1972. I did a lot of hitchhiking from the north down to Sinai. I spent a week picking apples at Kibbutz Bar'am on the Lebanese border. I visited someone I had known from graduate school at Maryland who had immigrated to Israel. He and his wife were starting off at a new agricultural settlement in the Negev. I took a long bus ride from Tel Aviv and was dropped off at a connecting road. I had to walk the rest of the distance. I hitchhiked to Eilat. I continued down to Sinai and back. Israel was on a high after the 1967 War, which made the outbreak of the 1973 War such an incredible, incredible blow. But in 1972 just about everyone in Israel was on a high. Israel was doing great, they expected, this was the way

it was always going to be. Everything is great; it is always going to be like this, no problem. It didn't quite turn out that way. Although Israel may have finished the war twenty miles from Damascus and on the road to Cairo, 2,600 Israeli soldiers were killed and 9,000 wounded. In any case, it was an interesting time to be there and see the difference in the Israeli national mood between 1972 and 1974.

Q: Let's pick up when you join the Foreign Service.

FEIFER: Okay.

Q: That was 1974?

FEIFER: I reported for duty on August 1, 1974.

Q: Okay, we'll pick it up then.

FEIFER: Almost all my classmates of the 114th Class were new to the Foreign Service. One woman was a Mustang, a former secretary becoming an officer, so she actually knew what was ahead of her. But it was new for the rest of us. This was a very talented group of about 23 persons, 21 men and two women, with a range of life experiences. One of the guys had been a Mormon missionary and spoke several languages fluently. Most had advanced degrees. Some had worked on the Hill. The five-week course seemed designed less to teach us anything in particular and more to mark time while the Foreign Service system figured out what to do with us. I was somewhat clueless about what I wanted to do or where I wanted to do it, and was quite willing to let the system carry me anywhere foreign. Unlike other people, I didn't go into this career with a burning desire to make policy or change something. I was going on a great adventure, somewhere or the other. That attitude showed how clueless I was!

Q: You are speaking to somebody who had exactly the same feeling. In those days we weren't "cloned," but were selected to go off to be political, economic, administrative or consular officers anywhere. I also just said, "Let the system carry me away."

FEIFER: I just wanted to leave the university environment and get out into the world. I didn't know what I wanted to do or where I wanted to go. Of course, I wanted something foreign. But to me, even Halifax, Nova Scotia sounded exotic. Then things happened: fate, fortuitousness, somebody who knew what they wanted. I had a personnel advisor who told me: "You may want to go overseas, but I want you to go to the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, INR, and interview for a job there. If you don't make a good impression and they don't take you, I'll make sure you spend the next two years in the pouch room in the basement of the Department of State." Okay, I understood that the pouch room was not a good thing so I went to an interview with INR's Near East Division and made an acceptable impression. They took me on. What they were actually doing was taking me on to fill a gap that they had for six months until someone else came on to take the position of the Arabian Peninsula analyst. I knew where the Arabian Peninsula was, but that was about it.

Q: Yeah.

FEIFER: I knew some basic very history of the area, but was no area expert nor did I know much about intelligence analysis. I might have thought I knew something about foreign affairs but my knowledge was, shall we say, somewhat thin on the operational side. I did this for six months and apparently did surprisingly well. They were very satisfied with me.

Q: When we look at the Arabian Peninsula today, there is an awful lot going on. Where was the real concern at that time?

FEIFER: My focus was on the daily things that might go into the Secretary's morning intelligence brief. When I wasn't doing that, I worked on longer-term think pieces. The Shah's Iran was our ally, so the Iranian-Arab/Shia-Sunni cleavage simmered, but was different than the situation today. Subjects I wrote about were the Dhofar Rebellion in Oman and the implications for Bab el Mandeb, the Red Sea, and Oman. What were the Saudis going to do with regard to the Palestinian issue? You may remember that the 1974 Rabat Summit determined that the PLO would be the sole legitimate representative of the Palestine people, which took away a possible Jordanian role to represent the Palestinians. Actually we could see how it was shaping up. The Saudis were going to back the PLO rather than King Hussein, and Sadat would go along. Another perennial was what was happening on Perim Island, which is in the Red Sea off Yemen and a potential choke-point. So I was following these issues, plus internal developments in Yemen, what's happening with the dynastic intrigues in Qatar and elsewhere in the Gulf Sheikdoms, all of which were very arcane things which I knew nothing about before coming to this job.

Q: You mentioned the Rabat Conference and the PLO being supported by Saudi Arabia.

FEIFER: We had a sense of the direction things were going. Rabat shouldn't have been as big a surprise as it seemed to be at the time.

Q: What happened after six months in INR?

FEIFER: The people in the Near East Division liked me and thought I was doing a good job. They asked for and got an extra position, and kept me on for a full two year assignment. That was pretty rare for a first tour officer.

Q: Absolutely. What job did you get?

FEIFER: They gave me responsibility for Lebanon, Jordan and the Palestinians, and back-up for Israel. All of that was just fine with me. I was interested in the region and it was very exciting to be in the know. I really enjoyed that. What was fortuitous was that the person I was holding the Arabian Peninsula position for was Graeme Bannerman, who was coming from the American University at Beirut. He was smart and knew Lebanon well. However, given the ways of the Department, he was given the Arabian

Peninsula position, and I covered Lebanon. The Lebanese Civil War started in early 1975. You can time its outbreak in Sidon between a Sunni leftist urban militia and the government, or when a busload of Palestinians driving through a Maronite area of East Beirut was shot up. But, in any case, covering the Lebanese Civil War would become my primary responsibility for the next 18 months. I was responsible for all the analysis in the Secretary's morning intelligence brief, research papers, analytic papers, and State's input into national intelligence estimates. I learned a lot from Graeme, who would later go on from being Civil Service employee at State to become a staff member on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

I mentioned that I was the back-up analyst for Israel. One of the projects I decided to do was an analysis of the role played by Arik Sharon, a controversial army general and founder of the Likud, who had been named by Prime Minister Rabin as a special advisor on security affairs. Rabin may have been seeking to implement the recommendations of the Agranat Commission, which had looked into the shortcomings of the Israeli army during the 1973 War. I wanted to get a sense of Sharon's relationship with Rabin, and how much Rabin was influenced by him during the Kissinger shuttles. I discussed this with Peter Rodman, who was Kissinger's personal assistant and with him during the shuttles. In any case, I will have more to say later about my own personal experience with Sharon.

Q: Let's discuss the Lebanese Civil War. Did you feel did we have a stake in its outcome?

FEIFER: We had a stake in the survival of Lebanon as an independent state. We had a stake in trying to make sure that Lebanon didn't become Syrian-controlled or PLO-controlled. We had a stake in preventing the internal conflict from drawing in Israel. The Syrians first backed the PLO with their own Syrian-controlled Palestinian organization As-Sa'iqa, and then attacked the PLO when it seemed to be winning. The civil war was a vicious and bloody sectarian conflict. My job was to try to figure what was happening and where things were going.

Q: What was, you might say, the atmosphere in the Middle East? You were right in the heart of where policy and politics collided. Were you observing any of this or any pressures?

FEIFER: I had the opportunity to work for some of the best. Roy Atherton was the Assistant Secretary for the Near East and South Asian Bureau. Hal Saunders was Deputy Assistant Secretary and point man for the evolving U.S. position on the Palestinians. All the people I worked with in the Near East Division were experienced, had been in the job for years, and were great at what they did. They taught me that it was not enough to be a good analyst; one had to be able to present your views effectively. They were superb drafters. It was a great learning experience just to be able to work with them. It was a great introduction to the Foreign Service. I learned how drafting that you thought was good could, and would be, edited and polished to become more effective than you ever dreamed. I was really fortunate to have in my first two years the opportunity to work with

people who were great at their jobs, good managers, and good mentors. I worked for people who truly had my interests in mind. I was very fortunate.

Q: So, they would sit you down, and say this is how I would say that?

FEIFER: They would just make the changes. The first thing my supervisors did when they read a draft was to pick up a pencil. They didn't read only with their eyes, but also with their pencils, because they were going to improve the draft. That was OK with me. Not only because I didn't have pride of authorship, but because I could see them improving the product. I rarely disagreed with the editing.

Q: Where were there disagreements?

FEIFER: When I came to the INR Near East Division, the office director was an old time Foreign Service Officer, an Arabist in his last position before retirement. He believed that Israel should never have been established. It was a big mistake, he would say, it was against U.S. interests. That was his personal point of view and that was his business. But Israel was a fact of life in 1974; 26 years after its establishment. Israel was not going away any time soon. So, his views made little sense for someone who was doing current issues. It was just irrelevant. It struck me as bizarre.

Q: Did being Jewish cause you any problems?

FEIFER: No one I worked with referred to my being Jewish. But I'll get into that a little bit later because it had implications for my postings in the Foreign Service.

Q: Oh yes. We'll come to it in a few minutes.

FEIFER: Since 1975 I felt I needed to get out and see more. My office wanted me to go to places I was working on. I did an orientation trip including Syria, and toured the Syrian side of the Golan. I went to Jordan. I went to Beirut in the middle of the Civil War. I'm not sure if people would approve such things today. I went to Israel and joined a War College group on a tour of the Golan Heights battlefield.

Q: Going to Lebanon during the Civil War must have been scary, wasn't it?

FEIFER: What you don't understand doesn't scare you. Here I am in Damascus and I wanted to go to Beirut. How do I go? I got on a *Service*, an inter-urban taxi from Damascus to Beirut. I had to pay the driver extra because he knew what was going on. I went down to the American Embassy, which was then in Ras Beirut. I said, "Hi, I'm Ted Feifer, here on consultation." They were pretty busy: trying to cover the civil war, deal with American citizens and people seeking visas. I stayed for a few days, walked around areas that I should have avoided, and then flew out. It was a great adventure. I didn't think about the danger or implications. As you know, Ambassador Meloy who I had met in Washington and Economic Counselor Waring were kidnapped and murdered in 1976. I remember this very, very well. I used to brief the office directors on intelligence issues

every morning. I went in one morning to see Morrie Draper, the Office Director for Lebanon, Syria and Jordan. I made a comment that, "The Ambassador seems to be lost, what's going on?" In fact, he hadn't shown up at an appointment, and they didn't know where he was. They eventually found the car and the two bodies in it.

Q: Did you feel that you were getting good intelligence on the situation in Lebanon?

FEIFER: As the Lebanese Civil War intensified, the data coming increased as well. I had to review all the open source reports, such as FBIS monitoring of radio news all over the region, embassy cables, intelligence reports, special intelligence. I had to read everything. How did it arrive in the pre-computer age? I had to wade through stacks of paper, increasingly tall stacks of paper. NEA -- the Near East and South Asia Bureau -- focused increasingly on operational issues. They focused on American citizens; the security of embassy staff. The Foreign Service Institute Arabic School was then in Beirut. Its students were all over greater Beirut, and eventually they as well as embassy staff and dependents had to be evacuated. The NEA Lebanon desk officer and the country directorate had their hands full. Consequently, INR was increasingly tasked with Lebanese political and other analysis because NEA didn't have time to wade through all the paper. The situation was complex: international involvement, the military situation on the ground, sectarian, political and local militias -- Maronite, Sunni, Druze, Armenian; the disintegrating Lebanese Army and security forces, and the PLO and the other Palestinian organizations. Trying to follow and understand as much as possible of this constantly changing situation and complexity was an adventure in and of itself. I was expected to understand the broad policies of the many state, sub-state, and non-state actors, as well as the fluid situation on the ground. Moreover, I was trying to explain not very clear developments, even to me, in some sort of coherent way. What were the Syrians trying to do on any particular day? What was their strategic objective? What are the PLO trying to do and the same for various Sunni factions? The leftist Sunni militias allied to the PLO were trying to displace the traditional Sunni political elite, centered in the cities. The Sunni leftist militias were doing the same thing the old established families had done in another day to gain power. They were simply trying to take over the Sunni leadership. Many of the Arab states also had their proxies and clients. Trying to understand the dynamics was fascinating.

Q: What did you come away from that experience? Was there anything for the U.S. outside of cooling these parties down?

FEIFER: The civil war destabilized what had been a friendly state, and was tragic for all those living in Lebanon, Lebanese and Palestinians. There was the possibility of a broader conflict if the PLO and its Lebanese allies took power, or Syria occupied all of Lebanon. The conflict increasingly involved outside states. The Maronite Christian militias were being pressed hard and decided to reach out to Israel for help. Developments in Lebanon had obvious implications for Israel, but Israel was at first cautious. Nonetheless, as the Maronite militia leaders stepped up their appeals, Israel increased its support. This was highly sensitive stuff and of great interest to the leadership in the Department.

This was a rare opportunity for a first tour officer. I was writing the Secretary's morning brief on Lebanon and associated issues, which was read by all the Seventh Floor principals. I was coming in, first of all, at 4am, then 3, 2, and 1 am. I was eventually coming in at midnight to review the incoming material and write a coherent two-page briefing paper, which had to be ready at 6am. This was pre-computer, so here I am with my two fingers on the typewriter trying to prepare a two-page memo appropriate for a demanding Secretary of State. Not surprisingly, there is nobody at that time of day to clear it. I'm writing whatever fanciful thoughts come through my mind in the course of the night and present them to the Secretary's personal assistant by 6am. How many opportunities like that does a first tour officer have?

Q: Not just a first tour officer but a brand new first tour officer?

FEIFER: I would also brief NEA Assistant Secretary Atherton and INR Director Saunders so when they went into the Secretary's 8am. morning meeting they would not be blindsided by things in their area of responsibility. It was a great opportunity. I did this for three months straight, seven days a week. I had the morning report and my colleague, Graeme Bannerman, had the afternoon one. I did this through the end of my tour.

Q: So where did you go then?

FEIFER: Now that's interesting. I had had a conversation with the NEA Personnel Officer on my onward assignment. I had done well in my job, people liked and respected what I had done, and supported my working in NEA. The Personnel Officer told me, "You know, Ted, we look forward to the day when we can have a Jewish officer serving in Arab countries. Unfortunately, that is not possible today. How would you like to go to Iran?" I had no interest in Iran or going there and said so. "Well," he said, "we can give you a rotational position at the embassy in Tel Aviv. You start off doing economic/commercial work, and then you go to the political section." So I said, "OK." That was my introduction to the Department's practice of not assigning Jewish Foreign Service Officers to postings in the Arab world.

That practice would change within three years. Senior and working level people just rejected the traditional mindset. Roy Atherton, when he was ambassador in Egypt and the Arab-Israeli peace process became a high priority, wanted political officers who understood Israel. He wanted someone who could explain to the Egyptians the Israeli perspective. The guy that he wanted was Dan Kurtzer, who became a political officer in Cairo. Dan would eventually become our Ambassador to Egypt, and then Israel. Hal Saunders also wanted good people, whoever they were. Meanwhile, a new personnel officer named Tom Carolan came to NEA and decided to end this discriminatory practice. He was going to send qualified Jewish FSOs to the Arab world, and he didn't care about the "old think." Then, all of a sudden, the practice of not sending Jewish officers to Arab countries became history. It was as if it had never existed!

Q: I understand that there was some resistance from the Saudis?

FEIFER: The Saudis may have had issues, but NEA sent Jewish officers to Saudi Arabia. Just as women FSOs have had problems working in the Gulf, Jewish FSOs might have problems on the peninsula. FSOs have to deal with challenges.

Q: So you were in Israel?

FEIFER: I went to Israel in July 1976.

Q: From when to when?

FEIFER: I departed Washington about when the Entebbe hijacking occurred. I arrived in Tel Aviv after the Israeli rescue mission.

Q: You better explain the Entebbe hijacking.

FEIFER: This was a hijacking of an Air France aircraft flying from Tel Aviv to Paris. The hijackers were from a PFLP offshoot and one of the German leftist guerilla groups. The aircraft flew to Athens, Benghazi and finally Entebbe in Uganda.

Q: Idi Amin was then president of Uganda.

FEIFER: Yes, Idi Amin was president and the Ugandan government supported the hijackers. The hijackers separated the passengers. Non-Jews were released and flown out. Israelis, Jews and the crew were kept as hostages. Uganda is 2,500 miles away from Israel but as soon as the hijacking took place, the Israelis started planning a rescue operation. The mission involved sending transport aircraft to Entebbe, killing the hijackers, destroying Ugandan MIG fighter aircraft on the tarmac, and returning to Israel after refueling in Kenya. They saved 102 of the 106 hostages. Israel's Prime Minister Netanyahu's older brother Yoni was killed by a sniper. He was the only Israeli military fatality in the raid. Netanyahu would make his name as a writer on terrorism and standing up to terrorism.

Q: Hijacking was in full blossom at that point.

FEIFER: Air hijackings and attacks on civil aviation targets had been used by Palestinian terrorists since the late 1960s. I remember one particular incident during my first duty officer assignment in Tel Aviv. There was an attack on an El Al aircraft in Istanbul. The Embassy was expecting a Congressional staffer to arrive on that flight. He was coming to Israel to research the Palestinian issue. After the attack in Istanbul, the aircraft took off for Israel. As duty officer I contacted the Israeli aviation security people, briefed the Charge, kept the State Department Operations Center informed, and tried to figure out what was going on. What had happened to the staffer? Where was he? The aircraft showed up in Tel Aviv, but he wasn't on it.

Q: How was the hijacking resolved?

FEIFER: There was a shootout during the attempted hijacking, and the aircraft took off. Later we learned that the staffer had been killed in Istanbul.

Q: Who was ambassador when you were in Israel?

FEIFER: When I arrived in Israel Tom Dunnigan was Charge. He was a gentleman, relaxed. Bill Dozier was the economic counselor; a soft-spoken Southerner. John Crump was the political counselor. All very nice people. As was often the case at the time, none of them had Middle East experience. There were very few officers who had spent two years studying Arabic and served in the Arab world who were then prepared to serve in Israel. Arab states would not accept diplomats who had served in Israel There were a few who had served in both places, but not many.

Q: Tom Dunnigan did some interviews for us here. Tom was very much a Berlin hand.

FEIFER: Tom Dunnigan and John Crump were European hands. Bill Dozier was a South America guy. That's the way it was.

Q: How did you find Israel? What was your impression?

FEIFER: My job was a rotational assignment. I started off as an Economic/Commercial Officer, including U.S. AID. I was formally the U.S. AID representative in Israel, which was primarily a check-writing operation. The military and economic assistance provided to Israel was almost all funding rather than project support. I was responsible for follow up on the AID program for the resettlement of Russian Jews in Israel. There was some U.S. AID project assistance to the West Bank and Gaza, I and occasionally visited development projects there. I supervised two Foreign Service Nationals: an auditor handling the accounts and a secretary. I was also following Israeli economic activities in the West Bank and Gaza, such as settlements and oil exploration. Israel at that time occupied the Sinai and was pumping oil from the Abu Rudeis oil fields, as well as exploring for oil. Finally, as I have mentioned, I followed civil aviation, and related security issues.

My job may not have seemed sexy, but it was. All of the issues I dealt with got me moving around, meeting lots of people, traveling to the West Bank, Gaza and Sinai. It was a great introduction to things I would do later. I spoke Hebrew so it gave me an entree. Then I moved to the political section, taking the peace process portfolio, which also made me the reporting officer for Gaza.

Q: What was going on in Gaza?

FEIFER: One footnote. When I had worked in Washington I had made a good impression on Hal Saunders, longtime National Security Council Special Assistant to the President for the Middle East, NEA Deputy Assistant Secretary Director of INR, and then NEA Assistant Secretary. He came out to the region with the Secretary of State on numerous

shuttles. He felt that I was not being given tasks matching my potential. So he asked Sam Lewis, who became Ambassador to Israel in mid-1977, to give me more opportunities. So, Sam Lewis took me on for a while as a part-time staff aide. It was a good educational experience for me.

Q: Sam Lewis practically sat in on cabinet meetings, didn't he?

FEIFER: The Israeli media liked to call him the "High Commissioner," comparing him to the British official who ruled Palestine during the Mandate period. It was of course a big overstatement, but Sam was very well-plugged in to Israel's leadership and society.

Sam Lewis was the consummate professional working diplomat. He picked staff that he thought could keep pace with him. He didn't want European hands unless they had a skill he was seeking. He brought in Dick Viets, who had been Deputy Chief of Mission in Bucharest, who was a real hardnosed guy. He brought in Bob Blackwell as political counselor. The new senior staff prided themselves on their intelligence and analytical skills, but also their ability to draft. Each one of them could have written for a literary journal, and each had an individual style. Dick Viets and Bob Blackwell competed in packaging their messages with choice literary allusions. They could make a cable sing in terms of readability and style. Sam Lewis was more interested in substance and getting to the point. Sam was amazing. He could go to a meeting in Jerusalem and on the way back dictate a reporting cable on a recorder. His secretary would type it on a telegram form with rarely a need for a change. He knew what he wanted to say and how to say it.

There were so many things that were positive about that Embassy, but it was a stressful place. Dick Viets had very high expectations. As DCM, it was his job to make sure people delivered the goods. He made clear that I had better meet his expectations. Bob Blackwell also put a lot of pressure on staff to meet his high standards. The payoff for us was that we got to write key analytical and reporting messages for the Embassy during this critical period of the peace process. Sam Lewis of course did many first person messages. Viets and Blackwell did their full share of drafting as well. However, mid- and junior level officers were full partners in the Embassy's reporting. The Embassy leadership also made sure we participated in the historic diplomacy taking place. I sat in on every meeting in which Secretary of State Vance met with the Israeli Ministerial Security Cabinet. It was a heady experience for me during my first foreign posting. I'm sitting with the Secretary, drafting reporting cables, and working with his party. This was a great learning experience, a great opportunity.

In addition, Sam Lewis would call together what he considered his brain trust -- his political section, DCM, and Defense Attaché, and ask us to think out loud about issues to just let us participate in the process. It was great mentoring.

Q: It is remarkable. What was your impression of the Israeli government at the highest level and how it dealt with us as a note taker looking at this?

FIEFER: It was quite amazing not only how they dealt with us, but how they dealt with each other. Here I am sitting with the Secretary and his party at a meeting with the Israeli Ministerial Security Cabinet including Prime Minister Begin, Foreign Minister Dayan, Defense Minister Weizman, and others. They are bickering in Hebrew with each other. Weizman is arguing with Begin, Begin is arguing with Dayan, and another one is contradicting both. Secretary Vance and his team are watching and don't understand what is going on. I did. It was quite amazing watching the dynamic.

Q: How did the negotiating process look to you??

