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

AMBASSADOR THOMAS G. WESTON

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy

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[Note: this interview was not edited by Ambassador Weston.]

Q: Today is March 4, 2005. This is an interview with Thomas G. Weston. What does the G. stand for?

WESTON: Gary.

Q: Gary and you go by Tom?

WESTON: Tom.

Q: Alright, well let's start kind of at the beginning. Could you tell me when and where you were born?

WESTON: I was born in 1944 in Detroit, Michigan.

Q: Alright, let's talk a bit about your family. Let's start on your father's side. Where did the Westons come from, grandparents and that sort of thing?

WESTON: Well, what I know about the family basically starts in the mid-19th Century. The Westons emigrated from England. I think they were basically peasants or yeomen farmers in England and they immigrated through Canada to Michigan when Michigan was being settled in the middle of the 19th Century. They basically stayed in the same area of Michigan until I came along a century later. That is, anyone from Michigan holds up their hand like a mitt and I'm from this area called the Thumb.

Q: The Thumb, I got you. Well now, what were they, did they remain farmers?

WESTON: They did until my father's generation, completely farmers until my father's generation. I spent time as a kid on my grandparents' farm...

Q: What kind of farm was this?

WESTON: A small family farm and in that area the cash crop was sugar beets. They were basically family farmers, they grew their own navy beans and both feed for humans and pigs but had their orchards and their vegetable gardens and kept chickens and so on and so forth. A crash crop, sugar beets.

Q: Well then, how about your father, what caused him to leave the farm?

WESTON: The period when he was growing up was a time when many family farms were going out of business and being taken over to consolidate ever larger, what is called agro business in Michigan. Most of these family farms, they just weren't viable anymore and they got bought up. You can hear different reasons why this happened. The whole area is still very agricultural but it is now fresh fruits and vegetables and really good agro business cooperation driving it. My father basically had to work to help support the family. I think he was 13 when he started delivering sugar beets from the city to the mill. He basically left the farm and went to Detroit to make a living and then stayed not really in Detroit but went just north of it in Warren, Michigan. This was a small farming community then but he commuted in and was a factory worker for many years for Hudson Motor Company. So, I was born in Detroit but then grew up in Warren and went to school there my whole life.

Q: I take it, in your father's generation, he didn't go to college?

WESTON: No, no, he left school at eighth grade. Now my mother's family is a little bit different. They immigrated much later, also English, through Canada but didn't come over to Michigan until sometime around the turn of the last century, 1900 or so. She grew up basically in Detroit and went through the depression. Her father was an architect but was also an investor who lost everything in the depression. My mother and father met sometime 1939-'40, somewhere in there, and got married. Now my mother grew up under very strange circumstances in the depression. She went to high school and then worked basically all of her life in the school system in Warren. She went back to get a college degree, it was about the time I was in late primary school. She got her bachelors degree and actually went back and started working on her masters before she actually retired. So it was a different situation coming out of very different circumstances.

Q: How big was your family?

WESTON: Immediate family? I've got a brother and a sister.

Q: Where did you land?

WESTON: I'm in the middle, older sister, younger brother.

Q: What do you remember of family life in Warren?

WESTON: Well, when I was growing up Warren was still a very small basically farming town so we, even growing up, still grew all of our vegetables. There was only, I think, one paved road anywhere close to us. I went to an early primary one room school, sort of a classic mid-West farming town, growing up. Then about the time I was in the 8th grade, I think it was, General Motors decided to build its world headquarters in Warren and bought up several square miles of land. This part of Michigan is absolutely flat. Bought that up and developed their world headquarters and along with that came a huge economic development. It is now just a massive, wall-to-wall suburban community with General Motors world headquarters in the middle of it. That was going on when I was going through high school. But you asked about family life. I grew up, I guess, in a kind of classic family, father and mother, same father and mother, no changes, brother and sister. We all went to the same schools. My mother worked in the school system as I was growing up. If there was anything different, it's that she worked her whole life at a time where I think especially where we were, in rural Michigan, most mothers stayed at home.

Q: What about, say at home, was there much interest in the outside world, the news or not, or any discussions?

WESTON: Outside world meaning internationally?

Q: Yes, or even nationally.

WESTON: There was a great deal of interest nationally and there was a great deal of interest in travel. Internationally it would include Canada. Both sides of the family had this long standing relationship with Canada and this is important because eventually we'll get to the point when I was the chargï¿½ in Canada for several years. I grew up literally across the border from Canada so it was very usual for us to go over for the day and go to Point Pelee and the beach, whatever, in Canada. We were very aware it was a different country and in that part of Canada it was very, very British at that time.

My parents for whatever reason loved to travel and all the time we were growing up every summer we spent a couple of weeks going somewhere else so that by the time I was, I don't know, seventh or eighth grade, I had been in most states in the United States and often to Canada. There wasn't any international travel but there was always the interest to go places, see things, learn something new especially where there were other cultures involved. I remember Michigan in those days was a very multicultural environment and it still had an exceptionally large population of native Americans. It had a large population of migrant Mexican laborers especially in the rural areas. It had a very large population of blacks who had come up from the south in the thirties and forties to work in the factories and had a very, very immigrant community. In our area there were a tremendous number of Poles and Italians. Finns and Lithuanians and whatever, first generation so there was a lot of use of other languages. It was a fun thing to do to go places, see things and learn new things.

Q: How did you go?

WESTON: By car, almost always by car. I can remember going to California by train from Chicago and back but it was by car mostly.

Q: Did the outside world intrude much, I mean with discussions or listening on the TV or the radio, the newspapers?

WESTON: Well, it depends on what you mean by the outside world. Certainly economically it did a great deal. I mean when I was in high school, in Michigan, we were going through the first great spasm of anti-Japanese feeling because of Japanese auto production displacing Michigan auto production, as an example. I would say more than anything else it was the outside world intruding because of developments economically. That, of course, changed drastically by the time I got to college which was the middle of the Vietnam war.

Q: How about the Cold War? Was that something...

WESTON: You know what, I remember it now, for instance as a little kid we used to go to something called the Michigan state fair. Every state has one, and our church had a corn booth there where they sold corn-on-the-cob and ginger ale to make money for the church. We as kids had to go and shuck corn and do our job but then we got to spend the rest of the time at the fair. I can remember, I'm not sure now old I wasix, sevethat one of the big exhibits that we found fascinating at the state fair was a company trying to sell fall-out shelters. I don't if you remember the metal round things; stock them with water and that sort of thing. Of course they were trying to sell them by hyping the dangers of a nuclear attack and so on. That's probably the earliest memory I have of the cold war potentially having a direct influence. Then when we were in school in those days, you trained for nuclear attacks...

Q: Duck and cover...

WESTON: Right, exactly, hide under your desk and that sort of thing, which of course...

Q: Well, it was something to do.

WESTON: So it was a good exercise. It was an alternative to fire drills.

Q: Where did your family fall politically?

WESTON: My parents were determinably non-partisan. It would never; I mean they said they wouldn't even tell one another how they voted. But, I would say that both parents came out of a tradition which was mid-west Republican, more Eisenhower type Republican Rockefeller. There is nothing like the republicanism we see today. That being said, they were also what we would describe today as very socially liberal. I think that was part of the environment because it was so disparate culturally and linguistically, just the way people were. They were very determined not to discriminate against people and that, of course, is not true of everyone in Michigan, but I think it was very uniformly true of people in small houses in The Thumb area. They were also economically probably more inclined to be associated with the Democrats in part because of the very strong influence of labor unions in Michigan. My father started out working in a car factory, Hudson Motor Company. My mother because she worked in a school had an affiliation with the school union so there was a very strong union movement in Michigan which continues to this day. I think that impacted politically, many were economically predisposed to vote democratic although I've got to tell you that until my father died I never knew for sure how he voted and he wouldn't tell me. My mother has only begun to tell me now. She is in a nursing home and I went to see here and tried to tell her how to vote in the last election and she'll tell me now but never would growing up. It was very trade union oriented and socially liberal. Don't interfere with anyone else's life but live and let live, that sort of thing. It would be classified as democratic although I think the family would think of themselves as Republicans.

Q: Yes, you could be an Eisenhower Republican which carries quite a different connotation than to be a Bush Republican.

WESTON: Yes, absolutely.

Q: What about the church, what church and how much did the church effect your growing up?

WESTON: When we were growing up, small town Michigan in those days a lot of it evolved around church and school. It was a Methodist church, which is kind of standard for that part but it was affiliated with the Episcopalian church. Affiliated in the sense that they did a lot of joint services and vacation bible schools were all the same. Until I was in late high school we went to church every Sunday and you went to Sunday school and we went to vacation bible school and you were a member of the teen group. There were father/son events and mother/daughter, I mean there were a lot things going on. Along with school external to the immediate family and the extended family it was one of the two kinds of social poles, if you will, of life.

Q: You mentioned you went to a one-room school house. For those unfamiliar with it, will you explain a bit about how a one-room school house works? The ones you experienced.

WESTON: Sure. The one-room school house actually had two rooms. One room was kindergarten, first, second and third. The other room was fourth, fifth and sixth. You basically were spending time with kids of different ages all the time and, of course, during playground time you were all together from kindergarten until sixth grade. During the course of the school day, for instance, it would be like the first and the second graders would have reading and maybe the third graders would work on their math homework. It was a very segmented school day because of that. I think socially the big difference is there was less rigidity in what you were studying at any point of time. If you, for instance, were a particularly good reader in the first grade you might find yourself in the third grade reading group or something like that. And socially you were with a much wider age range of kids growing up.

Q: I would think that also you would, you couldn't help but be absorbed in and in a way be exposed to a lot more by the fact that you are a fourth grader and you are listening to sixth grade presentations and all that.

WESTON: Yes, that is probably true. I think you would have to make an evaluation which is hard to make from this distance about what the overall level of education was in those days compared to what it might be in a primary school now. Whether the overall level was quite up to the standards, whether the teachers met the same sort of educational standards. These are the questions I would ask. But yes, you were exposed to a lot more. On the other hand, there were some things thought were important in schooling for my kids that were shortages. We never had anything like physical education; we had recess on the playground. We had very, very little in terms of art and music until high school. Things changed drastically in high school. This school system, incidentally, you were in primary school through eighth grade, although then it was no longer a one room school. You had a separate seventh and a separate eighth grade in another consolidated school and then the high school was a large consolidated school from a much wider area where you did a lot more activity.

Q: During this, particularly up to before you hit high school but that period, did race relations and I'm meaning, basically, black Americans versus white Americans intrude because I think the year you were born was the year of the big race riots...

WESTON: Race riots in Detroit.

Q: In Detroit and the black population had never been completely accepted within that concept. I mean did that spill over to where you were now?

WESTON: No, and I will tell you why. Even though I was born in Detroit, I was probably in Detroit less than a dozen times until I was in high school and Warren, even though it is immediately above Detroit, was a different world. There was not one black family, black student or anything else all the time I was growing up including through high school. I made my first black friend when I went off to college. That was also true of Jews. There was no one who was Jewish and my first Jewish friend was in college. There were a certain number of Mexicans although they didn't tend to be around year-round, but you got to know them a little bit in the summer when they were the kids of agricultural workers. It was an ethnic mix of often first generation immigrants. In the Upper Peninsula, where the other part of my family lives, there were a lot of Native Americans. Of course, in those days Native Americans were in dreadful shape on reservations. But race relations intruded by something like someone on television saying there was something going on. Now, this became more and more active as I went through kind of upper primary and into high school. Rosa Parks, for instance was from Detroit. I can remember my father talking about being dismayed that people would discriminate against black people even though for a lot of his life he worked in the factories and so on. By the time I was in high school, which I graduated from in 1962, so roughly '58 to '62, civil rights issues were prominent, even though there were no black people in the high school where I lived. There was a very strong kind of feeling that you know what was happening in America. What had happened was wrong and had to be fixed. That was the kind of environment.

Q: Well now, in high school, you would be about 16 I guess or so, did the election of 1960 and John Kennedy at all engage you?

WESTON: Yes. Remember this was after eight years of Eisenhower which was kind of "Leave it To Beaver", staid, apple pie kind of America which I think a lot of the people that I knew, other kids and their families thought there was something basically not right going on here. I think that election, everyone that I knew thought that Kennedy was a whole new fresh force and had great hopes. In particular, I would say because of the race issue. This was before Vietnam intruded drastically on our minds. Then Kennedy was assassinated when I was a sophomore in college.

Q: In high school and before, what were your favorite subjects and less favorite subjects?

WESTON: I loved science. I ended up taking more zoology courses including very advanced genetics and embryology and everything else in high school. I think that was due to one teacher who happened to be the wife of the local funeral director. She was just a terrific biologist in her own right and a terrific teacher and really made science great. Even most of the time I was taking lessons in zoology it carried over into chemistry and physics as well. So I would say probably science. I also loved English, mainly because I had the same English teacher for, I think, three years who made us memorize Shakespeare and do all kinds of things like that. I was really, really into English literature in a very important way, if you were a student of his. I took a lot of French. My least favorite subject? I don't know I had a least favorite. I took four years of mathematics and I don't think the teachers were as inspiring but I liked it but I think I associated it with science in some way. I don't know that there was anything I didn't like.

Q: You mentioned a reader, this goes a ways back. What sort of things did you read?

WESTON: Oh, by the time I was in high school, I read long before high school, but by the time I was in high school I was trying to read the great Russians and all of that sort of stuff - literature.

Q: Any books that left a lasting impression on you?

WESTON: Of Human Bondage by Summerset Maugham. I read that in my freshman year in high school.

Q: Interesting. As you were in high school, was it for you and for your siblings more or less expected to go on to college or not?

WESTON: No, quite the opposite. I don't know the exact statistics but this was a consolidated Michigan high school. It had something they called a college prep program which was four years of science, four of math, a foreign language, and so forth. It had a standard high school program which was much less rigorous and had a vocational program so that people could actually take courses and learn a trade in carpentry, metal working, and things like that. For college prep, the percentage in my class would have been under twenty percent, I'm sure. Most of the folks I went to school with did not go on to college.

Q: Were you in the college prep and what was driving you in that direction?

WESTON: Yes, I think I mentioned that my mother started back in college and I think she was always the driving force for education, education, education. My two siblings were the same way, in college prep too, although my brother ended up not finishing college. The other part was probably I really liked academics and I was good at it. Maybe a third part and this might relate to being brought up and traveling all the time. I could never quite see myself just spending my life working around Warren, Michigan.

Q: What about summer jobs. Was this a new dimension? I would imagine this would be part of your...

WESTON: Sure, well, I worked my whole life. These were more than summer jobs. When I was very young I had a paper route, I don't know when that started, maybe about sixth grade. I picked up jobs shoveling snow in Michigan. I remember that I got my first regular job when I was a freshman in high school, I think I was thirteen. It was as a stock boy in sales at a Sherwin Williams paint store. I worked I don't know how many hours a week. I'm sure it would be in violation of today's child labor laws because I would work for a couple hours after school everyday until the store closed and all day Saturday. I did that I think two years or so and by then I had gotten old enough to get my lifeguard and my swimming teachers credentials from the Red Cross. I worked in the recreation department of the town either as a life guard or as a swimming teacher for the rest of high school. And then in the summer by the time I was in my senior year I worked at a country club doing the same thing, life guard and teaching swimming. I did that until I went away to college. Then I changed summer jobs but we can get into that later. I basically had a job from the time I was a freshman in high school and not without one since.

Q: It doesn't seem to have allowed much time for extra curricular activities.

WESTON: Well, it must have because I was on the swimming team during high school, competitive swimming. I was in student government, I was president of the class a couple of times and when I wasn't the president of the class I was the vice president or something else. I was in all kinds of clubs. We had a very good group of buddies who I ran around with all of the time, always seemed to be going out to get a pizza. I don't know I had more time in the day than you think.

Q: Well, actually when you are a teenager and all I think there is a 48-hour day.

WESTON: Exactly. You get a lot in, if you want to. I would also have to say high school and college or anything I have ever done academically has always been very useful so I might have to spend time to write a major paper or something but I literally spent very little time studying.

Q: What about by the time we are getting up to what '64?

WESTON: '62 is when I graduated from high school.

Q: What were you pointed to? Did you know where you wanted to go or...?

WESTON: What I though I wanted to do then is stay in the field of science in particular, zoology and potentially medicine. So, I was applying to colleges and I wanted to get a scholarship. I probably would have gone anyway but I would have had to have gone on student loans because my parents could not afford to pay for it. I applied for scholarships at a couple of colleges, University of Michigan and Michigan State, but it was always with the understanding that I would major in either premed or zoology, which is a lot of overlap in those two. I got scholarships to both of them in those fields so I guess in those days I was pointed toward some sort of science career.

Q: So where did you go?

WESTON: Michigan State...

Q: And you were there what...

WESTON: Because it was a bigger party school. I visited both and as I say I got scholarships to both and visited both and spent a weekend on campus and all that sort of thing. I decided in the end that Michigan State suited me more and it was socially a much more robust school.

Q: '62-'66 was it at Michigan State?

WESTON: Right and then I actually started a masters degree before I finished the bachelors degree. You can do that but we were changing subjects in here from zoology to political science but we can go back to that. Then I started off coming to Georgetown's graduate school but got married at the same time and decided we couldn't afford graduate school at Georgetown so went back to Michigan State and did the remainder of my graduate studies at Michigan State. So I was there until '69, in various capacities.

Q: In '62 what was Michigan State like?

WESTON: Michigan State was an exceptionally large school, big town school. This was before it had split off into several sub-universities so the student body in '62 was over 60 thousand. It was a very big school and it was a very diverse school. It had a lot of students from Michigan obviously which was pretty diverse in itself but it had a very active recruitment program for international students as well. I moved into the dorm and it was a completely different sort of experience than Warren, Michigan was in high school, in terms of diversity. It was thought of as a party school and it was. It was also a very socially active and politicized student body and about that time Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) had been founded a couple years before...

Q: SDS, yes.

WESTON: SDS yes, here in Michigan. That had a big impact. Michigan State was one of the more radicalized, if you were, campuses in the Big 10 along with Wisconsin. It also, however, had a very strong police department and the guy who turned out to be my PhD. Chair Adviser had a strong involvement with Vietnam and Vietnam policy in the Vietnam war. So some of this radicalism translated into violence against the school police administration and things like that so it was a socially active but highly politicized and very diverse campus.

Q: Did you find when you got on all of a sudden people were trying to recruit you for causes and all that? Was it that sort of or did you sort of drift off to what one wanted to do?

WESTON: No, I think I started off as a really serious student in zoology and Michigan State at that time had a program where you could take the final exam in a course and I think you had to get an A out of it and you would get credit for the course. It wouldn't apply to getting the required number of credits to complete a degree but it would count to credits completed for a particular major so I took a lot of these exams and worked very hard in zoology and completed a lot of the requirements in zoology during my freshman year. I think my freshman year I did a lot socially but I was a pretty serious student in zoology but then the summer of the freshman I went on an exchange program. I went off on an exchange program to Paris. So, never send an 18 year old to Paris. Be happy in Michigan that way. By the time I got back from that, Paris in those days, African socialism was a big deal and Algeria was not that far in the past and so on. I was in a very student environment a kind of North African student environment. I think coming back from that I got a lot more involved in politics and student government than I would have been otherwise. At the same time I pledged a fraternity so I was Greek which is thought of usually as quite conservative but the house I was in was a very politicized one. An awful lot of my fraternity brothers were very engaged politically in student government and politically otherwise including one who went on to be the governor of Michigan for several terms and is still a close friend. I would say it was my sophomore year after I came back from Paris when I became, it wasn't that I was less of a student, but the balance shifted a little bit.

Q: What was there about Paris that got you?

WESTON: Well, first of all it is one of the most spectacular places on earth and I still think that. I still love the place. It was the totally different linguistic and cultural environment than anything I had known up to that point. I had had a lot of French already in high school and went on and did it in college and there was a kind of a language and culture program exchange program in France. I rented a room from a French family; it was in fact a maid's room under the roof. I was very close to this French family and they had four boys kind of Lyceum and university age at the same time. I really became integrated into French culture at an early age almost as an alternative to everything I had been in the past which was English speaking American. It's that transferring into another culture which happens a lot in the foreign service which happened and was very appealing to me. I felt it expanded my mind and my understanding of what human beings were.

Q: Did you see much of a difference between, I take it you were going to a university, were you not?

WESTON: It was associated with Michigan State; it was a city university of sorts.

Q: Was it being essentially taught in the American way? Or was it...

WESTON: No, no.

Q: As French...

WESTON: It was French. It was both language and supposedly French culture, history and literature and the language was taught totally differently than in the United States. Much more conversationally oriented. Almost no memorization or grammar or vocabulary. It was all geared toward conversation and the kind of language and literature and the history part of it was mainly lectures so it was a different sort of environment.

Q: Did French politics intrude or did you get into this...

WESTON: Yes, but more in the sense of anti-colonialism than the importance of African socialism. This was 1964, right after Algeria. I can remember I hitchhiked around to go to go down to Provence or something like that and got a ride from a so called pied noir, if you know that term, which you shouldn't use because it is politically incorrect still in France I think. People did use it a lot in the United States and we would talk to people on the kind of divisions inherent in the society and how they translated into political divisions. It wasn't so much French policy in terms of Gaullism, French international policy; it was more dealing with the break up of empires and the remnants in French life and in France and its relationships with Algeria in the first instance but also French Africa.

Q: When you came back to Michigan State when was it '65 or...?

WESTON: It was still '64.

Q: '64. What happened to zoology?

WESTON: It went by the wayside. I had passed an awful lot of these courses and so I went on and I took a couple more course in, I don't know, histology maybe or something like that but I started to increasingly take courses in other areas: philosophy, history and increasingly political science, changing my major to, I've forgotten what they actually, I think they called it a combined social science degree where you basically had triple majors. You had one in the hard science, which was zoology, for me, and then two others. Mine were in political science and French. I also started to take another language, Spanish. I was active in student government; I was the vice president for something called International Student Affairs of the student government. I was more active politically in all kinds of ways, but I was clearly going in a different direction and I had decided by then to go on to graduate school and political science.

Q: You mentioned Michigan State was a party school. The definition of a party school has changed considerably over the generations. What did that mean in your time?

WESTON: It meant something very different than now. We had a lot of parties and partied hard, but when I was at Michigan State there was almost a complete absence of drugs other than alcohol.

Q: Yes.

WESTON: But there was a lot of alcohol around and that meant going to a lot of parties where you drank sometimes in excess, but not necessarily. You danced a lot, lots of loud music, that sort of thing.

Q: Well then, did the Vietnam war while you were still an undergrad intrude?

WESTON: It did in a political sense, in a sense that the whole atmosphere on the university campus was questioning the war. There were a lot of protest marches, I think in my senior year there was a violent attack on the school police administration because they had been training to stop the police. So in the political sense it intruded in a big way. It intruded in a personal way in a big way after I got married when I was in graduate school and I was about to be drafted but that is down the road in this chronicle.

Q: By the time you graduated from...

WESTON: Undergrad, it would have been '66.

Q: '66.

WESTON: Yeah '66. It was what we called a Georgetown over and under because I was already starting to take graduate courses in political science as well.

Q: Would you say the faculty of Michigan State fell into any particular category, as a political science faculty. I mean, some schools tend to be of a type or something.

WESTON: I think Michigan State was probably more mixed than most. The chairman of my PhD committee was a fellow named Wesley Fischel, who was a long time adviser to the government on Vietnam. He was a political scientist and a specialist on security politics in Southeast Asia and I even did some work, this is graduate work now, for him in translating some documentation from the French colonial period for his research. He was very, say, supportive of the war. He was quite conservative. On the other hand, in graduate school I drifted toward African studies in comparative politics. I would say the African studies and professors were very liberal leftists. It was a mixed picture.