FEIFER: Let me give you some background. I started following the peace process from inside the Department in 1974, just a year after the 1973 war. Although Israel and Egypt, and then Israel and Syria concluded disengagement agreements with U.S. mediation, no one knew what would come next. The effort to conclude a disengagement agreement between Israel and Jordan failed. Israeli and Egyptian gunboats faced each other in the Gulf of Suez in 1975; there was real potential for a shootout. Then Sadat for his own reasons decided in 1977 to go to Jerusalem, which started a new dynamic in the region.

Q: Yeah.

FEIFER: For young Israelis Sadat's visit was an opening to a different type of life; something was changing. Israel was not condemned to endless war. True, Sadat demanded in his speech to the Knesset that Israel withdraw from all the occupied territories in return for peace. At the same time, he had come to Jerusalem to talk directly to Israel. Something had changed; it was no longer the Khartoum Arab Summit's 3 No's: No peace with Israel, No recognition and No negotiations. I remember sitting with a group of Israeli military officers at the time watching Sadat's arrival on TV. They were watching spellbound. We learned later on that the Israeli Chief of Staff was still cautioning saying: you don't know why Sadat is doing this, you've got to watch out, and it may be a trick.

At the time of Sadat's visit I was escorting a congressman on his visit to Israel. We were staying at the King David Hotel in Jerusalem. Israeli security had moved all the guests out of the King David and took it over to host the Sadat Party. The congressman insisted on sticking around for this historic event, so I got to remain at the King David too. I had the opportunity to see the Sadat visit up close.

Q: Was the embassy caught by surprise would you say?

FEIFER: We certainly didn't expect it, nobody did. Sadat's decision was a surprise to his own senior advisers. Earlier, there had been secret talks between the head of the Mossad and then Dayan with Egyptian Deputy Prime Minister Tuhami in Morocco, but I wasn't privy to any of that.

Q: How did the Sadat visit impact on the Israeli government?

FEIFER: The negotiating process had been stuck. President Carter's game plan had been to seek a comprehensive peace. He was trying to reconvene the regional Middle East Peace Conference co-sponsored with the Soviets. That was anathema to Israel -- and Sadat. The U.S. focus on a comprehensive peace was one of the catalysts that convinced Sadat to come to Jerusalem. He didn't want Egypt's effort to regain Sinai to be dependent on the other Arabs, especially Syria's terms for regaining the Golan. He didn't have confidence in the American strategy and so decided to deal directly with the Israelis. Since I had the Political Section peace process portfolio, I became the Embassy's primary reporting officer on how Israel approached this process. I was also the Political Section's reporting officer on Gaza. I went to Gaza every week to talk to Palestinians there and get their sense of what this meant to them -- and the influence of the PLO on what they were prepared to do.

Q: How did you get your information? You were writing on the peace process and all of a sudden the peace process goes into capital letters. Every newspaper in the world and every media commentator are reporting on it. How did you get your stuff and how did you put it together?

FEIFER: I talked to contacts in and out of the Israeli government. Sam Lewis took me along on visits to senior officials as his note-taker. He didn't really need me, but it was a great mentoring opportunity for him to develop a junior officer. I realized what he was doing and appreciated it. I often went with him to see Dayan. Dayan's mind operated in unexpected, original, surprising ways. I had to work hard to follow and keep up with the different directions his thoughts were taking him, and I had to get it right. I connected with Israeli media Arab affairs analysts and academics. The Israeli media was also filled with leaks, but the problem was trying to determine what was real and what was not. And what was misdirection. In Gaza I talked to Palestinian leaders including Mayor Rashad Shawa, and one of the founding members of the PLO Dr. Haidar Abdel-Shafi. I met with Palestinian refugee leaders and Gazans working in the Israeli Civil Administration. There were lots of people to talk to, but identifying those who were well informed and willing to share was hard. Making contacts among the Islamic community was difficult. I should have worked harder to connect with them. Another part of my portfolio was to be the point of contact with the Israeli military government. I met with the IDF West Bank and Gaza military governors and their Arab affairs advisors. They gave me their take on what was happening.

After the Camp David Accords were signed in September 1978 I went to Gaza to convince Palestinians that the Accords were a great opportunity for them to achieve their aspirations. The PLO was opposed because it had been recognized by the Arab states as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, and didn't want anybody in Gaza or the West Bank as a competitor. It could earn a Palestinian a death sentence to be seen as supporting the Accords. I would get in my car in Tel Aviv and drive to Gaza, which was a little less than an hour's drive away, without security. I'd meet people in a restaurant by the Mediterranean and we'd sit and talk or I'd go to people's offices. I never heard of any threats to me.

Q: I've had people talk about how awful Gaza was, that the Israelis had taken over the best land, the best water, and left the rest of Gaza to turn into a slum.

FEIFER: Gaza has long been a disaster waiting to happen always. A half million refugees arrived in 1948 to a place 25 miles long and no more than 7 miles wide, with limited water in the aquifers. The refugees and residents of the strip had limited opportunities to leave and limited opportunity for employment. Adding Israeli settlement activity and further pumping of the aquifers exacerbated the problem. I remember writing an analysis about the degradation of the aquifers and impending shortage of water in Gaza 35-40 years ago. This is not a new development. I talked to the Israeli Water Commissioner and other experts. Everyone had the same assessment.

Gaza was a violent place in the late 1960s. There were lots of attacks on Israelis there. Arik Sharon became the IDF Southern Commander and eliminated the Palestinian armed resistance. He bulldozed roads through the refugee camps so the IDF could patrol them. Gaza was pacified for another decade.

Q: Were you able to talk to Palestinians in Gaza?

FIEFER: I had good contacts with a range of Gazan leaders. There were pro-Jordanians, pro-PLO, clan leaders, refugee leaders, businessmen. I was not an Arabic speaker so people I met with had to speak English or Hebrew, which was very common in Gaza. There was open travel between Gaza and Israel at that time. Lots of Gazans worked in Israel. In retrospect, there were more people that I should have contacted. There were certainly gaps in my knowledge, especially with the Islamists, the Muslim Brotherhood and the Islamic University.

Q: I would think that in the Israeli military dealing with Palestinians would be a pretty hardnosed bunch and would not particularly look with favor upon an American coming around and saying, "Oh, these poor Gazans and all that."

FEIFER: That was not my approach. I didn't try to build relationships with Palestinians by telling them how tough things were for them. They were not shy in telling me the realities of living under occupation or their grievances. I tried to get them to talk about things interesting to me and listen, rather than to try to tell them about things they knew about far better than me. My goal as a reporting officer was to get people to talk. I eventually learned how to be an active listener and not try to impress. The goal was not to show how smart I was, but to learn.

Q: Yeah.

FEIFER: It's an important lesson.

This led to one of the biggest problems I faced during this posting. I was sitting down at dinner with a friend from the Israeli Foreign Ministry and the radio was on. The news broadcast announced that during a television interview Agriculture Minister Sharon had

accused a member of the American Embassy staff, Ted Feifer, of being in touch with the PLO. Now this was 1979 and contact with the PLO was illegal in Israel. I almost gagged. Junior officers do not usually hear news reports on the radio that senior host government officials have accused them of contact with the country's enemy. I called up the political counselor and said, "Guess what I just heard?" The Embassy spokesman put out a statement that I had never diverged from routine embassy activity. Sharon had taken part in a television interview in the Friday night news program that everyone in Israel watched. The interview went more or less like this. "Mr. Sharon, you hear lots of things in Cabinet meetings don't you?" Sharon answered, "I hear lots of things and some of them would shock you." "Well, Mr. Sharon, like what?" "There are American diplomats who are in touch with the PLO. One of them, Ted Feifer, is in touch with the Gazans who are PLO. If he would come to them to talk about Camp David that would be okay but he is telling them that the Americans will pressure Israel into doing certain things that are not acceptable." I was shocked. I had never said anything like that.

Q: Oh yes.

FEIFER: Either Israeli security people were bugging my meetings or they were calling in people to ask what I had said to them. I had drawn on the American presentation on the Camp David Accords that Hal Saunders had delivered to 35 questions from King Hussein, which was the USG Gospel. I wasn't winging it. The Israeli government did not share our interpretations of the Accords. Nonetheless, my Embassy superiors instructed me to show a low profile for a while.

I happened to be in the Knesset soon after and one Member of Knesset, Yossi Sarid, said, "Oh Feifer, Sharon said stuff about you. He said I am with the PLO too. Don't worry about it." I often saw Sharon after that in meetings and at the Knesset. He would smile and laugh when he saw me. His statement had nothing to do with me personally. It was simply a way of making a political point because he was trying to undercut the Israeli-Egyptian move towards a peace treaty.

In March 1979, President Carter visited Israel to finalize the Israel-Egypt peace treaty. The negotiations had stalled and the President wanted to wrap up this bright spot in the regional picture, following the collapse of the Shah's government in Iran. Embassy Tel Aviv was always involved in supporting high level visits, but we became more substantive players this time. . Carter was unhappy with Begin's response to the proposals he had proposed. The President planned to use the speech he would be making to the Knesset to go over Begin's head and appeal directly to the Israeli people for support for a peace treaty. Behind the scenes, the speech preparation was not going well. The President's speechwriter had prepared a draft and Carter's senior staff had provided comments. The speechwriter, however, had gotten sick. The Embassy Political Counselor, Bob Blackwill, a gifted writer, was tasked with putting the draft and comments together. Bob brought together from the Political Section Josiah Rosenblatt, Gil Kulick and me. The draft that Bob delivered to the Secretary's Party was his achievement, and would catch the eye of National Security Advisor Brzezinski. Within a few months Bob's assignment would be curtailed and he would be transferred to work on

the NSC. Bob would later become Ambassador to India and a senior NSC official during President George Bush's first term.

I also had the opportunity during the March 1979 Carter visit to Israel to attend the official dinner for the President held at the Knesset. I don't remember how the seating came about, but I found myself together with the other Hebrew-speaking Embassy political officers, Josiah Rosenblatt and Gil Kulick, sitting with three of the most senior hawks in the Israeli government: Sharon, IDF Chief of Staff Rafal Eitan, and Deputy Minister of Defense Mordechai Tzipori. It was always a great opportunity to sit and talk with senior officials, but also potentially dangerous. Saying the wrong thing to Sharon could easily be twisted by him and become a press headline. That was not something a junior officer like me would want to see happen during a presidential visit. In any case, whatever we discussed that evening, nothing made its way into the press the next day.

Negotiations on autonomy for the West Bank and Gaza were one of the outcomes of the Camp David Accords. I believe they began in May 1979. I was the Embassy's representative with the American delegation in talks with Israel and Egypt. There was a working group, with one subgroup working on autonomy powers and responsibilities, and another working on elections. There were meetings at the ministerial level with the Israel and Egypt. President Carter's Personal Representative to the Middle East Robert Strauss or Deputy Special Representative Jim Leonard would represent the U.S., together with the U.S. Ambassadors to Israel and Egypt, and a supporting Washington team. It was a great experience. One of the pluses of having me there was that some ministerial members of the Israeli delegation didn't speak English. So I became an American they could talk to in Hebrew. I didn't have any contact with Robert Strauss. I was, however, detailed to work with Jim Leonard, who stayed in the region. Jim Leonard was a wonderful guy, soft spoken. I was with him until he developed his own team. He took me to all his meetings with Israeli ministers and senior officials. Once again, this was an opportunity to make myself smarter.

Q: It must have been a wonderful education.

FEIFER: It was fantastic; a great opportunity.

Q: What was your impression of the Egyptian officials that you met?

FEIFER: I spent a lot of time in small working group meetings with Israeli Foreign Ministry Legal Advisor Meir Rosenne and Amr Moussa, his Egyptian counterpart, who would later become Egyptian Foreign Minister and Secretary General of the Arab League. They were professionals, who knew both international law and diplomacy. They were smart and tough

Q: How did you get to sit there?

FEIFER: I was the U.S. representative to the autonomy subgroup on powers and responsibilities. There were one or two other Americans at the beginning, the director of

the Israel desk Walter Smith and Bill Kirby from NEA. NEA's Wat Cluverius and Jock Covey came later.

I still remember one of my first small group meetings with Rosenne and Moussa. I watched them in action and tried to figure out what they were doing. One made an argument and the other one disagreed, and they debated for the rest of the meeting. The next day we met and they switched arguments, and debated getting nowhere once again. It was almost like they were having an argument for the sake of showing each other how smart they were and how they can duel verbally. I remember saying to them, "Gentlemen, I'm sorry but I seem to be missing something. You seem to be shifting positions back and forth but you're not really making an argument which is consistent on either side. I don't understand." They looked at me, looked at each other and started laughing. It was only afterwards that I understood what had actually happened. They had both been given guidance to mark time, and not move forward until their political leaders had decided they wanted to make some progress. So they were just dancing around each other the whole time. Clueless as I was I didn't get it until later on and they just found it hilarious that I was so green that I didn't understand what was going on.

Q: Were things moving? How did you feel from what you were seeing at the time?

FEIFER: Begin's concept of autonomy was very limited: administrative and not territorial. According to the Egyptians, autonomy had to be extensive to attract Palestinians to the negotiations. The USG saw the concept of autonomy as having incredible potential. We could argue that autonomy could theoretically apply to the entire West Bank and Gaza, to the 1967 armistice lines. The Palestinians could logically propose full Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank and Gaza after the five year interim period of the Camp David Accords, if they were to enter the negotiating process. This should have made the Accords very attractive to the Palestinians. Moreover, if there was the possibility of the status of the West Bank and Gaza shifting from Israeli to Palestinian control after five years, potential Israeli settlers would have second thoughts about going to or even staying in settlements. If you were Palestinian and you wanted to end settlement activity, which was Gazan leader Abdul Shafi's prime demand, this would be a powerful practical way to achieve this goal. For its part, Israel could advocate annexation or whatever outcome it wanted following the interim period. The U.S. goal was to convince the Palestinians to enter into the negotiating process with Israel, Egypt, and the U.S. As arguments go, the U.S. had made a good talking point out of a restrictive Israeli proposal. But the PLO had a better argument against Palestinian engagement in the negotiating process: if you show any support for the Camp David process, you'll get killed. Even if there were Palestinians who were prepared to give it a try and see how far it would get even to discuss it-- and there were some Palestinians interested--there were also PLO supporters and roving bands of Palestinian students who would trucked from community-to-community, town-to-town, village-to-village so wherever there would be a public meeting to discussion Camp David, they made sure the answer was negative.

There were some Gazans who went to Beirut to talk to Arafat to ask, "Why don't you give us the opportunity to see how much we can get out of this. You can stay clean and

we'll see what's what?" But the PLO said, "No way." They didn't want anybody representing the Palestinians but themselves, and they weren't ready for negotiations.

I was a true believer. I didn't think twice about our policy. Jim Leonard eventually concluded that the autonomy talks were never going to go anywhere. Strauss' successor as Special Ambassador to the Middle East, Sol Linowitz, thought he was making progress and wrote in his memoirs that 80% of the issues had been resolved. While there had been discussion in depth on many issues, it was hard to argue that real progress could be made in the absence of the Palestinians. Although the Egyptians were representing Palestinian interests in a way, they could not (and would not) make concessions on behalf of the Palestinians or accept any compromises on their behalf. The Egyptians would say, "We are only here to deliver a package to the Palestinians, we can't accept it for them." If you were an Israeli negotiator, you would not go to your bottom line with someone who would say we can't accept your proposal; we can only offer it to someone else. As a process it was doomed to failure. That said, it did allow for the Israel-Egypt Peace Treaty to be signed in 1979 and implemented because it gave cover to Sadat. Did Sadat really think the Camp David Framework would be adopted by the Palestinians and the other Arab states? Was it enough of an achievement for him to go his own way whatever they did? Was it a cover for a separate peace? These are good questions. In any case, the Camp David Accords led to the first peace treaty between Israel and an Arab state: the Israeli-Egypt Peace Treaty.

Q: Well then, you left when?

FEIFER: I left in January 1980, right after my last autonomy talks meeting.

Q: You were there for almost four years?

FEIFER: I was there three and a half years. I was originally assigned for a two-year tour. I extended for another year, and then extended for another six months. Not a normal career progression for a junior officer.

Q: I would have thought that you would have gotten awards for this. You were in a very crucial place at a very crucial time.

FEIFER: I received a Letter of Commendation from Under Secretary for Political Affairs Sisco for my INR work. I received a Meritorious Honor Award, which Hal Saunders and Roy Atherton presented to me while they were in Israel during one of their shuttles with Secretary Vance. It was a surprise. I very much appreciated the personal effort they made to show their appreciation for my Washington work. Hal also sent me a letter after the Camp David Summit, thanking me for my contribution to the U.S. effort. It was great. There was a lot of recognition from people I respected. I was very appreciative.

Q: What did you do to help prepare the U.S. effort for Camp David?

FEIFER: I was in Tel Aviv reporting on a daily basis our sense of the Israeli approach? What are they going to propose? What are their limits?

The arguments about what had actually been agreed upon at Camp David went on even after the Summit ended. President Carter and Prime Minister Begin disagreed on what Begin had committed to do on settlements. Carter believed Begin had committed himself to no settlement activity for an open ended period while the autonomy negotiations went on. Begin believed he had committed himself to no settlement activity for three months. Sam Lewis gave me his handwritten notes from the Camp David meetings and asked me to write a first person message explaining what he believed Begin had said, which is not what Carter thought he had meant. This showed how much confidence Sam had in us. He gave us the opportunity to draft important messages, which he of course reviewed before they went out.

Q: What was the Israeli mood during Camp David?

FEIFER: There was a wave of incredible optimism sweeping most Israelis, like with the Sadat visit. In many ways it was a different Israel. The right wing was in government and yet they were the ones who were the partners for Sadat. Begin had pushed the extreme right to the margins. Likud depended on Labor Party support in the Knesset on the Accords. They were working together for peace. Even if Begin's goal was only a separate peace with Egypt, that would be a historic achievement. Many Israelis had an incredible optimism.

Q: How did you find the social life? Or did you have any social life?

FEIFER: I certainly made time to have a good social life. I knew a lot of people and I enjoyed myself. I got out a lot and I was young enough, despite the long hours at work, to have enough energy to do everything I wanted to do.

Q: That's great. What was your impression of or did you get any on the relationship between the Consul General in Jerusalem and our Embassy in Tel Aviv?

FEIFER: We were both under pressure by some parts of the Israeli government, especially when they saw our contacts with the Palestinians as problematic. Some Israeli officials accused Consulate General staff of being pro-Palestinian. I had a similar problem, because my job involved contacts with Palestinians in Gaza. I already mentioned my problem with Sharon. There were also other incidents. Sam Lewis got a call from a senior Israeli Foreign Ministry official stating that I had forced my way into the Israeli military headquarters in Gaza. In order to avoid an embarrassing incident, it was said, the Israeli army had allowed me in and they had somebody talk to me. The thought that I could force myself into the Israeli military headquarters in Gaza without getting shot sort of beggars the imagination. Nonetheless, that was the complaint made against me. What had actually happened was I had requested, under the normal procedure, approval from the Israeli Foreign Ministry North American Division to meet with the Gaza military government Arab affairs advisor. That was the process, because

the Israeli military was not authorized to talk with diplomats without formal permission. The Israeli Foreign Ministry arranged the meeting and told me when to go. I went to the meeting and it had taken place without any problems, at least as far as I knew. It was all strange to me. I told Ambassador Lewis my version and suggested: "Why don't you ask the Foreign Ministry official who called you to talk to the North America Division officer who set up the meeting. He will clarify it all." To my good fortune, the MFA officer was an honest guy and backed my version. He confirmed that this was the way the process worked. He suggested that there must have been some misunderstanding, because this was an approved meeting. So he covered me and the complaint disappeared. This was an example one of those little fabrications and incidents that happened, stuff going on against staff from the Consulate General but also me because I had the most contact with the Palestinians at the Embassy. There was a lot of nastiness going on, including lot of negative stories to the media. The Israeli security people who were watching the Palestinians made sure that we knew that they were keeping an eye on us too.

I had a very nice farewell given to me by Isam and Geri Shawa in Gaza. Many of the Gazan political elite came to say goodbye. The Mayor, Rashid al Shawa, the head of the Shawa clan, was there. Haidar Abdul Shafi the head of the Gaza Red Crescent, and one of the founding members of the PLO, was there too. I would come into contact again with Abdul Shafi when become head of the Palestinian delegation which went to the Madrid Peace Conference in 1989 and participated in bilateral talks with Israel afterwards in Washington.

Q: Where did you go next?

FEIFER: I received a call from John Crump, who had been political counselor in Tel Aviv. He was then the political counselor in The Hague. Tom Dunnigan, who had been DCM in Tel Aviv, was DCM in The Hague. John asked if I wanted to come to The Hague as a political officer. I couldn't imagine working with a nicer group of people. I accepted. In January I left Israel, took my mother on a short holiday to Paris, and then returned to Washington to learn Dutch at the Foreign Service Institute over the next five months. I then went off to The Hague for three years.

Q: Today is the 27th of October 2015 with Ted Feifer. There may be other things you want to mention before we move on.

FEIFER: Something I remembered about my assignment to the Bureau of Intelligence and Research in Washington 1974-76. I mentioned that I worked for Hal Saunders, who was then the Director of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research. The Middle East Situation Report (SITREP) I started would go through several incarnations. It originally focused on the Lebanese Civil War and associated issues. Later it became a more general Arab-Israeli SITREP. Graeme Bannerman was my partner in producing the Lebanon SITREP, and he became responsible for it after I left. It is amazing how much responsibility we were given. Both of us were on our first assignments in the Department of State. Graeme was Civil Service and I was Foreign Service. Hal Saunders had confidence in us. But it was more than that. He looked on us as people who were worth

the investment of his time for mentoring. He was overloaded with responsibilities, yet took the time to support us. Hal told me once: "You are not always going to get it right," which is realistic in recognizing that people can and will make mistakes. However, he added, "You are going to give me your best and I have confidence that that's going to be fine." We wouldn't always be right and there is no question there were a couple times I got it very wrong. Later on, he told me that he and Roy Atherton had put Graham and me up for the Director General's Reporting Award. What was unique about this was that the reporting award traditionally goes to reporting from the field.

Q: Yes.

FEIFER: As INR Director, he wanted to open this award to people doing analytical reporting in Washington and not just reporting from the field. The Director General didn't approve the recommendation; he wanted to continue to reserve this award for reporting from the field. Nonetheless, he did agree that our work was worthy of special recognition. Consequently Hal Saunders and Roy Atherton recommended that Graeme and I receive Meritorious Honor Awards. Footnote: since I had departed Washington for Tel Aviv by then, I never received the Award. Hal and Roy found out and, as I have already mentioned, arranged a special ceremony with the Charge and Embassy staff present, to present the Award to me.

Q: You mentioned your work as an analyst in INR. Can you give us a sense of the sort of things you worked on?

FEIFER: Once we were asked for a discussion paper for a meeting of the National Security Council during the Lebanese Civil War. There was concern that the PLO would bring in one of its units, the Ayn Jalut Brigade, a unit based in Egypt. Each one of the Palestine Liberation Army Brigades was sponsored by a different Arab state. They generally had officers from the sponsoring state together with locally recruited Palestinians. The questions concerned the Ayn Jalut Brigade's makeup, its leadership, its capabilities, and whether it could have a significant impact if it was deployed to Lebanon. The whole intelligence community was asked to provide answers to the questions. We had nothing on the subject and apparently nobody else did either. I learned a useful lesson: the intelligence community tends to provide answers to what it knows or thinks it knows, rather than try to answer the questions it is asked. My officer director asked me, "Do we know anything about this subject?" I said, "No." "Then what do you think?" I told him what I thought based on projections from other information I had. I gave my best guesses. We later learned that the only contributor to answer the questions asked was INR. As a result, the NSC meeting discussion was based solely on what INR provided. I don't think the meeting reached any operative conclusions. It was very complimentary that they used our input. Unfortunately, as I later found out, what we provided was wrong. Apparently, something is always better than nothing. This was an example of what you might call "creative analysis." Sometimes you get it right and sometimes you don't, but you provide your best shot.

Q: I have a similar example from an interview with someone who served in Indonesia when Sukarno was overthrown in 1965 and there was a campaign to kill off both Communists and Chinese. My interviewee had been following this but had no way of knowing how far this campaign had gone. Somebody asked how many do you think were killed? He picked out a number out of thin air and said 300,000; that number still persists today. When somebody acts positive about something and the rest dither, then the positive person gets the credit rightly or wrongly.

FEIFER: This is such a great lesson. It's unfortunate that it's not one that everyone learns. There are some things that you know, which are factual and you have a basis for knowing, and there are other things that are creative and simply your best guess. If you are smart you understand the difference between the two. Your best guess is no more than that, and should always be open to change.

Q: Anything more about this period of time?

FEIFER: An additional comment about Embassy Tel Aviv's Political Section in the late 1970s. Many political sections have people with great reporting skills, who have studied the local language for years, know the country from multiple postings, and are hard working. But you don't find very many political sections in which the staff speak the local language with native or superior professional fluency, know the country, its cultures, and could fit in easily almost anywhere. Most of our political officers could do just that. We had an amazing team.

Q: Okay. You went to The Netherlands from when to when?

FEIFER: I was in The Netherlands from mid-1980 to mid-1983. I had spent five months studying Dutch at the old FSI in Roslyn and then I went to my assignment in The Hague.

Q: Let's talk a little about the Dutch. How did you find it?

FEIFER: I hoped to fit in as well in The Hague as I had in Tel Aviv. Although Dutch is not a hard language, I had a hard time developing spoken fluency. I had good teachers at FSI. I was trying, perhaps overoptimistically, to be as good in Dutch as I had been in Hebrew. I had professional fluency in Hebrew. I could fit in easily in Israeli society. I assumed that I would be able to do the same thing in The Netherlands.

When I got to The Hague I started speaking Dutch to everyone. But as soon as they heard my accent, they would shift to English. I'm talking about going to the market to buy some fish, going to the green grocer, talking to someone with little formal education. Everybody heard my accent and immediately shifted to English to make it easy for me, which made it impossible for me to use Dutch. However, for about two weeks I stuck to it. I insisted I was going to use my Dutch. I wasn't going to be deflected by people being nice to me. Then one day I went to a café. The waitress was a young kid who answered me in Dutch. Then she added something along the lines of, "Sir, when you speak Dutch, it sounds so cute." She used a particular Dutch word for cute, which for me was the kiss

of death. She might have wanted to flatter me for trying to use Dutch, but I didn't feel flattered. As a result, I decided my effort in Dutch would not get me very far. While it was good that I could read the newspaper and generally follow what people were saying on radio and on television, I would never be able to use my Dutch or have fluency as I had in Hebrew. I didn't find that to be a problem because just about everyone I met in The Netherlands could speak passable to fluent English. That was much better than my Dutch would ever be.

Q: What was happening in the Netherlands when you got there?

FEIFER: Nuclear weapons were the issue in The Netherlands, as it was elsewhere in Western Europe. The Netherlands was where this issue really came to a head.

Q: Was this in connection with the Soviet SS-20?

FEIFER: The SS-20 and the NATO dual decision. You may remember that NATO decided in 1979 to offer to negotiate a limitation on intermediate range nuclear delivery systems with the Warsaw Pact, and modernize its own intermediate range systems. The Netherlands had its own response to the dual decision, which it participated in. The Netherlands supported the decision to negotiate, but reserved judgment on deployment. One of the places where there would be deployment was in The Netherlands. The other countries were West Germany; United Kingdom, Belgium, and Italy.

Q: What was your role in the political section?

FEIFER: I had the domestic politics portfolio. I dealt with members of parliament. My personal goal was to meet with every member of the Dutch Second Chamber of Parliament. Some Dutch political parties had a religious base. The Christian Democratic Appeal was the ruling party. The Dutch Labor Party was in the Opposition. There was the conservative VVD Liberal Party, as well as a more left liberal party called D-66. There were also several small leftist and right wing religious parties. I was also in touch with anti-nuclear weapons groups like the IKV Interchurch Peace Council, the Ban the Neutron Bomb group, which was a Communist front. It was a great opportunity for me to talk to just about anybody within the political spectrum. I also handled Middle East issues for the Section.

At that time the Embassy lacked a political/military officer, so I was asked to be the Embassy's representative with the USAFE U.S. Air Force Europe team negotiating with the Dutch on deployment. At the first meeting the Dutch delegation had an interesting lead presentation on the Dutch position on the dual decision. The Dutch noted that if they do nothing to advance deployment, which is a long process, it is the same as rejecting deployment, which is not the Dutch decision. So the Dutch were going to negotiate if they had agreed to deployment and would go about discussing everything that has to be discussed in terms of planning and implementation. Down the road there would be a

political decision. So, in effect, they proceeded as if they were going to deploy, rather than do nothing and preclude deployment, which was a very, very cooperative approach.

Q: In a way it leaves you standing with your jaw open.

FEIFER: Realistically, the Dutch had to select a site for the cruise missile base, do the planning for the site, go through the legal process for zoning, and so on. They were seriously going through the process of preparing for deployment. It wasn't just an issue that the central government could make on its own. There was a lot of local government planning that had to be done, and approval processes beyond the question of the contractors who would actually build the base. It took a lot of time to do that but they did go through the requisite planning process.

Q: The logic of the Dual decision was that successful negotiations with the Warsaw Pact would make INF modernization unnecessary.

FEIFER: The issue was one which Willie Brandt had made in 1977 when he brought in the question of "decoupling." Does the deployment of the SS-20, which can be used against NATO in Europe but not the continental United States, "decouple" NATO partners in Western Europe from the U.S. nuclear umbrella? If there is a nuclear or even conventional attack on Western Europe, would the U.S. endanger its homeland for Europe? Would the U.S. resort to nuclear weapons even if its forces based in Western Europe were facing defeat by conventional Warsaw Pact forces? NATO INF modernization was to address the decoupling question. The Soviets were working hard to undercut the deployment decision. Their propaganda line was that the Americans were endangering Western Europe for their own interests, and that if there were to be a war it would be fought in Europe. They were providing covert support and funding to elements of the anti-nuclear weapons movement. Not many arms control experts thought a zero option was possible. That was Reagan's idea. He pushed the zero option and was able to achieve an agreement to eliminate this entire class of weapons. The Dutch government was very happy that there would be no need for deployment in The Netherlands, but did keep the option seriously in play until it was no longer necessary. The Dutch government held the line, even though it was under pressure from within the CDA ruling party. There were many in the CDA who were opposed to nuclear weapons, and wanted to get rid of the Dutch nuclear tasks entirely. So, it was a great time to be there.

Geri Joseph was the ambassador when I arrived in The Hague. She was a Democratic Party leader and journalist from Minnesota who had been appointed by Carter. She was terrific. She had also been Vice Chairperson of the Democratic National Committee. She understood politics, and was very effective with the Dutch. She was great to work with, but departed in 1981. Political Counselor John Crump and DCM Tom Dunnigan also departed soon after. As I mentioned, they had sponsored my posting to The Hague. Geri Joseph's successor as ambassador was a career FSO named Bill Dyess who had been Acting Spokesman of the Department. He reportedly had problems with Secretary of State Haig, who promoted him out of Washington and gave him The Hague.

Q: Bill and I did a tour of Eastern Macedonia when we were both at Embassy Belgrade.

FEIFER: He and his DCM were absolutely convinced that they understood the Dutch. Dyess was a true believer in polling. To his credit, and I'm not sure I have many things I would say to his credit, he got one thing right. The polls he commissioned consistently confirmed that the Dutch majority did not favor cruise missile deployment in the Netherlands. However, when asked if they though deployment would happen, a majority thought it would. He got right the difference between personal preference and expectation.

Q: Let's talk about the nuclear weapons issue. What did you hear from the people in the Dutch anti-nuclear weapons organizations?

FEIFER: My contacts were savvy and knowledgeable about the issues. We had great discussions on East-West politics and nuclear strategy. My key contact from the Inter-Church Peace Council, named Jan Mient Faber, understood nuclear strategy, Soviet intentions and the dual decision. He was well-informed. He opposed nuclear weapons for moral reasons, which was not at all unreasonable. We got together often. It was always interesting to talk to him. Rather than try to convince him that he was wrong or that our position was right, I wanted to understand where he was coming from and what impact he thought his movement would have on Dutch politics and policy. Another good contact was the International Secretary of the PvdA Labour Party, Maarten van Traa. He understood the issues well, had insights into the political dynamic and direction of the PvdA and the West European peace movement. It was always interesting to meet with these guys and talk politics. I also talked to as many parliamentarians as I could to gauge the impact of the anti-nuclear weapons movement on them and the pressure they felt from their grass roots on these issues.

Q: How did you feel about this yourself, deep down inside on the nuclear issue?

FEIFER: My thinking on the subject has evolved over the years. Deterrence made sense. Use of nuclear weapons made no sense whatsoever. The problem was how to make deterrence credible without being ready to use nuclear weapons. Mutual Assured Destruction may have worked so far in deterring use, but would that always be the case? I can see the rationality, the problems with the rationality and the moral dilemma.

By the way, you didn't ask me how I felt about working in Tel Aviv. I never doubted that the positions the U.S. took with regard to Israel and the Arab-Israeli peace process were in Israel's and America's best interest. No doubts. I never believed that any of the positions the U.S. took were against Israel's long term interests. I felt the same way when I served in The Hague. The only thing that made me feel a little weird was the Reagan Administration's embrace of the Contras. Everyone was expected to do public affairs and explain how the Sandinistas were evil and the Contra's great. This did not fly with most people in The Netherlands. Still, it was fun to go out with the Department's talking points and watch people's reactions I didn't worry too much about it because I felt I was there to make a best faith effort.

Q: This may have been before your time, but were there ongoing demonstrations outside Consulate General Amsterdam protesting the Viet Nam War and U.S. policy? Was there a radical group that demonstrated while you were posted in The Hague?

FEIFER: There were umbrella and individual organizations leading the protests. I remember going out to talk to one of my contacts from the Stop the Neutron Bomb organization, which held one of its protests in front of the Embassy in 1981. I invited him and a few others to come into the Embassy to formally present their protest letter to President Reagan and to chat. The high points of the anti-cruise missile deployment protest movement were a mass petition in 1981, big demonstrations in 1981 in Amsterdam and 1983 in The Hague after I had finished my posting. Nonetheless, the Dutch government decided in 1984 and 1985 to deployment.

Q: How would you characterize the Stop the Neutron Bomb group?

FEIFER: It was a Communist front.

Q: When you say a Communist front, were these committed Communists or were these idealists who were co-opted?

FEIFER: There were Communist Party Netherlands members, as well as people within the protest organizations who had clear contacts with Soviet agents. Soviet funding and talking points were identified. There was enough intelligence to show Soviet involvement. That said, the overwhelming majority of those involved in the protests did so out of idealism.

Q: Was this whole anti-nuclear protest thing a Soviet initiative trying to break the NATO alliance?

FEIFER: Some of those in the movement were communists working in support of the Soviet line, whether intentionally or not. The Stop the Neutron Bomb group was a definite Soviet front, with guidance from people who were pro-Soviet communists. But that doesn't mean everyone who supported the group was pro-Soviet. Most people supporting the anti-nuclear movement and the Inter-Church Peace Council were non-Communist. They believed nuclear weapons were wrong; it was pure idealistic moral opposition.

Q: What was your impression, since you had a political-military past, what was your impression of the Dutch military?

FEIFER: The Dutch Foreign and Defense ministries team to the deployment negotiations were very professional. They understood the range of issues that had to be addressed as part of deployment in the Netherlands. I was a neophyte on the subject of nuclear weapons and building a base from scratch. I was more a representative/observer than a real participant in the talks. It was interesting watching the pros on both sides deal with

the issues. The USAFE representatives were nuclear weapons professionals, as were the Dutch. The Netherlands has had nuclear tasks within NATO since the early 1960s.

Q: There was at one point a certain amount of almost dismissiveness about the Dutch military because navy ships were docked for weekends, soldiers had long hair, and unions for active duty personnel. The Dutch seemed to have a different attitude toward their military. Did you find that?

FEIFER: The Dutch senior officers I met seemed no different from senior officers from any other military. Discipline and capability did not seem to be issues, at least from my perspective as an outsider.

Q: That's true.

FEIFER: It is up to the Dutch on how they want to run their military. Several years down the road the Dutch would be placed in almost impossible situations in the former Yugoslavia, culminating in the UN's failure at Srebrenica.

Q: What about immigrants and politics at the time? How stood the situation?

FEIFER: Immigration-related political issues were visible in the 1980s, but did not have the saliency they have now in The Netherlands. During the late 1940s Molucans and Indo people, the descendants of mixed Dutch and Indonesian parents, left what would become an independent Indonesia and came to The Netherlands. The Molucans had been looked on as anti-nationalist or pro-Dutch in the Indonesian struggle for independence. Many didn't establish themselves or didn't fit in places where they were settled in The Netherlands, and they were perceived as a social problem. Turks and Moroccans started coming as guest workers in the 1960s. They moved into the poorer quarters of the cities, visible and noteworthy, but still not the issue as it has become more recently in Western Europe.

Q: Did you get involved with the Dutch intellectual classes?

FEIFER: I had good Dutch friends in the media, and some working in government. But my social circle was more the diplomatic crowd in The Hague. Unlike Amsterdam or Delft, Leiden or Rotterdam, Utrecht or Groningen, The Hague didn't have a university. The seat of government was The Hague, although the capital was Amsterdam. If you define an intellectual center as university based, the 12 or so Dutch universities were elsewhere. In addition, there was the Consulate General with responsibility for Amsterdam. Although I loved Amsterdam when visiting years earlier as a student, I was very satisfied with my life in The Hague. I almost never went to Amsterdam during my three years in The Hague. The Hague was my world. My circle was the diplomats, the British in particular, our people were very close, the Australians and New Zealanders, the Swedes and Israelis. The French Embassy was across the street from our Embassy, but we were not close to its diplomats.

Q: How did you find relations with Germany?

FEIFER: It may have been 35 years since the war, but the Dutch still didn't like Germans very much. Many Germans vacationed in The Netherlands especially by the beach in The Hague, Scheveningen. The Dutch were always making jokes about them, which says something. The war was the formative experience for many Dutch, who remembered the German occupation all too well. The German bunkers from the Atlantic Wall were still standing along the coast. There were historical exhibitions, for example, of The Hague during the Second World War with photos of swastikas on streets we walked down every day. There were memorial plaques on historical sites, though not on the scale as in France. I knew people whose families had been victims of the Holocaust, who had been deported to death camps, or had suffered during the war. The Second World War did not feel very far away.

Q: We know the language problem in Belgium. Was there anything comparable to that there?

FEIFER: No. There is, of course, a difference between the primarily Catholic south and the mostly Dutch Reform Protestant north. There was, however, a trend of religion declining as an organizing principal in Dutch life. It had been a core factor in Dutch history; but was becoming less and less important. That is why, in fact, the Catholic Peoples Party and two protestant parties joined together in 1977 to form the Christian Democratic Appeal, because they were all losing strength. People were less willing to vote for a Christian Party. There were some very small conservative Calvinist Protestant political parties, but they were on the fringe. They weren't part of the government.

Q: How did you find life there?

FEIFER: Life was great. I enjoyed myself very much: interesting work, lots of friends, good social life. The dollar was strong, so it was a good time to be living in Western Europe. I could take the overnight ferry over to England and be in London in next morning. I was an hour's drive from Brussels, maybe four hours' drive from Paris. I could go anywhere I wanted, do anything I wanted. It was a great.

Q: What was the media like there? Some are vicious. I mean, how was the TV and papers?

FEIFER: The Netherlands had a very active print media, its New York Times equivalent, the NRC Handelsblad, a leftwing tabloid Volkskrant, and a rightwing tabloid, De Telegraaf. The print media were traditionally aligned with the religious pillars of Dutch society, and only evolved into more commercially-oriented media in the 1970s. Dutch broadcasting similarly evolved through pillars, with people subscribing to associations, which are in turn allocated broadcasting hours. It seemed to be a wide open media.

Q: How did the media treat the United States? Focus on the sensational or just regular news?

FEIFER: Depended on your newspaper or broadcaster. If it was a religious broadcaster, even with programming on non-religious subjects, there seemed to be a moral tone. The NRC Handelsblad was where I would go for news. Volkskrant would have something edgier. Trouw continued to have a Protestant slant and focus. . For me, the media was an opportunity to add to my knowledge base. I was less concerned if a columnist liked or disliked Americans. This was not long after the critical Viet Nam War years. There was certainly more than enough skepticism, if not criticism, of U.S. policy in Central America. There were questions raised about nuclear weapons policy. There was no great affection for a Republican Administration in the U.S. that wasn't their kind of American.

Q: You mentioned that although Bill Dyess got something right, you had some real questions about how he operated.

FEIFER: The Dutch never respected him or his deputy chief of mission, Dixon Boggs. Neither did many of the Embassy staff. If their goal was to influence Dutch public opinion, I don't think they had a positive impact.

Q: Did you get any major visits or get involved in any?

FEIFER: The Hague wasn't like Tel Aviv. We dealt more with preparing Washington for visits by the Dutch rather than USG officials or CODELS to The Netherlands. The Queen, the foreign and defense ministers would go to the U.S. But we didn't have many high level visitors.

Q: How important was the royal family in the political equation or were they above it?

FEIFER: The Sovereign's role is primarily symbolic in the government formation process. The Sovereign chooses an Informateur to brief on the results of national elections, and eventually a Formateur to form a government. The choice of candidates for these roles is based on established criteria and political realities. During my posting Beatrix was the Queen and her husband, the Prince Consort, was a former German diplomat. This was still a sensitive issue for many Dutch when they married in 1966, but less so over time. The royal family plays ceremonial roles in Dutch society, and the young princes were a focus of attention in the popular press as in the United Kingdom.

Q: What was our economic relationship with the Netherlands?

FEIFER: The Dutch were the biggest foreign investors in the U.S. at that time, if I remember correctly.

Q: Really?

FEIFER: They had a very important economic role.

Q: Did a lot of Dutch students study in the U.S.?

FEIFER: I was constantly amazed at how many Dutch people I ran into, including members of Parliament, had been Junior Year Abroad students at high schools or studied at universities in the U.S.

Q: When did you leave The Hague?

FEIFER: I left in June 1983. Where was I going to go to next? I thought it was probably a good time to come back to the U.S. I got a telephone call from Mark Grossman, then the Jordan desk officer and later to become Undersecretary of Political Affairs. He asked me if I would like to replace him as Jordan desk officer. Dick Viets, who had been my DCM in Tel Aviv, was then ambassador in Amman. Grossman said Viets recommended me for the job. "Why don't you take the job?" He said Viets would be giving me a call. I was flattered. It also shows the influence of corridor reputation in getting assignments. Then I got a telephone call from Bill Kirby who I had known from NEA, who had the strange title of Deputy for Middle East Negotiations Not deputy assistant secretary, but deputy. He worked on the Arab-Israeli Peace Process. He noted that the Reagan September 1 Initiative which had been launched the previous year had been rejected by Begin and never got off the ground. We are going to again give it a big push, he said. How would you like to come back to Washington and be a Special Assistant for Middle East Negotiations? So, I had been offered the choice of a traditional desk officer job or something which was completely amorphous. Which one did I take? I didn't think in career terms. I opted for the job which was completely amorphous; it sounded so much sexier.

I came back to Washington in June 1983 to find the Arab-Israeli peace process dead in the water. The resurrection of September 1 had fizzled. Nothing was happening and there was little for me to do. I met Tom Miller, who at that time was a special assistant to Don Rumsfeld, the President's Special Representative for the Middle East. Tom was still briefing Rumsfeld, who was in the process of leaving government service. Tom and I would be working together in NEA in a few years. As Special Assistant for Middle East Negotiations, I was with Kirby in our own little world. I sat on my own in the NEA Regional Affairs office for a few months, but was formally attached to the NEA Front Office. After a renovation opened up more space, I joined Kirby in our own office a few doors down from the NEA front office. What were we doing? We were trying to figure out what to do on the peace process when there wasn't one. One of the brainstormings was improving the quality of life in the West Bank and Gaza, a tried and true fallback when peace negotiations are not in the cards. We drafted statements and press guidance. We answered messages from the field asking about the state of play in the peace process. That's what I would do for the next two years. There was, however, one very sexy issue: Congressional proposals pushed by Israel to move the U.S. Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

Q: That's been perpetual.

FEIFER: True. We prepared the Department's response, working with the Legal Advisor's Office. We wrote Under Secretary for Political Affairs Eagleburger's draft congressional statements. He took our draft, personalized it, and made it an effective Eagleburger product.

Q: What was the argument for not moving our embassy to Jerusalem?

FEIFER: The status of Jerusalem had not yet been resolved. The theology was that the status of Jerusalem was a subject for negotiations between Israel and its neighbors. The United States should not pre-judge the issue by moving its Embassy and be seen as taking a position. That was the foreign policy argument. There was also a constitutional argument, that it was the President's constitutional authority to name ambassadors and decide where to place our foreign representatives.

Q: One other thing to explain. You mentioned a number of times the Reagan Initiative, what essentially was that?