Q: As I recall, in Vietnam, Michigan State was very much involved. I mean they were sending teams over and doing studies and all that sort of thing.

WESTON: The department of political scientists had several, Fischel was the preeminent expert on Vietnam in the faculty and one of the preeminent experts in the whole country. There were several others working in the Department of Political Science. There were several others things going on at the school. Police Administration was actually training both in Vietnam and bringing back to campus to sell Vietnamese beliefs some people who had some rather unsavory characteristics. John Hannah, was the president of Michigan State and later became administrator for AID (Agency for International Development) and was instrumental in getting a tremendous number of, I think, contracts basically from AID. The police administration was the big one, the controversial one, but there were others in health care systems, in public administration and so on. So there was a lot of involvement with Vietnam but for the most part with the U.S. assistance program to Vietnam.

Q: When you were looking at Africa was there any area you were looking at?

WESTON: I started out at Georgetown but it was just too expensive so my wife and I went back to Michigan State and continued there. I basically got my masters and was working on my PhD and finished all my course work on my PhD and then started to work on my dissertation. Michigan State was a very behavioral school of political science as opposed to traditionalist. By the time I started working on my dissertation, which I didn't finish and we will go into that, is where Vietnam enters again. The subject ended up being the relationship being patterns of settlement and focus of power in local governments - tribal governments in East Africa, so Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania. So, the focus was local government, tribal government in East Africa, almost political anthropology as opposed to political science.

Q: Where stood Tanzania in the area at that time?

WESTON: Nyerere was the president of Tanzania

Q: I was just wondering...

WESTON: He was one of the great leaders of Tanzania.

Q: particularly his African socialism.

WESTON: Although, I think I was more influenced by the African socialism of French West Africa, Houphouet-Boigny.

Q: Because Nyerere maintained a wonderful support system particularly from Scandinavia but elsewhere including Britain and the United States while he was screwing up his country and I was wondering whether while you were looking at this was there concern about maybe this isn't a very good system or not?

WESTON: When I was in graduate school I think we were a little starry-eyed about African socialism. It was kind of the idea that a lot of the problems of Africa were a direct result of colonialism. I think that was the very common assumption, both in the academic literature and almost ideological among those studying Africa at that time. That in order to cope with the heritage of colonialism some rather harsh and centralized system of development was the only thing that really had any chance of success. Remember this is from afar. If you are studying African studies in East Lansing, Michigan, it's not the same as my first tour in Kinshasa. I had a very different view of this once I lived in Kinshasa for a while, but from afar there appeared to be appeal to socialism or African socialism as the soundest path toward what people wanted to achieve, which was political stability in the first instance and economic stability in the second. But, as I said, I think I was a little starry-eyed and was deeply influenced by the anti-colonialism feeling.

Q: Oh yeah, well the whole, sort of, intellectual community and campuses in general really couldn't criticize these charismatic leaders, these Nkrumahs and...

WESTON: Nkrumah, Houphouet-Boigny, who weren't necessarily...I hope you really examined history a little more closely as they weren't necessarily good guys.

Q: The French seemed to have done in some ways a little better job in some...

WESTON: I would probably argue with that.

Q: I'll think about it.

WESTON: My first tour was the Congo so no one did as bad of a job as the Belgians, except maybe the Dutch in Indonesia.

Q: Did the Foreign Service intrude in anything or diplomacy?

WESTON: It did because this comes out of school in France more than anything else and the experience of being in France. I basically sometime in my sophomore or junior year, I'm not sure what, basically made up my mind that I wanted to have a career in international relations. At that time I thought what I wanted to do was to have a choice of career, which was an academic one and a practical one in diplomacy so my plan was to go ahead and get my PhD and then go into the Foreign Service. In order to do that, because I didn't think you could really have a meaningful academic career in international relations unless you had some practical experience too, the idea was I would go into the Foreign Service for x number of years and then I would go back to academics. I ended up taking the Foreign Service exam just about the time when I was finishing my course work for the PhD and starting my dissertation. At that time I had several graduate fellowships and then I actually joined the faculty at Michigan State lowest rank as an instructor. But at that time I was actually a member of Michigan State faculty but took the Foreign Service exam because you never know if you are going to pass it right away or not and started down that path. I did pass the written part and the oral on the first try so that was an option at the same time that I was about to get drafted. I ended up going into the foreign service earlier than I had planned.

Q: What about the oral exam? Do you recall how that went or anything?

WESTON: I do. I took it in Washington. It was in those days very different than it is now. It was basically a panel of three one of whom was an ambassador and the other two were kind of senior Foreign Service officers. I remember it as a very comfortable experience actually because in those days they would start off asking academic questions and I remember the academic question they asked me was to trace the territorial development of the United States including dates. One thing I am terrible on is remembering dates so I knew none of the dates. But I was able to trace the territorial development including the Gadsden Purchase and so somehow remembering the Gadsden Purchase struck with the panel. Something funny was said about you are the first one who ever remembered the Gadsden Purchase or something like that and it broke the ice early on. So the rest of it I remember being a pretty comfortable experience which I know is very different. My colleagues taking it at the same time, a lot of whom did not pass, found it quite traumatic. But I don't remember it that way.

Q: You mentioned getting married, could you give a little background of your wife.

WESTON: Sure. My wife and I started dating in our freshman year.

Q: She's part of the party circuit?

WESTON: She's more of a party girl than I am a party boy. At any rate, we lived in the first coed dorm in America.

Q: Good God.

WESTON: It was Case Hall at Michigan State and it was the second year it had been opened as a coed dorm. It was very different than a coed dorm is today. There was a man's wing and a woman's wing and at eleven at night huge doors would come between them. We met and started dating in our freshman year, dated on and off and also were dating other people all the time. By the time we got to our junior year we got pinned and by the time we were in our senior year we were planning on getting married and in fact got married, that was in '67, so it was kind of right after undergrad and we have been married since. We kind of grew up together in many ways I guess because she was at Michigan State.

Q: Where did her family come from?

WESTON: She grew up in Ohio but her father who worked for Chevrolet failed, got transferred to Michigan in her senior year of high school. So she took her senior year of high school in Michigan and ended up going to Michigan State, but she actually grew up here in Cleveland.

Q: What was her major?

WESTON: In undergrad it was in the home economics department, but it was retailing which is not what she does now. In fact when we got married I started at Georgetown. At that time she had graduated and had come to Washington ahead of time with a couple of her sorority sisters and was in a management program for Woodies, the old Woodward & Lothrop, in fashion merchandising. She was an assistant buyer or something in those days. Then she stopped doing that when we went back to Michigan State and worked at the university library and eventually, I guess it was after our second daughter came along, she did a masters at Catholic in library science. She's now a children's librarian in Fairfax County which is what she really wanted to do. So she changed completely from what she did as an undergrad.

Q: Well then as you were doing this, what was happening on the campus's vis-ï¿½-vis Vietnam?

WESTON: A lot of protests. I mean, Michigan State was a radicalized campus on the subject of Vietnam. There were a lot of programs supporting the South Vietnamese government and there were a lot of students who were very, very opposed to the war. The draft was a huge issue. Michigan being one of the states which traditionally provides cannon fodder for American wars was the same in Vietnam. You asked earlier about high school. A large number of my classmates from high school got drafted and killed. I find out every reunion, we go back to many of them, so it was Vietnam as a political issue and the draft as a personal issue.

Q: So what happened with you?

WESTON: Well, with me I originally was in graduate school and married by the time there was a massive draft and so I had the graduate school deferment and the deferment because I was married. So I thought I was going to get deferred. I joined the faculty in Michigan State. While I was in graduate school first they did away with married deferments, then they did away, we are talking in the period '66, '67, '68, '69 and then which was a very bad time to be in Vietnam. Then they did away with graduate deferment so I lost that and then Michigan State requesting an occupational deferment on the basis of being on the faculty and that was declined. So it looked like I was going to be drafted. At about that time I was looking into Officer Candidate School, in the Navy and all kinds of things to avoid being drafted but I got called up for a physical. Went and took my physical unfortunately passed it and so on and about the same time because I had passed both the written and the oral test an offer came to join the Foreign Service. You know, in those days you got a letter inviting you to join the A-100 class on such and such a date. It increasingly became a situation where even joining the Foreign Service was no guarantee you wouldn't be drafted anyway. In fact, two people were drafted out of my A-100 course. It looked like a way of avoiding the draft or the chances of not being drafted were higher there than any other situation I might find myself in. It was just no longer feasible to go on doing a dissertation and teaching at Michigan State because I was going to be drafted in the not too distant future. So I went ahead and accepted the invitation to join the Foreign Service. In those days the State Department would not request an occupational deferment but would send your draft board a letter which read something like "Thomas Weston has been appointed by the President to the Foreign Service of the United States, such and such a date". That went to the draft board and without me doing anything else all of a sudden I found I had an occupational deferment. I went ahead and went into Foreign Service. I got an extension to finish my PhD which I never actually used but joined the Foreign Service and stayed for some 35 years.

Q: You got in, when did you come into the Foreign Service?

WESTON: '69, January of '69.

Q: What was your A-100 course like? Sort of a composition and your feeling about the people there?

WESTON: The composition of the class you mean?

Q: Composition, the class itself.

WESTON: The class itself was more diverse than I expected because there were several women in the class including one black woman who has become a life-long friend because we ended up going to the same first post together.

Q: Who is that?

WESTON: Ruth Davis.

Q: Oh yeah. I know Ruth. Ruth worked for me in Naples.

WESTON: Oh, ok. Sure. We were in the same A-100. It was kind of racially diverse and I guess we didn't have an American Asian but there were several blacks so it was a diverse class. It was kind of heavily ivy-league as most of the foreign service remained in those days but not excessively so. I guess what I would say is it was an easy group to blend into and to relate to and we had a lot of fun in A-100, although a lot of us were in there who were opposed to the Vietnam war. Two people got drafted out of the class and in those days we had something called the CORDS (Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support) Program, you recall. I think every male in the course who was not married had a first assignment to CORDS. So, Vietnam was an issue in the class itself.

Q: How, did you have the equivalent to bull sessions or something talking about, say, talking about Vietnam?

WESTON: Yeah, I mean A-100 down, this is in the old building in Rosslyn and you were with your colleagues at lunch and you frequently spent time with them at dinners together or whatever it was. We spent a lot of time with other married couples just because that is kind of how it sorts itself out sometimes but not exclusively. So yeah, just in the course of the day and as part of the curriculum, you talked a lot about the issues of the day with Vietnam being the biggie especially since a lot of people there had just gotten out of the draft or were being drafted or going into Cords or something else. It was a big issue which we talked a lot.

Q: Did you have any feel for where you wanted to go or do?

WESTON: Yeah, I wanted to go to Africa. Remember I am coming out of graduate studies in African studies.

Q: Did the career counselors agree with you or...

WESTON: I don't remember any such thing as a career counselor in those days. Someone asked where you wanted to go and we said Africa and they said hey that's great because not that many people wanted to go to Africa. I already had French and wanting to go to Africa and having French was kind of inevitable ending up in Africa. Yeah. But it is interesting because they would announce your assignment late in A-100 and the first assignment in Africa was to Johannesburg which was very troubling. In those days we were kind of young liberals and there was apartheid and you might not want a South African visa in my passport and so on. My wife actually started studying Afrikaans on the side and we were going to go to Jo'burg but that lasted no time at all just a couple weeks that assignment. I guess it was someone had been assigned to Kinshasa and either they left the foreign service or something. It was not someone from the A-100 class it was some other officer and they said would you go to Kinshasa instead of Johannesburg. We thought that was great so of course we would go to Kinshasa instead of Johannesburg and that is how we ended up in Kinshasa.

Q: You were in Kinshasa from when to when?

WESTON: From '69-'71.

Q: What was the situation in '69 when you got there?

WESTON: Probably better than Zaire.

Q: Was it Zaire in those days?

WESTON: It was the Democratic Republic of the Congo when we arrived and it changed to Zaire a couple of months after we arrived. It was probably in terms of stability and economics probably the best it had been in the post-independence period. Remember that '69 is only five years removed from '64 where disemboweling took place in the streets of Kinshasa. From everything I know since, probably the best period since.

That being said it was still a pretty rough place, especially outside Kinshasa. Mobutu, was of course in power, had been since '65. Our policy was very supportive of Mobutu given our history with Lumumba and everything else. Mobutu was seen as the only one who could hold his place together and avoid Soviet influence and so on. He seemed the only prospect for stability and economic development even though he was obviously robbing the country blind even then. But it was an interesting place.

Brazzaville had a very leftist government then with which we did not have diplomatic relations and the border was actually closed between Congo Brazzaville and Congo Kinshasa. Angola was still Portuguese so all of the rebel movements basically went between Brazzaville and the lower Congo into Angola in what was called the Bas Congo and that was the area where we used to do a lot of camping because we got out a lot. We actually weren't supposed to. I think it was against the security regulations but we did it anyway. It was very unstable in the lower Congo because of the revolutionary movements and so on. There were still two active rebellions going on, one in Shaba and one in Cebu. Just the most tenuous sort of authority and control and stability in large parts of Congo and the army was very effective in keeping control in Kinshasa by killing people. In fact, we arrived in the summer of '69 and the summer before there had been the killings at the university, Revaning University in the Congo, by the military and students were getting a little uppity about democracy and things like that but large parts of the Congo were still very tenuous. I luckily was in a rotational assignment and my second rotation was with AID doing self-help programs so I got to spend a lot of time throughout the country.

Q: So now, was this Shaba I or Shaba II or...

WESTON: Well, it was still Katanga then, it hadn't changed to Shaba. But you're talking just a few years after the UN effort and Hammarskjï¿½ld's plane going down and all that sort of thing. The rebel activity in Katanga Shaba then was in the extreme northeast of the province and the leader of it was Kabila, the father although he is dead now. So it, I guess, was Shaba II or II ï¿½, this is long after Shamba.

Q: Now what was your job?

WESTON: I was rotational officer so the first six months I was in what was a combined Economic/Commercial Section and the second six months was with AID where I was the self-help officer. This was great because I got to do self-help projects all over the Congo. The whole second year I switched with Ruth Davis and became the only consular officer in the Congo which was quite an experience.

Q: Well, let's talk about the economic side. One of the stories of the Congo is the deterioration of the economic structure. How were things, what were we seeing as far as whether the Congo economically?

WESTON: This is only a couple years after Mobutu took power and we had a huge assistance program which even though I did self-help that was a small part of it. We were involved in these huge projects like the Inga Dam hydroelectric project. It was at a different period of American development assistance and a very different philosophy with it.

In the Econ Section, I was a junior officer first tour. I found myself doing two things. One, it was a combined econ/commercial section; there wasn't much actual commercial action. What little there was kind of came to me or a fellow named Shirl McArthur, who was supposed to be the commercial attachï¿½. And it was basically exploratory activity of consumer products, companies from the United States, that sort of thing looking for agency distributors, what have you. So, I did a lot of that which was commercial work. There was a macro-economist who reported on macro-economics for the Congo on the basis of obviously flawed statistics and I helped him with some of that, some of the writing. But, you asked the question of what was the economic situation like. I think it was a time of transition in which Mobutu was the only alternative to chaos and economic chaos but a great deal of the kind of damage to the infrastructure such as it was had been done. There was massive American assistance to restore some of that infrastructure. There was consolidation by the government of its control over the resources of the Congo, copper, uranium, diamonds. Supposedly for the good of the Congo we stayed, but we knew at the time and everyone in the embassy knew also for lining of the pockets for Mobutu, his family and his tribal colleagues.

Q: Looking at Africa now sitting in the middle of it in the heart of Africa, as compared to being a PhD candidate looking at it from Lansing, was it Lansing?

WESTON: East Lansing.

Q: What was the difference for you?

WESTON: Remember my work was almost political anthropology centered on East Africa but it was tribal government and Congo is as tribal as they come centered among tribes linguistically every other way. So, on the one hand both my wife and I loved it and what we loved about it was kind of its richness culturally that the tribalism, the language and the art and even the physical features of people were so rich in their diversity. Of course, it is such a spectacular environment physically, savannah, jungle that the place itself and the people we found extraordinarily appealing. We really wanted to be with them and really got to be on our camping trips where we bought food from the villages, so on and so forth.

On the other hand, it didn't take long to realize what was really going on and what the cost of "stability" was. Mobutu was a very brutal authoritarian autocrat and that was clear then. He was fully supported by the United States. I think some would argue for cold war reasons I think even more because he was successful. He was the only person who could hold the Congo together. He would avoid even worst chaos and there is probably some truth to that. There was some truth to that but it was a blow to my earlier romantic ideas about Africa and socialism and the role of authoritarianism both political stability and economic development in Africa. I remember we had something called the junior country team meeting which was junior officers not on the first tour but first and second tours. There were five or six of us and we would get together and talk about these things. I can remember at one of these making the point that we are living in a fantasy world. The more we, as the United States, say that this county is moving in the right direction, under Mobutu, we are creating a fantasy world which is bound to collapse some time. No one wants it to return to chaos but it is going in a direction here which cannot ultimately be good. Mobutu was building palaces all over the place. The place is utterly poor; you just couldn't believe that that kind of disparity could continue to exist. So I came up with a very different kind of assessment of what Africa wanted and its possibilities that I thought about intellectually.

Q: Was there a sense would you say among your fellow officers or was there a division between the more senior and the more junior? Often the more seniors say well this is what we have to deal with, let's deal with it and let's not fuss around worrying about this and that and the junior officers are more idealistic.

WESTON: Yes, well I think that division was there but it wasn't a sharp one. One because I think the senior officers, starting with the ambassador...

Q: Who was the ambassador?

WESTON: Sheldon Vance. You know, we're not blind to what was going on but I think, believed and supported the policy that this support for Mobutu was the only real path to avoid utter chaos. I think that sentiment was shared by a lot of the junior officers and so it wasn't a sharp division at all. If there was a division it was more in, I guess there was more hopefulness that the policy would work out in the end on the part of the senior offices and more cynicism on the part of the younger officers that it could ever work out.

Q: Well now when you moved over to self-help, what sort of things were you doing? It sounds like it was very interesting.

WESTON: Oh, it was great. It was classic self-help projects that we had in Africa in those days. There was the provision of small grants of money for projects developed by either a village or a church or some social organization. It was individual Congolese organizations getting assets from the United States to help themselves. Examples could be the provision of a water system for a village, creating pumps for water supply and assistance so that you could have water in the village and people didn't have to go all the way down to the river and carry the water back. There was another one in Kisangani about a cooperative had formed to process coffee so the self-help money went to buy a coffee roaster and package the thing. There were others involved I remember with all three universities in Congo, one in Kinshasa, one in the Katanga and one in Kigali and all of them had put in for projects. One was to build systems for external farms. Another in Kisangani was to restore the swimming pool which had been used to eliminate Belgians and others a few years ago before they put them in the pool and shot them all. It was a wide variety of projects but what was fun for me is we would get a proposal which would come in and I would go out and talk to the people and see if it was viable and make a decision. Basically, it was my decision whether or not to do it and then do follow up and monitor it in other words whether it had come to fruition or not. So that got me all over the Congo, more so than almost anyone except the ambassador, I think.

Q: How were these decisions, I mean not decision but ideas cropping up. I mean, were these self induced....

WESTON: They would be submitted. Someone would come up with an idea, say this coffee roasting thing was a group of people actually, coffee farmers in Kisangani, which was devastated then. I mean this was the old Stanleyville. They had gotten together a group of coffee farmers and decided that if they could do a little more processing of the coffee bean, they could earn more income. So, by themselves, we called it a cooperative, I think they just called it a village society or something like that and the letter came in from them saying we would like assistance in getting a coffee roaster and a packaging machine, that is basically what it was. What would happen is you would have a group proposal come in, submitted by individuals but not necessarily, and you would go and talk to them and I would go up to Kisangani and I would have four or five of these different things and I would go talk to the people and decide which seemed viable.

Q: How did you find the Congolese authorities?

WESTON: They were very easy to deal with if you were with the American embassy and even very easy to deal with when we would go off camping because we would always, I mean we were still embassy. We would have to rent a Land Rover from the UN (United Nations), so we were in a UN Land Rover the whole time but we were still from the embassy. It was at a time when you didn't touch anyone from the American embassy so they were cooperative. That was less the case when I was a consular officer for a year because some of the things I did changed drastically.

Q: Yes, let's talk about that time. What were the things you were dealing with?

WESTON: In those days I was the only consular officer in the country. There was only one consular office in the Congo and I had two attachï¿½s working for me. We serviced the needs of the then pre-consulate as well. We did consular work in Kinshasa because they were all one person posts in Katanga and Kivu. There was very little visa work. Visas were basically either diplomatic or UN for the most part, very few immigrant visas, obviously. Very little passport work. The big part of the work and the most interesting was protection and welfare of American citizens because it took so many forms. One of the more unfortunate forms was a lot of American citizens dying from infants on up. I remember one of the people in the office of the MAG (Military Assistance Group) got eaten by a crocodile, a missionary dying of snake bites, someone committing suicide. Not a lot in quantitative terms in numbers but all of them incredibility complicated because of where we were. There were no embalming facilities or anything like that and we had to form a search party to find the remains of the guy eaten by the crocodile, things like that. So there were very kind of dramatic sorts of things. I think the only what I got through a lot of them was because back all through college I worked in emergency surgery in a large hospital to earn money, so I had had a lot of experience with shattered bodies. But, it was interesting both because obviously you were trying to help people, the relatives of those who had died in most extreme circumstances. You asked the question of Congolese authorities. To deal with the death of an American citizen in the Congo was very, very difficult. You were dealing with authorities who were, if any were ever bothered to get a death certificates who was Congolese, I mean, you would have to bribe these authorities. So they were not used to the normal sort of bureaucratic practices which were required by the United States.

There were also a couple of very interesting cases of assistance. We had an American, who was really a graduate student but they called him a professor up in Kisangani at the university and he was teaching introductory political science. As part of that, he was teaching political theory and he mentioned Karl Marx. Word got out that he was teaching Marxism so the authorities wanted to arrest him and send him off to jail because you can't do that sort of thing in the Congo. I basically had to creatively deal with the situation. He really wasn't doing anything at all unusual in terms of academic freedom or anything else, but you knew you were dealing with a situation that it would only take one trip to a Congolese prison and we'd never see him again.

Q: Yes.

WESTON: So, it was one of those situations where you are creative and you bend a lot of rules and we got him out of the country before he got arrested. But, I had to talk him into it and make sure he was really aware of the danger he was in and manage it. Fortunately in those days we still had a twice a week Pan American flight.

Q: Had they taken his passport?

WESTON: They had, so we issued him another one. We bent the rule. That was the only way you could protect American citizens, sometimes from themselves. Yeah, in that particular case because lot of it was talking, he obviously didn't want to leave. He was teaching, he thought he was doing good work and did not want to realize the real danger he was in. Eventually he did but you know we were young people about the same age. I'd been pretty much in academics six months before, a year before. But it was those sorts of things; it was a great year as a consular officer. It was the only time I had directly done consular work in the Foreign Service. It was protection of American citizens in a kind of a daily basis in a way that you really saw results.

Q: Did you get any real impression of the American missionaries? And their work there?

WESTON: Yeah. The American missionaries tended to be from what I would consider to be relatively radical sects, Mennonites in particular. We had one guy who had a braided beard which went down to his knees and he basically ran by foot around the Congo disseminating bibles. We had a few like that but most of them were organized groups, Mennonite in particular. Most of them I had a very favorable impression of the work they did especially compared to European missionaries who tended to be Catholic. They related whatever development work they were doing, or educational or health care or anything else to the quality and the amount of development work in education directly to the saving of souls and if you didn't come to mass you didn't get the vaccinations which I found appalling. That was not the case with the vast majority of American missionaries. I'm not a very religious person but I guess I have some questions about the more extreme religious sects which I place Mennonites in but my experience with Mennonites and missionaries more generally, most of them were Mennonite in the Congo, was a really positive one. I think they did really good work and are really dedicated people and underwent a lot to do some very good things.

Q: Well then you left there when? In 19...

WESTON: In 1971. We had a two year tour and we left, I think it was two months early because by then we were pregnant with our first kid and there was an embassy doctor and he didn't think a first child should be born in the Congo. There was not a hospital or really adequate medical care especially for a first birth. So, in those days the airlines had a rule that you couldn't travel after seven months of pregnancy, so we left just before hitting the seventh month.

Q: Well then we'll put here at the end so we'll know where to pick it up. We'll pick this up in 1971 and you...

WESTON: Leaving the Congo.

Q: Leaving the Congo and then we'll talk about where you went and what you did after that. Great.

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Q: Today is March 11, 2005, Tom, whither and what?

WESTON: Well, we came back to Washington. This was long before we had bidding and all that sort of thing in the Foreign Service so I knew the job I was coming back to was to be a staff assistant in the Bureau of European affairs. My wife and I had both wanted to stay in Africa for another African tour, but this was long before you had that much choice in the tour and we had gotten a cable that that was my assignment. We came back and found an apartment since we had a baby due and I started work as a staff assistant in European Affairs. Thereby starting what turned out to be the rest of my career in essence, working on European Affairs instead of African affairs.

Q: You did this from when to when?

WESTON: It was initially supposed to be a one year tour as a staff assistant in European Affairs. It ended up, because of a change in the assistant secretary after I had been there a year, to be a two year tour so I didn't leave the job until '73.

Q: Who was the assistant secretary?

WESTON: The assistant secretary who brought me back was Martin Hillenbrand and then he went off in the summer of '72 to be ambassador to Germany. The secretary of state was Henry Kissinger and I think there were some differences of views on how to deal with Europeans between Martin Hillenbrand and Henry Kissinger so he went off to Germany and was replaced by Walter Stoessel. So it was Martin Hillenbrand the first year I was there and Walt Stoessel the second.

Q: First it was Hillenbrand and then Stoessel. How did you find sort of working as an assistant?

WESTON: Well, this was my first tour in the Department of State and it was a very different place then than it is now and I think staff assistant jobs were very different. In the first instance it was a paper pushing job, if you will. A lot of incoming, a lot of outgoing and that was the essence of the job. But, I always felt with Hillenbrand and then with Stoessel after him that they made a real effort to include what was in fact a very low ranking officer in the front office in deliberations, in meetings and found it to be a very open environment which I enjoyed. In fact, the association of both Martin Hillenbrand and Walt Stoessel with Germany is what sent me into German affairs at that time - a place which I had had nothing to do with my whole life. As I say, Martin Hillenbrand went off to Germany and when I went off to Germany after being staff assistant was to the job which he had had in the immediate post-war period, the consulate in Bremen. So I think that kind of inclusiveness in the front Office of European Affairs with both assistant secretaries at that time plus their strong interest and belief in the importance of the relationship with Germany to the overall relationship with Europe was what brought me into European affairs for a long, long time, specifically German affairs for roughly the next 15 years.

Q: Was it the practice at this time as a staff assistant when the assistant secretary would be on the phone with somebody that you might listen in to take notes about some follow up things and that sort of thing?

WESTON: We did that but not so much on the phone because there were very few classified phone communications in those days. It was much more in meetings that took place when we did a lot of that. But, there were some phone conversations as well but it was not necessarily the job of a staff assistant. More often than not if it were a, say a phone conversation or a meeting with a German official it would be the German desk who would come up and take the notes.

Q: Did you have problems with the senior secretaries who were also doing this because sometimes staff aides and senior secretaries have problems getting along because these are usually women who were very competent themselves and so...

WESTON: Not really, the EUR (European Bureau) front office then was the assistant secretary and three deputies. The assistant secretary and the deputies all had their own secretaries; I'd say there were some who were easier to get along with than others. I don't recall any real problem. You hear stories or problems of access and that sort of thing and secretaries acting as guardians but that was never an issue.

Q: Well looking at, I mean obviously you're in what amounts to, as far as policy goes, a peripheral job. At the same time you're the fly on the wall. What were sort of the major concerns that you saw that the assistant secretary was being involved in?

WESTON: This was the early '70s. There was a whole complex of issues that were related to I'd call "the expanding East-West relationship". These were the days when we had all the initial thinking done on arms control agreements, the SALT (Strategic Arms limitation Treaty) Agreements, on nuclear weapons, MBFR (Mutual Balance Forced Reductions), early stages of thinking of CSCE (Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe) which ultimately culminated in the Final Act several years later. So there was this whole complex of kind of multilateral, if you will, negotiations and issues which were East-West in content but all in one way or another seemed to have at their center Germany. Part of the reason for that is the attempt at that time to find a more stable, if you will, relationship East-West dealing with Germany. This was also the time of negotiations on the Quadripartite Agreement on Berlin, which very much did stabilize what was otherwise a very unstable situation in divided Germany and divided Berlin. So, yeah, I was a fly on the wall, there's no question about that but it was a fly on the wall at a very dynamic time in U.S.- West European relations, U.S.-German relations and East-West relations more broadly. All of which were in the Bureau of European Affairs.

Q: Who is the Chancellor in Germany at the time?

WESTON: At that time Willy Brandt.

Q: Were you seeing concern on our side from your perspective of Brandt and his "Ost Politik" (East Politics) opening up maybe giving away the store, turning Germany neutral for trying to unite Germany or anything like that?

WESTON: By the time I was there, I think we were pretty much over that period. There was a long period of distrust of Brandt for all kinds of reasons including his Ost Politik. By that time, I think we had really moved beyond that and saw Ost Politik as very much embedded in what we were trying to do. The United States was trying to do more broadly in East-West relations. As I say, this whole complex of arms control negotiations, both on nuclear weapons and on conventional as well as negotiations on the other issues which were important in the East-West relationship, CSCE in particular, but also as a regularization and stabilization of the situation in divided Germany and divided Berlin. I think we were past, by the time I got there, that questioning period about Ost Politik. In fact, it was only a couple years after that when I was in Germany when we moved ourselves after the quadripartite agreement towards recognition of the GDR (German Democratic Republic).

Q: How about the relationship with France? This has always been a touchy relationship; I think it was Secretary of State Colin Powell who said, "The United States and France have been in marriage therapy for over two hundred years." Did you see any elements of the prickly relationship between the two?

WESTON: Because of the area that even as a staff assistant, because I was working for Martin Hillenbrand and then Walter Stoessel, I was working in mainly this complex of East-West relations which very much had its center in Germany. I think the relationship with France was very much viewed through a lens of cooperation on all of these issues with France in dealing with Germany. Remember we were still jointly occupying Berlin with the French and the British. I guess the individuals involved in the Bureau of European Affairs, as opposed to more broadly in the American government, did not come to dealing with France with the preconceived notion that they were particularly difficult to deal with. They were people who were very experienced in dealing with the French over the years and very experienced in dealing with the French on East-West issues which were the big issues and on Germany. I think if there were any prickliness it was related to French skepticism about whether the development of East-West relations could ultimately lead to a changed situation as it did with the Quadripartite Agreement and would ultimately lead to the unification of Germany as a good idea with the French traditionally taking the view that Germany was a lot better divided. So that was the only area of prickliness. I studied in France, I had studied France itself a great deal in graduate school and I think I would have to identify myself as probably Francophilic to a fault so maybe I didn't see some tensions which were otherwise there. I think one other point is important. At that point in time, the European Union wasn't the European Union; it was the European Community's Coal and Steel Community. The EC (European Community) and EURATOM (European Atom Energy Community) was not seen by France or anyone else in the way it later came to be at least partially seen as an alternative pole to the United States, alternative power pole. It was very much seen as a reconciliative mechanism in Europe and a path towards recovery and prosperity in Europe. So that became a very difficult issue in the U.S.-French relationship. As I went through my career in European affairs, perceptions were very different in the early '70s.

Q: With Germany, we all say that Germany is central...but one never has a feeling particularly during this, well, for most of the time that many of us have served in the foreign service during the '50s and '60s, '70s and '80s and on. You don't get much of a feel for German policy. I mean, they seem to be a willing or silent partner or, you don't have the feel of Germany exerting itself. Maybe this was offhand the interpretation is this is a result of World War II and trying not to get out a head. What about Germany?

WESTON: Well, I think at that particular time, the situation was changing. I think it is true that there was a very measured sort of articulation of German policy in the post-war period; I mean it was occupied for a long part. Berlin continued to be occupied, the German capital, until very late in the period we are talking about. Germany itself was divided and had lost as a result of the war all kinds of territories. So there was a restrained German policy in part as a result of the war and that policy included very stark articulation of German interest in East-West issues. I don't know if you remember, but if there was anything typical of German policy before the period of Ost Politik with Brandt, it was almost a refusal to deal with the issue. Remember the Hallstein Doctrine named after a German foreign minister.

Q: I wouldn't recognize any...

WESTON: The Hallstein Doctrine was that West Germany would have no diplomatic relations with any nation that officially recognized East Germany. So there was a real change in German policy as part of Ost Politik. I think it was part of a bigger change which was happening generationally in Germany. This was the change from those who had brought about the war, the Third Reich in the war, been defeated in it, and lived through the occupation of post-war Germany. At this particular time, the late '60s, early 70s, it would have been hard to find a German official who had not come of age during the Third Reich or during the post-war period. What started to happen of course in the '70s is you started to get younger German officials who were of a different generation. Brandt, of course, was kind of a pivotal figure here because of his personal history having obviously come of age during the Third Reich but in exile and returning as a political figure to a defeated and occupied Germany including as mayor of one part of a divided capital. He was, because of his personal history, a pivotal figure in changing from a very restrained defeated Germany, if you will, highly dependent on the West, who won with a bit more self confidence and assertiveness. I think it was that part of his personal history which lead to his ability to bring Germany to the point where it was able to pursue Ost Politik.

Q: Now, did the German ambassador, was he sort of a frequent visitor?

WESTON: In the Bureau of European Affairs? No more frequent than the British or the French, I would say. An awful lot of business was done in those days through a different kind of mechanism than the traditional diplomatic bilateral mechanism. That was the so-called quad, an institution developed to manage Berlin at least among the Western powers. The quad, including the United Kingdom, France, the United States and the Federal Republic, evolved into a mechanism for coordinating wider policies than before in particular East-West policies. Even then an awful lot of our U.S. diplomacy was basically multilateral diplomacy in nature through the quad extensively about Berlin but of course it was about far more that.

Q: How, when you arrived there in '71, how was the hand of Henry Kissinger? Was he there then?

WESTON: He wasn't. The Secretary of State was Rogers then, William Rogers.

Q: I mean was there?

WESTON: He wasn't at State then.

Q: One has the feeling that Rogers was not a very strong Secretary, completely overshadowed, bypassed by Kissinger and really Rogers didn't care particularly. Did you get any, was this...

WESTON: Yes, that was certainly the common assessment around the State Department.

Q: Was it a matter of frustration? Or did you feel you...

WESTON: I don't know that I saw Secretary Rogers that frequently. It would be the sort of thing, he was a very gracious man who would come down to the office and shake hands, a kind of a manager by talking to the troops all the time. We did see him but there was never any indication of any frustration or anything with his role but there wouldn't necessarily be in that context. I think what I saw was some frustration on the part of the assistant secretary's role in terms of relationships and diplomacy being conducted out of the White House in particular with the then Soviet Union. Not necessarily always being coordinated the way the State Department would always think it should be coordinated and using the mechanisms which were available to make sure that anything we were doing with the Soviet Union was compatible with the policies of our allies.

Q: Were you ever privy to people saying "Goddamit the NSC (National Security Council) has gone off in this direction and they didn't tell us or something like that?

WESTON: Yes, remember this is the time of Nixon to China and everything else. There was a lot of diplomacy being exercised out of the NSC, well, being exercised by Kissinger to be fair about it rather than the NSC itself. What I saw, remember I was in the bureau of European affairs, was concern about relationships with the Soviet Union not being properly coordinated with those of our allies.

Q: But you were there doing that until '73.

WESTON: Yes.

Q: What happened in '73?

WESTON: Well, what happened is I was supposed to change jobs in '72, it was supposed to be a one year assignment. Our assumption was we would go on to another job in the State Department but the assistant secretary changed and I was asked to stay on through transition. You know, it was one of these things, why change everything at the same time and by then we had a very young child and so on and we were buying our first house so that was fine. So I stayed on for another year.

That second year was basically preparing for the ongoing assignment which by then was pretty much settled would be Germany. I was originally assigned and this was in large part Martin Hillenbrand's doing, to go out to the embassy in Bonn as the number two officer in what we called political internal. So, it is a political officer doing domestic politics of Germany. But, what happened in between in those days is, let's see: I had my first tour in Kinshasa which was a rotational tour but it was carried on the books as an economic tour and I'd come in as a political officer into the Foreign Service but my first tour in Kinshasa was an economic tour. In those days selection boards met and you were basically promoted in what we now call cones. I don't think they were called cones then but given that I had already been assigned to be this political job in Bonn which was a terrific job for a second tour, obviously. But the boards met and they promoted me in the economic area, not the political, which in those days meant that if I were going to take the job, I could not take the political job and take the promotion in the economic area. So I sought advice of people like Martin Hillenbrand and he said, "In the foreign service you always take the promotion". So I changed to become an economic officer which required a change in the assignment. So there was some scrambling and once again Martin Hillenbrand was very much involved and by then ambassador in Bonn. An economic job which was open was the Consul in Bremen which was the job Hillenbrand had in the immediate post-war period. So it was kind of, he was obviously somewhat of a mentor to me and so he thought this would be a very good thing to take the promotion and take this job. It would be in Germany doing things which he felt were very important so that is what I decided to do.

In the summer of '73, well actually I was not a staff assistant for the whole two year period. I had never studied German. I had French and some Spanish but no German. I was a staff aide for the year with Martin Hillenbrand and then about six-months for the transition with Walt Stoessel and then I went into German language training. Then we went off summer of '73 to Bremen.

Q: Was there an economic training course at that point?

WESTON: There was but it was really minimal. It was a week long, I think.

Q: Was it like six months?

WESTON: No, no not at all. It wasn't even economics, it was economic-commercial something like that. It was very cursory, very cursory.

Q: So you went to Bremen; you were there from when to when?

WESTON: From '73-'76, a three year tour. I went there as the economic/commercial officer, this is before we had a foreign commercial office. Bremen was the smallest American post in Germany. The fact was you had Consulates in Frankfurt and Munich which were larger than most embassies. Bremen had a principle officer, the number two which was the job I was in, the economic officer, a communicator and a consular officer and then a couple other agency officers, someone from military security, a Coast Guard officer because of ship building and things like that and then a series of FSNs (Foreign Service Nationals) doing public diplomacy, political and things like that. In essence it was a very small post and you did probably every part of the job of the post at one time or another. A part of the time I was in Bremen, I was the acting principal officer, the acting consul general because it was such a small post. For instance, when I arrived I was immediately the acting principal officer because there wasn't one right then. But, you were basically supervising the one political FSN, so you were doing political work all the time, obviously doing a lot of representation along with the economic and commercial work. There was only one consular officer so when the consular officer wasn't there you were doing consular work as well. Also, when the communicator wasn't there you were decoding your cables the old way with the, I don't know if you remember those tapes we used to have to deal with to decode cables and things. So you did all kinds of things.

Q: Where did Bremen fit into the bigger German picture?

WESTON: Yeah. It was kind of an anomaly that we even had a consulate there. In fact, the consulate was closed I guess it was two years after I left. Bremer and Bremerhaven were an American enclave in the occupation period. All of Northern Germany was British occupation zone. But the United States decided it needed a sea port and that turned out to be Bremen and Bremerhaven and became an American enclave, occupied by the United States and then as you know, you had bizonians, the development of the Federal Republic. Bremen became a separate state from the larger area in the north and because of the long American connection in the post-war period what had in fact been the office of the occupation authority became a consulate there. On the surface of it, it would be very hard to justify and became very hard to justify continuing to have a consulate there. You had another one in Hamburg less than an hour away, 45 minutes away and one in Dï¿½sseldorf, about and hour and 50 minutes away. So it was a historical anomaly. That being said, it was a terrific job first because it was so small so you did everything. Secondly, unlike the other American diplomatic or consular establishments in Germany there was literally no American community so in addition to doing all aspects of diplomatic and consular work you were in a completely German environment very unlike the situation in a Munich, or a Frankfurt or a Stuttgart or anywhere else which made it much more interesting; it made it a little more difficult in a family sense. For instance, my oldest daughter who was just over a year old when we moved to Bremen ended up with her first language being German rather than English just because it was such a completely German environment. But from a work point of view and from the point of view of having fun in what you do it was absolutely terrific. But it was a bit of an anomaly, you know, and that comes out of the post-war period.

Q: What is the area of Bremen, was it a Land by that time?

WESTON: Yes, it was Land by then.

Q: Where did Bremen fit in the political spectrum?

WESTON: Very left. It always had an SPD (Social Democrats Party) government. At the time I was there you had the start of what was then called the Burger Initiative and these grass roots movements which eventually grew into the Green Party of Germany, so very left. It had a new university which was the most radicalized university in the Federal Republic. The consular district included half of Lower Saxony as well, a kind of the western half of Lower Saxony which was a very different area. It was quite conservative, had a CDU (Christian Democratic Union) government and so on and so forth. But included in the consular district was Oldenburg, which was the center of the Baader Meinhof gang, so we had very radicalized, even violent, politics as well as very leftist politics and very green politics all going on at once.

Q: Well now, we were still involved, but it was diminishing involvement in Vietnam, did this affect you?

WESTON: We had a demonstration against the consulate on about a weekly basis. Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. Yes, it was very much an issue.

Q: How did you deal with these radicals?

WESTON: I was there as an economic/commercial officer but you did just as much political work. I spent a lot of time with political officials in the SPD (Social Democratic Party of Germany). The SPD in Bremen was pretty much split between something the Germans called the Kanalarbeite (Canal Workers) branch of the party, which is kind of the traditional trade unionists part of the Social Democratic Party in Germany and the actual mayor or governor of the Land was called Mayor Burgermeister. He was from that wing of the party but there was the other wing which was the much more socialist international, much more ideological part of the party. There was about a 50-50 split I would say among the governing officials and party officials within Bremen. I spent a lot of time with both of them kind of uniformly against the Vietnam war, but you went out there and you tried to explain why. I have to say from my previous history I was not enamored with the war either but in the foreign service we do what we can to gain support for U.S. policy. That meant in Bremen trying to work with what was overwhelmingly the strongest political factor which was the SPD. I did try and also did things with academic institutions. That was very difficult at Bremen University. It was probably the most radicalized campus in the Federal Republic. Had difficulties in even having them invite you to meet with students. But, there were other academic institutions where I think we had a little more luck. So, basically you were fighting a losing battle for public opinion obviously on the Vietnam war, if you were an American diplomat in Germany at that time, but you did what you could to explain the policy.

Q: You were there during the collapse of the South Vietnamese government in '75. Did that have much effect or end the issue?

WESTON: I wouldn't say it ended the issue. Remember this was probably the farthest left and most radicalized part of Germany. It didn't go away overnight by any means. There was a great deal of distrust of U.S. motives. Another thing happened which was the conflict in the Middle East. We were trying to establish a brigade in Northern Germany. This all relates to new strategies of dealing with what was then viewed as the Soviet threat and there was insufficient infantry in the northern plans of Germany. At any rate, there was a move to establish an American brigade in Bremen which meant new deployments, new bases. Obviously, very difficult to do politically in this environment though ultimately successful. At the same time we had a great deal of controversy because in the conflict which was going on in the Middle East there was the resupply of Israelis from U.S. stocks which were actually located in Bremerhaven.

Q: You're talking about the October War in '73?

WESTON: Right, exactly. So you had a situation in which in addition to the Vietnam problem there was a great deal of concern politically in Bremen and in Germany more broadly about U.S. using its bases, if you will, and its spies in Germany to support what was seen by many Germans as questionable actions on the part of Israel and it was right there in Bremerhaven. This at a time when we were trying to establish new facilities, new dispositions of U.S. forces in order to defend Germany against the Soviet Union. So, it was a very complex time politically to have all these things playing together. You started out asking about Vietnam. I think that the interaction of all of these things made it a challenge. I was there talking to the government of Land Bremen about where can we get some land to build a U.S. base which might ultimately be used to supply actions in which Germans didn't agree, it made a really fun and challenging time to be doing this kind of diplomacy.

Q: What about...

WESTON: Especially since I was there as an economic/commercial officer.

Q: We'll come to the economic/commercial business in a second but continuing on the political thing you had far leftist elements in the Land then, how did they look at the Soviet Union because they weren't that far away from the 1968 attack on Czechoslovakia which squelched democracy there thoroughly. How did that play?

WESTON: Well, I don't think you had a great deal of love for the Soviet Union. There was a tremendous amount of support for "dï¿½tentist" type policies rather than confrontational policies with the Soviet Union that is of the Brandt Ost Politik type of policy. By then, of course, we had changed chancellors. I don't remember if you remember the history of the period we had this...

Q: You were saying by this time the Brandt government had been brought down by what sort of scandal?

WESTON: It was a spy scandal. A key advisor was found to be a Stasi (East German Intelligence Agent) so the government was brought down and Brandt was replaced as Chancellor by Helmut Schmidt, another north German incidentally. Brandt was from Lï¿½beck and Schmidt was from Hamburg.

Q: What was the commercial/economic activity there?

WESTON: Well, there were two big aspects of it. On the economic side there was substantial economic reporting in particular related to commodities. In those days we did a lot more economic reporting than we do now. Bremen was a trading center but it was very much a trading center of all kinds of agriculture commodities. For instance, the Bremen Bombulbuser (the Cotton Exchange) was the main center for trading fiber for all of Europe. We had a lot of responsibilities on commodities, reporting on agricultural products like cotton, tobacco, fresh fruits and vegetables, coffee, all kinds of things like that. There was a lot of reporting on the shipping industry and the ship building industry, so sectoral industrial reporting. That was the economic side; we did not do really macro-economic reporting out of Bremen, obviously.

On the commercial side, this was before the development of the Foreign Commercial Service. So commercial diplomacy was very much done by the Foreign Service and we had an active commercial program when I arrived there. It became even more active because during the time I was there we developed a kind of a systematic approach to performing commercial diplomacy in Germany which would have benefits at the margin. There was a new approach to commercial diplomacy then in Europe and it was, look, corporations like General Motors don't need the United States diplomatic service to pursue their commercial interests. Those who do need it are small and medium sized companies both in terms of trading and investment. So there was a real change to emphasize commercial diplomacy on such things as the ADS (Agency Distributor System), the World Trade Directory Reports (WTDRs), so all of these various programs of the Department of Commerce which were implemented by the foreign service for trade and investment by small and medium sized enterprises. We did this in Germany as a whole, but I think we did more of it in northern Germany than anywhere else just because we had some very talented people to do it in our FSNs (Foreign Service Nationals). We organized something called "sprachttage" (speaking days). These were basically days in which a team would go out somewhere in the consular district and set up a whole series of meetings ahead of time with German businesses of all kinds, industrial, agricultural, service industries, whatever, and try and foster these various instruments of commercial diplomacy. You would go out and spend a day in a small sized city in northern Germany. You would spend the whole day in meeting after meeting with businessmen trying to establish links in ADS in doing WTDRs on the firms that sort of things. This is before there was a Foreign Commercial Service. All of this has been taken over by the Foreign Commercial Service now.