FEIFER: The Reagan Initiative was an update to the Camp David autonomy negotiations, which had been suspended by Sadat in 1980. The autonomy talks at the ministerial level went on life support after I left in January 1980. There were working level meetings going on every couple of months, but not really going anywhere. When Israel moved into Lebanon in 1982, Egypt suspended these negotiations entirely. They would never resume again.

Q: How did you find working in NEA? Was there a split between those dealing with the Middle East and North Africa, and those dealing with South Asia and Iran?

FEIFER: South Asia was another world, as far as I was concerned.

Q: You were in the same bureau, but there was practically no contact?

FEIFER: South Asia was not part of my world. My focus was Israel; Jordan, Syria, Palestinians; and the Arabian Peninsula. We had periodic consultations with the Europeans on the peace process. They had their own ideas; we generally disagreed. By the way, I worked with great people who were junior officers at that time: later Deputy Secretary Bill Burns was a staff assistant in NEA working for Assistant Secretary Dick Murphy, and later Senior Advisor to the Secretary and Coordinator for Iraq David Satterfield, was the other staff assistant. They were sharp, interesting, with open minds and just beginning their careers.

Q: What about AIPAC, the American-Israel Public Affairs Committee? Did you feel its influence?

FEIFER: It was part of the environment, including the effort to move the Embassy to Jerusalem. I met every now and then with AIPAC people to explain to them the Department point of view. I also did some public speaking to various Jewish groups.

Q: Every time we move into an election year, candidates announces that they will move the Embassy. Many make these announcements and nothing happens but...

FEIFER: Israel is ready for a move. There is a plot of identified land which is currently an Israel Border Police camp where the embassy could be built in West Jerusalem. Israel has made the site available to us.

Q: You mentioned dealing with the Palestinian quality of life. What is that?

FEIFER: The range of actions that can be taken by various actors to improve the lives of Palestinians in the absence of political movement forward. How should we and others use aid to the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza? How to convince Israel to modify its security and economic policies and practices in the West Bank and Gaza? How to influence Israel to use its policy on Palestinians working in Israel to improve the Palestinian economy? How to open up roads, reduce road blocks, facilitate the export of strawberries or flowers grown in Gaza, ease the shipment of oranges across the Allenby Bridge? Economics has an obvious impact on the quality of life. Another important piece was how does Jordan fit into this? The 1974 Arab Summit recognized the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. Hussein no longer could negotiate on behalf of the Palestinians. But Jordan continued to have many links with the West Bank and Gaza, including over the Muslim holy places in Jerusalem. In 1985, Hussein and Arafat would agree on a Jordanian-Palestinian delegation for peace negotiations. So there would be new life to a Jordanian role, but this time together with the PLO.

Q: What was your impression of Arafat?

FEIFER: Arafat's significance was his success in putting the Palestinians on the map not as refugees, but as a political force. The PLO engaged in terrorism in Israel and elsewhere. Arafat was engaged in that. The U.S. and others had tried to come up with a way of involving the Palestinians in peace negotiations without the PLO, but without success. During the 1980s the U.S. bought into getting Hussein to work with Arafat in a joint delegation. This succeeded in bringing the Palestinians into the negotiating process, a goal we had been unable to achieve with Egypt with the Camp David process. Hussein hated Arafat and distrusted him; aware that he had no greater enemy. Trying to make this work was a challenge, as we sought to establish a viable negotiating process with Israel.

Q: How about Sharon?

FEIFER: Sharon had been Israeli Minister of Defense in the early 1980s. Israel and the PLO had been battling each other for years, primarily along the Lebanon-Israel border. Lebanon was a base for PLO attacks on Israel. Sharon believed that Israel could create a new strategic reality in the Middle East through an Israeli invasion of Lebanon, destruction of the PLO, expulsion of Syria from Lebanon, and establishment of a pro-Israel government in Beirut. He used an attack on the Israeli ambassador in London by a non-PLO Palestinian terrorist faction to convince Begin to launch the invasion in 1982.

Sharon suggested that all he planned to do was a limited cross border operation. Begin was not a military man and couldn't read a map. He didn't understand that Sharon intended to go all the way to Beirut, bring in the Kataeb Phalange Party leader as president, who would make peace with Israel, and kick the Syrians out of Lebanon. The Israelis would eventually drive to Beirut, clash with the Syrians, and have Kataeb leader Bashir Gemayel elected as President of Lebanon.

The Israelis succeeded in expelling the armed PLO state within a state from Lebanon. But the Syrians maintained their hold on Lebanon until their withdrawal in 2005. Bashir Gemayel would be assassinated by a pro-Syrian group and prospects for an Israel-Lebanon peace agreement would evaporate. There were also unintended consequences. The Lebanese Shia would eventually coalesce into Hezbollah, with an alliance with Iran, presenting a more serious threat to Israel than the PLO ever did. In addition, the 1982 Lebanon War tends to be remembered for the massacre of Palestinians in the Sabra and Shatila camps in Beirut. Israel's Kahan Commission investigated the massacre. The Commission assessed that even though the massacre was done by the Phalange militia, Israeli forces should have known what they were going to do because this happened right after the murder of Lebanese President Gemayel. The Commission would eventually recommend that Sharon be removed from office. A compromise deal led to Sharon resigning as Minister of Defense, but remaining as a Minister without Portfolio.

Q: You were doing this work from when to when?

FEIFER: I was Special Assistant for Middle East Negotiations from 1983 to 1985, starting after the Lebanon War. The Reagan Initiative proved to be a failed effort to take advantage of the situation emerging from the war to make a fresh start in peace negotiations. A renewed effort to push the Reagan Initiative also failed.

Q: Was Sharon viewed with suspicion?

FEIFER: Sharon was always viewed with suspicion by anyone who knew him. He was often up to no good, but he was Minister of Defense of Israel into 1983. The U.S. and Israel had a growing strategic relationship. The USG should have not, however, been surprised by the outbreak of the 1982 war. There were some like Haig who thought that an Israeli intervention could successfully expel the PLO and Syria from Lebanon. Other senior USG officials were opposed, believing that this could precipitate a regional war. In any case, Israel's military achievements did not translate into political achievements, and there were disastrous unintended consequences.

Q: During the time you were in NEA how were we treating settlements?

FEIFER: There was a shift. Since the 1967 War, the USG had termed settlements in the occupied territories illegal. Then Reagan was elected. He was asked in an interview, "Mr. President, what do you think about settlements?" He said, "Settlements are not illegal." He gave a double negative, which Begin interpreted as him saying the U.S. had changed its position. The Department had a problem. Reagan's September 1 Initiative had already

been negative on settlements. What to do now? What does the President's statement mean for our long-standing policy that settlements are illegal? The revised press guidance focused on settlements as an obstacle to peace, rather than debated the issue of legality.

Q: So basically it was giving a green light to the Israelis.

FEIFER: It wasn't a green light. Saying that settlement building is an obstacle to peace does not make it a good thing. But given what the President had said, the Department could not push the legality issue.

Q: What did you want to do in your next assignment?

FEIFER: The peace process was dead in the water. I didn't feel things were going anywhere. On the one hand, I felt it was time to move on. On the other hand, I liked working on the peace process.

Q: Is there anything else we should talk about? Things you were involved in, incidents or anything else you want to talk about?

FEIFER: I remember doing some talking points for a Reagan meeting with Hussein. We spend a lot of time on draft talking points, but in the end it's what the National Security Council staffer actually puts down on the card and gives to the President. The same thing happens in talking points prepared for the Secretary. There had just been a terrorist attack by the PLO. I thought it really important that the President tell Hussein that this was unacceptable. If Hussein was serious about being in a partnership with us, to make a push with a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation to negotiate with Israel, he had to read the riot act to Arafat. I was very insistent and Bob Pelletreau, who was Deputy Assistant Secretary in NEA, was agreeable and massaged the language a little bit. I don't know if the talking point was ever used.

Q: Okay, then what happened with you?

FEIFER: I started job hunting. There was nothing attractive for me in NEA. I found a nice job in the European Bureau as Cyprus desk officer. I had never been a desk officer and thought it was the right type of position for me in career terms. Moreover, Cyprus was almost Middle East and sort of sexy. It had been eleven years since the Turkish invasion. There was a complicated peace process being managed by the UN, supported by the U.S., This was an opportunity to put into practice a lot of the things I'd learned from the Arab-Israel peace process. The Cyprus conflict had similarities and differences from the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Q: And was influenced by domestic ethnic politics in the U.S., too.

FEIFER: That's right. The Greek lobby in the U.S. was as active politically as the Jewish lobby was on Israel. The Cyprus negotiating process was challenging. The U.S. was not the lead mediator, the UN had the lead. If we had ideas, we had to work through the UN.

We worked very closely with the UK, rather than as the Lone Ranger. The Cyprus issue was complicated by the conflict between Greece and Turkey, which had implications for NATO. But the Cyprus problem was, at least theoretically, more manageable than the Arab-Israeli problem. You could write on the back of an envelope reasonable solutions to the territorial, refugee, economic, property, and security issues. It seemed doable. The population of Cyprus was maybe two million. It was tiny. My optimism that the Cyprus conflict could be resolved showed how little I really understood it and what motivated the parties.

Q: I served four years in Athens during the rule of the Colonels. I experienced the Greek lobby in action.

FEIFER: I had second thoughts right before I was paneled into my new position. Things were kind of percolating again in the Arab-Israeli peace process. I didn't want to miss the action. I still thought there was traction in the Jordanian-Palestinian delegation approach, but it would be another five years before there was real movement in the Arab-Israeli peace process. In any case, it was too late. My friend Josiah Rosenblatt, who had served with me in Tel Aviv, moved into my slot. Off I went to be the Officer in charge of Cyprus Affairs. Bill Rope was the Director of Southern European Affairs. Peter Collins was the Deputy Director, succeeded by Townie Friedman. I had a lot to learn. UN Secretary General Perez de Cuellar, a real Cyprus hand, had put forward his first Cyprus settlement document. It was accepted by the Greek Cypriot side but rejected by the Turkish Cypriots. What to do? Bill Rope's idea was to find a way to keep the Greek Cypriots locked in, while crafting a document which the Turkish Cypriots would accept. That's what we tried to sell to the UN Secretary General's Cyprus hand in the Secretariat, Gus Feissel. Things didn't work out as we thought. The Secretary General's second document was made more attractive to the Turkish Cypriots. So, they accepted it and the Greek Cypriots rejected it.

During this assignment I had the opportunity to travel with our Special Cypriot Coordinator/EUE Deputy Assistant Secretary Jim Wilkinson to Cyprus, Greece and Turkey. Congress has legislated creation of a Special Cyprus Coordinator to focus action on Cyprus. It was a pleasure to watch Jim in action. He was knowledgeable and low-key. We met the Greek and Turkish Cypriot leaders, Kyprianou and Denktash. There were experts on both sides who could -- and would -- be called upon to give you historical lessons on the Cyprus problem, in detail. They were true talking heads. They would be brought out to sing the Gospel of the Cyprus conflict from their side's point of view. The senior levels of both the Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots leadership knew each other from the good old days as law students in London and as barristers in Nicosia. But they still could not find a peaceful solution to the Cyprus problem.

Q: They were schoolmates?

FEIFER: Several had studied law in London and knew each other from that period. I would eventually learn that the Turkish Cypriots had what they wanted: the Turkish Army to protect them and Turkey to support them. Unless they could get something at

least as good, they weren't going to make a deal. The Greek Cypriots, in their heart-of-hearts, had not accepted that they would not again be masters of the island. That the situation would not go back to the good old days. That was the basic problem during my time with the issue. Even when the Turkish Cypriot position seemed to evolve, the Greek Cypriots didn't. There were also the Greek and Turkish Cypriot relationships with Greece and Turkey, respectively. It was sometimes unclear who was pulling strings or who was being manipulated. Another factor was Turkish settlers from Anatolia coming to live in the Turkish part of Cyprus. That tended to change the dynamic. Native Turkish Cypriots seemed to be emigrating and more conservative Turkish settlers coming, influencing the politics in the Turkish Cypriot community. I enjoyed working as Cyprus desk officer. I had that job until mid-1987.

Q: What was your impression of the Greek Cypriot leaders? Did they know it was going anywhere, were they satisfied with the way things were?

FEIFER: They wanted the Turkish Army off Cyprus. They had very clear ideas on what they wanted to see happen. That was certainly the case with Kyprianou. He was not interested in the sort of bi-zonal, bi-communal deal that seemed to be possible, so nothing happened.

Q: And Denktash?

FEIFER: Denktash was quite satisfied. He had what he wanted: solid Turkish support. He had the Turkish Army for security, and Turkish funding subsidies for his government. He was also very good in playing the Turkish media and Turkish public opinion. He was under no pressure to reach a deal.

Q: You mentioned that Anatolian Turks were coming in and Turkish Cypriots were leaving. Why were they leaving?

FEIFER: Economic opportunities in Turkish Cyprus were limited. The Greek-controlled Republic of Cyprus was the internationally recognized government of Cyprus. Turkish Cyprus was under an economic boycott. Many Turkish Cypriots preferred to go to London. There were probably more Cypriots in London than there were in Nicosia. The Anatolian Turks came to Cyprus to improve their economic situation. They were generally rural, more conservative, more religious, and less secular. They received land and felt they had something to lose with a peace settlement.

Q: Was there anything comparable to the bad old days of the EOKA Greek Cypriot guerillas?

FEIFER: EOKA was the anti-British organization before Cyprus' independence. EOKA increasingly targeted Turkish Cypriots when the British started recruiting Turkish Cypriots for their police. An extreme nationalist EOKA-B was established when independent Cyprus' President, Archbishop Makarios, showed no enthusiasm for Enosis, or union with Greece. Once the Greek Colonels precipitated the coup to overthrow

Makarios in 1974, Turkey intervened, the Colonels regime collapsed, and eventually Makarios returned to power. EOKA-B evaporated.

Q: I left Athens the first of July, 1974; it was a very good time to get out of there.

FIEFER: There is one thing that I would like to talk about my time on the Cyprus desk. One of the most sensitive issues to the American Greek community was the missing in the course of the 1974 Turkish invasion. There had been outbreaks of inter-ethnic violence in Cyprus, starting in 1963-1964. Turkish and Greek Cypriots were pulled off buses, kidnapped and murdered, and their bodies hidden. The Turkish Cypriots, as the minority felt more vulnerable. The Turkish Cypriots would eventually seek security in enclaves. During the instability that followed the July 1974 EOKA-B coup and Turkish invasion, a number of American citizens, some dual nationals, disappeared. This became a cause with the Greek lobby. Where is the missing? There were accusations that the Turkish Army or Turkish government was holding these people in prison in Turkey eleven years after the war. It didn't make much sense but this was the position articulated by some of the Greek lobbying organizations. There were about 2,000 reported missing on both sides.

Q: We had that too. There are still people who believe there are Americans held in prison somewhere in Viet Nam.

FEIFER: I saw as a real goal, an achievable goal, to convince the Turkish Cypriots to resolve the most publicized case, that of 16-year old Andrew Kassapis, who disappeared following the Turkish invasion in 1974. It would be good for the family. It was the sort of outstanding consular case that we should try to resolve. I had a good relationship with the unofficial Turkish Cypriot representative in Washington. I suggested that putting this case to rest would have an important positive impact on Turkish and Greek Cypriot reconciliation and the negotiating process. "Why don't you release the information that you have collected and resolve this issue? It is in your interest." There was a bi-communal Committee on Missing Persons with a Greek Cypriot, Turkish Cypriot and UN member formed in 1981. Both the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot authorities had conducted investigations into disappearances and had information on many of the cases. But the issue was highly politicized. They did not cooperate. They weren't even able to agree on a joint list of the disappeared until the late 1990s. I urged the Turkish Cypriot representative to go back to Denktash, who was a family relation. "Why don't you ask the boss to see if you can get some information." The Turkish Cypriots eventually delivered to us a report on their investigation. According to an interview by Turkish Cypriot investigators, an eyewitness said Kassapis was taken down the road out of eye sight, shots were heard, and Kassapis was buried. It appears that Kassapis was killed soon after being captured by Turkish Cypriot irregulars. The person who claimed to have been an eye witness to his capture may have been involved. This was circumstantial, but was detailed information based on an official investigation. We were authorized to share the information with Kassapis' Congressman and family. We tried to share this with the Congressman, but he didn't want to touch it.

Q: All they wanted was to keep the issue alive.

FEIFER: It was too sensitive for the Congressman. Perhaps he didn't want to be seen as being the channel on this issue, the one bringing bad news. We would eventually pass the information to the family, who wouldn't believe it. It would be another decade before this issue would get unstuck. During my time on the desk, the Turkish Cypriots were adamantly opposed to looking for remains. They claimed that they didn't want people going around Turkish Cyprus digging up alleged graves based on rumors and allegations. It was only in 1998 that the Turkish Cypriots allowed the grave site to be dug up and Andrew Kassapis' remains to be returned to his family in the U.S. for burial. President Clinton also sent a letter to Congress with a report on U.S. efforts on the Kassapis case. But this was long after I had departed. Although I had achieved my goal of being able to get information on what had happened to Kassapis, I was unable to resolve the issue.

Q: I remember going to a public event entitled 25 years of freedom for Cyprus. Speakers, including Congressmen, talked as though the situation in Cyprus came about because of the Turks invading and no mention of what had gone on before, which was a Greek-sponsored coup which put a known murderer named Samson in as President of Cyprus. It clearly provoked the Turkish action. But the Greek lobby, to my mind, seemed to have this almost blind vision that nothing happened before the Turks came in.

FEIFER: The roots of the conflict went back to the late 1950s, through the 1963-1964 ethnic violence. Bad things were done by people on both sides. Crimes were committed by both sides. That was reality.

Q: What did you do next?

FEIFER: I had started thinking about my onward assignment as early as 1985. I saw that there was a political officer position in Tel Aviv opening up in 1987, a language-designated position at my grade level. I informed NEA personnel that I was interested. Nobody would be paneled for language training for the job in 1985. As a result, I was a natural candidate when it came up for assignment the next year because I was qualified in Hebrew at the professional level, was the right rank, and had prior experience at post. So, off I went to Tel Aviv in the summer of 1987.

I took a personalized vacationing route. I flew to Amsterdam, revisited The Hague, drove through France and Switzerland stayed with friends in Rome, took the ferry from Brindisi to the Athens port of Piraeus, took a ferry from Piraeus to Limassol in Cyprus, and then to Haifa. My friend Scott Loney met me at Haifa port and took me to my new home in Ramat Gan, in metro Tel Aviv.

Q: Who was the ambassador at the time when you arrived?

FEIFER: Tom Pickering. He had been there about a year.

Q: What was the situation in Israel when you arrived there in 1987 and the relationship with the United States?

FEIFER: Yitzhak Shamir had returned as prime minister, the U.S. was trying to breathe life into the Arab-Israeli peace process, and there was our evolving strategic relationship. Secretary of State Shultz launched a peace initiative in 1988 which went nowhere. Shamir was not interested. We were still trying to make something happen.

Q: What was your job actually?

FEIFER: I was deputy political counselor and domestic political reporting officer, focused on the government coalition, the Knesset, political parties, and local government. The 1984 Knesset elections had been a stalemate. The Alignment led by Peres, had come out with a few more seats than Likud led by Shamir, but neither had been able to form a government. So they established a national unity government with rotation of the two leaders. Peres served as prime minister for the first two years with Shamir as foreign minister. In 1986 Peres resigned and Shamir became prime minister. Rabin served as defense minister under both prime ministers. There was a complex dynamic between the three. Peres was trying to push the peace process. Shamir did not want anything to happen. Rabin was focused on defense, and had a difficult personal and competitive relationship with Peres.

Q: How would you describe the difference between when you left in 1980 and when you came back in 1987?

FEIFER: Begin had achieved a revolution in Israeli politics with a winning coalition based on the Sephardic Jews who had come from Arab countries. Begin, the small town Polish lawyer, successfully campaigned as the candidate who understood and represented the disadvantaged, under-privileged, and more traditional and religious Sephardic Jews. He would be tough on the Arabs, which also resonated among the Sephardic Jews. That became the winning strategy for Likud. Labor was branded as the party of the Ashkenazi Jews from Europe and the elite. The Likud's 1982 Lebanon War and its outcome had left a bad taste for many Israeli voters, but not enough to return the Labor Alignment to power. There was no peace process and continuing settlement activity during the 1980s.

Q: Was the migration from the Soviet Union still substantial? Russians can be a really xenophobic breed. How were they fitting in?

FEIFER: There had been an upsurge in Jewish immigration from the Soviet Union during the 1980s, but the massive increase would come after the fall of Communism. Immigrants to Israel from the former Soviet Union were expected to be right wing because they didn't like communism or socialism, or the symbolism of the Labor Party. However, during the mass immigration following Communism's collapse they seemed to be more up for grabs politically. There were issues pulling them in different directions. The newer immigrants seemed to be influenced more by quality of life economic and social issues. Judaism was a distant memory after seventy years of Communism.

Knowledge of Jewish religious practice and knowledge were limited. Many consisted of mixed families. Many had married non-Jews and came as family units to Israel. They ran into problems with the Rabbinate which controlled personal status issues like marriage. There is no civil marriage in Israel. Immigrants had an obvious interest in a more flexible approach to personal status issues. Non-Jews couldn't be buried in a Jewish cemetery. There were bizarre situations of Israelis serving in the IDF but not recognized by the Rabbinate as Jews and not allowed to be married in Israel, or when killed in action couldn't be buried in a Jewish cemetery. Jews from the former Soviet Union seemed at that time more concerned with which party would provide better opportunities. Moreover, Likud identified with the religious parties. There seemed to be an opportunity for the Labor Alignment to make inroads with just enough of the new immigrants to make a difference in an election. The Alignment also had its generals, and could show it could be tougher on security than Likud claimed to be.

Q: How did you the various parties work with each other? How well did the Knesset work?

FEIFER: Knesset public sessions were often loud and raucous. This is an Israeli tradition. Members of Knesset yelled at each other; interrupted each other. Interjections were traditional; no holds barred. There were rules and Members could be removed from the plenum floor. But once Members got off the floor and went into the cafeteria, they could be and often were buddies, polite and friendly with each other. I had a pass to the Member's cafeteria, which is where everyone in the political game -- Ministers, Knesset members, journalists -- would hang out. Everyone knew who I was. I could invite myself to sit down with whoever I wanted. If I saw a minister I wanted to talk to, I could ask if I could join the group, no problem. The same applied, for example, to sitting down with Sharon. He loved to see me and needle me about what he was up to on settlements, or what the Americans were unsuccessfully trying to do on the peace process. I got to know most of the ministers, as well as the up and coming politicians. Some were nice and friendly, others less so. I met with Netanyahu when he came back to Israel in 1988 to launch his political career, and Olmert, then Mayor of Jerusalem. I was at the Embassy's guy at the Knesset. If somebody wanted to talk to an official American and ask a policy question, there I was. If you were Shamir, Peres or Rabin, of course, you would call up the ambassador. But anyone could talk to me, quick and easy. It was a great opportunity. I had great access and the politics were completely fascinating

I worked at building relationships and access to all the political parties, especially the religious parties. I spoke good Hebrew, which gave me an in with those who did not speak English. I developed a good relationship with the Shas Party leader, Aryeh Deri, who became Minister of the Interior at the age of 29 in 1988. Sometime later, I remember that I accompanied Ambassador Bill Brown as interpreter to meet with Deri. Secretary of State Baker was pushing a proposal for Israel to negotiate with a Palestinian delegation that included deportees from the West Bank and Gaza, and residents of East Jerusalem. During the conversation, Deri made clear that he supported the peace process, and did not think that Shamir did.