Q: Did you find yourself colliding with the consulate general in Hamburg or others?

WESTON: No, we were both consulates general and we split up Lower Saxony between us and we had quite a cooperative relationship. I mean I wasn't the principal officer most of the time.

Q: Who was it then?

WESTON: A woman named Frances Usenik. There were three different principal officers when I was there but for the vast majority of time it was Frances Usenik

Q: I know Frances, we served together.

WESTON: She was a terrific lady. So that was about the time when she adopted the two kids.

Q: Two kids. They were Polish kids.

WESTON: Right, exactly. So Frances was the principal officer most of the time. When I first arrived there I was the acting principal officer and there was a fellow named Ken Sullivan who was there for about a month. Frances arrived and as I was leaving Frances had left the foreign service and just as I was leaving Irv Schiffman arrived, so we overlapped for a couple of weeks, almost a month. So it was Frances most of the time. At any rate, Frances was very involved in all of these same things. I mean when we'd go out, I was talking about these "sprachttage" and commercial diplomacy, she would go out and she'd host a reception as the consul general in the chamber of commerce or something and she would participate actively in these discussions so it was all very cooperative. On the other hand, you asked about consulate general Hamburg because we split Lower Saxony in terms of consular districts. It was very easy to split when you were doing consular affairs; it wasn't so easy to split when you were doing economic affairs in particular political because the capital of Lower Saxony was in Hanover which was in Hamburg's consular district yet half of the land was in Bremen's but it worked very well. I went to Hanover frequently but doing political work in Lower Saxony in Hanover which was Hamburg's consular district . We worked very cooperatively, there really wasn't a rivalry.

Q: What about Bremerhaven as a port? I came in on a troop ship back in '53; I came into Bremerhaven in the bowels of the troop ship. Was that much of a care and feeding of seamen and shipping and much of a problem for you all?

WESTON: No, but not only Bremerhaven it's Bremen because the main container port was in Bremen. In those days Bremer/Bremerhaven were still one of the main ports in Europe mainly because of container shipping but because it was container shipping you're talking about very small crews. We had and this was really the consular section, we had your crew list visas, the normal sorts of things that you do with seamen and shipping but it was probably less than you would have expected because the nature of shipping in trade through Bremer/Bremerhaven which was highly containerized by that time. You're not talking about these freighters with large crews and so on. We still had also a certain amount though of kind of cruise tourists shipping because Norddeutsche Lloyd was a Bremen company which was one of the you know one of the last great German transport companies.

Q: Well, then '76 where did you go?

WESTON: '76 we left Bremen and were assigned back to Washington initially because remember I was an economic officer then. I get back to being a political officer eventually but we went back to the Department of State and I went to be a trade officer in EB (Economic Bureau) in the Office of Trade in a sub-office called TA (Trade Agreements) which was basically the office which did trade relations with developed countries, EU (European Union), Japan, Canada and so on.

Q: You did that from what '76 to?

WESTON: Actually, I was only there for about a year and I will tell you why. At that time almost all of the office's activity was geared to the Tokyo Round of trade negotiations. I think we were three officers maybe and a kind of sub-director of the office. Most of the work of the office revolved around two things. One was preparing for Uruguay Round trade negotiations which is an analytical job in many ways which we did in concert with special trade representatives, Department of Commerce and so on. So, preparing for Uruguay, not Uruguay, Tokyo Round, I did Uruguay round later out of Brussels, but Tokyo Round of trade negotiations.

The second big element was bilateral trade issues with developed countries and there I was doing a tremendous amount of work on Canada. These were the early days of something called the auto path with Canada which was the first formal agreement to completely integrate an industry across the border. The industry, that is the companies, the labor unions and everything else, so it was an innovative thing which ultimately lead to a free trade agreement with Canada and ultimately to NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement). There were some other trade agreements with Australia and some other things unrelated to the Tokyo Round but that was secondary.

The third thing was working to build support within the United States for Tokyo Round, in particular to obtaining the authority which has been a constant battle for the executive branch whenever we've had a multilateral trade negotiation. It's part of that last item I found myself doing a lot of work developing materials to support positive views on the part of individual congressman to vote for Fast-Track Negotiating (FTN) authority. That developed into a lot of research why fast track authority and a trade agreement is good for congressman x's district in the middle of North Dakota or whatever. This was just part of my regular job so I didn't think that much about it. What happened is that I apparently was successful at it, because word got back to a fellow named Doug Bennett, who was the assistant secretary for congressional relations that there was this guy in EB who was doing all this work on what in essence was congressional relations on a very difficult topic which was pertaining to fast-track authority. One day I got a call from Doug. Remember, I'm still a pretty junior officer sitting in EB with my adding machine or whatever we did in EB in those days and he asked me if I would come around and talk to him, which I did. He was recruiting me to be what I think is still called an LMO (Legislative Management Officer) in H (Congressional Relations) on the basis of this work I had done to develop support on the part of individual congressmen for voting for fast-track authority. So, he put this forward, it sounded interesting, I liked the idea. I had always liked working with the congress. So after I think it was only after a year in EB, I moved over to H as the Legislative Management Officer and my portfolio was Europe, EUR, because I was also just coming from Germany and I had a functional assignment which was OES (Oceans and Environmental Studies) at the same time. So I spent the next I guess it was two years in Congressional Relations.

Q: I assume that was probably '70...

WESTON: '77, '78.

Q: '77, '78.

WESTON: '77, '78 I think it may have gone into '79. Cyprus was one of the things I was really involved with in '78. There was the campaign by the administration, Jimmy Carter was president then, to lift the arms embargo on Turkey. This had been imposed after the Turkish actions in '74 in Cyprus. Carter's effort was ultimately successful. We won by four votes in the Senate but it was then that I got my first introduction to the Cyprus problem. Because I was doing European affairs I was very much involved with the Bureau of European Affairs again and the assistant secretary then was a fellow named George Vest. We got along very well. I think he liked what I was going in H so all of a sudden an opening came up as the officer in charge of Federal Republic Affairs. He asked me if I would do that so I left H and became the officer in charge of Federal Republic Affairs in the Bureau of European Affairs. I did that for two years and then moved up to be the deputy director in the Office of Central European Affairs which then added Austria and Switzerland to Germany. I kept getting recruited into these other jobs so we ended up being in the State Department for, how many years would it have been, from '76 until we didn't go out again until '83 when we went to Bonn, so seven years, which was an exceptionally long time to be back in the State Department.

Q: All the time you were in H, how did you find dealing with congress? Did you have hands on experience of dealing with them?

WESTON: Oh yeah, all the time. I mean it was absolutely great. I spent my day basically on the Hill in meeting after meeting with members and staff because I was doing both Europe and OES (Office of Environmental science), most of the time it was Europe frankly. But the OES part fully was interesting because it got you involved with a lot of committees which you normally wouldn't, fisheries, committees like that which you wouldn't normally do from the State Department. The job was dealing with members and staff on the Hill all of the time.

Q: Did you run across the problem, I've often heard of those who are in congress and all saying the State Department was not very good in responding to requests and all that. Did you have any problems?

WESTON: No, I think this was a very different time in H. Doug Bennett was assistant secretary and he had a deputy named Brian Atwood. Doug was a pure political appointee. Brian had been a foreign service officer who then left the foreign service early on and went to work for Stu Symington and then returned as a political appointee to the State Department. But both of them were adamant on the need to be responsive to the congress and see them for what they were and to spend a lot of time with them. So, I won't say that there weren't complaints that the State Department was unresponsive but they would tend to be complaints about a congressman trying to get a visa for someone and the State Department just not being willing to issue it for very valid reasons, not an unresponsiveness in not responding to an inquiry or to set up a briefing or to organize a CODEL (Congressional Delegation) or whatever it might be.

Q: Were you in the position of talking to congressional staffers and congressmen and then going back and trying to persuade whoever was in charge of a particular aspect that they were interested in to respond to the congressmen? In other words, were you sort of the in between person trying to get the information back and forth?

WESTON: Yeah, and we had all kinds of mechanisms for doing this. I mean...

Q: To press you within three days?

WESTON: In those days every night from H we sent to the Secretary and the other department principals something we called legislative memorandum, or something like that. This was every day literally, which was a summary on activities on the Hill, our conversations that had taken place, a request that had come in, whatever that needed action so there were formal mechanisms to do this. Because of the area I was working in I frequently found myself going across the hall and talking directly to Matt Nimitz who was then the counselor of the Department say on the Cyprus or the Turkey issue, or with the deputy secretary who was then Warren Christopher on some aspect. It was very direct. I would have been in a meeting with Scoop Jackson or something and he had said his view was thus and so and then you would debrief that and look for ways of accommodating those views. It was very hands on in Congressional Relations. I think quite different than what I understand congressional relations evolved into in later administrations.

Q: What was your impression of the staffs of the various committees and of the members of congress?

WESTON: Well it would be hard to say. There were some people who were absolutely excellent, outstanding and would have been in any line of government work and there were some folks who weren't so good. I mean, it was like any other institution. I found myself, because I was doing European affairs most of the time spending a great deal of time with the Sub-Committee on Europe and the Middle East of the House International Relations Committee and the Sub-Committee on Europe of Senate Foreign Relations Committee. I mean you did a lot of others but that was where you spent a lot of time in those days. The chairman of the sub-committee was Lee Hamilton who remains a friend to this day. I first got to know him back then and he is one of the finest congressmen America ever produced as far as I am concerned and he had a staff which matched that. On the Senate side, the chairman sub-committee was Joe Biden, a very different person politically, but excellent on the substance and with an exceptionally strong staff. So, I guess my evaluation goes with whom I worked most closely was exceptionally positive both in terms of members and staff. When you got into certain other areas both on those committees and certainly other committees and with a leadership I would be more critical of both some members and staff so I mean it is uneven, as it is in any institution.

Q: Did you get involved, it was your particular area, you wouldn't have gotten overly involved with the human rights aspect, would you?

WESTON: Well, remember Europe included Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, so yeah, these were the days of Jackson-Vanik. I can remember spending a lot of time with both Scoop Jackson and Charlie Vanik talking about such things as the Jackson-Vanik Amendment. There was an involvement in human rights. I would not say, and this was the Carter administration, as well. Human rights per se were not my portfolio; remember that's when the first Human Rights Bureau was established under...

Q: Patt Derian.

WESTON: Patt Derian and so on, but there were aspects obviously which affected Europe.

Q: What about with Jackson and Vanik, was the State Department uncomfortable with their amendment?

WESTON: Well, it depends on the part of the State Department you are talking about. I think there were a lot of people, traditional free traders if you will, would say in EB, were very uncomfortable with association with what was in essence political involvement in what was a trade matter. So, I think there was some real discomfort from that sector. Obviously it would have been a very different sort of approach if you were talking about the human rights people and to some extent those in the Bureau of European Affairs who when you start to look for diplomatic instruments which affect the behavior of a country like the Soviet Union. In those days they were few and far between so this presented an instrument to achieve a goal. So, I think that I would have to say there were different views within the State Department.

Q: Were you by this time, actually your economic credentials were pretty weak, won't they?

WESTON: Yes, I think they were always pretty weak. If you look at my graduate school or anything else, I'm a political scientist not an economist. But it was the quirkiness of the system as to how this came about. In H, I was, of course, doing I would say mainly political work although Jackson-Vanik is arguably economic as well; it has a high political component as well. As I said, I went from there to the German desk where I was the officer in charge and there were two other officers, one doing political-military and one doing economic and I was doing namely the political so sometime in there I returned to the political cone. I can't remember the exact date but I was obviously doing political work.

Q: Well then when you took over the German desk, this is what, about '81 or so?

WESTON: No, let me think a minute, I think '80, because I did it for two years and then I did one year as the deputy director of Central European Affairs and then went to Bonn so it would have been '80.

Q: Well in '80, what were the, well by this time it was still the Carter administration.

WESTON: Brought all these changes.

Q: Were you picking up any of the consequences of the lack of warmth to put it mildly between Carter and Schmidt?

WESTON: Absolutely. On the German desk, I had been there six months or something, and we had had an official visit from Helmut Schmidt to the United States. Obviously the desk officer was deeply involved in all aspects in such a visit but the visit started out with the meeting between the president and the chancellor in which Zbig Brzezinski participated and basically lectured. Brzezinski, not the president, lectured Helmut Schmidt who was not given very kindly to being lectured to about the responsibilities of Germany for its past and in particular vis-ï¿½-vis Poland and consequently the rest of Eastern Europe and so on. So the visit did not start on a very good footing. Those were still the days where the U.S.-German relationship especially from the German perspective was the crucial relationship that Germany had; less so from the American, but still to some extent from the American perspective as well. There was plenty of evidence of the effect of personalities on the overall relationship between two major countries.

Q: Were you seen, now granted you had only one small corner of Germany when you were in Bremen, but how did you view sort of the political landscape of Germany when you got there in 1980 on the desk particularly with the Green Party developing and other things. What were you seeing?

WESTON: I think I was lucky because remember I had been three years in Bremen. That was where the initial beginnings of the Greens can be traced to Northern Germany specifically Bremen with what was then called "Burger Initutiven." These were environmental movements by citizens initially centered on opposition to nuclear power, not even nuclear weapons but nuclear power. So, I came out of having had direct experience with the beginning with the Green Party and very extensive experience with both elements of the Social Democratic Party (SPD) both what was called the "Kanalarbeitet", the old trade unionists which you would have to say Schmidt was a member plus the more ideological way. Even though I was in a very small place in Germany I think I was seen as having been very enmeshed in Germany and clearly seen in those days an up and coming member of the German Club. There was this combination of experience with all elements of the Social Democratic Party as well as the Greens who were the forces in German politics then which I think gave me a lot of credibility as the desk officer. Now where I had had far less experience was with the conservative side of the German political spectrum although I had had some because of having dealt with the politics of Lower Saxony which was CDU (Christian Democratic Union) governed. Where I had almost no experience was with the Bavarians and the CSU (Christian Social Union). Remember there was a fellow named Franz Josef Strauss, he was kind of a towering figure in German life.

Q: For a long time. During this time you were on the desk, how did we view the Green Party?

WESTON: Well, I think from how did we the United States feel?

Q: Yes, I mean the State Department.

WESTON: I think those who really watched it and were involved with it and actually talked to Greens viewed it as a kind of expression of the new, in the sense of the next generation of German politics. German politics as more assertive of specifically German interests shedding some of the restraints imposed by the German defeat in the war and so on and the Greens kind of exemplified that. Now there were complicating factors from the point of U.S. interests with the Greens. First of all, the greens really started in terms of opposition to things nuclear, initially nuclear power but obviously that included nuclear weapons which was a real problem for the United States obviously. In particular because late in that period by the time '82 rolled around we were deeply enmeshed in the so-called Dual Track decision on intermediate range nuclear weapons. This involved the deployment of large numbers of new nuclear weapons to Germany which was of course thoroughly opposed by the Greens as well as probably the majority of the German population. I think the Greens were seen as kind of a new Germany. More assertive, probably, obviously more difficult to deal with because you would be dealing with them more as with a traditional political system rather than as a defeated enemy that you still occupied their capital which we still did then. But more broadly in the State Department I would say they were viewed as a problem because of their opposition to a lot of American policies.

Q: It was Petra Kelly at that point.

WESTON: Petra Kelly and Gert Bastian both of whom killed themselves while I was in Bonn and I knew them both obviously, early founders.

Q: I can't remember but this was the time when you were dealing with Germany of the SS-20s and the response to it was it...

WESTON: You know that is the INF (Intermediate Nuclear Forces), the Dual-Track decision.

Q: What was the feeling about, I mean, it looked like the Soviets were trying to neutralize Germany by introducing the SS-20s.

WESTON: Well, or Europe more broadly. I actually myself believe that is exactly what they were trying to do. They were deploying weapons which could hit Europe but not the United States. They were trying to put a wedge between the United States and its allies in Europe, trying to decrease the credibility of the American nuclear guarantee.

Q: Were you involved at your level in working to get the Germans to accept the Pershing missiles...

WESTON: Very much so.

Q: The cruise missile, in order to as a counter to the SS-20s was the idea of...

WESTON: Absolutely, this started before I went to the desk. I started to do that actually when I was in H doing the European account which is when we were trying to get the negotiations going, the second track of the Dual Track decision. That either we eliminated all these weapons, the SS-20s or the U.S. would deploy or NATO would deploy these weapons. So, it actually started in H with all of the period I was in the German desk and then in '83 I went to Bonn as the deputy political counselor. I did a lot of things in Bonn. I headed what we called the Security Working Group. This was the actual working group with the German government diplomatically and militarily which did the planning for the actual deployments of both P2s and ground-launch cruise missiles in Germany. At the same time, I was doing political work, if you well, with members of the Bundestag (National Parliament of the Federal Republic of Germany) trying to convince them of U.S. sincerity in trying to reach a negotiated solution to this problem. I told them that the only way we would reach a negotiated solution was by making clear we would carry through with the deployment which was very much opposed in Germany. Ultimately, the strategy was successful, of course, but I was involved in both the deployment part of it and the negotiations part. Not the negotiations directly but basically the diplomacy associated with convincing Germans that we were sincere in our wish for a diplomatic solution. From the time I was in H through all the time I was on the German desk and then in Bonn itself.

Q: Well, when did Kohl come in?

WESTON: Let's see, I'd have to look up the actual year that that happened. I would say it was when I was in Bonn so I want to say '84.

Q: But anyway, so Schmidt was there during the...

WESTON: Yeah, this was Schmidt most of the time, well not most of the time but when I was on the desk.

Q: On the German desk?

WESTON: Right, right.

Q: Where was Schmidt falling on this, he had been burned by Carter on the neutron...

WESTON: Neutron weapon.

Q: Bomb as it is so called, where Carter got him to commit himself and then Carter withdrew the support. I don't think Schmidt never forgot that.

WESTON: Helmut Schmidt was a very smart and principled man. I think he really did believe that the reason for these Russian deployments was to cast doubt if you will on the American nuclear guarantee which was what in fact kept Germany protected and kept West Berlin viable. Schmidt of course was supportive of the Dual Track decision because of this belief but faced a terrible time in his own party the SPD (Social Democratic Party) and a terrible time obviously with the emerging Greens although this was long before there was any thought of the SPD-Green coalitions, the current government there.

It was also at about this time in the '80s when I first met the current Chancellor of Germany. I was on the desk when he was the head of the young socialists, the youth branch of the army, Schroeder, Gerhard Schroeder, became the minister president in Lower Saxony in Hanover, first SPD government there in a long time.

Q: How about looking at Germany, were you studying or looking at a generational change because it seems like the Germans more than almost any other country the university always turns out sort of radicals who agitate and then they sort of disappear after a while.

WESTON: I don't know but remember I came from a really radical university in the United States and went to school in a place in Paris where the universities could be pretty radical as well, so I'm not sure I'd go along with your characterization that Germans were...

Q: How did we find, I mean, were we looking at the next generation?

WESTON: This was the time when there was a generational change among the German political elite if you will and among German voters from the defeated post war, almost subservient, generatiosubservient to a larger whole, to a new generation which did not believe it was responsible for the Third Reich, or the war, or the Holocaust or anything else and hence logically and I believe rightly in terms of long term German and U.S. interest was a generation which was much more assertive as to specifically German interest. I think that was the generational change, not so much young and old or left/right or anything else but from the post war generation political elites and voters to a post war occupation kind of mentality.

Q: Well this brings up a theme of, I kind of noticed I mean, I was born in 1928 and I served after World War II in Germany for a while. I don't think we were occupying at that point but anyway, but...

WESTON: Well, we had continuing rights and responsibilities for Germany as a whole which is another word for occupation and we technically continued to occupy Berlin.

Q: Yes, but I mean so many men of my generation served in Germany in the military. I mean, we had German wives, and then all of a sudden, not all of a sudden, but as we became a more professional army and we were no longer putting the troops in such mass numbers and all for the normal American Germany sort of fell off the map. If you were going to Europe you went to France, Italy Spain or Britain and you sure didn't go to Germany. The German language is not very popular in schools anymore.

WESTON: If you look at the statistics we continued to have an exceptionally large turnover of American troops in Germany who continued to marry German wives and everything else and a lot of them continued to be there. If you look at the statistics whether of tourism, exchange students, or whatever they continue to remain very high for Germany compared to France or any other European country, so, I 'm not sure that I see Germany falling off the map. I'm not sure that German was ever that popular a language to study in the United States after World War I let alone World War II. When I grew up it was certainly not offered in high schools or anything like that. I think what may have happened instead was there was so much attention focused on the East-West relationship be they issues of security deterrent or be they issues of dï¿½tente, and they were both issues all of the time, there were always those two prongs in the East-West relationship more broadly Germany inevitably was a complicating factor. Germany remained divided even though you had Ost Politik and all kinds of things going on. You still had almost at war with one another the traditional need to defend Germany and Berlin as a key element of the overall East-West relationship and between the United States and the Soviet Union, containment, if you will, with the other strain of we've got to solve East-West problems through arms control, through increasing contacts, CSCE (Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe) type mechanisms and so on and so forth. Germany was always a complicating factor.

Q: Well now...

WESTON: Not because of German politics in particular but because of history and Germany being divided and Berlin still being occupied and yeah, the key thing "Deutschland liegt wo es liegt" (Germany is where it is).

Q: While you were on the German desk how stood Berlin? You know most people looking at foreign affairs felt that World War III is going to start and probably Berlin was where it could easily begin. Had the Berlin issue more or less been solved by the time you got there?

WESTON: Well, remember by the time I was there you did have the Quadripartite Agreement which had certainly regularized the situation with Berlin in terms of access to Berlin. It was a period where we were doing a lot better in the joint management of Berlin with the Soviet Union. That being said, Berlin as potential trigger to something far greater and worse remained. I can remember at least two specific incidents when I was on the desk. One was a Soviet tank officer who, it turned out, had a nervous breakdown, whatever it was, but drove a tank through Checkpoint Charlie into West Berlin, a tank, a Soviet tank. You see a Soviet tank coming across Checkpoint Charlie and a Quadripartite Agreement not withstanding this is the sort of thing which could easily trigger, you've got all kinds of planning on how you deal with someone crossing especially with a tank. It could have easily led to a very violent confrontation in Berlin itself. In that particular instance cooler heads prevailed, the tank stopped not very far from it and the guy got out and it became clear that this was a very disoriented individual. This was not the first tank of many crossing in Berlin into the American sector, in fact. But, back in Washington when the first thing came in that this had happened, I mean the immediate reaction was "is this the start of something else".

Q: The hackles went up.

WESTON: Yes, is this the start of World War III. I mean that is where Berlin still was. Another time we had an incident of what turned out to be a bad misunderstanding but it was in the air corridor. It was a private corporate jet leaving Berlin. Something went wrong and the Soviet controller, you know we did joint control air space under the Quadripartite Agreement, and he notified some Soviet fighters which went up demanding that the plane land in the GDR. Decisions had to be taken what to advise the pilot to do. Once again is this the start of pressuring tactics in violation of the Quadripartite Agreement to restrict air access to Berlin in this particular case but the immediate reaction, until you got the facts, you know, okay, there may have been a screw up in passing the information about the flight to the Soviet controller so that he could notify that this was an authorized flight. The immediate reaction was "is this a tactic to restrict aviation". Both indicate that until very late in the game Berlin, despite the Quadripartite Agreement, was still always seen as a potential trigger.

Q: Well, did you find there was sort of a hard core of Berlin experts, the Berlin Group or something?

WESTON: Absolutely, and I am one of them.

Q: I've talked to people over the years and they were particularly nervous when the Kennedy Administration came in because they were talking about maybe we can make deals or something like that. They felt that any give in Berlin would only weaken our position.

WESTON: There are a group of such experts, I am one of them. The more you got immersed in Berlinery and the actual occupation of Berlin, in which I got immersed in more ways than you'll imagine, which I'm sure we will get into when we get into Bonn. An almost theological approach to anything dealing with Berlin. It became for those of us really immersed in Berlinery we just had a belief in all of these procedures and policies which grew up around Berlin, it was almost sacred.

Q: The thing that comes across is tailgates of trucks, how far you would go to tailgate or something like that. I mean the whole feeling was any give...

WESTON: I passed it on to my kids. I can remember going up to Berlin with my family. By then we had two kids and my youngest daughter was perhaps two or three years old. We were going over to the Pergamon, which is the large art museum which has the collection of antiquities in East Berlin. So I, of course, had a diplomatic passport, a member of the occupying force. By law with all my family, so we had complete access to the whole city. We were going through Checkpoint Charlie and so I was telling my kids how you do this is you hold your passport up to the window so that the VOPO (Volks Politzei) (People's Police) can see your picture but that's all you do, you don't smile at them you don't do anything, you show it and then you put it away and then we proceed. So, even my little kid, three years old was subjected to this kind of Berlinery type of thinking and it lasts, it becomes part of you. We were in the senior seminar, this was '89. The wall had come down so obviously the reason for Berlinery was long past. There were military officers in the senior seminar. We got to Berlin, this was '89 still, so unification had not taken place, Berlin was technically still occupied and I can remember thinking I've got to insist that the military officers in the senior seminar, when we went to East Berlin, did not wear their uniforms. You know, it being a big issue, it was that Berlinery from the past that was a real issue.

Q: Well, two things I would like to talk about before we move to Bonn which we will do next time.

WESTON: Yes.

Q: One, when the Reagan administration came in did you find a change politically in the United States from Carter. German-wise did you see a change or was there a concern before it was happening?

WESTON: Remember that there were some personality problems associated with the Carter Administration and Germany, some of which we have talked about. When the Reagan Administration came in I think there were some other problems which came about. It was quite clear that the kind of political philosophies under girding the Reagan Administration were very different than the prevailing political philosophies in not only Germany but most of Europe. By political philosophies I mean related to domestic affairs as much as foreign affairs. They were very much different and thought to be out of step with at least moderate European political thinking. There were also at least perceived differences on what was then the key question of the day which was East-West relations. The Reagan administration being perceived as taking a much harsher line or being much more on the confrontational side of the spectrum rather than the Ost Politik dï¿½tentist side of the spectrum in dealing with the Soviet Union, that was the perception certainly.

Q: What about central Europe. Where you get Central Europe you get the whole, you moved up one notch in your last year.

WESTON: To become deputy director.

Q: And so you have...

WESTON: The German desk was still most of central Europe. That was 90 percent of the work obviously but technically then I was in the staff line for Austria and Switzerland with two other German speaking countries in Europe as well as the Berlin desk which was technically separate from the Federal Republic desk, which is what I had headed as was the GDR desk. So, in essence I was doing Federal Republic affairs still, which was 90 percent of it, but Austria and Switzerland, and GDR Berlin much more as well.

Q: Did you have any problems with; let me look in your portfolio, the American ambassadors in Switzerland and Austria?

WESTON: Yes, indeed.

Q: These are traditionally political appointees... and they all seem to be a problem.

WESTON: And they were.

Q: And they all seem to be a problem.

WESTON: And they were.

Q: What sort of issues did you have?

WESTON: The ambassador in Switzerland was a woman named Faith Whittlesey who came out of Pennsylvanian republican politics but the problems were more, I mean I have been around European affairs a lot and around a lot of political ambassadors obviously, some of whom were good. For instance when I was in Bonn the political ambassador was a fellow named Arthur Burns, who was absolutely terrific. One of the best ambassadors we have ever had to Germany but some of these others like this Faith Whittlesey was not necessarily interested in diplomacy with Switzerland. She was interested in other things. There were a great number of what I would call management problems related to her and the necessity she felt for having some associates put into positions which were traditionally foreign service positions in Switzerland, consul general in Zurich, the DCM. She wanted political appointees in those positions and there were some complicating social factors also involved there, so it was a very difficult management time.

In Austria the ambassador became while I was the deputy director, Helene von Damm who had been Ronald Reagan's, the President's, secretary for many years and was a woman who had come from Austria as a refugee sometime before and was returning as the American ambassador. Once again there were all kinds of issues of a management nature. She, well, of her personal nature I guess, rather than management, but they become management problems in the relationship because she was with her husband there but she took up with the head of the Sacher Hotel and eventually married him and then he killed himself. Anyway, it was a very messy period with both Austria and Switzerland, but these are not unusual stories if you had asked me about Denmark or Norway I could come up with some as well.

Q: How did you find, I would think this would be the sort of thing you would sit down with the director general of the foreign service or something and say "what the hell are we going to do about this?"

WESTON: I mean it wasn't me sitting down with the director general but basically you know it was the assistant secretary or deputy assistant secretary.

Q: Then it would be they who would sit down and talk.

WESTON: Yes, absolutely, especially when you were dealing with someone like the ambassador in Austria who was very close to the president. The one I was talking about in Switzerland was a bit different. This was basically a fundraiser type appointment. It moved up pretty rapidly and it basically became an issue which was irresolvable in terms of the ambassadors involved. It became a question of how do you protect the post, and how do you carry out your business with these countries. From the point of view of the desk, there is the deputy director; the carrying out the business of the countries was pretty easy. You basically did it through their embassies here where they had professional diplomats so that was fine. The protection of the post and the people at the post was much more difficult issue, especially DCMs (Deputy Chief of Missions), heads of sections, things like that.

Q: Did you feel, I mean, could you work within the personnel field? The real problem of course is that if in some ways the DCMs refusal of a fraction or something like that and an ambassador whom we consider to be both incompetent and vindictive or something or some other personality quirk, is there a way of protecting your people by putting something into the efficiency report or saying don't pay any attention to this?

WESTON: In my experience, and I'm drawing from a whole 35 years in the foreign service, it is very difficult to do. These sorts of ambassadorial, in particular ambassadorial differences with political ambassadors when they go wrong and they frequently do in particular if you have a responsible DCM who is really looking after the post and American interests. Frequently it is very hard to avoid career damage to those people, very difficult. There are some mechanism where you can try to do it and they are related not so much to inserting something in the personnel file as to trying to, frequently these folks get curtailed or are curtailed but the most you can do for them is to make sure they get a good ongoing assignment. I think it is the most effective thing that you can do. But, in my experience it has caused a great deal of damage to the foreign service and to a lot of very good individuals over the years.

Q: Okay, we will pick this up the next time and we will be talking about when you went to Bonn in what...

WESTON: '83.

Q: We will pick this up in 1983 when you are off to Bonn.

WESTON: Okay.

Q: Great.

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Today is March 25, 2005. Tom we are going to Bonn in 1983. What were you going to do in Bonn?

WESTON: I went to Bonn in '83 as the deputy political counselor.

Q: And you were there from '83 until when?

WESTON: Until '86.

Q: '86. Who was the ambassador?

WESTON: When I went to Bonn it was Arthur Burns who had gone out as ambassador two years before, when I was on the German desk, which we talked about before, so I was very much one of his choices to go to the embassy. He was the ambassador '83-'84, '84-'85 and he was replaced by Rick Burt, Richard Burt, for the last year I was there.

Q: Well, we talked about this but still when you got there what was the, this is a rather tumultuous time, I mean we are talking about SS-20s (Soviet intermediate range missiles).

WESTON: Very, it was...

Q: Can you explain what the...

WESTON: Yes, we were very deep in the so-called implementation, the so-called Dual Track decision on Intermediate Range Nuclear weapons which had two components. One was the deployment of American/ NATO Intermediate Range Nuclear weapons to act as a deterrent to Soviet SS-20s which had been deployed against the wishes of NATO. Act as a deterrent and reestablish the strategic nuclear link between the defense of North America and the defense of our NATO allies in Europe, in particular Germany. The second track of the Dual Track decision was to use the deployment of those weapons as an incentive to enter into negotiations to do away with this whole category of weapons. The idea was that there is no incentive for the Soviet Union to do away with their SS-20s if there were no deterrent on the other side or similar category of weapons on the other side.

The strategy was ultimately successful in removing not only intermediate nuclear range weapons but short range nuclear weapons so it turned out even better than one thought. In '83, however, it was exceptionally controversial in particular in Germany. The weapons were deployed in actually three different NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) member states, but most of them were in Germany. The strongest protest movements were in Germany, one, because they were nuclear weapons, two because at that time the Green Party was emerging as a national party. In Germany many people thought that it was a simple protest movement but it gained strength very, very rapidly and in part I think gained strength because of this deployment decision on intermediate range nuclear weapons.

We arrived in Bonn in the summer of '83. One of my responsibilities was dealing with both tracks of the Dual Track decision. This involved both the deployment which led to a tremendous amount of work on security issues, how do you deploy these types of weapons in a very hostile environment, at least politically hostile environment, as well as the negotiating track which was going on in Geneva. In '83 we moved into our house which was right on the Rhine. I took my two kids out, it's right in the middle of a large park called the Rhinella, and I guess my eldest daughter was, she must have been about twelve then and my youngest daughter must have been five or something like that. Well, at any rate, we went out for a walk and we almost immediately ran into a very huge and very threatening I would say type of demonstration, a tremendous amount of anti-Americanism to it. I have my two kids here in the middle of the park in the middle of this demonstration. Now, I don't mind demonstrations that much, having participated in plenty of them myself both at Michigan State and then in Paris where demonstrations could get out of hand very easily. But it is a different situation when you have your two kids with you and it's a blatantly anti-American demonstration. I can remember saying if you ever see this get away from it. Unfortunately, you can easily be identified as an American and these things can get out of hand. So it was a very early lesson for my kids in what to watch out for in dealing with political direct action.

Q: From your perspective, from your work situation, what were you doing in Bonn when you sort of hit the ground?

WESTON: Well, I've already mentioned the political section was relatively large. There was the political counselor, I was the deputy, there were then about five different sections. It was about a 25-person political section, quite large. You had an internal section, a political/military, an external and you also had something called the Bonn Group which was the management of the continuing occupation of Berlin. We also dealt with inner-German relations. You had a separate legal unit, so it was quite a large section. Of course, the individual members of the section, all of whom I supervised except for the political counselor, obviously, who supervised me, did all the various elements of substantive political work that you have and this was one of our largest political sections, one of the most complicated in the world especially at that time. But in addition to, if you will, managing the section and all the activities of it I took on a couple of substantive responsibilities including the IMF (International Monetary Fund), the Dual Track decision and another over time that I assumed were some very sensitive negotiations initially related to spy exchanges but then developed into dissident exchanges which were negotiated through mechanisms involving the East German lawyer named Wolfgang Vogel.

Q: Yes. He was exchanged.

WESTON: Exactly, so during that time I was the one who would fly up to Berlin after coordinating with the German government who had a very strong role in this. I talked to Vogel and actually did the negotiating on those things. They initially were basically exchanges of spies held by the respective East-West sides but turned into negotiations which ultimately lead to the release of Natan Sharansky who is currently a very controversial figure in American life. These were the exchanges at the Glienicke Brucke (Glienicke Bridge) in Berlin and so on. Because of the time I had spent in Bremen earlier and especially the sorts of ties that I had with a lot of political figures and Social Democrat Party and among the emerging Green party I did a lot of directly internal political work as well.

Q: Well, on the one and this is on the spy thing now, what was your evaluation of Wolfgang Vogel? Where did he come from? How did he get arrested?

WESTON: He was an East German lawyer; he's also a member of the bar in West Berlin, which was quite unusual. But he had made his way and he had developed a legal practice in what was obviously a very unusual situation in the old German Democratic Republic, I think in part because of the establishment of very close ties with a lot of the emerging leaders of the then GDR (German Democratic Republic). He however didn't begin to do a great deal on exchanges until he was approached by a woman, West German Olympic swimmer whose fiancï¿½, or boyfriend, describe it as you will, who was also an Olympic swimmer was arrested in the GDR. This woman went to Vogel to try and seek his release. Vogel eventually negotiated his release. Then as luck would have it he ended up marrying this lady and I think she remains his wife to this day. She became his assistant as well as his wife and he kind of developed a reputation as the person to go to do these sorts of very delicate things. So, I think it was something which developed over time because of his unusual situation of having well developed ties with the political leadership in the GDR, also a legal background and ties being a member of the bar in West Berlin plus personal interest that came out of this. It was a very lucrative business for him after the collapse of the GDR regime. He was tried by the Federal Republic on a whole series of tax evasion charges and such; there were all kinds of accusations that he had benefited from acquiring assets of some of the exchangees whose release he had negotiated. I suspect some of this was justified. We suspected it at the time but this is a pretty shady business that you are talking about and you don't necessarily deal with the most savory characters. At any rate, that's my impression.

Q: On the deployment did you, obviously there are military considerations on where you put the things but there have to be political considerations on where you put the things.

WESTON: Yes.

Q: Did you get involved with that.

WESTON: The actual, you mean the actual location?

Q: Yes.

WESTON: Basically the decision was taken that they had to go on U.S. military facilities for obvious reasons, control of nuclear weapons, and there were two different types of weapons: Pershing II missiles and GLCMS (Ground Launched Cruise Missiles), nuclear capable.

The Ground Launched Cruise Missiles had to go someplace which had a runway so that ended up being U.S. airbases in Germany of which there weren't that many to choose from. The Pershing missiles ended up on U.S. army bases with artillery facilities, they were in essence rockets. So, when you have those requirements to start out with your options for actual locations become extremely few in number, the same thing is of course true in other NATO states where these weapons were deployed: the Netherlands and Italy, as it turns out. So it was really those military considerations or tactical considerations which governed where they would be deployed rather than political per se. They ended up of course because of where U.S. military bases were, both air and artillery, basically in southwestern Germany.

Q: Were we reaching out to try and get to the Green Party? Was the Green Party so hostile that we couldn't deal with it?

WESTON: No, we did everything we could to deal with it and they were clearly an emerging force. They were in many ways a refreshing force in German political life which had been pretty staid with three parties basically during the entire post war period. They brought a lot of issues to the forefront of German political life which really needed to be addressed. The genesis came out of opposition to things nuclear, both peaceful uses of nuclear energy and nuclear weapons, but they were very strong on environmental issues, human rights issues, gender equality and things like that. A lot of us saw them as kind of a renewing force, if you will, in German political life which was quite welcomed even though if you were dealing with American policy at that particular time there were some peculiar problems attached to it, in particular the deployment of nuclear weapons.

We made tremendous efforts to reach out to them and I can remember having a number of them over to the house. The current foreign minister of Germany, a Green, Joschka Fischer, was one of the earliest that we reached out to. I can remember him when the Greens first entered the Bundestag, which I believe was 1984. He was at the house in his black t-shirts and rather overweight and really a figure out of the '60s. We made real effort and not only myself but the American government in general, the whole embassy, the ambassador on down, to reach out to the Greens.

Q: Did you find it was hard to ride herd on this group of people, of 21 or more officers running around in often different directions?

WESTON: No, this was a very talented group of people; I mean we are talking about the '80s in Bonn attracted absolutely the best political officers you can imagine. All of them very language capable, very experienced, very professional. I can remember only one instance that I would call difficult to deal with in a personnel management sense, that part of the job. But in terms of the substance of the work of the political section, when you have these kinds of great people, I'd say it is not hard.

Q: During the time you were there, what were some of the issues particularly that you got involved in?

WESTON: Substantive issues? Well, they ranged on the totality of our relationship with Germany. This involved, of course, all of our relationships with both NATO and the European Community at that time, other multilateral organizations and a tremendous number of bilateral issues, a tremendous number of basing issues. A large number, not only because of weapons deployment but large number of troops still deployed in the Federal Republic at that time. You know, ranging from negotiating new legal arrangements and Status of Forces Agreements (SOFAs) to dealing politically with the fall out of some G.I. takes off in his tank and rams into a pub in a village, what have you, training issues, and basing issues in general. I was deeply involved; I think because of my interest in German politics, in domestic political affairs. It was a very dynamic time in domestic political life in the Federal Republic. I was deeply involved in inner-German relationships, the relationship between the Federal Republic and the GDR. This was growing rapidly at that time. I remained deeply involved in the technical management of the occupation of Berlin and the residual rights and responsibilities that the United States enjoyed in Germany as a whole which was a lot of coordinating work in quadripartite mechanisms. So, legacies of the war, to very contemporary political issues, and obviously I loved doing this. I think one of the things I loved about it most was the range of issues you were dealing with all the time. Always something new.

Q: In the '80s did you see a new breed of German politicians?

WESTON: Yes. I think you were seeing the emergence of the first real postwar generation of German political figures, people like Gerhardt Schroeder, the current chancellor, during this time. I actually knew him before when I was on the German desk and he was head of the so-called YOUSOS, (Youth Branch of the Social Democratic Party). While I was there he won election as minister president of Lower Saxony. Constance Fot, who is now in the foreign ministry of the Federal Republic, another young social democrat and from the other side from the CDU (Christian Democratic Union), the CSU (Christian Socialist Union) and even the FDP (Free Democratic Party), the smallest party, as well as the Greens. Already you were seeing the emergence of the first generation that had been basically my age. They were people who had been born in the mid-late'40s and just emerging on the political stage. The biggest change was their wish to be judged on their own terms and not in the way that Germans had felt themselves judged, I think before that generation which was heavily burdened with the legacy of the Third Reich in the Second World War. Just to give you a difference: Chancellor Kohl, who became chancellor during this time, every time he would meet an American, whether it was the president or anyone else, the first story he told about was how he had gotten his first suit to go to his wedding in a care package and so on. His generation I think still felt a tremendous burden from what had happened in Germany. It was an emerging, a different political generation. Now it is the generation in political power and I think you can see a real difference between the way that that generation exercises power in Germany, quite different from the wartime generation, or occupation generation, if you will. It is much more assertive and much more attuned to clearly following what it sees as German interests rather than perhaps broader trans-Atlantic or even European interests, it's not burdened as much by the legacy of the Third Reich.

Q: How were you seeing at this time Germany and the European movement?

WESTON: It was then the European Community. Of course, this was before Maastricht. Germany at this time, the basic political philosophy was the post-war philosophy that German integration into wider European mechanisms was the path to German recovery. It was through the coal and steel community and so on from the war; two, the path to protect Germany from itself, integration into a larger whole prevented Germans from exercising their worst instincts as they had in the Third Reich. I don't really buy this description of psychology of Germans but I think a tremendous number of Germans do, and I think it is what underlay the absolutely firm support for integration, no matter what, at that time of German political life. Once again you see the difference now. The new generation of Germans really came of age politically in the late '70s and the '80s questioning integration much more than was the case of those in power in the '80s.

Q: Was there concern at this time that some how or another Germany, West Germany might cut a deal for somehow the integration of East Germany, or neutralize itself? Was that possible?

WESTON: It wasn't a concern of mine but it did exist for some people. It goes back, you can date it back to the Ost Politik of Willy Brandt. Some people would even date it back to the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact of World War II. It was the "great bargain" between the two central European Empires. Austria and Hungary having disappeared from the scene. There were people who thought in those terms. I think it was totally unrealistic in terms of what Germany had become in the postwar period. There was a great deal of continued support for fostering relations between the Federal Republic and the GDR doing what one could to ease tensions. You saw all kinds of private transfers of families, of monies and so forth to do that. What I call fringe elements of German political life which really not so much sought reunification of Germany, because that was basically a political goal of Germany all along, but it was always reunification when East Germany was freed, if you will, from the Warsaw Pact or however you want to describe it. There was a fringe group who saw the possibility of recovering the of German Lands, this would be Konigsberg, East Prussia (which is now Kaliningrad), and Oblast of Russia, or even Silesia territories in Poland. They knew that the only way to do that was to deal with Russia. But those were really fringe groups, very small numbers of people. Even though some of these concerns were expressed in particular by the right wing of the Republican Party. Remember the '80s were the years of Ronald Reagan. I don't think they were a realistic reflection of what Germans were, what the politics of the Federal Republic were, or what the intent of any significant number of German voters or political figures were.

Q: I take it that under the "Sudeten Deutsch" this was no longer a factor?

WESTON: Well, they remained a factor in terms of being a very well organized pressure group which sought compensation for their expulsion from then Czechoslovakia, which became the Czech Republic. In fact, they remained a factor even to the point of enlargement of the European Union to include the Czech Republic not that many years ago in which they remained a very powerful influence on the negotiations by the German government on Czech entry. There had to be a deal to solve some of their claims. They were also even more an influential force within the CSU (Christian Social Union), which is in Bavaria which is where most of the Sudeten Deutsch had settled after returning from that part of the world.

Q: Looking at that time, of course, you were looking at East Germany and there was so much talk about East Germany being the tenth greatest economic power and everything else and eventually would not too long thereafter when East Germany turned up to be almost a basket case. Were you getting reports that the significance of East Germany was considerably overrated?

WESTON: Well, it depends on what you are comparing it too. It was a basket case compared to the Federal Republic. It was not a basket case compared to Romania, Bulgaria, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Russia and so on. It is all kind of relative or certainly farther afield into the developing world. I don't think it was seen as really a threatening power in any economic sense of the term. Remember from the days of the coal and steel community in European communities you essentially had fairly open trade insofar as it was allowed by the GDR regime with the Federal Republic and the rest of Europe. Germany was treated as a whole for purposes of the European Community and later the European Union. But it was never seen as an economic threat to the West. It was seen as a force of if you wanted to make some goods which would meet European standards with cheap labor, especially consumer goods, it wasn't a bad place to do it. For instance, in the '80s when it was still the GDR, the Swedish firm Ikea basically started by sourcing the production of most of this, mostly wooden furniture in the GDR because of the very cheap labor cost. I can remember going out in Bonn to the Ikea store and getting some bunk beds for the kids or whatever it was that you put together and of course it's all coming from the GDR.

There was a lot of economic interaction insofar as it was allowed by the GDR regime not the rest of Europe but the Federal Republic, never seen as a threat. I think in military terms it was seen as a threat as part of the Warsaw pact. The "Volks Army" (People's Amy) was a large very well armed force and of course there were large numbers of Soviet troops in the GDR in particular in the northern plains. To go back, remember when I was in Bremen we did the establishment of the northern Brigade to meet that perceived threat across the northern plains of Germany, that was the threat from the Soviets. At any rate, but it was seen as very much a Warsaw Pact threat, not an individual GDR threat. It was certainly seen as a threat in terms of espionage by the Federal Republic, the authorities, by the Federal Republic population, and I think by the United States. I think the counter intelligence effort against the Stasi consumed a lot of resources of a lot of people.

Q: When one thinks about that whole intelligence war it sort of eliminated one another but kept a lot of people employed.

WESTON: Going from John Le Carre and The Spy Who Came in From the Cold, it is all in Berlin and I did negotiations with spy exchanges which were very low grade recruited agents being exchanged on the two sides, but it was a very different world.

Q: By this time had the threat of, we had had the threat of 2+4 and all that, the threat of...

WESTON: The threat of 2+4 is later.

Q: so Berlin was still...

WESTON: 2+4 is in '89, '90.

Q: Oh

WESTON: Yes, the negotiations on unification of Germany and indeed the occupation.

Q: True but I mean by this time had we seen that the boil of Berlin essentially had been drawn. I mean that was no longer the place where World War III was going to start, or not?