Q: Yeah.

FEIFER: In 1990, the differences between Peres and Shamir over Baker's effort to jump start the peace process came to a head. Peres was also trying to use the issue to replace Shamir as Prime Minister. Peres had worked out a secret deal with Deri to support a motion of no confidence in Shamir's government over the Baker proposal. The Labor Alignment, which was part of Shamir's National Unity Government voted for the motion of no-confidence. The motion passed. Shamir fired Peres. The other Labor Alignment ministers resigned, including Rabin did not like what he later called "the dirty trick," but went along. There was a lot of behind the scenes dealing to influence the religious parties and single Members who were up for grabs. Likud mobilized ultra-orthodox rabbis to block the religious parties from supporting Peres' gambit. I worked like crazy, like everybody else, trying to figure out what was happening behind the scenes. Talk about working the phones. In the end, however, Peres was not able to keep the religious parties and the wild card Members in his column. The venerable senior rabbis proved to be very influential, and it was unclear whether key religious party MKs had even committed themselves to supporting a Peres government. Peres had to give up his effort, and Shamir was able to form a nationalist rightwing and religious party coalition. Rabin was clear his disgust with Peres' failed effort, and would eventually replace him as the Labor Alignment's lead candidate in the next election.

Q: A separate question. What about the role of women in politics? Were there many women in the Knesset?

FEIFER: There had always been strong women in the Knesset. Golda Meir had become prime minister in the early 1970s. During the 1980s, however, less than ten percent of Knesset Members were women. Some were very powerful in terms of their personalities, influence and as leaders of the smaller parties, but they were few proportionally. These numbers would go up to maybe a quarter of the 120 Knesset Members today.

Q: Why was that?

FEIFER: It's hard to explain. The socialist ethos of equality was strong during the state building period and the 1948 War. Women fought in combat units. The Kibbutz, the collective settlement, even though representing a small part of the population, served as the model for Israeli society. But Israel was evolving. It was moving in several directions at the same time. Some parts of Israeli society were moving in a more liberal direction and others in more religious and conservative directions. There was the Tel Aviv center moving in the former direction and the periphery in the latter. This has obviously had an impact on political affiliation and support

Q: I worked with this when I was running the consular section in Belgrade in the 1960s. A man came in and wanted to get married. His name was Cohen. He was an American citizen but couldn't marry the Jewish woman he wanted to marry in Israel because he was of the Cohen priestly class. She was a divorcee. He asked if he could get married in Belgrade. I said, "Sure." So I made arrangements for him to get married.

FEIFER: To this day there are people who cannot get married in Israel, although their marriages are recognized if married elsewhere. I'm not talking about marriages between people of different faiths. I'm talking about Israeli Jews who see themselves as Jews. If they want to get married, they have to go to Cyprus or elsewhere. Personal status issues in Israel continue to be handled by the different religions according to their own laws, as in the old Ottoman *Millet* system.

Q: Israel is a state that is practically under arms at all times. Women are drafted. Yet there are religious students, young men who receive deferments because they are studying at religious schools. How is that seen?

FEIFER: Those deferments started soon after the state was established. During Ben-Gurion's first term as prime minister, he was approached by one of the leading Rabbis and asked: The Holocaust destroyed the Jewish base in Europe. Six million Jews went. All the Orthodox community was destroyed. All the Rabbinical schools -- Vilna, Warsaw destroyed. Let this be born again. Let Yeshiva students be excused from the draft. Let us rebuild something in our religion." Ben Gurion later wrote in his diary: I looked at this man as if I was looking at my father. I couldn't say no to him. A deferment for 400 students in 1949 has grown to deferments for over 60,000.

Q: Let's follow through on this. How is this draft deferment viewed in Israel? I would think there would be a lot of contempt for people who avoid service and a lot of political push back.

FEIFER: This has become an important issue in the last two elections. Sharing the burden has become a very tense political issue. Yair Lapid, the leader of the Yesh Atid Party, which became the second largest in the 2013 Knesset elections, made sharing the burden a big part of his program. This continues to be a controversial issue.

Q: How did you assess the role played by this government? Was it positive or negative from the American point of view?

FEIFER: My job as a reporting officer was to establish good relationships with everybody, with Likud, with the religious and ultra-orthodox political parties; and local mayors. I met with everybody. Some were quite fascinating characters and super politicians. They knew how to play their cards. I tried to explain what they wanted, what they would oppose and their impact on our goals.

Q: During the time you were there did you see the religious parties gaining more power?

FEIFER: Religious Parties had been coalition partners of the Labor Party going into the 1970s. That changed when the National Religious Party was captured by its more nationalist and settlement oriented youth wing. The ultra-orthodox Sephardic Jews from Arab countries would also produce their own religious parties, and their leaders knew how to play the political game. There was a new Sephardic religious political party Shas,

which would become the preferred party of Jews from many Arab countries. Shas would take some of Likud's constituency away from it. Some of its leaders, including its Rabbinical sponsor, Ovadia Yosef, made clear that the most important religious principle was the safeguarding of life, not settlement or the whole Land of Israel. Making peace and supporting the peace process could be the most important thing. The religious parties, depending on their rabbis' interpretations, could as easily support the peace process as oppose it. In practice, however, the rabbis and religious party leaders found a more nationalist line popular with their followers.

Q: How did the U.S. influence Israel and vice versa?

FEIFER: No question one of the most important strategic issues for Israel is its relationship with the U.S. No Israeli would say that it is unimportant. The question, however, is how best to manage that relationship and influence U.S. policy, either directly or indirectly. When Israeli priorities are different, managing the fallout with the U.S. comes in as a second or lower priority.

Q: During your second posting, what peace plan did the United States have in operation? We always seem to have a plan in motion.

FEIFER: The logic of having a plan in play is that, at a minimum, the parties are talking and not fighting. If the parties are looking for an excuse not to fight, a proposal in play provides an excuse. That is the beauty of process, to keep people busy. But if the parties want progress and not just activity for activities sake, it is not enough just to have a plan. You have to also be seriously pushing it. The 1988 Shultz Interlock Proposal went nowhere and he left office in another year. The new Bush Administration established its opposition to settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Then Iraq invaded Kuwait in August 1990. When President Bush stated that "this shall not stand," the peace process took back seat. How would the war to liberate Kuwait impact on Israel? Saddam Hussein had publicly stated that he would "burn half of Israel." Iraq would fire 39 Scud missiles at Israel; nobody knew what would be in them. Would missiles carry chemical weapons? I have a picture of myself sitting in my "sealed" room with a gas mask on during a Scud attack. Nobody knew what would happen.

Q: Let's stick to the politics. Were there any issues you found personally difficult to sell or support?

FEIFER: No. I supported a safe and secure Israel. I supported a close relationship between our two countries. I supported a negotiated settlement to achieve a two state outcome. I had no problem with our opposition to settlements

Q: Did you deal with Sharon much again?

FEIFER: By this time, I had known Sharon for almost a decade. He had no problem talking to me or telling me what he thought about any number of things. I remember I had lunch with our Consul General in Jerusalem, Phil Wilcox, soon after I arrived in 1987. I

brought the Embassy Political Section's analyst, former journalist Amnon Barzilai. Many Israelis thought that Sharon's political career had been destroyed by the Lebanon War. Amnon had convinced me; Sharon would be back. We had a fascinating conversation with Phil speculating about how Sharon would eventually become Prime Minister, which he did in 2001.

Q: Prior to the Gulf War, was there anything that you would like to talk about?

FEIFER: There were Knesset elections in November 1988. I tried to tap contacts in all the parties to see what they thought was happening and how it looked to them. I also touched base with the pollsters. I was sending in a reporting message every day with assessments from each part of the political spectrum. Interestingly, not even the senior players had an accurate sense of trends. I already discussed with you the Peres effort to form a new government in 1990, which failed disastrously.

Q: What was the reaction in Israel when Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait?

FEIFER: The question Israelis asked was what it meant for Israel? Saddam Hussein had spoken publicly of destroying Israel if a war were to break out.

Q: I assume that the Israelis' had no friendly feelings towards Iraq or was it mixed?

FEIFER: Iraq was one of the most extreme of the anti-Israel Arab states. Nobody liked Saddam Hussein. At one point the Israelis tried to privately reach out to him in the 1980s. However, we were doing the same thing, so there was nothing surprising about that. It's easy to forget that we provided support to Iraq in the Iraq-Iran War.

Q: We were in the midst of Desert Shield, getting ready to retake Kuwait. We were putting together a rather unusual coalition, including Egypt and Syria. We were also keeping Israel out. Do you want to talk about that?

FEIFER: It was clear that we had put together a very selective coalition, and didn't want Israeli involvement to complicate Arab participation. Shamir understood that. He understood that the U.S.-led coalition could do things Israel could not do. Not all Israeli politicians or the IDF agreed. The Israeli military believed it had the operational capability to have an impact on the threats to Israel. When Iraq started firing Scuds at Israel, what would Israel do? Would Israel depend upon the U.S. to solve the problem or would it defend itself? If Israel accepted American urging to keep cool and let the U.S. deal with Saddam Hussein, this would be the first time Israel deferred to somebody else to handle its' own defense. We sent Patriots anti-missile systems to Israel and Deputy Secretary Larry Eagleburger to sit in Tel Aviv to show we were with Israel. Fortunately, the Scuds proved to be more a terror weapon than one with a strategic impact. The Scuds often broke up in flight, carried an explosive not chemical warhead, were not fired in quantity, could not be accurately targeted, and did not cause mass casualties. The attacks did cause a lot of stress and some injuries. Perhaps a handful of Israelis were actually killed in Scud attacks. I wonder what might have happened if a SCUD had hit a school

and killed a large number of children. As I understand, we never were ever able to destroy a single Scud with the Patriots, and our SCUD-busting efforts in Iraq were also a failure.

Q: What was happening with the Embassy staff and dependents at this time?

FEIFER: We received gas masks from the Israeli authorities. In retrospect, if there had been chemical weapons, it's a question whether these gas masks would have been effective at all. In any case, we had a partial evacuation of Embassy staff. Whoever wanted to leave could leave. My secretary left, so I helped pack her out. This was a quiet time for me. Domestic politics went on a low burner in Israel. The big game was happening elsewhere.

Q: What was the public mood?

FEIFER: The question is whether there was a safe place to be if there is a SCUD warning. Was it better to be on the roof or in the basement? If the SCUD warhead has high explosives it is going to hit a building and penetrate down, so perhaps you should be up higher. If there are chemical weapons, the gas is going to rise so the basement might be better. Fortunately, it didn't really mater. During the war I was control officer for the visit of Congressman Lantos. We did a survey of Scud damage in the Tel Aviv suburb of Ramat Gan, which was in the SCUD trajectory and hit numerous times. There were many damaged buildings, but few casualties. There was a minute or two of early warning and people took shelter. It could have been much worse.

Q: Did we have our coalition air assets patrolling the Scud launching areas in Iraq?

FEIFER: It was an issue between the U.S. and Israel. The Israelis pressed us to do more. As I mentioned, the Israeli military felt it could do a better job. Shamir had the right idea, let the Americans do it. Let them run around the deserts of Western Iraq, trying to find the needle in a haystack.

Q: Apparently, it was very difficult.

FEIFER: Extremely difficult. As I understand, we never succeeded in identifying a launch site before it fired that we could hit. The U.S. military took the view at the beginning of the war that the best way to solve the problem was to win the war, the quicker it is finished the sooner an end to the SCUDs. The Israelis put tremendous pressure on the U.S. government and military to make a more effective effort -- or the Israelis might go into Western Iraq themselves.

Q: How were relations with Syria during the time you were there?

FEIFER: Syria was the enemy on the other side of the Golan for most Israelis. The Knesset had extended Israeli law and administration to the Golan in 1981. There were, however, some Israeli leaders were noted that Israel had had a quiet border with Syria

since 1974. Asad ruled with an iron hand and could implement agreements. Rabin, Barak and later Olmert recognized that peace with Syria would be a strategic contribution to Israeli security. Israel could make peace with Syria -- depending on the terms.

Q: How about Lebanon?

FEIFER: Lebanon was a continuing problem. The IDF would eventually withdraw from most of Lebanon, maintaining a security zone in south Lebanon along the Israel- Lebanon border. One of the unintended consequences of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon was the establishment of Hezbollah, which became the deadliest of Israel's enemies. South Lebanon would become the fighting arena for Israel and Hezbollah, a continuing struggle, bleeding Israel.

Q: What was the situation in Gaza?

FEIFER: Gaza was no longer my portfolio. I made one visit in 1987 with the Ambassador and a group from the Embassy to meet with some Palestinians. I didn't go there anymore. It was different from when I had been there in the late 1970s. I had simply driven there and driven back, no problem. Starting in the 1980s the security situation started to deteriorate. Islamists groups were starting to assert themselves. The First *Intifada*, or Palestinian uprising, broke out in December 1987 following a traffic accident in which an IDF truck hit a car with Gazans, killing four.

Q: On the West Bank what was happening?

FEIFER: The *Intifada* spread to the West Bank. There were Palestinian protests, civil disobedience, throwing of Molotov cocktails and stones. Israel used a heavy hand to try to break the uprising.

Q: How did you find dealing with our Consulate General in Jerusalem?

FEIFER: I had less contact with Consulate General staff during this posting. I went to Jerusalem to go to the Knesset or meet contacts every week, and sometimes I stopped by the Consulate but we had less business to do together.

Q: How about the Israeli Arabs? What was their political role? Were they completely isolated? Were they able to throw any weight around?

FEIFER: I was in touch with Arab and Druze Knesset Members. I visited Arab mayors in communities in Arab majority parts of the country. The smaller Arab parties were purely opposition. They were beyond the pale in domestic political terms. They might support a Labor coalition from outside the government, but they were not seen as kosher for participation in coalition.

Q: How about delegations from the States?

FEIFER: There were always high level visitors and Congressional delegations. These were great opportunities for entree to meetings with senior Israeli political figures.

Q: Did you find this useful?

FEIFER: Definitely. I welcomed the opportunity to go to meetings with ministers and senior civilian and military officials. I remember accompanying a U.S. delegation on a helicopter flight to Masada and then over the Old City. These are things you wouldn't get to do normally

Q: Did you have problems addressing U.S. groups coming to Israel? Many would be very pro-Israel. Not everything you would say about U.S.-Israel relations would be positive.

FEIFER: I don't think I ever had a problem doing that. If something is a problem, it's a problem in the relationship. If a visiting Congressman asks a question, I would do my best to provide an honest answer. If I am going with a Congressman to visit an Israeli official, I am there to accompany and do a reporting message, and not be a participant unless asked. It's not my meeting. I can, however, provide my input to the visitor after the meeting.

Q: Okay, today is November 18, 2015 with Ted Feifer. Ted, we are a little unclear where we left off but let's start when you are going back to Israel. This is just to set the stage. You were arriving at Embassy Tel Aviv in mid-1987. What was familiar and what was new?

FEIFER: I had served in Tel Aviv before and knew it well. It was in many ways like coming home. What was different this time was that my focus was Israeli domestic politics. I was no longer expected to think big, think cosmically, about the U.S. and Israel and the peace process. I had very good bosses. The Political Counselor was Joe Sullivan the Deputy Chief of Mission was Art Hughes, and the Ambassador was Tom Pickering. It was a very solid embassy.

One of the key domestic political questions was whether Peres would push for early elections. Will he be able to do it? It wasn't really in the cards; there was no majority in the Knesset for early elections. The Labor Alignment itself was split. Many Labor Knesset Members felt that they might not return to the Knesset if there was another election. So even they didn't want to see an early election. There was also an interesting economic aspect. Many of the economic institutions of the *Kibbutz* movement were dependent on government funding and subsidies. If there were early elections and the Alignment went into opposition, a Likud-led government would give them nothing. It would push everything toward settlements in the West Bank and Gaza and nothing to the Labor *Kibbutzim*. The Kibbutz movement also used its influence on Labor to not go to early elections. That was the reality. Of course, there was also the question of who would be the Labor Party's partners. The religious parties were no longer natural parties of Labor. The religious parties had shifted to the right. They no longer focused on religious issues and funding for their institutions as in the past. I did lots of assessments of the

political parties, impact on the current developments on the political scene, and lots of biographic reporting. This was, pre-Google time, so the only way Washington knew who was who was by diplomats sending in biographic reporting.

Q: Were we pushing anything?

FEIFER: Well, we had basically stood down. Unfortunately, it often takes an outbreak of violence to make the parties think about the peace process. There had been sporadic violence going on in the West Bank and Gaza. But these incidents, like continuing settlement activity there, didn't seem to impact upon most Israelis. If you lived in Tel Aviv, Haifa or even Jerusalem you didn't usually feel the impact of what happened in the West Bank or Gaza unless you were doing Army service there. The explosion of the first *Intifada* in December 1987 shook things up.

The first *Intifada* was a wholly different resistance phenomenon. It started spontaneously and developed into organized mass resistance. It came from within the West Bank and Gaza, rather than from the outside PLO. Some called it non-violent, but it was violence without guns. Rocks and Molotov cocktails were thrown at vehicles traveling on West Bank and Gaza roads. These could kill you just as dead as guns. There were mass demonstrations, and non-cooperation with the Israeli authorities and boycotts. The Israeli government used a heavy hand to try to beat it down. Rabin told the IDF to use force to break the *Intifada*. It didn't work; the *Intifada* evolved but didn't go away. As the Embassy Political Section domestic reporting officer, I tried to understand how the *Intifada* affected Israeli public opinion and the direction of Israeli politics. In 1988 Secretary Shultz used the simmering *Intifada* as a peg to launch a new initiative. He proposed a complicated interlock of actions in which each party would do certain things. In any case, Shamir was prime minister and not interested. He liked having the Labor Alignment in a National Unity Government to suggest that the Israel might be interested in a peace process. But Shamir had no intention of letting anything move.

Q: He was satisfied with the status quo?

FEIFER: Correct. The *Intifada* continued, and Shamir supported Minister of Defense Rabin's tough line on the *Intifada*. By the way, another interesting aspect of the domestic politics at the time was the divisions in Likud. Sharon was contesting Shamir for leadership of the Likud. Foreign Minister David Levy and another government Minister, Yitzhak Modai, often banded together against Shamir, in the Likud Party institutions. Every day there was a new twist. I went to one of the Likud events organized by the three "constraints" ministers -- Sharon, Levy and Modai -- attacking Shamir and Arens and trying to "constrain" government policy on the emerging Baker-led peace process. It was a pure power play, and policy was the medium. I happened to be attending one of their events of Likud Central Committee members. Modai noticed or was told that I was in the audience, and he made a point of telling the crown that he hoped I would tell Washington everything I heard. I decided to slip out and go home.

Some background. The George H.W. Bush Administration came into office in 1989. Secretary Baker launched his own peace initiative in 1990 for Israel to negotiate with a Palestinian delegation. Shamir rejected it. The Alignment led by Peres was part of the National Union Government. The Alignment filed a motion of no confidence against the Government. Shamir fired all the Alignment ministers. All this seemed bizarre. Peres, however, thought he knew what he was doing. He had cooked up a parliamentary gambit to replace Shamir as prime minister. He had a secret deal with the new Shas Party, based on the Sephardic Jews. Shas was led by Aryeh Deri, who talked a dovish line. He had worked out a deal with Peres. The Alignment would bring down the government and Shas will support Peres in forming a narrow government based on the Alignment and religious parties. Peres brought down the Government with a motion of no confidence; maneuvered Shamir into firing all the Alignment ministers; and was named by President Herzog to form a new government. Then everything started to fall apart. The Ultra-Orthodox parties were led by politicians, but they still had to follow their parties' rabbinical spiritual guides. One of the Ashkenazi spiritual leaders Rabbi Shach spoke out against going with the Alignment, "the eaters of rabbits and pork." The spiritual guide of Shas, Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, although allegedly dovish, had to follow Shach's lead. He blocked Shas from going with the Alignment. One of the other small Ashkenazi ultra-Orthodox religious parties may have given Peres the feeling that they would go with him, but they got cold feet. A former Likud and now independent MK who Peres had co-opted him with various inducements also backed out of the deal also. A former Alignment Knesset Member also refused to provide support. The whole thing fell apart and Peres had to return his mandate. Shamir succeeded in forming a new right-religious government. Rabin, who disliked this sort of politics, called it "the Stinky Deal." He was disgusted by it and had lost his ministerial portfolio for nothing. These political developments would set the stage for direct election of the prime minister in the next election. But very soon even the *Intifada* would get overshadowed by what would happen in another part of the Middle East; Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990.

Q: What were you doing while all this dealing was going on? Were you running around and talking to everybody? Were we pushing in any particular direction or were we staying out of it"

FEIFER: We stayed as far away from involvement in it as we could. At the same time, I was trying to figure out what was going on. I was going to the Knesset Member's cafeteria to see who knew anything. The Alignment people around Peres felt that they had a winning game, but in the end they didn't. It started out as fancy political gamesmanship, and ended as an embarrassment.

Q: Did you talk to Rabin?

FEIFER: I didn't see him around. In any case, Rabin was more of a Front Office contact. The Front Office focused on the ministers, I chased everybody else active in or covering politics, and targets of opportunity.

Q: Were the Members of the Knesset interested on how the U.S. viewed all this? Or were they so involved it didn't matter?

FEIFER: Some are interested in "what the U.S. thinks," although many more are interested in how to influence the U.S. domestic political and foreign policy process. Israelis believe that they understand that what the U.S. ultimately does can be influenced through Congress, public opinion, lobbying and the media. That is sometimes accurate, but not always. There certainly are many voices speaking for the U.S. and involved in the policy process. Nonetheless, I was one of the more visible faces of the U.S. to many Israelis involved in party politics at the working level. That said, a lot of them didn't know what was going on either. This competition to line up or block votes in the Knesset was being run by the leaders of the various parties. Moreover, many of them were responding to people they had no control over, such as 80-year old Torah sages whose world, shall we say, was very different than the political world. Still, it was those rabbis who would decide whether Peres' political gambit would succeed or fail.