WESTON: I wouldn't say that because remember our actual knowledge of what was going on in the Soviet Union in particular and hence in the West of the Warsaw Pact and specifically the GDR was limited. We knew there was a military threat but we didn't know what the trigger mechanisms could be. I think I mentioned already in one of these discussions having to deal with some very immediate things at this point in time relating to Berlin which could have been interpreted as actions triggering conflict. Trigger one: East-West war. One of them I talked about was this Soviet tank coming across Checkpoint Charlie while I was at the desk in the early '80s. The other one was the difficulty in the air corridor with an aircraft which we called back for fear that it might be shot down in the air corridors. Now that was in I believe '85, it was while I was in Bonn doing Bonn Group so it was in the mid-'80s. If the Soviets had shot down an American civilian aircraft one can speculate about where that might lead but it certainly would be a very dangerous situation.

Q: This is just the time when the Soviets did shoot down a Korean Airline.

WESTON: Yes they did. KAL 007 was it or...

Q: Well, what was the incident that sparked this plane calling back?

WESTON: You had this situation of three air corridors between the Federal Republic and Berlin which came from the days of the Berlin airlift with the results of long negotiations. Think of them as three tubes in the air, there is a bottom level to them, a top level and right and left, one coming from the north, one from central Germany and one from the south, all towards Berlin. A plane taking off, a civilian aircraft, American flight from Berlin and there was some question whether it was bad weather and if it was outside the vertical limits of one of the corridors. All of this stuff was monitored obviously not only us but by the Soviets. When this plane which may well have wandered outside the vertical limits all of a sudden we picked up on our radar Soviet fighters scrambling out of a base in East Germany, headed towards this aircraft. I mean that was the incident and there were some warnings, radio warnings and I'm not sure how much I should go into this sort of discussion but it ...

Q: It was classified but we are talking about twenty years ago.

WESTON: We are but I'm not sure if a lot of this remains unclassified. The long and the short of it was a decision had to be taken by the Mission in Berlin about whether to recall this aircraft to Berlin or to have it continue on its flight in order to continue to assert U.S. use of these air corridors in an uninterrupted fashion which is the sort of thing in the past we had threatened to go to war over. Whether or not we have use of the air corridors to resupply Berlin. The decision was taken ultimately because of uncertainty about how the Soviet fighters were operating to recall the aircraft. That sort of an incident gives you an indication this was not the time when everything was terribly relaxed. It was very, I mean for people like myself, and I was in East Berlin as often as I was in West Berlin, I would go up and take my kids and we would go over to the museum and all of that sort of thing and drive all over the place because we had access under the post-war arrangements including the Quadripartite agreement on Berlin. But, there was still tension - probably too strong a word - but still a degree of tension in relationships related to Berlin.

Q: Were we at all concerned about at this point about the German treatment of "gast arbeiters" (guest workers), this sort of thing?

WESTON: Yeah, you mean was the United States officially concerned. Yeah, because the "gast arbeiter" was our concern and I'll give you two different answers. The "gast arbeiter" by then had been in Germany of course for thirty years. I was going to say a generation, and a lot of the people who were called "gast arbeiter" had been born in Germany. Germany was having a hard time coming to grips with this. In sociological terms, in economic terms, in all kinds of other ways, and there was a great deal of debate in the '80s which ultimately culminated in changes in German citizenship law. A lot of this incidentally was fostered by the Green Party which I say was emerging as a force then. Changes in German citizenship law which in essence gave the possibility of citizenship to a lot of those who were "gast arbeiter" that didn't come until much later but the debate about it and the development of it was going on at that time. There was a clear sense that the "gast arbeiter", in particular the Turks who were actually more Kurds than Turkish, but that is a whole other discussion, were clearly discriminated against economically and socially. An anecdote I can remember at that time: a German film came out reportedly showing the plight of the "gast arbeiter" which was called "Ganst Unten" (All the Way Under) meaning at the bottom of the social ladder, social and economic ladder. It was about a Turk in Munich who had to work as a janitor and how harsh life was. But interestingly at this time right now there are several million Turks or Turkish Germans of various kinds in Germany, at that time I'm sure there were over a million, I've forgotten what the actual figures were; but out of all those Turks they couldn't find a Turk to play this role. Instead, they had the role of this Turkish worker played by a German and used makeup to darken his skin. Now, if you know Turks and Kurds, they can be of all varieties but here a film purporting to be sympathetic and showing the plight of the "gast arbeiter" has the role played by a German with artificially darkened skin. So, I think that puts in a nut shell the situation which existed then. I mean it was a situation which people were aware of and which were being debated. A lot of people were concerned about it. I think officially the U.S. government saw this as obviously a domestic problem to be resolved by Germany. We, of course, have certain problems with immigration of our own to deal with but I personally, when I would discuss it, found myself in great sympathy with the positions being taken by the Greens most prominently but also by the Social Democrats who sought to improve the lot of these folks who at that time had none of the benefits of citizenship, were expected to thoroughly integrate anyway into German society, have their education in Germany.

Q: I know the citizenship laws back in the middle ages to 1955 or '56. I was in Frankfurt. I was the baby birth officer, registering American children. We had our laws and they had their laws.

WESTON: And theirs were based on blood rather than place of birth.

Q: Theirs were based on blood, however if a woman was married to a foreigner the child would not get German citizenship.

WESTON: But, if the father was German and married to a foreigner he would, he or she would.

Q: Now we have a German woman married to an American. He may have married her but very obviously was not the father when the baby was born. According to German law the baby was not German; according to our law the baby was not an American because there wasn't that birth factor there. I used to try and go up and down with them trying to, you know, we ended up getting stateless passports for these kids so they could be adopted.

WESTON: Now you were in a conflict with German and American law on citizenship but if it had been the case, the real difference before the changes - in I forget the exact date - I think it was about '91 or something like that in German citizenship law. If a child is born in the United States unless they are not subject to U.S. law that is, diplomatic child in essence, you are automatically an American citizen, doesn't matter who your parents are, whatever. That was not the case in Germany and it still is not the case in Germany. That's the big differencbased on blood rather than on place of birth.

Q: Re points of view. Did you find yourself, this is sort of subjective, find yourself in dealing with the Germans every once in a while your approach differed from where they were coming from with a different point of view than we were?

WESTON: You are talking about political or economic or social issues? I think culturally there were clear differences. I'll take an example from the '70s, relates to raising children. We arrived in Bremen and we had a kid still in diapers and we hadn't found our permanent housing. We were in temporary housing so we had to go to a laundromat for clothes washing. That was fine and the way you did it in Germany in those days if you went to a Laundromat you gave the laundry to the "washhelfern" who worked there and the person put it in the machine and washed it and then put it in the dryer and you basically waited for it. You didn't do it yourself because you were an American and they had a different way of doing things. We were a young family, had a young kid and knew it would take a while so we had the kid with us, my daughter. I guess we are more liberal in allowing certain sorts of behavior in laundromats with our kids than Germans were but, in any rate, she was walking around and climbing on things while we were waiting for the stuff to go. All of a sudden the clothes finished in the washing machine and the "washhelf" she brought them forward, put them on the counter all wet and said "go". So here we were asking why not dry them? "No, this child is misbehaving." For us, this kid hadn't misbehaved at all, hadn't cried or anything else but had been moving around and got up on a chair or something like that and that was a very direct thing, evidence of a big cultural difference coming from a very different place. There are cultural differences certainly. I think they are becoming fewer and fewer over time as the whole world gets more and more homogenized on American culture but they remain. I think they were more pronounced and more apparent in a place like Bremen than they were in a place like Bonn.

When you move into the realm of policy I think the cultural differences recede somewhat. It was a time when we were really changing these generations that we have talked about. I guess I could understand why the burden of the war had such an effect on political and social behavior to a certain extent of Germans who had experienced them as either teenagers or young people, particularly older people. What a devastating experience it was in the knowledge that it had been done with the will of the German people and complicity of the German people. It's a pretty heavy burden to bear and has effects on people, differing effects on different people, but has effects. I could understand that. I think that led to real differences as you put it where people were coming from on particular political or even economic issues, certainly in social issues. I think that was changing a lot when we were in Germany with this new post war generation of Germans and German political leadership.

Q: The people you were dealing with one, were they interested in American political life and political process and two, were they looking for either examples or things to avoid? How did you feel?

WESTON: There was certainly a fascination with and an adoption of American cultural life at large, popular culture and everything else and that obviously continues to this day in Germany; that hasn't changed much. There was a lot of interest among the political class in the United States politically at that time, you remember early in this period, when I was in Bonn, we were dealing with the Social Demokratic government, Helmut Schmidt, and then it changed to a CDU government, Helmut Kohl. I would say across the political spectrum the politics of Germany was to the left, including the CSU-CDU, of the totality of the political spectrum in the United States. Certainly the center of the political spectrum was to the left of the center of the political spectrum of the United States. So, that had its effect on the assessment of the United States and how we dealt with a lot of issues, not necessarily foreign policy issues, but great opposition to the death penalty, concern about religionosity in American life, those sorts of things.

Q: How about Ronald Reagan? By the time you got there he had been in office a couple years, I mean did you see a change in the perception of him? How did they define his worth?

WESTON: I think he was a mystery to a lot of Germans. Even though with the change of government to a CDU government, there was clearly a more sympathetic view of Ronald Reagan, of the Republican Party. I think President Reagan was still seen by most Germans as a somewhat unpredictable figure, if you were on the German left he was a cowboy figure and, of course, Reagan having played a cowboy in a lot of movies didn't help. On the right and right center the unpredictability was more "we're not sure what this guy ultimately would do in the world including with the Soviet Union." Remember during this period of time, in addition to things like INF (Intermediate Nuclear Force) there was the Reykjavik Summit, I don't know if you remember that.

Q: I remember that...

WESTON: Where the President apparently offered to do away with nuclear weapons completely. Now, if you really are an aficionado of the nuclear deterrent and of the guarantee of Berlin, and of maintaining stability in the post-war period until the end of the cold war and all that sort of thing, the idea of doing away with nuclear weapons completely by the United States and the Soviet Union was a pretty scary thing to Germans despite the anti-nuclear mood of the country. There was a fear based on unpredictability.

Q: Before we move on, did you see a change in attitude or methods between Ambassador Burns and Ambassador Burt?

WESTON: Day and night. Arthur Burns was a grand old man revered for his academic brilliance. Remember that he's kind of the father of the theory of business cycle, his many years as Chairman of the Federal Reserve. He was seen as very much a statesman and a revered academic. He was revered that way not only by Germans but by people like me in exactly the same way. I arrived in Bonn when Helmut Schmidt was still the chancellor. He had been finance minister when Arthur Burns was still the Chairman of the Fed so you know, you are talking about people who had worked very well together in one of the more difficult areas of economic or at least fiscal life. He was really admired very widely, not only among the political elite but by Germans in general and his appointment to Bonn by the President was viewed very much as the United States taking Germany seriously by sending one of its finest senior statesmen there as ambassador. It gave him clout as an ambassador which was quite remarkable to watch.

Rick Burt, a brilliant man intellectually, was of a very different stripe. Remember he had basically made his way politically in the administration through the development of the INF decision. He would see himself in many ways as one of the architects of the Dual Track which of course was quite controversial among the public in Germany. He was much younger, did not have nearly the resume, if I can put it that way, had a very different style, a very different, I would say more aggressive and less than fully diplomatic style. Burt never enjoyed the admiration of either the German political elite or certainly the German people, so it was a very marked contrast. It was nobody's fault it was just two very different people with very different backgrounds, very different styles, hence viewed very differently.

Q: But did you see a change in response from Washington, in other words when Burns went to Washington things might be...

WESTON: Washington listened.

Q: When Burt went I mean it was not...

WESTON: Burt had to fight the battles. I mean there were a lot of other actors.

Q: Was there concern, this is pretty early on but, it might be more apropos later, but that Germany was no longer as much as a focus of interest as it had been before or not really?

WESTON: I think there was some of that. It was not so much what happened later which I would identify much more in the '90s in the post cold war period of this distance growing with Europe in general and with Germany specifically. It was more that Germany had always been seen as the heart of European NATO and of the European Community, the key to U.S. policy in Europe. Because of where it was, Germany was the most important ally vis-ï¿½-vis the Soviet Union. This changed a bit in the sense as the Soviet Union started to show signs of changing. There was more and more attention to the overall super power relationship rather than to the relationship with Germany or other NATO allies. It wasn't the same as I believe happened in the '90s, but there was a bit of the sense that Germany is not the center of the universe perhaps the super power relationship is the center of the universe.

Q: During the '83-'86 period obviously it wasn't in your realm but everybody was looking at the phenomenon of Gorbachev at that time. Was he considered to be for real or same old same old with a new face or...

WESTON: In Germany no, I mean, people hoped that this was a positive change and Germany did what it could to foster seeing Gorbachev in a relatively positive light as a potential agent for change.

Q: How did you and your colleagues feel about it at the time?

WESTON: I think there were probably those of us who had spent a long time working in European affairs, and maybe in particular those of us who had worked in Germany and had a habit of working with the Soviet Union in a way others didn't, like the management of Berlin. I guess to some extent it made us a little bit, maybe even warier, of whether there was real change going on in the Soviet Union. I at that time was also doing things like negotiating exchanges which obviously involved Sharansky departing the Soviet Union. I could see that some things seemed to be starting to be possible which didn't seem to be possible before so there was something going on. But I think there was also a degree of unsureness, of skepticism, we don't have enough information, let's not move too rapidly in the assessment of what was going on.

Q: How much did you get involved in the Sharansky exchange?

WESTON: I basically negotiated it, I mean on the ground negotiated it. The actual transfer took place with Rick Burt, who was the ambassador, greeting him as he came across the bridge and that sort of thing but the negotiations with Vogel I did.

Q: What were the issues?

WESTON: Basically, the Sharansky case grew out of our ability to do exchanges for far less controversial figures most of whom had been arrested as spies in one Warsaw Pact country or another. These exchanges were not only people from the GDR; they could be from the Soviet Union, or Poland, or Czechoslovakia, or wherever. It worked, but that experience lead us to believe that Sharansky of course was one of the most prominent dissidents that we had been working to get out...

Q: Perhaps you can explain who Sharansky was.

WESTON: He was a prominent Jewish dissident as well...

Q: In the Soviet Union.

WESTON: In the Soviet Union and is now a minister in the Israeli government, also apparently President Bush's favorite author these days because of his book on democracy. At any rate, he was basically a Soviet dissident but was probably the most prominent Jewish dissident; now remember this was in the wake of such things as Jackson-Vanik legislation, trade relations with the Soviet Union could not be normalized unless Jewish immigration was allowed and so on. So the Sharansky exchange grew out of what were spy exchanges. We were taking advantage of a channel which had worked for obviously incredibly sensitive negotiations to try and use it for a very prominent dissident. I think that because of changes in the Soviet Union that we have just been talking about as much as any other reason that it became possible to negotiate it.

Q: Was there a quid pro quo?

WESTON: There was but I don't think I can get into that even to this day because it involves a lot of people still very prominent in various governments.

Q: I mean, did you ever find yourself with somebody calling up and saying, "Hey, we got this guy standing at the edge of the bridge and he wants to come on over"?

WESTON: No, it was not that sort of arrangement and the GDR was not that sort of society where someone ended up at the end of the Glienicke Brucke one day and said they wanted to come over. No, this was a very lengthy and complex process which had a great deal of involvement with the Federal Republic as well and ultimately a lot of other countries, in the case of Sharansky, Israel.

Q: Now then, is there any chance we should talk about this period?

WESTON: There were so many issues at play then. It was a terribly exciting time and I really felt deeply involved in all of it doing foreign policy then even making foreign policy a lot of the time in what we were doing. There were a lot of other events then, one of them I can remember specifically. Do you remember there was a presidential visit to Germany? This was Ronald Reagan and one of the ceremonies which had been arranged was to put flowers on a grave in a cemetery in Bitburg (Bitburg is where we have a major U.S. air base, not unimportant in terms of our previous conversations) but it turned out after this was all arranged and announced that several members of the Waffen SS were buried in this very spot. So, we had a situation in which the American President was going to appear to honor some pretty unsavory folks and a German Chancellor who felt he could not politically back down from this particular ceremony. That's just another example of some of the things which were going on at that time and I mean there are several books full of material on that period of working on German affairs.

Q: Kohl came away with a great deal of admiration for Reagan. Reagan kept his word and didn't back down. A lot was made of this and I mean these were kids in their teens who had been killed in the Waffen SS which was not a nasty SS unit, they could do nasty things but I mean they were basically just draftees in a...

WESTON: But of course there was a political cost to it still in the United States.

Q: There was a political cost and we're still talking about it in these interviews but...

WESTON: I think it is true that Kohl came away with great admiration for the President sticking to his word. I think he came away from it with an even greater admiration for Arthur Burns who he felt was the one making the recommendations that the President go through with this despite the political cost. Arthur Burns of course was Jewish and perhaps in knowing that another example of the role that Arthur Burns played in the relationship at this time. I think the admiration was as much for Arthur Burns as for the President.

Q: But also to there was the horrible example of Jimmy Carter and Helmut Schmidt when Carter...

WESTON: When Brzezinski came in.

Q: In the nuclear, how was that?

WESTON: Oh yeah, the neutron bomb, you are talking about another. I had another problem with it and that's...

Q: That one, Schmidt never forgave Carter. I'm sure in German party politics they think had Reagan done an about face they would have, I mean American presidents would have gone down in estimation in Germany.

WESTON: Well, the Schmidt/Carter relationship was complex for reasons other than the neutron weapon. That was the complicating factor but there were several other things. I remember the first meeting when the Chancellor came to Washington during the Carter administration. I knew about this because I was just coming from Bremen then. I remember working on Congressional Affairs and President Carter invited his national security adviser in for the conversations, Zbig Brzezinski. Brzezinski took to lecturing the Chancellor of Germany on his responsibilities in Central Europe, in particular in Poland in a way that I think had a very adverse effect on the remainder of the relationship between President Carter and Helmut Schmidt. I mention that because I think these issues like the way the neutron bomb was dealt with clearly have an adverse effect on international relationships in my opinion. I don't think we should lose sight of the importance of personal relationships whether good or bad in relationships between nations to this day.

Q: Well, then should we mention anything else or what do you think?

WESTON: We can pick up again in '86 when I left.

Q: Where did you go in '86?

WESTON: I came back assigned to the National War College.

Q: We might just cover the War College.

WESTON: Ok, well I only was able to stay there; I've forgotten what it was, six weeks or something like that so I lost my mid-term training assignment very rapidly.

Q: So then what happened?

WESTON: I got pulled into a job working for Ron Spiers who was undersecretary for management doing the 150 Account, in particular the appropriations for State, Commerce and Justice on the Hill. There is a long history to this, why this happened. I essentially got pulled out of the War College to do that job.

Q: Okay, so we will pick this up in '86 when you are doing the 150 Account, and we haven't talked about why you got in...

WESTON: Okay, but we can pick that up when we start again.

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Q: Today is April Fool's Day, the first of April 2005. Tom, you said there is a long story about the 150 Account.

WESTON: The State Department has for a long time had people who work on obtaining the resources necessary for not only the operations of the State Department but development assistance, funding for USIA (United States Information Agency) and so on. All of those together form a so-called 150 Account which is a budget function account under the U.S. Government system of accounting. Obviously this is an important job because of you don't get sufficient resources you can't do what you want to do either in assistance or in operational terms. The job traditionally had been done by a political appointee, a Schedule C, and it went back and forth between Congressional Affairs and the undersecretary for management for many, many years. At any rate, in '86 I came back from Bonn and I was assigned to the National War College for my mid-career training, which was the right sort of assignment at that time in the personnel system. I was enjoying myself but what happened is the person who had been doing this job, a political appointee for the undersecretary for management was going to leave, he was taking another political appointee, I think it was a member of the Federal Trade Commission, something like that. Ron Spiers, a career Foreign Service Officer, wanted a career Foreign Service Officer to do this particular job. He asked around a little bit and in particular to the director general at that time who was George Vest and asked if he knew of anyone, a career foreign service officer who could do this job, which is basically working with the congress to assure sufficient funds. I mentioned earlier in this I had done the congressional relations job for European Affairs back in the late '70s when George Vest was the assistant secretary. So I think he put two and two together and recommended me to Spiers. Spiers called me over at the National War College to discuss it, made it pretty clear that he wanted me to do this job very much and that he understood I would be missing my mid-career training. But if I did this for a while, he was the undersecretary for management and we would work out something later on so I could get the training which I really wanted to do.

So, I went and did that. It was essentially a job in which you work with the Congress all the time to assure sufficient funding in particular for State operations. There was another fellow who remained a political appointee who did most of the 150 Account related to development assistance but I basically did the, you know, appropriations for the State Department which are split into two appropriations bills, foreign operations and State/Commerce/Justice appropriations bills and he did the foreign operations and I did the State/Commerce/Justice. Different sub-committees of the Appropriations Committee different members you are working with, but it covered appropriations for all of State operations, for contributions to international organizations, funding for USIA and so on. I ended up doing that for what I thought was going to be a relatively short period of time but I ended up doing it for I guess just over two years which was through two budget cycles. It was something that I think I was very good at because I enjoy working with the Congress and had an easy time forming relationships with I think some of the key people that I had to form relationships with to be effective. This was the one period in time when we had, what I would call sufficient funding for our operations before the great fall off in funding for the State Department which took place in the beginning of the early '90s. I dealt with a lot of very interesting operational issues or management issues including the implementation of the whole change in the Foreign Service brought about by the Foreign Service Act in '86. I dealt with some rather eclectic things such as the discovery of bugs in the new chancery building in Moscow and what should be done about that, or what could be done about that in terms of getting the necessary funding to solve the problem because of the Moscow incident in particular but also some bombings that took place in the Middle East at that time. I dealt with the early transition, if you will, from what had been a relatively small security operation in the State Department to the development of the Bureau of Diplomatic Security which, of course, during these years had to obtain massive funding to support the sorts of things it was intended to do. It was a job deeply enmeshed in politics, obviously, but it was dealing with a lot of management or administrative issues. Most of my career up to that point had been in political affairs in particular but in economics secondarily even though it was a very operational political job not a political cone job but deeply enmeshed in the politics of the United States. It gave me a lot of exposure to a lot of new areas.

Q: You know this oral history program goes back a ways and I have talked to people who have had the, I won't say pleasure of dealing with John Rooney of Brooklyn you probably know.

WESTON: He was actually in the foreign ops side so...

Q: But he was the power, I mean essentially the cobbling of John Rooney became sort of a major job of accompanying him on trips, keeping him fully supplied with liquor and everything else, but there was no major figure or was there a major figure?

WESTON: Well, actually I would say there were two major figures and they were the appropriations sub-committee chairs of Commerce/State/Justice. On the House side that was a gentleman named Neal Smith from Iowa who was a joy to work with, very open to discussion and I would even say persuasion on what we were attempting to accomplish. On the Senate side the sub-committee chairman was one Fritz Hollings, the Senator from South Carolina. He was a much more prickly figure, less amenable to a lot of the things we were trying to do. The ranking minority member on the Senate side was Warren Rudman, quite a different person. Ranking minority person on the House side was a fellow by the name of Hal Rogers who remains to this day very influential on the Appropriations Committee. So I would say the two chairmen were the key figures clearly but the ranking minority members and other members of the committees were the bread and butter of what I was doing. It was building relationships with them which did involve some travel and all of that sort of thing with them at various times but it was building those relationships so that in the middle of the night when you were doing an anonymous appropriations bill you didn't all of a sudden show up with some big cut for whatever account of State operations happened to be there.

Q: One, the trips I would think one of the best ways to build Congressional support is to get them to see a post and to see the problems because it is not all ivory, marble covered halls and all this. I mean, you go to some places and they got real problems just living and all that. Were you able to get that across?

WESTON: Very much so with the House side. Neal Smith was willing to travel and willing to take fellow members of his Appropriation Subcommittee with him so we made, I would have to think about this for a minute about how many, but trips to literally all areas of the world doing just what you have described, bringing to bear the reality of diplomatic life abroad. A lot of those trips, some of them were to posts that I knew very well in Europe but a lot of the others were to I can remember going to places like Colombo, Algiers and very different sorts of places. I remember going down during this time we had a very massive earthquake in Latin America. Our embassy in San Salvador, the embassy building, chancery building, was, well, not totally rubble but it was no longer functional. It was destroyed for all intents and purposes. It had to be leveled and so we found ourselves down there in the middle of earthquake devastation on a trip. That was far less the case with the Senator in part I think because of the personality, if you will, of the Subcommittee Chairman Fritz Hollings who was far less disposed to finalize and amenable to really doing the sorts of on the ground work and research and so on and so forth necessary to really understand what diplomacy was. That led to a real difference in how you did the work that I was doing. You were much more dependent on the House.

Q: Tell me a bit about how you perceived Fritz Hollings and where he was coming from and how you dealt with it.

WESTON: He was basically very skeptical about the operations of the State Department, some of the ideas about State Department employees out there just living the good life and going to receptions and so on. He was very skeptical about the ability of the State Department to manage any kind of large project, meaning for the State Department the construction of new embassies in particular as we went through the Inman Report period. He was very skeptical about the functioning of international organizations to which the United States made large contributions and the contributions were in his Appropriations Bill. I use the term skeptical, that's a delicate term obviously, he could be a pretty difficult man and very biased in this regard. We tried to deal with him through conversation not only with myself, but most importantly by senior figures in the State Department when they could be arranged. I felt the most effective means of dealing with him was to deal with other members of the Committee and in particular the ranking minority member Warren Rudman who could bring things up and not meet with the same sort of reaction as those from State Department met from Senator Hollings.

Q: Well, during this time what would you say were the funding issues that caused the greatest problems for you?

WESTON: Surprisingly they were not the operational funding issues although those were affected because of some of the issues that were going on and what I mean is this is the period when the overseas building office was...

Q: FBO.

WESTON: FBO (Foreign Buildings Office) was much maligned and had had a whole series of building projects which were severely criticized for all kinds of reasons, both within the State Department and outside the State Department. That coincided with a need to obtain substantial new funding to deal with what were viewed as emerging security threats, mostly relating to dealing with terrorism. This is the construction of Inman type embassies, but also to deal with, in the case of Moscow, espionage. In that need for vastly expanded resources for buildings and security in general although I think the need was pretty much supported in the Congress, led to real pressures on the operational accounts. This sort of thing will up funding for x,y,z but we'll cut it for a,b,c and of course the a,b,c is the heart of the personnel account and travel and all that sort of thing. I think that was the biggest single area of friction on funding at that point in time.

The other which was then emerging was the issue of contributions to international organizations which later led to the actual withholding of the payment of dues - this was led by Jesse Helms more than anyone else - to the United Nations and other specialized agencies but this issue was emerging at that time, how to use the leverage of the very large U.S. contributions to these organizations to foster either management changes, more often to foster changes in policies by these organizations. That was the other big area of a very different nature than this competition for funds.

Q: Did you find that your State Department colleagues who had issues of State, could you call upon them to present their case, or were they able to deal with them?

WESTON: I would say it was very uneven and if you were talking about someone like Ron Spiers who was the under secretary for management, he was very adept at presenting the case, very willing to do so, do whatever was necessary on the Hill. I would say it was uneven throughout the rest of the building.

Q: How did you find the staffs of the two appropriations sub-committees?

WESTON: Once again very different. I think the staffs on the Hill in general tend to reflect more than anything else the member for whom they work, secondarily the committee for whom they work. I found it much easier to work with the staff on the House side than I did the staff on the Senate side. That is a reflection of members. I would also have to say that appropriations staffers basically have a mindset to critically examine funding requests. This is not only State Department, it is across appropriations bills with one, a view to cutting them normally. The fact of the matter is across government appropriations requests tend to be highly padded, that is part of the job. But they also had a tendency to play the role of almost inspectors on operational programs, to ferret out anything they viewed as inappropriate or inefficient or mismanaged. These provided justification for funding cuts which is the real mindset. In general, appropriations staffers to some extent were harder to work with than say Authorization Committee staffers who are much more involved in policy issues. I think this is highly dependent on members that they are working for. The House was much easier than the Senate.

Q: Can you explain the difference between the funding and the, you know there are two committees say, one...

WESTON: Authorizers and Appropriators.

Q: Authorizers and the others. What's the difference?

WESTON: In our system of government the Authorizing Committees which are for the State Department, the House International Relations Committee and the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, pass authorization bills, bills authorizing the operations and all its manifestations of the State Department. These bills are authorizations for appropriations, and they identify specific amounts to be authorized for appropriations as well as containing normally a great deal of material on substantive policy. It is a method for the Congress to express its will through legislation on foreign affairs.

Appropriations, of course, are the actual appropriating of the funds in separate bills that have been authorized. Now, it's very interesting at that particular time and since and for a long time before it was very unusual to actually obtain and have signed into law an authorization bill for the operations of the State Department. It was even harder to get an authorization bill for foreign assistance because of the politicalization of it. What happened is you went through the exercise of getting authorization bills but frequently found them bogged down in committee, never went to the floor. What you had to do is then in the appropriations bill, because theoretically you could not have an appropriations bill without an authorization, is you would insert a waiver of a Provision of Law into the appropriations bill which waved the necessity of having an authorizing bill. So in fact the important bill really turned out to be the appropriations bill in all of the time I was working on this and I believe since. That had a real advantage because there would tend to be far less, a real advantage from the point of view of the Executive Branch. I should caveat that, because appropriations bills would tend to have far less substantive guidance than an authorization bill.

Q: You know, we have to make sure that you benefit the widgets sector of something.

WESTON: Not only that sort of thing, which is pork barrel type of politics but actual directives on foreign policy, you will establish an embassy in Jerusalem instead of Tel Aviv, things like that.

Q: Then you there left when?

WESTON: '89, summer of '89.

Q: Did you have a feeling that you made your mark, I mean, were you pretty satisfied with what you had done?

WESTON: Yes, very, very. As I say, it was a time where we were able to maintain a healthy appropriation for State operations. I would say the record was less good on foreign operations which is the assistance account. We were able to fend off some of the early attempts to withhold payments or dues to international organizations and we did obtain substantial funding for some of these security projects. Now personally I really question a lot of these projects as a practicing diplomat abroad. But, the older I get the more I question them but that's a different issue. My job then was to get the funding for them and we did pretty well and we solved for instance, I didn't do it myself, obviously, but I participated in the solution of this very difficult problem and a difficult problem in U.S.-Soviet relations, dealing with the embassy building in Moscow.

Q: How was that solved?

WESTON: Basically by a new design which took down I think it was the top couple floors of the building - this was a tower office building - leaving the lower part of the building unclassified. That is you didn't worry about people who had wires and collecting information, building a barrier and having the top three floors classified with all the necessary requirements to keep it that way.

Q: Was there...

WESTON: Massive and very expensive dismantling and reconstructive project.

Q: Who paid for it?

WESTON: Ultimately the tax payer.

Q: The Soviets weren't up to paying for it?

WESTON: No, well they came up at the same time with certain things that they accused the United States of doing to their new chancery building in Washington, up on Mt. Alto.

Q: Which of course, we had nothing to do with.

WESTON: Which, of course, we deny.

Q: We're both smiling.

WESTON: Yes, we are.

Q: Summer of '89 where did you go?

WESTON: I took Ron Spiers at his word and got my training assignment which turned out then to be the Senior Seminar so I spent the last six months of '89 and the first six months of '90 in the Senior Seminar.

Q: Well this is of course a seminal period in European world relations...

WESTON: And in Germany.

Q: Yes, in Germany. How did that play from the Senior Seminar, were you sort of chomping at the bit wanting to be uniting Germany?

WESTON: Even when I was doing appropriations I kept very involved in the work of the Bureau of European Affairs and especially a lot with German affairs. In the Senior Seminar there was a great deal of flexibility in what it actually did and what the students decided to do with it. So, three days after the wall came down in '89, I found myself in Berlin. I was participating in a think tank, Aspen Institute Berlin Program, so I basically got off the plane in Tegel. My friend who was then the DCM in East Berlin met me at Tegel with a hammer and a chisel and we went right to the wall. I had been deeply involved in Berlin for a long time, so I chipped out some pieces of the wall which I still have in my office over at Georgetown. Then, later that year it turned out that the Senior Seminar made a trip to Berlin which I was intimately involved in organizing because of my German affairs background. It also included travel to Brussels to deal with the multilateral institutions of Europe where I was headed after the Senior Seminar ended. I also during the year of the Senior Seminar did a couple of USIA speaker programs. They would take a speaker and program him into a series of places in what used to be the GDR to actually talk to students about what was going on. I forgot how many trips I made during that year back to Germany but it was several and I didn't feel that far from it.

Q: Were you finding any sort of self-examination, I'm talking about as the Foreign Service or your friends in the intelligence community I guess, wondering okay what was happening, what didn't we see?

WESTON: In the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact? Yes, there was some self examination but it was very different depending on who you are talking about. I think there was a bit of a surprise for those who hadn't actually spent time with dissidents. I really won't address the Soviet Union because I don't know well enough the rest of Eastern Europe. In the year before the GDR ceased to exist which was a while after the collapse of the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet Union, there had been massive expression of discontent which first showed itself as huge numbers of people seeking to get out of the GDR. So it was very different from the old days of trying to jump across Checkpoint Charlie, or swim the Spree River, or dig a tunnel, whatever. It was basically to take advantage of the changing situation in the rest of what we called Eastern Europe. So, you saw such things as large numbers of East Germans for instance crossing the border into Czechoslovakia showing up at the Embassy of the Federal Republic, thousands climbing the fence and refusing to leave until they got a West German Federal Republic visa and permission from the Czechs to leave. There were other incidents like that.

It was at the same time within the old GDR itself a movement not dissimilar to "Solidarity" in Poland but much more centered on the church, the Protestant church, dissent expressing need for human rights, regime change if you will. You saw all of that but I think the estimate of people was that the regime was efficient enough to contain these pressures and was perfectly willing to use very brutal methodology to do so. I guess I underestimated, thinking back, reexamining assumptions, how fragile that regime really was; that once it really lost the assurance of Soviet intervention to keep itself in power, its abilities to use really brutal methods and authoritarian methods to keep itself in power were far less effective than I thought they would be. I think at least for myself I would have to say I did a personal reassessment of what I had thought in the early '80s.

Q: By the summer of 1990 you were in Brussels? Is that it?

WESTON: Summer of 1990.

Q: What was your job?

WESTON: DCM at the U.S. Mission to the then European Community, now European Union.

Q: Who was ambassador then?

WESTON: Tom Niles.

Q: Well, Tom is an old hand, am I right? I was his first supervisor overseas, he was a vice counsel in Belgrade. Tom has been one of our preeminent ambassadors. Were the European Community and the group around it looking at what was happening in Eastern Europe? I mean it had a huge impact on the whole European Community idea and all of that. What were you getting in these very early days?

WESTON: Remember these were the days in the early '90s when the European Union was changing rapidly, the terms used were "widening and deepening". It clearly saw early on it was going to absorb the old GDR. The GDR basically became a part of the Federal Republic so that's one country. You can call that enlargement or whatever you want but it was very clear that enlargement, widening of the European Union, was the direction history was taking. Moreover, it was widely recognized that the prospect of joining western institutions, in particular the European Union but also NATO was a very powerful card in fostering democratization, collapse of the Warsaw Pact. It was widely viewed as the case and still is to this day that a lot of the geneses for the end of the cold war, the collapse of the Warsaw Pact in the Soviet Union found itself in the activities in another multilateral process which was the CSCE, now OSCE. So, there was a view very much in Brussels, certainly by '90, that the European Union would and ought to be expanding eastward along with NATO ultimately and that that was a useful instrument in fostering change in Eastern Europe as it was with NATO. Why this is important is because I end up coming back after Brussels to do NATO, the EU and everything else in European Affairs. But then I was doing it from the EU point of view and that was the expanding party.

The other part is the EU which had just enlarged a couple of times in the '80s and took on new members. It was moving farther and farther in what's called the "deepening of European integration" in a whole series of areas. During this period I was in Brussels from '90-'93. That was the time leading up to the Maastricht Treaty, which was the establishment of the European Union from the European Community. The formal adoption of a common European foreign and security policy, this was all deep in integration and most importantly was the establishment of a common currency, the EURO, as a logical extension of the European monetary union and currency union. There were all kinds of other things going on, integration in police affairs, the judiciary and, so on. There was a widening and deepening going on very dynamically within the European Community until Maastricht, after which it changed to the European Union. The EU was very much associated with what was going on in what we used to call Eastern Europe and now call Central Europe.

At the same time there were some other things going on which were very troublesome in terms of European affairs and European integration. The big one in the economic fields was we were trying to settle the Uruguay Round while I was there. That formed a great deal of my work as well as working with many of the trade disputes we have with us to this day, subsidies for large aircraft, the banana regimes of the EU. The list goes on and on, foreign sales corporations...

Q: Did you get into farm subsidies?

WESTON: Absolutely, common agricultural policy and American subsidies. That was a key issue in the Uruguay Round. On the more political side of things, this was the time when Europe was trying to also deal with the break up of Yugoslavia and the rather aggressive nationalism in the former Yugoslavia, not very successfully dealing with it on its own.

Q: I'm wondering at the beginning of when you got there, after all as Foreign Service Officers of part of a bureaucratic process, although we're used to fast breaking situations, most bureaucrats are, I mean they're used to how things are, they like them orderly and having all these peculiar countries all of a sudden becoming free and clamoring to get in. I would have thought that the bureaucratic establishment must have been aghast?

WESTON: Absolutely and that was most pronounced in NATO, I would say. It was also present in the European Community but it was most pronounced in NATO and the whole issue of NATO membership was in the forefront. We will get into when I go back because then I took responsibility for this in European Affairs.

Q: But what about during the time you were there about the EU. What was our stance?

WESTON: At that time we were concerned about what NATO would become. The primary instrument for American diplomacy, defense and security policy in the trans-Atlantic system in Europe in the post cold war period had, if not lost its reason for being, then been called into question. I mean, what was NATO for if not to keep the Russians out, keep the Germans down, and keep the Americans in. That was very much at play. There was a tendency on the part of U.S. analysts to see the integration of Eastern Europe and Russia plus states of the former Soviet Union, that the preferable path for joining Europe and the Atlantic system having a very active and robust OSCE in security matters. Using whether it was admission or special relationships with the European Communities as the primary instrument to have the drawing card of the integration work toward democratization in Central and Eastern Europe and in the former Soviet Union. Still using NATO to foster relationships but relationships short of membership. I think there was tendency to say that the real responsibility for integration of these countries lies with the Europeans, the European Union. It was a very dynamic period in the variable geometry of Europe, let alone the variable geometry of the European Union.

Q: Did you have the feeling that the French jumped into this with both feet because seeing that here was a real chance of their dominating a situation which they couldn't do with NATO and all and at that time the Germans were relatively quiet, I mean they weren't pushing themselves, how did you see this?

WESTON: I would not view it that way. Remember the 2+4 talks which led to the unification of Germany. France and the UK to some extent were not enthusiastic about the outcome of those talks yet they did succeed, so that the integration of the first element of what used to be Central Europe, the old GDR, took place. It was with French and UK acceptance ultimately but dragging and kicking all the way in. Since you asked about France specifically, I think there were some in France who saw potential enlargement relationships with Central and Eastern Europe and with Russia as a means to enhance French interests but more on the economic side, French commercial and business interests basically against Germany dominating those things. Germany having been the traditional economic, by geography and every other way, the traditional trade power and politically, to some extent, you had an issue within the European Community. The German, French engine for integration but there was always the French concept that that engine only worked as long as it was the European Union which was really a greater France. After the unification of Germany, when it became a much larger country in population and every other way within the European Union than France, France did what almost any state does. It starts to think maybe we need some political relationships around the edges to balance off that great continental land power in Europe. Now this is kind of World War I type of thinking, but there were elements of that. I think there was a prevailing French belief, remember Jacques Delors was the president of the Commission, there was a continuing French belief that the European Community was in many ways ideologically, historically, politically a French creation and that only as a greater France was European integration really in French interest. I think this was the prevailing concern among the French political elites, whether enlargement of the European Union especially into Central and Eastern Europe, where you might expect these countries to be much closer to German interests. This would be in French interest. Whether deepening as it was being talked about then of the European Union, greater integration of all kinds of areas would really lead to a European Union increasing French power in the world, which had been the traditional motivation for France after containing Germany.

Q: The phrase that is used now by one of our political leaders "old Europe vs. new Europe".

WESTON: Well, not really, because one of our political leaders would put both Germany and France in total Europe of course and that's the German/French relationship here and the relationships of others to France and to Germany was much more a factor than that kind of a division.

Q: Were we at this time, maybe it wasn't expressed openly, was there thought among your colleagues, what does this expanded European Union mean, are we building a rival to the United States particularly? We are talking about commercial and economic and I don't think anybody is thinking in military terms.

WESTON: Well some were, actually.

Q: Okay, well let's talk a little about it.

WESTON: We had terrible problems with European security and defense policy because of it. Yes, those concerns were there and depending on which official you were talking about or thinker would color how much of a concern these things were. I think though at that particular time remember we're talking about the Bush 41 administration. James Baker as Secretary of State, had a great interest in the result of ending the cold war. You can call it liberation, you can call it whatever you want but the geopolitical situation had shifted significantly in U.S. favor. The main interest for the U.S. had was in assuring that remain the case. So, you had the emphasis on policies, for instance, the rush to open embassies in the countries of the former Soviet Union to in part a guard against them being reincorporated into some resurgence of the Soviet Union was very strong. The same thing applied in the countries of the Warsaw Pact and the Baltic states; that the way to consolidate this wonderfully changed geopolitical situation for the United States with the end of the cold war was by integrating these countries into the larger whole of Europe. That was I think for most American policy makers the operative and most important element. Now, were there concerns about Europe as an economic rival? For most people it was quite clear that a very prosperous integrated Europe was very much in U.S. economic and commercial interests. I mean I don't know what the exact statistic is today, but then a third of European industry was really U.S. investment and vise versa of trade, which was huge and far less important than investment, I would argue. 98 percent was absolutely trouble free, mutually beneficial so Europe as a great economic rival what are we talking about here. That Opal of Germany as a rival to Chevrolet in Detroit or something like that, it just didn't make sense to people who really understood economics. This is not to say that there were not concerns. They were more in the political realm and on the Hill when an issue would come up. Normally it was a trade policy issue although there were some in the field of anti-trust competition policy, but the trade policy folks felt that it would be a trade dispute and there will be trade disputes, different trading systems, all that sort of thing particularly in the field of agriculture. Those disputes because they were pretty tough and they involved an awful lot of money and a lot of special interest groups, they could get translated very rapidly, at least rhetorically, into concerns about Europe as an economic rival but I don't think they were realistic and they never, never trumped this greater U.S. strategic interest that I've talked about.

Now, there were similar concerns about the development of ESDP (European Security and Defense Policy) in defense issues. There was a perception in some quarters, I think the perception was justified for some people in Europe as an analysis of some of the forces that play in Europe, particularly in France, that the motivation for ESDP was not to create a rival military power to the United States but to basically undermine American dominance of security in defense policy in Europe as exercised through the American role in NATO. That led to bitter, bitter discussions. I mean the United States supported the development of the European security defense policy for I believe a whole series of very good reasons but it was always with very strong concerns being expressed that it only take place within NATO and not at the exclusion of the United States. There is a whole history of that diplomacy from this period of time.

Q: It is becoming more and more obvious that the United States had a military that was just light years ahead of European military in transporting...

WESTON: Absolutely.

Q: and in a way the Europeans are, I won't say a banana republic, but they are just not in the same...

WESTON: The emphasis was not so much on technology but remember you had huge European standing armies in Germany in particular but throughout NATO. Their concern was you had the wrong thing. You had an awful lot of troops sitting there defending against a land attack by the Warsaw Pact into Germany. That wasn't going to happen. What was going to happen and what was going on at that time was the emergence of conflicts including in Europe in the former Yugoslavia but in other places as well either through ethnic conflict or failed states or disintegrating states and the concern was this was the real issue for the future. It was very much the issue in Yugoslavia, well ex-Yugoslavia at that time. It didn't take much of a look across the Caucasus and into Central Asia and the Middle East, and everything in Africa, to realize there was a problem in a lot of places. The U.S. at that time was taking advantage of the end of the cold war, was dismantling a lot of its military and there were not reductions in defense spending but a decline in the rate of acceleration of defense spending for the United States. The same thing happened in Europe, but the United States was trying to adapt itself even then to the post cold war environment. There was a requirement for troops to be more mobile. Europe would have liked to have done the same thing but was still dealing with individual and national forces, defense procurement systems and everything else. It became most apparent in some of the costliest items for defense which the United States already had because of its role in NATO in defending Europe, a tremendous lift capability...

Q: Airplanes.

WESTON: Airplanes, although not only airplanes but mainly its role in NATO which fit perfectly with the need, if you had to deal with conflicts somewhere, you had to get some troops there as well as a very well integrated command and control capability which was not the case in Europe except through NATO. It seems strange saying this today in the wake of the various reports on the American intelligence community, but still, with an intelligence capability in particular for military use which was integrated. The Europeans had nothing remotely comparable to it. So, in these big ticket items and by big ticket I mean a lot of U.S. military intelligence is based on satellites, surveillance and this stuff is expensive. The United States for different reasons already had these things which were applicable to the new threat environment, if you will, which the Europeans didn't. The whole capabilities issue we had been bogged down in NATO for years on how much you're spending on defense and trying to foster interoperability and rationalizing their programs going back, you know to the '50s on all of these things. What was different in the early '90s was the change to the post cold war environment and the thinking that was going on about that which led to very different assessments about the United States and Europe just because of the nature of the military forces in existence then.

Q: Was there at the time you were in the EU, I mean you obviously didn't deal directly with NATO, NATO was...

WESTON: Did all the time. We had a Mission to NATO, our DCM there was John Kornblum who is an old friend. I had been his deputy in German Affairs, we lived three houses apart in Brussels and we were all the time dealing with these things. We tried. The ambassador was Will Taft, who is legal adviser now, who was deeply involved in this development of European security and defense identity, deeply involved obviously with dealing with ex-Yugoslavia so there was a degree of cooperation. I would argue we worked together between the Mission to the European Community and the Mission to NATO which was unprecedented then because of the changed environment. I can remember John and I putting together lunches which we would co-host and I would bring in some of the kind of political security types from the EU side of things and he would do the same with NATO. You find these people live in the same town Brussels and they didn't know one another. There was a deep interaction between our two Missions.

Q: Was there any effort on our part, maybe this had been going on for but hadn't gone anywhere, but getting the major countries in NATO to start developing their own airlift and their own fancy equipment?

WESTON: It was quite clear that we were all going to change the type of militaries we had or had to at some point given the new threats that we thought we would face. We wanted the Europeans to first of all spend more to develop their capabilities but to develop their capabilities for light easily mobile infantry in essence and to integrate in the sense of rationalizing their forces so that they could operate together more. The United States was an early supporter of such things as the so called Euro Core, these joint military organizations which were springing up at that time. They weren't limited to land forces; there was EURO NAV for naval forces and things like that because we believed there needed to be a rationalization as well as improvement in capabilities. I think for the most part we were not arguing that Europeans should spend a great deal of those defense resources on duplicating U.S. lift capabilities or intelligence. That's not what they really needed to do. Some help would have been nice but that was not the biggest gap in the common capabilities to deal with the new threats. There was some fear that if we went down that path what you would be devoting scarce European defense resources to something which would duplicate what already existed in NATO because of U.S. forces. That could have the effect of undermining NATO. You can find references to someone citing Europeans have got to build the lift capability. This was particularly true because in the early '90s we were trying to stay out of ex-Yugoslav conflicts and they wanted NATO to stay out of it. We were fostering the EU doing things well, the problem is the EU without lift capabilities, intelligence, command and control, did not do well militarily in that part of the world.