Q: Did you talk to the rabbis?

FEIFER: I spoke to as many people as I could within the religious parties and to journalists, many of whom had very good contacts with the religious parties.

Q: How about Arab members of the Knesset?

FEIFER: If Peres would have been able to form a narrow government, Members of Knesset from the Israeli Arab-based members of the Knesset would have supported his government from outside the coalition. They have never been viewed as an acceptable part of a governing coalition.

Q: Were Jordan or Syria playing any role in this?

FEIFER: Peres' failure to implement the London Agreement with King Hussein left a very bad taste in Hussein's mouth; Peres couldn't deliver the goods. During the first *Intifada*, Hussein decided to cut his ties with the West Bank. So he made clear, I'm out of it, it's the PLO's problem now, not mine. The only thing he retained was a role in the protection of the Muslim Holy Places in Jerusalem, a role which Jordan retains to this day.

Q: What was Sharon doing during this time?

FEIFER: Sharon was driving Shamir crazy. Sharon was very effective working the Likud party organization and the Likud Central Committee. It was all that Shamir and Moshe Aarons, one of his key allies, could do to prevent Sharon from taking over the party organization and turning it against him.

Q: What came out of all this?

FEIFER: The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and the Gulf War overshadowed Israel's domestic politics, even the *Intifada*. Israel was `suppressing the *Intifada*. The Palestinian uprising was continuing but at a much lower level, and Palestinians were increasingly using weapons. Once President Bush stated that the U.S. would reverse Iraq's conquest of Kuwait, Iraq reiterated that if war broke out it was going to attack Israel which it did. Iraq fired 19 Scud missiles at Israel during the war. Many were aimed at Tel Aviv. If a missile landed too early, it hit the urban area just east of the city, Ramat Gan. If it went too far, it went into the Mediterranean. No one, including the Israelis, knew what Iraq had placed in the Scud warheads. There was concern that the warheads would contain some chemical weapon. Israel issued gas masks to its population, including for babies. The Embassy staff also received gas masks, people were instructed on how to set up a sealed room in their home and there was a very impressive civil defense network and radio broadcasts on what to do and with warnings. We wanted the Israelis to not attack Iraq and not undercut the coalition we had put together, including Egypt and Syria. If Israel attacked Iraq there was concern that it would break apart our anti-Saddam coalition. The Israelis made very clear that if we didn't do better in preventing Scuds from hitting Israel, then they would do the job themselves. Shamir had to deal with his own military which told him: "We could do the job, we are confident." They were itching to get into the game. But Shamir understood that the Americans greater better capability and it was better to let the Americans do the job. Israel opted to take a passive stance and let someone else defend it. We did send Patriot missile batteries with American crews to counter the Scuds, although they never downed any.

Q: These were anti-missile missiles?

FEIFER: They were originally anti-aircraft missiles, and were given an anti-missile function. We also sent Deputy Secretary of State Larry Eagleburger to show U.S. support and to request continued Israeli restraint. While Desert Shield and this high-level diplomacy were going on, I had less to do. There was a voluntary evacuation of staff members and families. Those who wanted to leave could depart. I spent some time in Jerusalem. There were no Scuds fired at Jerusalem. Most of the Scuds were aimed at Tel Aviv, some at Haifa and at least one toward the South. Two Scuds hit somewhere in the West Bank. There was considerable property damage in the Ramat Gan area where I was living at the time.

Q: How did the Embassy staff react? Were there problems?

FEIFER: Not that I saw. As I mentioned, there was a voluntary evacuation. Staff and families that felt threatened left. I had no intention of leaving. Some people would go up on their roofs, watch the Scuds come in and the Patriots engage them. I stayed in my "sealed room" when there was an alert. My future wife Sonia was also living in Ramat Gan at the time. We would take shelter in the central corridor of her apartment house when there was an alert, until there was an all-clear.

Q: Did the Intifada coexist?

FEIFER: The *Intifada* continued, although at a low level. Many Palestinians seemed to relish Israel getting hit by Saddam Hussein's Scuds. Arafat made one of his biggest strategic mistakes by backing Saddam Hussein, which lost him support of the Kuwaitis and Saudis.

Q: Was there lots of resentment towards King Hussein?

FEIFER: King Hussein's Jordan was right next to Iraq. He was in a very delicate position. Jordan was also dependent on Iraqi oil imports. King Hussein had to weigh every step he took. But he had already cut his ties with the West Bank because of the *Intifada*. He tried to keep his head down, while developments worked out. The U.S. understood that he was in a delicate position.

Q: During this time were you continuing to meet with Members of Knesset?

FEIFER: I was going out and meeting people, trying to gauge the impact of the war on the Israeli political elite and public attitudes. How did they feel about Shamir letting the American-led coalition deal with Iraq? How did the public feel about the Government's strategy? Domestic political reporting, however, was not the highest priority at the time.

Q: What were the attitudes in the Knesset? How did they assess the regional impact of the war?

FEIFER: Israelis wanted more effective Scud hunting in Western Iraq and an end to Scud attacks on Israel. The sooner Saddam Hussein was eliminated, the better. That was not the position that we ultimately took. The U.S. decided that its goal was the liberation of Kuwait, rather than regime change in Baghdad. Shamir was certainly not thinking of peace negotiations with Israel's neighbors.

Q: Did the war change political dynamics in Israel?

FEIFER: Not really. Everyone in Israel felt vulnerable. The sooner the American-led coalition finished the job, the better. The support by Arafat and many Palestinians for Saddam Hussein did not make negotiations with the Palestinians more popular. As soon as the war was over, Secretary of State Baker would start using our victory in the First Gulf War, the ejection of the Iraqis from Kuwait, the building of a U.S.-led coalition and the U.S. as the sole superpower -- the Soviet Union had collapsed in 1991 --, to put together the Madrid Peace Conference. But that was happening in Washington. I left Israel in July 1991.

Q: One of the things about the First Gulf War was the performance of precision guided munitions. It played out on CNN and all. Was this a topic that the Israelis were watching with avid interest?

FEIFER: I'm sure the Israeli military was studying the performance of U.S. forces and weapons, working on presumably the same things, the same precision-guided munitions. They probably were developing their own wish list of things they wanted.

Q: While you were there nothing particularly happened in the Israeli government?

FEIFER: No. There would be another election in 1992. When I left in July 1991, it seemed to be the dawn of a new American Age in the region.

Q: Was the Embassy short-staffed as a result of the voluntary evacuation? Were there any problems during this time?

FEIFER: I don't remember any problems. My secretary had departed, but we had enough staff in the Political Section to do whatever was required. We had Congressional delegations -- CODELs -- coming in during this time. Congressman Tom Lantos visited with his wife. I was his control officer. We did a survey of Scud damage in Ramat Gan with Ambassador Bill Brown. We did all the things we had to do.

Q: You left...

FEIFER: I left in July 1991 for assignment to the National War College in Washington.

Q: Your War College assignment was 1991 to 1992?

FEIFER: Yes. I was in the National War College Class of 1992. When I arrived back in Washington Secretary Baker's peace process initiative was in play. I went to NEA Deputy Assistant Secretary Dan Kurtzer, who was handling Israeli-Arab affairs and the peace process portfolio. I had known and worked with Dan since the last 1970s when he was in Cairo and I was in Tel Aviv. I said, "Here I am." Even though I was assigned to the National War College, I offered to make myself available to help out whenever asked. I had experience from the West Bank/Gaza Autonomy Talks after Camp David and enjoyed working the issue. Dan was agreeable. If the Madrid Process were to launch Arab-Israeli bilateral negotiations, as they were intended to do, I could break my assignment at the National War College and go over full time to work on the negotiations. As much as I liked the War College and the opportunity it provided, I would go from the National War College at Ft. McNair to the Department whenever I could, and help out on peace process issues.

Q: So you really didn't get much of a War College experience?

FEIFER: I got a lot out of it. It was noted, however, that I seemed to be invisible sometimes. The College leadership made clear that it was incumbent on me to improve my attendance. I ended up spending more time at the War College and less at the Department. The negotiations weren't starting so quickly, so I could actually enjoy my War College experience.

Q: What was your concentration at the War College?

FEIFER: I was a Research Fellow. Rather than take electives afternoons, I did a research project. I did an analysis of the 1979-1982 West Bank/Gaza Autonomy Negotiations, drawing on the NEA archive. But the War College wanted to broaden students' perspectives. Rather than have students spend time on things they knew about, they made sure people focused on things they didn't know anything about. They saw I had served in the Middle East and Europe, so they made my specialization South Asia, which I never had anything to do with. I had a great group of fellow students. We worked towards a two-week field trip to Pakistan and India towards the end of the school year. Hosted by the Pakistani military, we went to Peshawar and the Khyber Pass, and flew by helicopter to Azad Kashmir on the Pakistani side of Kashmir. We traveled to Islamabad and met with former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto in Karachi. Hosted by the Indian military, we went to New Delhi, visited the Taj Mahal, and Bangalore. Everyone in our group got sick. It was a great trip and we packed a lot into those two weeks. I learned a lot.

Q: Did the War College program assess the Gulf War?

FEIFER: The War College Class of 1992 had a lot of people who had served in the Gulf War. There were planners for the air war, flyers, sailors, and armor and infantry officers. It was a great opportunity for me to hear their perspectives and for them to get my perspective as someone who had been in Tel Aviv during the War. I explained the regional dynamics and bilateral diplomacy with Israel, domestic and internal pressures on the Israeli government to act, including from the IDF. Some were skeptical about the value of shifting assets from the campaign against Saddam Hussein to Scud busting in the Western Iraqi desert. I explained the political imperative to make a maximum effort to deal with the Scuds, lest the Israelis feel they had to act themselves and in the process endanger the unity of the coalition. The political requirement showed that military requirements for ending the war as quickly as possible had to be balanced by the political requirements to maintain the coalition.

Q: What was the reaction from other War College students?

FEIFER: My fellow students were interested because it was a different perspective. Military men and women had their professional perspective based on their education, training and experience. Just like me. I provided a diplomatic and political perspective. I was equally interested in their points of view and learning from them.

Q: Was there a feeling among the military that the success of Desert Storm lifted the cloud of Viet Nam?

FEIFER: I think so. The U.S.-led coalition had achieved its objective of liberating Kuwait and smashed the Iraqi military. It wasn't an unsatisfactory outcome viewed from that perspective. The U.S. had moved major forces from one side of the world to the other. We had put together a coalition and we had defeated a very large and well-equipped army. We had won what was probably at that time, the biggest ground battles for

decades, so everyone felt very good at what had been achieved. In retrospect, however, we did not pay as much attention as we should have to the post-war situation in Iraq.

Q: Did you have any real action on the peace process, with the Madrid Conference and all that?

FEIFER: Yes. I was doing work for Dan Kurtzer as part of a very good and experienced team in Washington. Dennis Ross was at that time the Director of Policy Planning and working closely with Secretary Baker. This is the point at which I started coming into daily contact with Dennis.

Q: What happened after you finished the War College?

FEIFER: Dan Kurtzer asked me to take the job of Deputy Director of Egyptian Affairs in NEA. We still had an office for Egyptian Affairs at the time and the Deputy Director also had responsibilities for the peace process. The Madrid Peace Conference launched bilateral negotiations between the parties, and they started in Washington. My assignment was to be policy advisor with the Israeli-Jordan/Palestinian delegation, sitting with each side after their meetings and then reporting back. I was also tasked with writing a daily Memo to the Secretary putting together the high points of the three and then four bilateral talks. Initially, the Israelis had agreed to meet with a joint Jordanian-Palestinian Delegation. They did not want to have a separate track with the Palestinians. The Palestinian participants on the Joint Jordanian-Palestinian Delegation were formally non-PLO, per the agreement the Secretary had worked out. The Palestinians team was headed by Haidar Abdul Shafi, who I had known from my work in Gaza a decade before. I had a very good relationship with him. The Israeli team was headed by Ely Rubinstein, who I had known since he was Foreign Minister Dayan's Special Assistant in the late 1970s. I had good relationships with the Palestinians, Israelis and eventually the Jordanians. However, a snag developed during the very first meeting. The Israelis refused to meet separately with the Palestinians, saying this was not part of the arrangements agreed with the Secretary. So the Israelis, Palestinians and Jordanians refused to go into the meeting room, and sat in chairs in the corridor. They would sit in a hallway in the Department of State for a month before they worked out how they were going to handle the meetings.

Q: What were you getting from your contacts with the Israelis at this point?

FEIFER: I was simply reporting whatever I got from them and passing it through to Dan and others and putting it in a daily Memo to the Secretary. That's what I was doing at the time.

Q: Did you feel things were moving in the right direction?

FEIFER: The Madrid Conference launched bilateral and multilateral negotiations. But the Israeli and Jordanian/Palestinian negotiators had gotten stuck in an avoidable procedural muddle even before they had started on substance. They would sit in a hallway for a month until they found a procedural fix. It was not only the Palestinians who wanted to

talk directly and privately with the Israelis. The Jordanians also wanted to talk privately with the Israelis without the Palestinians present.

Q: What sort of business did the Jordanians want to discuss privately?

FEIFER: They wanted to discuss security, water, and economics with Israel. These were issues on which Jordanian and Palestinian interests often diverged.

Q: I guess water was a big thing.

FEIFER: It is a critical issue for Jordan, which is a water deficit country. Jordan also viewed the Palestinians as a security issue, something they had in common with Israel

Q: Did you sense that the Palestinians were beginning to act like serious players, or were they loose cannon?

FEIFER: You have to think about who was there, who was not there and who was representing who. Secretary Baker had worked out an agreement on Palestinian representation that would be acceptable to Israel, first of all to Shamir. Who were these so-called non-PLO Palestinians? Abdul Shafi was a Palestinian nationalist who had been one of the founders of the PLO. He was an independent, seen as on the left of the political spectrum, whatever that meant. His issue was settlements. Israeli settlement activity had to stop for anything else to happen; that was his position. The other Palestinians did not have his standing. They were always looking over their shoulder, towards the PLO. They were always on the phone with the PLO, getting guidance, defending themselves against possible criticism of undercutting the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian People. If anyone was looking for a Palestinian delegation that was authoritative, could make decision and could be flexible, this was not it. The Palestinian man in the street and the Arab states at least publicly, looked to Arafat and the PLO as the representatives of the Palestinian People. So the Palestinian delegation would say nothing that could be seen as going against PLO positions, or giving up on maximum Palestinian rights or demands.

Q: It doesn't sound like there was much give.

FEIFER: There was no give, either on the Palestinian or Israeli sides. It was a dead-end, rather than a way forward. When Rabin became Prime Minister in 1992, he asked the basic question: Can we go anywhere with this? He concluded: Obviously not, so what are the alternatives? The alternative was talking directly with the PLO. Although Rabin had long looked at the PLO as an unacceptable partner, he was a pragmatist. There was no better alternative, so he would ultimately go along with the Oslo process. Two Israeli academics had started a dialogue with a PLO official, with the assistance of the Norwegian Foreign Ministry. The PLO eventually asked to have the talks upgraded, and a senior Israeli Foreign Ministry official close to Peres was brought in. Rabin blessed the negotiations with the PLO because he recognized that it was not enough to say he didn't like the PLO. What was the alternative if you wanted to see if a deal with the Palestinians

was possible? At this time the PLO was a marginal player. They had been kicked out of Beirut in the early 1980s. Its leadership was sitting in Tunis, far away from the West Bank and Gaza. The PLO had lost support from the Gulf Arabs because of its support for Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait. The PLO did not start the First *Intifada*. To the contrary, the *Intifada* developed because many Palestinians saw no one paying attention to them. Arafat recognized that the Oslo Channel might be the one chance to get back into the game of diplomacy. Otherwise, the PLO might become irrelevant. So that is why Arafat blessed the Oslo Channel and was prepared for secret talks with Israel.

Q: Did you feel things were finally moving?

FEIFER: Nothing was happening with Shamir as Prime Minister. He might have grudgingly gone along with the Baker-led Madrid process, but he had no intention of letting it progress. His strategy was to let the talks go on forever without moving forward. I could see that the Washington talks were going nowhere. I learned about the Oslo Channel a week before it became public. The USG's perspective was whatever worked would be OK, even if we were not instrumental in putting it together. But we had known about it, had been briefed on it, and when it suddenly started producing the goods got behind it.

Q: There was no feeling that it wasn't our thing, so we were stand-offish about it?

FEIFER: No. I think we were practical. The Washington Talks we had put together after the Madrid Conference were going nowhere. A delegation led by Haidar Abdul Shafi was going to be holier than the PLO, and would not give an inch. Abdul Shafi was a man of principle, but inflexible. Settlements were the make or break issue for him. Shifting to an authoritative PLO as the Palestinian interlocutor, which had an interest in being flexible to get back in the game, was the right way to go. The Israelis saw it that way.

Q: Were settlements going on while all this was happening?

FEIFER: Settlement construction was continuing even when Rabin was prime minister. He stopped as much settlement construction as he felt he legally could. But there were some things, he explained, he couldn't legally stop. He couldn't do anything about construction contracts already signed, but there would be no new contracts. Rabin had staked out his position on settlements soon after the 1967 War, saying publicly, "I have no problem with getting a visa to visit Hebron, I don't care about that, it's not an issue." He termed settlements a cancer. But as a pragmatist and not an ideologue, he thought he could do what was possible and not let settlements get in the way with the Palestinians. His focus was achieving what was good for Israel, with emphasis on security. He made his decisions based on that. And his thinking was always evolving. He would eventually decide that peace with the Palestinians was the best way to ensure Israel's long term security as a democratic and Jewish state.

Q: How long were you in NEA?

FEIFER: I was Deputy Director of Egyptian Affairs, but spending more than half of my time on the peace process, from 1992 to 1994.

Q: What were you doing on Egyptian affairs?

FEIFER: The U.S.-Egyptian relationship was a solid one at the time. The U.S. looked upon Mubarak as a critical partner in the region, as a strategic security partner and as a partner in the Arab-Israeli peace process. The aid relationship with Egypt was important, and the Egyptians worked hard on maintaining the high levels based on Camp David commitments. We often looked to Mubarak to lean on Arafat. We were very supportive of the U.S.-Egyptian relationship. The Egyptian human right situation was murky, however, but I don't remember it becoming a cloud on the relationship. One of the issues you may remember from that period was the entry into the U.S. and the granting of a green card to Omar Abdel Rahman, the "Blind Sheik," an extremist Egyptian cleric. He had issued a *fatwa*, calling for the murder of Sadat. He would become the spiritual mentor of the 1993 World Trade Towers bombers and eventually sentenced to life imprisonment in the U.S., dying in prison in 2017. He had been put on a watch list but still received a visa to enter the U.S. in 1990. The visa was not issued by our Embassy in Cairo, but by a U.S. consulate in another country. Still, we had to document everything we knew about his travels and contacts with U.S. officials.

I enjoyed working on Egyptian affairs, since it also gave me the time and opportunity to work on peace process issues. The Madrid Conference had launched two negotiation tracks: bilateral and multilateral working groups. I worked as a deputy to Tom Miller, who was head of the U.S. Delegation to the Multilateral Working Group on the Environment. Tom's other job was Director of the Israel desk. Japan chaired the Environment Working Group, the Europeans chaired the Economic Development Working Group, Canada chaired the Refugee Working Group, the U.S. chaired Water Resources, and the U.S. and Russia co-chaired the Arms Control and Regional Security Working Group. The U.S. and Russia were formal co-sponsors of the Madrid Process, but the Russians were very much bit players. They knew it and didn't like it, but they had no alternative at that time if they wanted to at least be seen as players. The Russians had senior diplomatic personnel representing them at the bilateral meetings and multilaterals, but we had the lead. Tom and I worked closely on the Environment Working Group. We had a small ad hoc interagency team, from EPA, and AID. AID still had its own experts at the time, rather than contractors. We participated in plenary meetings of the Environment Working Group, chaired professionally by Japan, with about 25 states, including 13 states from the region and a Palestinian delegation attending. We also reached agreement on and implemented a number of projects, such as an environmental code of conduct; Gulf of Aqaba oil spill emergency cooperation; wastewater treatment; and desertification

Q: Oh boy.

FEIFER: Later on I started working with the Working Group on Refugees and attended one of the plenary meetings in Geneva. I also joined the U.S. Delegation to the Arms

Control and Regional Security led by Bob Einhorn, who was then a Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs. Egypt took a very active role in the multilaterals, and not always a positive one. The Egyptians tried to find ways to focus on Israel's nuclear program no matter what the context was. It's always been one of their security concerns and was always an issue for them. The Egyptians were always neuralgic about Israel's nuclear capability. They brought the issue up in discussions on the Non-Proliferation Treaty, and in the Environment and Arms Control and Regional Security Working Groups. The Egyptians brought it up from every angle they could think of. We always had to be ready to field the issue and find a way to manage it. The Israelis were equally adamant in avoiding their nuclear program or anything it might affect. We always had to be ready to field the issue and not let it blow up whatever else we were trying to achieve. They wanted to talk about nuclear free-zone in the Arms Control and Regional Security Working Group. They wanted to get at the Israeli nuclear weapons program, even indirectly. They were always pushing it.

Q: Were we concerned about domestic security in Egypt, such as Muslim Brotherhood and terrorism?

FEIFER: Always. There was the Islamic Jihad that assassinated Sadat in 1981. There was a very active insurgency by the Gama'a al Islamiya. Although it was most problematic in Upper Egypt, it was a matter of significant concern. The Egyptian government would eventually break the Gama'a al Islamiya. They eventually opted for a truce with the government in 1999. The Muslim Brotherhood was tolerated and monitored, but was increasingly becoming a threat to the Mubarak regime.

Q: You did this for how long?

FEIFER: I did this from 1992 to 1994. I looked around for jobs and found nothing in NEA. The Bureau, however, was no longer the key player on the Arab-Israeli peace process. It was Dennis Ross. I had first met Dennis when he became a Special Assistant to the President on the National Security Council during the Reagan Administration. He became the State Department Director of Policy Planning during the first Bush presidency, and was part of Secretary Baker's small team. He became the ultimate decision maker of Middle East strategy, to the irritation of many in NEA. Rather than NEA calling the shots, it was Dennis Ross who had the ear of Secretary Baker and had more influence than the NEA Assistant Secretary. There was always a lot of sensitivity within the Bureau about an outsider having so much influence on policy, rather than the Bureau. When Clinton was elected, everyone expected Dennis to be out of a job and for power to shift back to NEA. There were those who were pleased that Dennis would be out and NEA would, once again, have the lead in Middle East policy. Then, to just about everyone's surprise, President Clinton asked Dennis to stay on. Dennis would be Special Middle East Coordinator coordinating all USG efforts in support of the peace process. In a practical sense, he would have the lead in just about anything he wanted to in Middle East policy. I had gotten to know Dennis fairly well while I was in NEA, and often had to take memos to him for clearance. Alan Makovsky, who was a Southern European and Middle East specialist who I knew from my time on the Cyprus desk, worked in Dennis'

office and told me he was leaving to become a staff member at the House Foreign Affairs Committee. So I asked Dennis if he wanted to take me on. He agreed and I joined the Special Middle East Coordinator's Office as a Special Advisor.

Q: Could you explain how personalities and personal interactions impact on assignments?

FEIFER: Everybody in the Foreign Service gets a corridor reputation. It is what people say about you to each other when you are not around. It can be positive, it can be negative. It can be about your work, your personality, or whether you are easy or difficult to work with. It can be anything that people remember about you. If people do not know you personally, they want to know about your corridor reputation. Relationships are extremely important. If someone in a management position has a positive experience with you, they are more likely to want you to work with them. They will want to sponsor or mentor you. If they have a negative experience with you, they can ensure that you never get to work in their operation in the future. If you have a personal clash, it may impact on you in the present or in the future. It may nothing to do with performance, experience, background, or suitability for a job.

Q: How did you get along with NEA when you were part of the Ross team?

FEIFER: No problem whatsoever. I represented the Special Middle East Coordinator.

Q: Viewed from a bureaucratic point of view, Ross' role must have made the Bureau of Near East Affairs uncomfortable?

FEIFER: Dennis had the superior bureaucratic muscle. He was the one with the relationship with Secretary Baker, and then with Secretary Christopher, and the White House. He would win any turf battle. He also had spent enough time in the bureaucracy to know how to play his hand.

Q: Did you find this an awkward positioning for you personally?

FEIFER: No. Dennis was the key player whether or not people liked him. He had years of experience at the Department of Defense, the NSC, the White House and State. He was a brilliant analyst and drafter. Aaron Miller, who joined the Bureau of Intelligence and Research as an analyst a few years after I left, was his deputy. I was pleased to have snagged a job with a senior decision maker on a subject that interested me. It was as close as one could hope to be to where decisions were made on the peace process. I sat in on Dennis' small morning meeting every day which discussed what was going on and what should be done. Participating were Dennis, the NEA Deputy Assistant Secretary, the Special Assistant to the President handling Arab-Israeli issues, Aaron and myself.

Q: Were any of these key players a specialist on the Palestinians?

FEIFER: The NEA representative was expected to have a feel for the Palestinians. Dennis felt he understood the Palestinians, as did Aaron. Dennis probably had more face time with Arafat than anyone else in the U.S. Government. But he was not an Arabic speaker and not a specialist on the Palestinians.

Q: There does seem to be a sort of a gap there.

FEIFER: That was always one of the criticisms on the Arab side. Dennis was said to understand Israeli requirements and needs better than those of the Palestinians or Arabs. He would eventually recruit for his team Gamal Helal, who had been the Arabic interpreter for several presidents and secretaries of state. Gamal served to help Dennis understand the Arab perspective more effectively, as well as interpret. He played an important role in helping the team understand the Arab players politically, socially and culturally. Gamal was a pleasure to work with.

Q: What was your impression of Dennis Ross?

FEIFER: Dennis is impressive. He became indispensable to several presidents and secretaries of state through his ability to make complex issues understandable. He could walk principals verbally or in writing through the key issues, provide a road map and a script, help them understand where they wanted to go and how to get there. He was a great analyst, articulate, and impressive to watch in action. He liked to say "let me put things in context," to set the stage for what he wanted to talk about.

Q: What sort of things did you handle in Ross' office?

FEIFER: Whatever Dennis wanted me to do. Any instructions drafted in the regional or functional bureaus with a peace process component had to be cleared by the Special Middle East Coordinator's (SMEC) Office. I reviewed guidance on peace process issues and anything that had to do with Palestinians or PLO. I was involved in preparing instructions on how to deal with the new Russian foreign minister, Primakov, who wanted to raise the Russian profile in the peace process. He had decades of involvement in Middle East issues when he was KGB. The approach I suggested was to offer him more consultations rather than more involvement. The Russians had been co-sponsors with us for the Madrid Conference, but had really nothing special in terms of involvement.

Q: How did the job go?

FEIFER: I enjoyed it very much. I enjoyed participating in decision making discussions. I enjoyed sitting in on Dennis' meetings with high level visitors. I enjoyed watching how the process played out. I continued in that job from 1994 to 1996. The Israelis preferred to focus on the Palestinian or Syrian track at any one time, and use that as leverage on the other track. The Arab-Israeli peace process hit a high point with the Oslo Agreements in 1993, but implementation with the Palestinians proved difficult. The Israelis wanted to minimize risks from any agreement, and were not prepared to move fast and far. The

Israelis didn't really trust Arafat. Add the 1995 Palestinian Islamic Jihad and Hamas suicide bombings and Rabin's assassination in November 1995 by an Israeli Jewish extremist. Peres became prime minister and had to make decisions on counter-terrorism, the peace process, Lebanon and early elections. Each would have an impact on the other. There were things about the negotiations with Syria that Rabin had never told Peres. Peres had to decide whether to hold early elections to take advantage of the great sympathy for Rabin, or let domestic politics play out? This would also be the first time there would be direct election for prime minister, separate from the Knesset list. Peres decided to go for early elections in May instead of waiting until October.

Hamas seemed to have stood down in 1995 from suicide bombings. The Palestinian Authority also appeared to be cooperating more closely with Israel in preventing bombings after Rabin's murder. Then, the Shin Beth domestic security service informed Peres that they had located the key Palestinian bomb-maker Yahya Ayyash and had somebody who had access to him. This was an opportunity to eliminate him, but what might be the Hamas response? The Shin Bet, which had failed to protect Rabin and prevent his murder, saw an opportunity to regain its reputation. They pressed Peres to eliminate him. Peres agreed. Ayyash's killing in January 1996 led to Hamas' resumption of its suicide bombing campaign, resulting in the deaths of 60 Israelis. It was a terrible period, with multiple bus bombings. Opposition Likud leader Netanyahu fanned Israeli fears and hammered Peres on the decline of personal security. Netanyahu also played the Jerusalem issue, claiming Peres would divide Jerusalem.

Israel had withdrawn most of its troops from Lebanon except from the security zone in South Lebanon, supporting the South Lebanon Army against Hezbollah. There was an escalation in March/April 1996 during which Hezbollah fired 50 rockets into northern Israel. Peres faced another decision. Rabin had been Mr. Security. As former IDF Chief of Staff during the 1967 War, he radiated confidence that he knew how to handle security issues. Peres, even though he had been involved with security issues his entire career, had always been involved on the civilian side. He did not have Rabin's reputation, his aura. Peres decided to respond to the Hezbollah escalation with a major military operation into Lebanon to give Hezbollah a bloody nose. This would also embellish his security credentials. Operation Grapes of Wrath seemed to go as planned for a while, but there is always something that goes wrong in war. Hezbollah teams were firing rockets and mortars from the vicinity of a UNIFIL base at Qana, where there were hundreds of Lebanese civilians seeking shelter from the fighting. There was also an Israeli ground reconnaissance unit coming under fire in the area. Israeli artillery fired, artillery rounds fell short, and a hundred Lebanese civilians were killed. Israel came under tremendous international pressure to end its operation. Secretary Baker went out to the region and achieved the April 26 written Understanding that stopped the fighting. There had been an oral understanding worked out after a previous round of fighting, but it clearly was not working. The April 26 Understanding, among its provisions, set down clearer limitations on the parties and established an Israel-Lebanon Monitoring Group. The Monitoring Group would monitor the written understandings that had been reached, primarily to prevent the use of civilian areas for launching attacks or firing at civilian areas. At the same time, Israel retained the right of self-defense. We also provided a side letter at

Israel's request to confirm Israeli interpretations. It was not hard to see the contradictions in the Understanding.

There had been many aspiring mediators shuttling around the Middle East during the April fighting, complicating Baker's diplomacy. There were representatives of the Europeans, Russia, and France in its national capacity. Once the April 26 Understanding was announced, the U.S. invited the other members of the Monitoring Group to Washington to negotiate the working rules of the Group. Lebanon, Israel, Syria and France participated in the talks with the U.S. The Lebanese had pushed for the French to be included in the Monitoring Group to have a sympathetic third party to balance the U.S.' expected partiality to Israel. The Syrians became a member of the Group as a so-called honest broker. Dennis Ross led the negotiations in Washington. Syrian Ambassador Muallem and Israeli Ambassador Rabinovich knew each other well and had worked publicly and privately with Dennis on the Syrian track. The Lebanese ambassador seemed to defer to the Syrian Ambassador. France sent a senior diplomat from Paris. He didn't get along well with Dennis, and eventually the French replaced him. I sat in on those negotiations. David Greenlee, who had been my successor in Embassy Tel Aviv's Political Section in 1980, was chosen as the head of the U.S. Delegation to the Monitoring Group. I asked Dennis if I could be a part of the U.S. Delegation. I suggested that it would be useful to have someone who had participated in the negotiations to be part of the U.S. team. He agreed. I became David Greenlee's deputy and we set about getting organized. David and I worked well together.

Q: How so?

FEIFER: According to the April 26 Understanding and the working rules that had been negotiated, the Monitoring Group was to be a temporary military, not political body. The Syrians wanted to make clear that this is not a secret negotiating channel that would enable them to play footsy with the Israelis. There would be no secret talks. Syria had claimed that they were not sell outs like the Egyptians or PLO, everything they did would be public. There would have to be peace negotiations between Syria, Lebanon and Israel, but this was not the forum for them. The Monitoring Group was to deal with South Lebanon, and the potential spillover into Lebanon and Northern Israel. The Syrian Delegation was headed by a general, the Lebanese by a colonel, and the Israeli Delegation by a brigadier general. All had intelligence backgrounds.

Dennis wanted our Delegation to be headed by a U.S. diplomat answerable to the State Department. He wanted to maintain control of the Delegation and the operation. We reported to him and to NEA Deputy Assistant Secretary Toni Verstandig.

David Greenlee headed the U.S. Delegation, regardless of what the working rules suggested. We needed a military representative. The Department of Defense did not want to provide an active duty officer. So we contracted with a retired U.S. Army brigadier general, Jim Wilson, to serve as the team's military representative. The French followed our example. Their delegation was headed by an ambassador and had an active duty military officer as its military representative.

We also needed to flesh out our team and prepare ourselves administratively. What additional personnel did we need? What types of support would be required from the Department and any other agencies? What would be our formal and administrative relationships with American embassies? What were our likely expenses? We needed to develop a budget and have it approved. We had to establish our diplomatic status and request accreditation from states in the region. We had to start planning even before we knew where our Delegation would be based. The question where the Monitoring Group would "establish itself" would be addressed in the negotiations in Washington. The negotiators agreed that the Monitoring Group would have its meetings at UNIFIL headquarters base camp at Naqoura, in South Lebanon. We later briefed the UN Secretariat at what had been agreed. The UN graciously cooperated and UNIFIL provided support even though it was excluded completely from the Group's operations.

If I remember correctly, there was a short break on the negotiations in Washington on the working rules for the Monitoring Group for the Israeli elections at the end of May 1996. The Peres government was being hammered by Netanyahu and the Likud on the peace process and security. Peres did not want to give Netanyahu another Lebanon issue for more criticism. Nonetheless, Peres' losing streak continued. He lost to Netanyahu in the direct election for prime minister by 30,000 votes, even though Labor won more seats than Likud. Netanyahu became prime minister. Although Netanyahu had been criticizing Peres' handling of Lebanon, the Netanyahu team did not have a better answer. After a short break, the negotiations resumed in Washington and working rules for the Monitoring Group were completed.

Naqoura is several miles north of the Israel-Lebanon border, and at that time in the Israeli-controlled security zone. Initially, the question was where the five delegations could establish themselves. It was easier to determine where they couldn't. Israel, Lebanon and Syria were out. The Syrians rejected Egypt because it had signed a peace treaty with Israel. Jordan was unacceptable to Syria because Jordan was too close to Israel. Turkey was out because at that time it was close to Israel and had poor relations with Syria. European capitals with good air connections to the region -- Paris, London, and Rome -- were too far. As the first Chair of the Monitoring Group, we decided to set up shop in Nicosia, Cyprus. I believe we arrived in July 1996, within two weeks of the completion of the working rules of the Monitoring Group. The French Co-Chair also set up shop in Nicosia. Israel, Syria and Lebanon decided not to set up delegations in Nicosia. No reason to have people who had regular jobs to be sitting around in Cyprus. They could be reached in their home countries. We arranged a commercial Fax connecting us with the other members of the Group. Complaints of violations could be sent to our Fax machine. When we received a complaint we would Fax it to the other delegations and set up a meeting in Naqoura within two days. It was up to each delegation to make its own arrangements to get to meetings. We established ourselves at a hotel in Nicosia. American Embassy Nicosia hosted us in its conference room and supported us administratively. Even though we were from the Near East Bureau and Embassy Nicosia was from the European Bureau we had smooth working relations. Ken Brill was then U.S. Ambassador in Nicosia, and he took good care of us. I was

responsible for the budget of the U.S. Delegation and made decisions on our expenses, but didn't have signature authority. The administrative officer at the embassy paid our bills out of our account. It was a great arrangement. How often do you have a chance to do that?

The first question David Greenlee and I asked ourselves when we arrived in Nicosia was whether our Monitoring Group set-up would work when we received our first complaint. Would our Fax communication system work? Would we -- and the other delegations -- be able to get to Naqoura in time? What about our arrangements in Naqoura -- security, meeting space, private space, food? We decided to call a test meeting. It would also be an opportunity to start building relationships and iron out rough spots. We contacted the other delegations and asked them to meet with us at the UNIFIL compound in Naqoura. We told UNIFIL we were coming and asked for its support. How did we all get there? Naqoura was in the Israeli-controlled security zone. The Syrians and Lebanese were not going to go overland through the Israeli security zone. They asked UNIFIL to provide helicopter transportation from Beirut to Naqoura. How did we get there? There were ferries from Cyprus to Lebanon and Israel, but we couldn't be sure our travels would be compatible with their schedules. There were commercial flights from Larnaca International Airport to Israel or Beirut, but once again we couldn't be sure we could make the schedules. As a result, we initially flew from Larnaca to Tel Aviv on a chartered aircraft. We had asked the Department of Defense for use of U.S. military air transport, but the charge would have been far higher than a civilian charter. It was cheaper to rent a charter aircraft to take our Delegation to Israel, and then rent a civilian Israeli helicopter and take us to the helipad at Naqoura. Our helicopter pilot was a reserve Israeli military helicopter pilot, and knew the area well. He flew us from Tel Aviv Airport over the Mediterranean and then straight in to Naqoura. Our helicopter pilot communicated with the Israeli civilian air controller over Israel, with the Israeli military air controller prior to entering the air space over the security zone, and with the UNIFIL air controller for landing. The Lebanese air controller didn't interact with our aircraft.

Q: Did the Syrian, Lebanese and Israeli officers wear their uniforms?

FEIFE: Yes. At the first meeting the Syrians and Lebanese cold shouldered the Israelis. We, the French and the Israelis arrived first. We were chatting when the Syrian and Lebanese came in. The Israeli head of delegation went to shake their hands. They walked right past him. They gave him the cold shoulder, intentionally as they later told us. That would change over time and there would be a lot of interaction, not only in the plenary meeting formally but also privately on the margins. But that was the first meeting, a cold shoulder.

Okay, today is November 30, 2015 with Ted Feifer. What can you tell us about the Israel Lebanon Monitoring Group?

FEIFER: How would the Israelis, Syrians and Lebanese respond to each other in this multilateral context? The bilateral talks between Israel and Syria and Israel and Lebanon launched at the 1991 Madrid Conference had been suspended by the beginning of 1996.

The war in Lebanon had ceased, but all expected a resumption of fighting at a lower level. The Syrian and Israeli Ambassadors had worked well with Ross in Washington setting up the Monitoring Group, but policy differences had been eased by personal relationships. We had met the French Co-Chair and the Israeli representative to the Monitoring Group, but not the Syrian or Lebanese representatives. The challenge for was to make this thing work. The conventional wisdom in Washington was that the Monitoring Group would collapse after the first complaint and the first meeting. There was no way Israel, Lebanon, and Syria could reach consensus on anything. The Monitoring Group, however, had to reach consensus on how to deal with complaints or the issue would be raised to the foreign minister level. In effect, if the Monitoring Group could not successfully handle complaints, it would collapse. David Greenlee and I talked a lot about what strategy to follow to try to make this thing work. We didn't know what instructions the Syrian and Lebanese delegations had been given -- to make the Group work or to see it collapse. Assuming that they wanted to see it work, at least for the time being, or put the blame on the Israelis for a collapse, my idea was to try to find a reason for each of them to want to succeed. Perhaps a personal pitch: we don't want to fail and show that we can't do it. We don't want to fail professionally. We don't want to have to pass the issue to foreign ministers, who probably don't want to be bothered. We wanted to make it seem in the personal interest of every delegation leader to be successful. We also had a policy reason to pitch. The foreign ministers had established the Monitoring Group because they didn't have a better idea. It was our responsibility to implement their vision, to make something imperfect work, in the best interest of our countries. For whatever reason, the Monitoring Group was able to reach consensus on all the complaints submitted during my time with it, the first six month of its operation. By the way, we also agreed to keep the discussions and reports of the Monitoring Group private, and limit public statement to press releases issued in capitals, not by the Monitoring Group. All the delegations tended to keep a low profile with the media. We didn't get into dueling interviews, and that no doubt made a positive contribution to our working relationships. Senior officials from the parties sometimes spoke about the Monitoring Group in interviews, but they said what they wanted.

Q: What were the complaints?

FEIFER: Complaints regarding violations of the April 26 Understanding were usually about civilians being injured by the parties or firing from within a civilian area. At meetings, the Israeli or Lebanese complainant would state the complaint and the other would explain why it was not accurate or provide a denial/explanation/justification. Over time we increasingly found ourselves dealing with several complaints at once, some related and some not. Other delegations could also address a complaint or ask questions if they wanted. We would then break and perhaps engage in consultations. I would then draft a proposed consensus Monitoring Group report that addressed the complaint. We did not have any organizational precedent to start with, so the first reports were general and contained something every delegation could accept. What did that mean in practice? A draft would note the complainant said this and the other party said that, and another member of the Monitoring Group might have made a certain point. The draft added that the parties agreed that those who committed certain actions should strive to do this or

strive not to do that. This was more or less the starting point. I would do several drafts because the Israelis would have language they wanted changed, the Lebanese would have language they wanted changed, and the Syrians would have their own suggestions. The French might also do some word-smithing. At each point it was my job, consulting with David Greenlee and other members of the U.S. team, to find a way to make a draft report acceptable to all the members of the Monitoring Group. We did not have a lawyer on our team, although the Syrian, Lebanese and Israeli delegations did. We emphasized that we were producing a political report, and not a legal document. We wanted to avoid dueling lawyers. We learned fairly quickly the limits of the Israelis and Lebanese, and what they would allow to be said in criticism of the South Lebanese Army or Hezbollah. The Syrians, who at that time occupied half of Lebanon and had an unresolved conflict with Israel, acted as if they were a neutral party. Nonetheless, we were able to develop a working relationship with the Syrian head of delegation and his staff.

Q: Was this done in English?

FEIFER: Yes. As the first Chair of the Monitoring Group, we made clear that we would work in English. That established the working language of the Monitoring Group. Everyone could speak French. The French would have liked to speak in French. The Lebanese, Syrian and Israeli delegations spoke French. We made very clear that we did not speak French and that was not an option for us. Six months later, when we and the French rotated and the French took the Chair, English remained the working language of the Monitoring Group for its duration. Working in English gave us a drafting advantage. Although all the representatives to the Monitoring Group spoke and understood English, we as native speakers inevitably had a better grasp of the shades of meaning of words, and the impact of grammar and punctuation.

Q: What were the Monitoring Group meetings like?

FEIFER: There were about seven meetings plus the initial practice meeting during the first six months of the Monitoring Group. During my time with the group we were always able to reach consensus on reports. Sometimes it took us 48 hours. We would be in Naqoura, discuss the complaint, take breaks, work on language, get together again in plenary, take more breaks for consultations, get together again in plenary, until we could reach agreement on language. I think the Lebanese and Syrians sometimes wanted to show that it wasn't going to be so easy, and hold out for additional language they knew the Israelis would never accept. They would let us find a solution with creative language. The Israelis were just as tough. They would insist on or reject language to show they were just as serious. We were also able to handle the multiple complaints when they started being made. We learned what was possible and what was not. The working rules provided for the verification of complaints. The reality was that once we started operating, it was clear that verification would be too complicated and dangerous. The Israelis wouldn't do verification in areas controlled by Hezbollah, and neither would we. The Syrians and Lebanese wouldn't go into the security zone or Israel to do verification. There was only one verification in the field during the first six months of the Monitoring Group. The U.S. participant, our military representative Jim Wilson, handled the

arrangements himself. He made clear that he would take this on because he was putting his security on the line. He wanted to make sure everything worked the way it should. There was no more verification during my time with the Monitoring Group. They weren't necessary because the Monitoring Group was not established to find fault. As far as I was concerned, it served to enable the parties to avoid escalation by saying they were taking care of incidents in the Monitoring Group. If the parties wanted to avoid a recourse to violent self-help, the Monitoring Group gave them that excuse.

Q: What was interesting about the Monitoring Group?

FEIFER: The Lebanese, Syrian and Israeli delegations protected their interests and those of their clients and proxies. No surprise there. But the relationships between them were not simple. Hezbollah did what it wanted and was the authority in South Lebanon and South Beirut, not the Lebanese government. The Lebanese government had no influence over Hezbollah. We met with the President of Lebanon at the time, Rafiq Hariri, during regional consultations between meetings. He harshly criticized the damage Israel had inflicted on Lebanon, but also had no love for Hezbollah, which would murder him a decade later. Hezbollah's influence even then was such that the Lebanese Delegation as a matter of course glossed over, ignored or defended Hezbollah's apparent violations of the Understanding. The Syrians also had a very complicated relationship with Hezbollah at the time, using them sometimes and controlling them sometimes. The Syrians let the Lebanese Delegation defend Hezbollah, while it seemed to take a more nuanced position. If the Syrians seemed comfortable with the way we proposed handling a complaint, the Lebanese would eventually go along too. Iran was a behind the scenes player too, given its support for Hezbollah and cooperative relationship with Syria. Since Hezbollah didn't criticize the Monitoring Group or Lebanese/Syrian participation in it, perhaps Iran assumed the April 26 and Monitoring Group limited Israel and its allies more than it did Hezbollah. But that is just my speculation after all these years. The Israelis had a complicated relationship with their proxies in South Lebanon, the South Lebanon Army, who were upfront and taking a lot of casualties. When the South Lebanese Army got hurt, they were prone to hit out regardless of what the Israelis wanted them to do.

Q: Did the Monitoring Group's reports have any influence?

FEIFER: The Monitoring Group had no authority over any of the armies, militias or guerillas operating in the area. One or more delegations protected their interests and those of their clients. They made sure there would be no critical language or anything that might work against their military or political requirements. The reports were one way that we could try to influence the way the parties carried out their struggle in South Lebanon. As time would go on, the delegations would reach consensus on more real content in the reports.

Q. You mentioned that you were injured during one of the meetings. What happened?

FEIFER: Coming back from one of the meetings in South Lebanon in November 1996, our chartered helicopter landed in an industrial zone just north of Tel Aviv in the late

afternoon. We stepped out and started walking to meet our transportation back to town. It was getting dark. I stepped into an open lamp pole hole and broke my ankle. I had a cast put on. I was not in great shape and it hurt to move. I didn't want to go back to Nicosia. David Greenlee agreed to my recovering in Tel Aviv until the next Monitoring Group meeting. I also cleared this with Dennis Ross' office. To my surprise, I was given a cable sent from NEA in the Department instructing me either to go back to Nicosia or return to Washington. My assumption was that someone in Embassy Tel Aviv was not happy with my being there, but why I never did find out. It just happened that my wife was then in Tel Aviv nine months pregnant and about to give birth to twins. She wasn't traveling. I decided this was a good time to take family leave. I worked this out again with David Greenlee and Dennis Ross' office. I would be on family leave for the next three months, but would make myself available for Monitoring Group meetings as required. I stayed in Tel Aviv, and my wife would give birth two weeks later. I would travel to and participate in two or three Monitoring Group meetings with a broken ankle and crutches before I returned to Washington at the end of January 1997.

Q: What about the Palestinians in Lebanon?

FEIFER: There were Palestinian armed groups in Lebanon that would periodically fire rockets at Israeli targets. According to the April 26 Understanding, Lebanon and Syria would ensure that all armed groups would adhere to its terms. The abilities of Lebanon and even Syria to control the many Palestinian armed groups based in the refugee camps was limited. It also was affected by political variables and local circumstances.

Q: How thoroughly did you deal with complaints in the Monitoring Group?

FEIFER: We took seriously the complaints by Israel and Lebanon, although the facts in complaints were often limited, sometimes inaccurate, and occasionally untrue. Nonetheless, whenever a party would make a complaint, the Monitoring Group would process it. Sometimes we were very creative in the way we handled complaints and actually produced some very solid recommendations in our reports. I'll give you an example. Hezbollah forces would often fire from the vicinity of a civilian area, which was inconsistent with the April 26 Understanding. Our military representative, Jim Wilson, addressed an Israeli complaint of such a Hezbollah action as follows. He noted that the April 26 Understanding provided for self-defense. If Hezbollah fired at Israeli forces, Israel was entitled to self-defense. If Hezbollah fired from a hundred meters from a civilian area such as a village, Israeli forces would return fire. The artillery being used by Israel and the South Lebanon Army had a burst radius of five hundred meters. Hezbollah firing from distances of less than 500 meters would therefore be endangering civilians because it was firing too close to a civilian area, and inviting firing at it. He included the burst radius data so it would be clear that, if you are fired from within five hundred meters, you were endangering civilians. You shouldn't do it. You wouldn't think the Lebanese would accept that sort of language because it was critical of and would limit Hezbollah operations. Jim Wilson, with his professional military experience, made an important contribution to protecting civilians if, in fact, the parties adhered to what they

had agreed to. We were able to get this U.S.-proposed language accepted by the Monitoring Group and into a report on a complaint.

Q: It sounds like this Monitoring Group did have a real calming effect.

FEIFER: I think it did have a positive effect for an extended period of time. Fighting in south Lebanon continued, but the parties may have been more sensitive to their rules of engagement and not endangering civilians. I remember a newspaper article in which the writer stated that when he had been an Israel soldier in South Lebanon in 1998, he had been told one day not to open fire under any circumstances, because the Monitoring Group was having a meeting. The Monitoring Group gave the parties an excuse to avoid escalation, if they wanted one, and resist whatever domestic or internal pressures they were under to respond to the actions of the other side. They could say they were taking a violation to the Monitoring Group.

Q: Did you feel that Netanyahu was on board with this?

FEIFER: Netanyahu and his advisors inevitably had their criticisms of whatever had been worked out by the previous Peres government, but they did not have anything better. They agreed to the Monitoring Group working rules that had been worked out. The Monitoring Group would last four years, but it would have a decreasing effect. As Hezbollah's military advantages increased over time, it adhered less to the April 26 Understanding. Hezbollah would put more pressure on the security zone. Israel eventually decided that the Monitoring Group no longer restrained Hezbollah and they ended their participation in it. Barak would advocate full Israeli withdrawal from south Lebanon as part of his campaign against Netanyahu in the 1999 elections. The continuing Israeli casualties in South Lebanon soured Israeli voters on continuing a seeming failed policy. Barak also saw Israeli withdrawal from South Lebanon as depriving Syria of a pressure point on Israel in peace process negotiations. Israel withdrew from South Lebanon in 2000 and the security zone collapsed.

Q. Did anybody see links between what happened in South Lebanon and the situation with the Palestinians?

FEIFER: That subject often came up in discussions we had with Israelis. What would be the regional impact of a unilateral Israeli withdrawal from South Lebanon? What would be the perception of the Palestinians, Hezbollah, Iran Syria and others? Uri Lubrani had been the last Israeli representative in Tehran before the fall of the Shah, and had been the Israeli Coordinator for South Lebanon. He argued that a unilateral withdrawal would be a mistake because it would be interpreted as Israel withdrawing under military pressure. The message would be that stepping up the violence and casualties could/would force Israeli withdrawal from other fronts. The Palestinians as well as Hezbollah might take that message on board. Maybe Syria, maybe Iran, might reach that conclusion too. Some Israeli analysts made the link between the Israeli unilateral withdrawal from South Lebanon and the outbreak of the Second *Intifada* later that year, for what it's worth.

Q: What did you do next?

FEIFER: I came back to Washington and rejoined Dennis Ross's Office in February 1997.

I started networking for my next assignment. The Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary in the European bureau made a proposal to me. He explained that our ambassador in Luxembourg, Clay Constantinou, a political appointee, did not trust the Foreign Service officers assigned to his post. He had kicked out one Deputy Chief of Mission, another had shortened his assignment, and the ambassador had no problem having a junior officer as the Acting Deputy Chief of Mission. Luxembourg would be taking the Presidency of the European Community in a few months. I was asked if I wanted to go out as the Embassy Counselor to handle the substantive work during the Lebanese Presidency. The ambassador's tenure would soon end, and as the senior officer at post I would stay on as Charge for the rest of the Clinton Administration.

Q: What was the Ambassador's background?

FEIFER: He came from New Jersey. I believe he was the Clinton state finance chairman in the 1992 campaign. He parlayed his fund raising role into an ambassadorship.

Q: What was he interested in?

FEIFER: He would have preferred being ambassador to Greece or Turkey or Cyprus. But Luxembourg was what he was able to get.

Q: I've had a number of people who have served in Luxembourg. It can be quite interesting due to its role in the European Union. How did you find it?

FEIFER: You made an excellent point. Our ambassador to Luxembourg can play an important role communicating through Luxembourg to the European Union and influencing EU policy, as well as understanding the EU decision making process itself. During my posting the European Community was actively debating Turkish membership. Luxembourg was a leading state among those opposed to Turkish entry. How we played our role to either support or just watch European policy making could be very important. You may remember that Luxembourg held the European Community during the breakup of Yugoslavia. Then Luxembourg Foreign Minister Poos, embarking on a 1991 European troika mediation trip, made the famous statement, "This is the time of Europe." And it was a disaster. Luxembourg can be a really critical place for U.S. diplomacy.

Q: So what happened?

FEIFER: We went to Luxembourg. It was a great place for a young family.

Q: What was your job?

FEIFER: As Embassy Counselor, I was responsible for substantive political and economic reporting.

Q: But you didn't become the Deputy Chief of Mission?

FEIFER: No. The Acting Deputy Chief of Mission continued in the same position. In any case, Rob Faucher and I had known each other in the Department and got along well. He focused on administrative issues involved in running the Embassy. I handled substantive issues, other than what the ambassador wanted to do. I don't remember us ever getting in each other's way. I enjoyed working with my Luxembourg government counterparts. We had good relationships with the ministries and did solid reporting on European Community policy making. There were also other interesting contemporary issues. Stu Eizenstat had been working in Washington on Holocaust era asset issues, including unpaid insurance payouts. Luxembourg had a small Jewish community in 1940 when Germany invaded the Low Countries. Jews had been required by the Nazis to fill out forms detailing their assets. The Luxembourg government retained documentation from the Holocaust; including those forms. The Luxembourgers were cooperative and it was interesting to work the issue there. By the way, Germany had absorbed Luxembourg into the Greater Reich, making it another *Gau*, or administrative region. The residence of the *Gauleiter*, or local Nazi Party leader, was given to the U.S. at the end of the war. It became the Embassy chancery.

Q: How did you get along with the ambassador?

FEIFER: I avoided any suggestion that I was working behind his back or cutting across anything he wanted to do. I made it clear that I worked for him. If the Embassy performed well, it would reflect positively on his leadership. I felt that we got along well, or at least we didn't have any problems. Despite the impression that I had been given in Washington that the ambassador would be departing at the end of the first Clinton term, he didn't want to leave. He would eventually work the back channel to the White House and get to stay on. I had a one year assignment and asked him if he wanted me to extend. He couldn't care less. He gave me a very good efficiency report but wouldn't request that I be extended. Someone else was assigned to my position. The deputy assistant secretary in Washington who had asked me to take on this job had also told me that I would be taken care of if I did. We all eventually learn from experience in the Department that promises are often given but not always implemented. He told me he couldn't deliver on any of the good jobs that were available. I found myself following up jobs that under no circumstances would I want to take, especially with a wife and two very young children. It became clear to me I was not going to get a in a place in I wanted to go, or a job that would get me promoted. I decided that my next job would be my last in the Foreign Service, and be the transition to whatever came next. I accepted a detail as a faculty member to the Armed Forces Staff College in Norfolk, Virginia from 1998 to 2000.

Q: What were you doing?

FEIFER: The Armed Forces Staff College--now called the Joint Forces Staff College -- is located in Norfolk, home to the largest naval base in the world. The Staff College is an independent institution although located on base. I taught classes on interagency operations, interagency relationships, and the political aspect of military operations. I enjoyed the Staff College environment, the other faculty, the students, and the subject matter. The Staff College was very happy to have Foreign Service officers as faculty to provide an additional perspective. The Special Operations people on the staff were especially appreciative because they had the best feel for the pol/mil stuff. The School knew I would be retiring from this job. The Command, as done in the military, arranged a retirement ceremony, an award and a very nice farewell.

Q: What impressions did you get from the officers that were coming through there?

FEIFER: The Armed Forces Staff College differed from the other senior staff colleges. The Staff College was born out of the World War II need for logistics managers who could move people and material from one side of the world to the other. The School's focus was more management and administration than strategy. It was an assignment that would give a mid-career officer joint status, necessary for further promotion.

Q: Did you see a difference between the officers from the different services?

FEIFER: No. I was impressed by the people I met there, faculty and students.

Q: Did you keep your contacts in the State Department?

FEIFER: No. I felt that this was my last assignment. I knew I wasn't going to get promoted out of a detail outside the Department. I started looking out rather than in.

Q: Where did out lead to?

FEIFER: One of my projects at the Staff College led to my next career. I noted that during the first part of their careers mid-level military officers rarely had contact or worked with U.S. diplomats. I arranged virtual meetings on an issue or problem between my classes and senior Foreign Service officers who might be serving as an ambassador, been a chief of mission and in a Washington job, or a POLAD/Political Advisor at a military command. One of the people I identified for my course was George Ward, who had been Ambassador to Namibia. He was at something called the U.S. Institute of Peace as head of its training program. While visiting the Foreign Service Institute, I saw an employment opportunity in the training program at the Institute. I applied for the position and received no response. A month later I spoke to George Ward for my project, but also mentioned that I had applied for this position. I had a PhD in Government and Politics, was a career foreign affairs professional, and had been involved in several high level negotiations, He said he had never seen my application; human resources at the Institute had never given it to him. He told me none of the applicants had met his standards. He would be putting out the advertisement again. I should apply for it and he would keep an

eye out. I eventually received an offer of employment, retired from the Foreign Service on June 30, 2000 and started working at the U.S. Institute of Peace on July 5.

Q: Let's talk about USIP. How did you feel? Were you pissed off at your treatment by the State Department? Were you relaxed?

FEIFER: It had been a good 26 year career, I'd enjoyed it. I'd been to a lot of interesting places, did a lot of interesting things, and met a lot of interesting people. It had never been a hardship. I'd been a fly on the wall of history on a number of occasions. Now it was done. I had a lot of useful experience, and learned a lot on political-military issues at the Staff College. I could have contributed more, but that's the way it goes.

Q: If you could share what you learned in the Middle East and elsewhere, that's the varsity team of any organization dealing with peace.

FEIFER: I had the background that George wanted. I had field experience in negotiations from high level to as low as you can get. I had an advanced degree, I had traveled, I had a lot of international experience, and I had worked with international organizations. I had all the things he said he wanted.

Q: Let's talk about what you did.

FEIFER: I started off in the training department and worked for George Ward. I delivered negotiations and conflict management training primarily overseas. I worked with foreign public and private non-government organizations, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe field missions and its training unit. I worked with military, police, civilian, and women's business organizations. I traveled to lots of places I'd never been to before. I worked in the Balkans, Central Asia, and had a couple of opportunities to work on Arab-Israeli programs. I became the program manager to produce and manage an online training course for U.S. candidates for employment with OSCE. I got to work on new issues, new technology, in new areas I'd never been to before. It was fun and stimulating.

Q: How did you find the administration of Institute for Peace? Was it different from government?

FEIFER: USIP was very small when I was hired in 2000. George Ward selected me and I was interviewed personally by the Executive Vice President, Harriet Hentges. She was a strong manager and had worked in the Balkans. There was a good balance between foreign affairs practitioners and peace workers when I came in. The President was Dick Solomon, who had been Ambassador to the Philippines and Assistant Secretary for East Asian Affairs. George Ward had been in the Foreign Service. The Training Program had a good mix of people who had served in government and had worked in the peace field.

Q: What did you do during your initial training programs overseas?

FEIFER: I went go out to Sarajevo and Tashkent to do three-day training on negotiation and diplomatic skills.

Q: How was the work with OSCE?

FEIFER: OSCE staff members are practitioners who have to negotiate with often difficult counterparts on tough issues every day. I tried to find skills and tools that might be useful and relevant to them. I tried to deliver material in ways that made sense to international and local staff. I talked about negotiation as a practical, rather than as a theoretical subject. What I delivered had to be practical, and consist of skills that they could pick up in three days and learn to use. I wasn't trying to teach a university course.

Q: How did it feel having to deal with the Serbs, Croats and Bosnians?

FEIFER: It was a new experience. I had never dealt face to face with the Balkans before. It was stimulating, exciting and educational. I had to develop examples to make training meaningful. I had to put ethnic issues, power issues into the course; I had to develop simulations for a negotiator with limited leverage. OSCE mission staff members in the field do not have a lot of resources to offer for cooperation, or the ability to punish non-cooperation or opposition. Yet they have to convince people to do things that are often against their political or personal self-interest. Doing the right thing, the good thing, the democratic thing, following European standards might lose your interlocutor its position, an election, or get them hurt. It was a challenge to find the right approach to engage and not alienate different types of people. It was always stimulating. I got to meet hard working and committed people, and travel widely in Bosnia, Kosovo, Serbia, and Albania.

Q: I spent five years there way before you know what hit the fan. How long did you stay at the Institute for Peace?

FEIFER: I had a good run. I was at the Institute for 14 years.

Q: Did you get involved with the beautiful headquarters building?

FEIFER: It is striking and is Dick Solomon's personal achievement. It's my understanding when he was up on the Hill one day talking about funding for the Institute, and was told that if he really wanted the institute to become permanent, he needed real estate. So that's when he focused on getting property and funding for a headquarters building, to give the U.S. Institute of Peace a permanent address just off the Mall, America's Main Street. We'll see if the advice proves to be accurate.

Q: Did you see political forces clashing over this thing?

FEIFER: USIP was born from strong Democratic Congressional support and acquiescence by Republican President Reagan. The founding generation left the scene, and strange political bedfellows have tried to defund or replace the Institute's legislative

mandate. But new high level support for the Institute's relatively small budget came from the Department of Defense and U.S. military, who welcomed the contribution in the field it gave to America's soft power

Q: Did the Institute help train military officers for civil affairs, peacekeeping, that sort of thing?

FEIFER: The Institute has been involved in Iraq, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. Staff worked at the grass roots providing peaceful resolution of conflict and mediation skills in lots of places that are important to U.S. national strategy. Institute staff did things that the military weren't trained to do and didn't want to do. They were happy to see the Institute operating in the field at a fraction of the cost it would take the USG. We also did training for the U.S. military, such as gender and education issues for civil affairs people going out to Africa, U.S. military deploying with the UN, or staff of the U.S. Threat Reduction Agency.

Q: Were there many permanent or semi-permanent participants at the Institute from other countries?

FEIFER: All the permanent employees had to be American citizens. The Institute did have International Fellows such as international organization diplomats, generals who worked in peacekeeping and conflict management and resolution professionals, who would come in and write an article or a book.

Q: Did you find yourself in competition with the Wilson Center?

FEIFER: I don't think so. USIP was different from all the other Washington foreign affairs organizations and think tanks because it was expeditionary. Much of its work was overseas. I always felt that foreign operations should be the core mission of the Institute. This was not a position adopted by Institute leadership, especially when it had the new building. The Institute had to maintain it, publicize it, have constant events, and show that the beautiful new building was not just there to house a bunch of tree-huggers. The building is expensive to maintain, and use effectively and efficiently. It also has to have the same security standards as any federal building.

Q: The budget comes from Congress, doesn't it?

FEIFER: The Institute's base budget is congressionally funded. Funding for various projects comes from State and Defense. The Institute is not allowed to accept private sector funding.

Q: How did you deal with the multitude of problems in Africa?

FEIFER: There were several programs in Africa. My major program at the Institute starting in 2007 was to provide negotiations training to African military peacekeepers. The logic is that soldiers are generally not taught soft skills as part of their military

training. But peacekeepers are not supposed to use their weapons except in self-defense. Moreover, they don't have the fire power of many of the state armies or militias they come into contact with. One skill that would be very useful to them would be negotiation. The catalyst for our training was a Rwandan military peacemaker's request during an after action meeting with the State Department's Africa Contingency Operations Training and Assistance Office, ACOTA, as it was called, which provided primarily military training and equipment to African militaries. After returning from a peacekeeping deployment in Darfur, the Rwandan battalion commander said: "We would really benefit from having negotiations training because much of what we do involves negotiating." Someone in ACOTA who I had known at State contacted me at USIP and asked me if I could do such training. "Sure." We developed a pilot program and delivered it in Rwanda in February 2008. The Rwandans liked it and ACOTA requested that we deliver it to an increasing number of African militaries. In six years I managed 89 trainings in eleven countries. I led 15 of them myself.

Q: What was your impression of the various peacekeeping troops?

FEIFER: I can answer that in a number of ways. I can't comment on their military skills. That was not my area. The basic question was the ability of participants to absorb our training. Some countries had officers with a higher educational standard and better English language skills. We also taught in French Negotiation concepts can be hard to transfer and understand in a second or even third language. The training we delivered was experiential, but culture and education traditions made that difficult in many countries. Rote education was the norm, and critical thinking and speaking up were not always easy for participants. Training of officers from a unit tended to lead the lower ranks to defer to the senior officers in proposing solutions to problems. No one would disagree with a more senior officer. We tried to find work-arounds to all these training challenges. Some of the units we worked with were not permanent organic units, but had just been formed for a peacekeeping deployment. The officers did not know each other well, had not trained together, and needed to work on their unit cohesiveness and military skills. One country had a mix of professionally trained military with better education and language skills, and militia-origin fighters with less education and lesser language skills. Some contingents had officers with peacekeeping experience who could validate our training to other officers, and other units had no one with peacekeeping experience. Sometimes we had base cadre to support our training with their own experience and language skills, and sometimes we were on our own. We had good relationships with the ACOTA military trainers, who were all former U.S. military. Some would listen in to our training sessions. I made a point of checking our modules and exercises with the ACOTA trainers and U.S. military detailed to USIP to ensure that nothing was inconsistent with the military training. Then there is the question of implementation. What did the peacekeepers actually do when they deployed? Did they use the USIP training? Was it relevant? In some places you are less in a position to really implement a lot of things because the host government doesn't cooperate, and is part of the problem, as in Darfur. I tried to convince ACOTA to authorize an evaluation trip to Africa, but I didn't succeed.

Q: When did you leave USIP?

FEIFER: August 2014.

Q: What are you up to now?

FEIFER: I'm an adjunct professor teaching a graduate course on Negotiation and Peacemaking at George Mason University. I developed a course to bridge the gap between the theoretical study of negotiation in school and the practitioner real world use of negotiation. I also am occasionally invited to deliver stand-alone trainings. I'm never bored. I just started working as a Montgomery County election judge.

Q: Thank you very much Ted. You had a remarkable career.

FEIFER: I had two great careers covering 40 years, 26 years in the U.S. Foreign Service and 14 years at the U.S Institute of Peace. . I never had a Foreign Service posting that I didn't enjoy. My time at the U.S. Institute of Peace was a great opportunity to share what I had learned and to broaden my horizons. During those years I met all kinds of people, good and bad, those who I liked and those who didn't like me. Looking back, there were some things I would have done differently. But life is for learning.

Q: We will finish transcribing this oral interview. This is our fifth session. We will send you a full draft and ask you to edit it. It's not just correcting the grammar and the things the transcriber didn't understand. Don't think of it as State Department document. Don't try to make it succinct, expansive is better than not in oral history. We don't know what interests' people will have in the future. Anyway, feel free. It is your story.

End of interview