Q: Also too, it is one of the problems that one looked at NATO and can't help resembling the old American confederation and...

WESTON: In the sense that it is all consensus based.

Q: Yeah and in Yugoslavia in those early days NATO or whatever it was didn't have the will to essentially confront the Serbs.

WESTON: But that means the U.S. didn't have the will; that's in fact what the case was.

Q: We stayed out of it, hoping that the Europeans would take care of it.

WESTON: Exactly, which meant that NATO stayed out of it.

Q: And it meant that whoever was doing it was not willing to confront. I mean they were willing to...

WESTON: I mean there were plenty of Europeans who wouldn't have minded NATO taking it on...

Q: Yeah.

WESTON: But we had not gone through the transition yet of the Germans deciding they could operate "out of area" which Yugoslavia would have been. Now they're in Yugoslavia, they are in Afghanistan, but that had not happened at that point, that transition in German thinking. That was the early stages of them, one of the things we worked on. I think the fair way to describe this is because the United States did not want to be involved in these conflicts.

Q: Did we feel that there could be a NATO spin off without the United States to go into Yugoslavia?

WESTON: No, not given our role in NATO. I think this is behind; we support it, the Europeans taking the lead role in dealing with ex-Yugoslavia. The reason is that we didn't want to and that included, the United States totally dominated NATO. It may have consensus decision-making but it was totally dominated by the United States. That's why it was such an effective instrument of U.S. policy for so many years.

Q: Turning to a slightly different subject, were you surprised, and also your colleagues as an old German hand, about the weakness, the horrible economy of East Germany, the GDR. It was named the tenth largest power and all it turned out to be...

WESTON: I think the big difference when the GDR still existed; their economy was compared to the other economies of the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet Union. That comparison you would put the economy of the GDR as one of the most advanced, technically and every other way. But, if the comparison changes to the GDR economy, a centralized state controlled economy incredibly inefficient, and you compare that with the economies of Europe or North America it is clearly failing. I don't think it was a surprise that when the comparison was being made to Western economies that it was, that this just wasn't going to work. It didn't take very long wandering around the old GDR, or East Berlin to see that they build a building and the faï¿½ade would fall off two weeks later. This is not good. Or you saw these factories which were completely irrational in terms of microeconomics but you took that and you compare it to what was going in a Bulgaria or even a Poland and it looked pretty good. You compared it to what was going on in Frankfurt or Dï¿½sseldorf and it looks pretty bad. I wouldn't say it was a surprise. Just different standards.

Q: Our focus is wrong in a way wasn't it; it was more looking at the Bloc as a Bloc and looking at GDR's place in the Bloc...

WESTON: Oh yes, it's the Warsaw Pact.

Q: Rather than thinking in terms of competition straight on with West Germany?

WESTON: Yes, in a Bloc but even within that, I will go back to the '80s which was when the GDR was still around and it was thinking of the GDR in a little bit different way. You had even within this Bloc one place where you got something which approached German standards of manufacturing in some areas with incredibly cheap labor. I think I told the story of about how IKEA, when it came into being, it's a Swedish corporation, sourced all of this wood working which was in the area and which it is the lower end of technology obviously but you could argue the GDR, the wood working skills present in the GDR were comparable to those in the Federal Republic and with much cheaper labor. It was within the Bloc but you could still see these differences in the factory production which led to a lot of economic interaction. There was a lot of economic interaction between the GDR and the Federal Republic.

Q: When you were in Brussels this whole thing, the world was changing, were you getting a lot of visitors from Poland, East Germany, Ukraine and all coming in and asking what is this all about, trying in a way to catch up because they had been pretty well isolated. Was there almost a training or a continuous briefing operation going on?

WESTON: Which continued well into the '90s and other jobs which we will talk about later that I found myself in. Remember the U.S. was very supportive of the building of relationships between the European Communities and the countries of Central Europe, the Baltics, and countries of the former Soviet Union. In part because we favored immigration there more than we did enlargement of NATO because of some fears about NATO at that time, you know, finding its new role and all that. We found ourselves in the situation where there would be all kinds of visitors from all of these countries. It was Central and Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union, the Baltics and increasingly the Balkans. Initially Slovenia but I can remember the first group of Albanians who came in, it must have been after the revolution in Albania which was '92, something like that. We found ourselves in the role of the United States of kind of helping to foster relationships and contacts with a lot of these folks with the institutions of the European Community. I can remember, let's take the Albanians a specific example, right after the revolution the United States was very supportive of this. I remember James Baker went to Albania and adulation from the crowds. Shortly after that we had the first delegation from Albania, the new government coming to Brussels for talks with the European Union. It was led as by a deputy foreign minister. One of the key meetings we arranged was lunch at my house with some folks from the foreign affairs part of the Commission, the development side of the Commission, the European Council, member states and the European parliament. So here you have the United States fostering relationships, and that occurred repeatedly in those days.

Q: It's an interesting thing you are bringing up something that comes through on all these interviews and that is the role of the United States as sort of the one country that takes the mega view, often we are wrong and I'm not putting this on as saying God aren't we wonderful but the point being, it comes close to being a term which sends a shudder up some peoples spine, but the indispensable country. But, at the same time no matter how you slice it the United States takes the role of and its allowed to, maybe sometimes because of geographic separation of coming in with power but saying "hey, why don't you all get together and do this, it's a good idea and have lunch with us" or something like that.

WESTON: That's of course how European integration started.

Q: Yeah, yeah.

WESTON: The Marshall Plan. A fundamental part of the Marshall Plan was that you guys start integrating your economies.

Q: I mean all along they were...

WESTON: That's continued

Q: In so many other things, in Asia and everywhere else, other things have started without our help or even with our opposition but for the main part certainly the post World War II role is very much the fingerprints of the United States is all over it.

WESTON: Absolutely, and I think the fingerprints of the United States are all over and continue to be all over all kinds of developments of the world. Look at Turkey and the European Union now, something which I have been working on in recent years. Would that be where it is now, not sure, no one can be sure when and if it will actually happen. I think it will but would it be as advanced as it is now without U.S. involvement? And that's, of course, what is the U.S. doing involved in a decision on the part of the European Union about its membership? I wouldn't use the term indispensable power, because I think you can find when you said the U.S. is the only country with a mega view. I think you can always find in other places the same kind of analytical steps which lead to the pursuit of policies which appear to have a mega view of the world and history.

Q: Of Jean Monnet.

WESTON: John Monnet is a very good example. I think one of the great successes of American policy in the post war period and I'm not sure that I would claim it still exists today but the United States has played a crucial role in advancing enlightened policies. What I mean by enlightened are policies which are likely to build a better world in terms of security and economics and environment and everything else. Now that's all in U.S. interest, a more secure world and a more prosperous world are all in U.S. interest, so it's reasonable that the United States would do that but I think it's been incredibly successful in the post war period doing that.

Q: One looks at things and we are getting quite a feel as we look back but in various things you feel that countries in Europe for example take a rather short range look at things.

WESTON: Or inward looking. Provincial almost.

Q: Very provincial, I mean, ok you sell military equipment to Iran or to China, those are issues right now but other things too of not caring about the consequences as opposed to open market let's get onto it right away. Maybe I'm cynical but...

WESTON: I may be less cynical and I've retained my youthful idealism. I think there are always voices and they exist in the United States as well which we look for short term advantage as opposed to the mega view, to use your term. The interesting thing is that the United States has played a very important role in amplifying the voices as it just did in terms of deferring a decision on lifting the arms embargo to China, amplifying voices which had misgivings about this policy which were most prevalent in the United Kingdom, Germany and probably Scandinavia, far less prevalent in Europe starting with France. It wasn't so much the U.S. pointing a way to an enlightened policy as the U.S. aiding and amplifying a voice for enlightened policy on the part of elements in Europe in this particular case. I think that's a role which the U.S. has been very successful at and it's a role which ultimately serves very broad and important U.S. interests.

Q: Absolutely. Looking at the European role in this period is it the European Union?

WESTON: It was the European Union in '83 with Maastricht. It is the European Community until then, which is European coal and steel community, European Economic Community and EURATOM. It is a technical legal difference.

Q: Were you saying something, looking at it from afar I feel the bureaucrats are taking over so much of particularly economic policy role within the European sphere and people sitting in Brussels or wherever Strasbourg throwing out the laws and having a great time as bureaucrats, developing a tangled web that is going to make things ineffective.

WESTON: Well, I think what is actually happening is those bureaucrats are all doing things following decisions of the European Council. None of them are operating on their own. European Council, of course, being the Council for the member states, that's the way decisions, work in the European Union. What they are doing for the most part is in pursuance of those Council decisions, decisions by member states. They are called directives for the most part. We will choose the U.S. term regulations, in particular in the economic field but increasingly in fields associated with economics: to improve the basic rates on debt of the European Union which is a completely open market in goods, services, capital and labor, that's the goal. Now, you know the sorts of criticisms that you hear are of all of a sudden there is this regulation from Brussels that a cucumber to be sold cannot be crooked or whatever it is. There are all kinds of examples like this, you are absolutely accurate. You are trying to eliminate a lot of differing regulations like in France maybe you could have crooked cucumbers but in Germany you couldn't so that if you are going to have open trade between Germany and France in cucumbers you have to have one uniform standard and literally everything traded, be it goods or services, are subject to standards in one way or another. That is modern economic life. It is easy to almost make a joke of some of these regulations. The one that has always been my favorite was the regulations on the size of condoms. If you are going to have free trade the fact of the matter is you need those regulations and it's exactly the same thing as happens within the United States and has happened in the United States to permit open trade throughout the United States, trade and investment increasingly. I don't see it as the bureaucrats having fun; not many of them are having that much fun because what they are usually doing is not inventing new regulations but an area will be identified by the Council where there is a problem. There is something interfering with free trade usually and then they are trying to come up with the best regulation they can out of existing regulations which are different.

Q: When you were there what was the relationship to I think it's the Council of Europe or whatever it is, Strasbourg is it?

WESTON: Council of Europe is in Strasburg, right.

Q: I watch French TV when I look at the Council of Europe I see very fancy sort of butler type people with chains around their neck opening doors; it seems like a very lush, plush place.

WESTON: Well you'll see that in any European parliament almost, the same kind of trappings of government but the Council of Europe of course is a totally different organization than the European Union. You also have in Strasbourg the plenary sessions of the European Parliament which unfortunately take place in basically the same place as the Council of Europe, a totally different organization. The Council of Europe is a much older organization; it is more devoted to democratization of human rights in Europe and it always has been. It's the place where the European Charter on Human Rights was developed; it's the part of the Council of Europe, the European court on human rights to enforce that charter and so on. It is a completely separation organization with a different membership than the European Union. Now, there is a link and that is it is literally inconceivable because of the criteria for becoming a member of the European Union for any state to aspire to membership in the European Union which is not also a member of the Council of Europe but a member of the Council of Europe in good standing; that is, completely adheres to European convention on human rights and so on. European parliament is in Strasbourg, the Council of Europe is in Strasbourg, there is some overlapping membership in these technical, not even technical, they are not technical ties, relationships between the two. In fact it's very interesting there was just a call by the current secretary general of the Council of Europe for rethinking about whether or not the Council of Europe should still exist given the existence of the European Union; especially because the new constitution of the European Union, which is now going through ratification procedures, may or may not be ratified by all member states and includes a fundamental charter of rights which is very duplicative of the Council of Europe. But, as I say, the membership isn't identical. But, there is a debate going on right now about whether you need a Council of Europe if you have the European Union.

Q: Did you find you were paying much attention to the Council of Europe?

WESTON: When I was in Brussels in the '90s, only with regard to the enlargement of the European Union and the European Community. It is a stepping stone. If you are not a member of the Council of Europe in good standing, that is, you are adhering to the European convention on human rights, you don't have a chance to join the institutions of the European Union. I have gotten more involved with it in my most recent job which is Cyprus because of some active cases before the European Court of Human Rights related to Cyprus and which has actually gone to plenary sessions in the Council of Europe. But, from '90-'93 it was very peripheral involvement and in fact, even to this day, say reporting, analysis, of the Council of Europe is not done from our Mission in Brussels to the European Union, it is done out of Embassy Paris and the Consul in Strasbourg.

Q: While you were in Brussels did the war in Iraq, Desert Storm, have much impact?

WESTON: It did in the sense of being a very successful undertaking and a very successful collaboration across the Atlantic to solve a very big problem. Remember it involved most of the major member states in the European Union. It wasn't in NATO either, although an awful lot of the assets of NATO were used in the process obviously and it only worked as a willing coalition because these folks were also allies of NATO so they could talk to one another on walkie talkies and what not. The Gulf War resulted in relatively positive feelings. Remember this was still the Bush Administration in which our relationship with the European Union in Europe more broadly was of a very different nature then it became in the Clinton Administration and certainly during the current (George W. Bush) Administration.

Q: We withdrew major military forces we used in Iraq and then we took them home. Did that change our role for your embassy?

WESTON: Not for the mission of the EU, but I was still a German type, and watching all of this stuff, that is where the forces came from, in Germany. Remember, I had worked on basing issues with all of these folks for years in the '80s. This was also a time when everyone realized that the constellation of forces which existed on the European continent was not the right one for the post cold war period, which was one factor. The other is we used a tremendous number of military assets in Europe to prosecute the Gulf War. I mean, anyone who got injured there didn't come back to the United States they ended up at the hospital whether it's Wiesbaden or Mainz or Bitburg or Rhein Main or somewhere in Germany. So that was a very strong view of American assets in Europe which remain in Europe to this day and are very relevant for the current war in Iraq.

Q: I would think that your Mission and your coming would have been very comfortable with the Bush I administration with Baker and George Herbert Walker Bush. Very much a Europeanist and from all accounts you definitely handled the unification process superbly and relations with what was still the Soviet Union, making sure it didn't feel overly aggrieved.

WESTON: And did a tremendous job at the day-to-day diplomacy across the Atlantic. That started with the President who I came to believe was a superb diplomat back when he was the Vice President and used to come to Bonn all the time. So I would say it was not only the legacy of dealing with the post cold war period and unification of Germany. I attribute a lot of some great successes in U.S. policy, you mentioned the Gulf War, but there were a lot of others during this period. It was also very much due to some really superb diplomacy from the President on down.

Q: Well then you left Brussels in '93?

WESTON: '93, right and I left early.

Q: Where did you go?

WESTON: Back to Washington to be Deputy Assistant Secretary of State (DAS). What happened in '92 is we had an election and the administration changed in '93. At that time Tom Niles had left. I was the chargï¿½ for an extended period of time in Brussels and then Niles was replaced by Jim Dobbins. In '93 I was recruited back by the new administration to be a DAS in European Affairs. I was to be the DAS who would for the first time be responsible for NATO and for all of this multilateral diplomacy. I went back as a DAS supervising the whole NATO structure of U.S. involvement as well as that with the EU and every other multilateral institution of Europe you could think of which there are many.

Q: Okay, today is April 29, 2005. Tom, March of '93, what was your portfolio and what did you do?

WESTON: March of '93 I was called back to be a Deputy Assistant Secretary of State in European and Canadian Affairs, and for the first time in the history of the Bureau, the job was designed to combine responsibility for both the EU side of the relationship with Europe as well as the NATO side. That had always been divided between two DASs in the past and technically its supervision of RPM (Regional Political Military Affairs) and what is now called ERA, then was called RPE (Regional Political Economic Affairs). This of course was in the wake of the end of the cold war and a lot of dynamism in all of these institutions finding a new role for NATO, developing an institutionalized relationship with the EU and so on, and changing what was CSCE into an organization OSCE and so on. It was putting together all of the multilateral diplomacy with Europe in one place. There was a political appointee as assistant secretary.

Q: Who was that?

WESTON: A fellow named Steve Oxman, very nice fellow, but how should I phrase this delicately, not with a lot of background in European affairs or the substance of it. He was a lawyer and investor from New York who had done a lot of fund raising for the campaign and he had worked as a staffer for Warren Christopher when Warren Christopher was Deputy Secretary back in the Carter Administration so many, many years befor13, 14, 15 years before.

Q: In Washington that is many, many years.

WESTON: Many, many years and that was his sole experience in foreign affairs as a staffer. That translated into many things, but in terms of doing the job all of the DAS's they had perhaps more responsibility than would normally have been the case. That's a delicate way of phrasing it.

There was another change at that time. You remember the first Clinton Administration, it was the first time that the old Soviet Union was separated out. Remember, Strobe Talbott came on early on as the head of something called OSNIS (the Office of the Secretary for the Newly Independent States) where as before the Soviet Union was part of the Bureau of European Affairs. Russia and all of the newly independent states except the Balkans migrated to this new office, so that left EUR a much smaller bureau obviously for the first time in my memory and I had been associated with EUR since '71. It went down to only three DAS's. I was doing the multilateral, the other two DAS's, Sandy Vershbow was another of the DAS's who did basically bureau management but also ex-Yugoslavia which was a very active account at that time and the third DAS basically did bilateral relations with the various countries. You had inevitably a lot more responsibility going to the DAS's than would normally be the case at the same time as you were reducing the bureau drastically.

Q: Looking at '93, things were beginning to hop. Looking strictly at your job what was the major interest to this multilateral side when you came on board?

WESTON: It was really the development of a new architecture for U.S. relations with the whole of Europe in the wake of the end of the cold war. Now some of this we've talked about before. I had been in Brussels relating to the EU. This was immediately after the Maastricht Treaty. There was a changing role for NATO. There was the early development of a common foreign and security policy by the EU, a European security and defense identity. Going back to Washington I continued doing much of the same thing. I would say it was the development of architecture in terms of relationships in all the fields of foreign policy, military, security, economic and in what in those days we called kind of "third pillar" issues after the EU, environment, health, law enforcement, police cooperation and all kinds of other things. The real meat of the job was the development of that architecture. This included such things as building, with the EU as an example, taking what we had done in the early '90s, the immediate post cold war period in terms of the transatlantic declaration, and developing an institutional structure for EU-U.S. relationships. We were building on that to develop what turned out to be called the New Transatlantic Agenda - a systematic way of dealing with all the issues.

We were also heading towards a NATO summit in January of '94. The great debate was, first, whether or not to enlarge NATO. The U.S. view was to go slow on that. Secondly, find a new role for NATO since it's previous role had totally gone, or was certainly far diminished. Third, look for ways in which NATO could relate to its former enemy Russia and Ukraine. So you had developments during this period of time culminating in the '94 NATO Summit: in particular the whole development of this concept of Partnership for Peace as a means of developing relationships with the newly independent countries of Central Eastern Europe including providing a path to ultimate membership. You have the development of the first formal relationships between NATO and Russia and NATO and Ukraine. You had the development of new roles for NATO in terms of its relationship to the emerging European security and defense identity, there is the development of this whole idea of CJTF (Combined Joint Task Forces). You had a new initiative on the part of NATO towards the Mediterranean, all of that was going on. At the same time I covered the EU and NATO we were making the transition from CSCE being basically an informal body which met under the auspices of an agreement from the '70s Helsinki Final Act but which had acquired a structural dimension in arms control, the remnants of MBFR in particular and other kind of confidence building that...

Q: MBFR is what?

WESTON: Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions in either conventional arms control issues as well as confidence building measures. The whole move was to create the OSCE from the old CSCE. It took place during that period and as I say had a great deal of architectural development. There were some other relatively less structured sorts of things going on like what was the relationship with the Western European Union to all the rest of things which became part of a combination of NATO's relationship with the EU, its incorporation into NATO in many ways. You had some development involving some other organizations such as the Council of Europe as well but those were of a far lower level of importance I would say in terms of U.S. interests. You had at the same time an attempt to develop some new way to respond to what was then the big on-going crisis which was the break up of the former Yugoslavia and the ethnic conflict which had taken place there. That took the form of the development of what was called The Stability Pact of Southeastern Europe which was also a part of our portfolio because it is part of this greater multilateral architecture with Europe. It was a huge complex of issues involving basically every U.S. interest that you can imagine with Europe, very geared towards the development of architecture. A strange development, but we were trying to make sense of the post cold war period.

Q: What do you mean by architecture?

WESTON: How NATO would change and how the United States would behave in NATO, what it's role would be, what its membership would be, how the EU would change, how you could develop institutional arrangements to perform diplomacy between the U.S. and the EU as opposed to its member states, institutionalize arrangements, that's what I mean by architecture.

Q: I would think that while you were looking at this, particularly NATO, and probably the OSCE developments that you would have almost a foreign power looking over you and monitoring you and causing difficulties, I refer to the operation Strobe Talbott had along with the old Soviet hands who wanted to make sure that the Russians didn't get unhappy with what was going on, they were going to be unhappy, I was just wondering...

WESTON: That's really not the way it turned out. You did have some real questions about moving bureaucratically the diplomacy with the former Soviet Union, Russia in particular and Ukraine out of the Bureau. However, there wasn't anyone working on NATO who didn't believe that one of the key elements of developing new roles for NATO, be it in the expansion of NATO, which was a new role to consolidate security in Central Eastern European, whatever, but new roles in general, had to have an element which brought NATO closer to Russia and Ukraine. You couldn't conceive of actually ever enlarging NATO into Central and Eastern Europe certainly not to the Baltics or even establishing relationships of the type which took place in NATO which are not only diplomatic but military, without at the same time having some sort of parallel relationships with Russia and with Ukraine. It was seen to be in our interest that Ukraine remain an independent state and a very large one. So if you were developing relationships with Russia you'd better be developing relationships with Ukraine at the same time. I think there was a coincidence of views there which might not have otherwise been the case.

The only place that I can remember having a really, really complicated way of doing diplomacy was in dealing with the Baltics. Here you had the Baltics which were part of the former Soviet Union remaining in EUR yet they were part of the former Soviet Union. We were dealing with some really difficult issues that Russians, call them a minority, but linguistically they were the majority in Latvia and all kinds of Russian military facilities in the Baltics and so on. The whole fate of Kaliningrad or Konigsberg, depending if you want to use the Russian or the German, which could only be dealt with somehow by dealing with Lithuania and Poland. Terribly complex issues. For instance, if you had any Balts involved we would have to do joint meetings just to bring it all together. It was a strange situation, but it was because of the history of the Baltic States. We maintained diplomatic representatives of the Baltic States all throughout the cold war period in Washington and London. That's the only place where I remember there being, conflict is too strong, but difficulties in meshing these two American bureaucracies. On Russia itself there was a real coincidence of views of what had to be done. So I wouldn't see it that way, that's with Strobe and kind of the whole way he ran the operation. There was a tremendous advantage of course in Strobe heading this, because of his relationship with the President which as we all know can be very important when you are performing diplomacy, whatever you want to call it. I would say that what could have been a difficult situation was not because of those two factors.

But you mentioned not only Strobe but you meant all the old American Soviet policy types. I don't put Strobe in the old Soviet type category but there were a lot of people, and I think myself to a certain extent among them, who were so used to dealing in a kind of paradigm of the cold war that it was very hard, especially in the development of this architecture, to break out of that. How you deal with Russia and how you deal with the Ukraine as well as the Caucuses, Central Asia? Russia and Ukraine were at the heart of it. It was pretty revolutionary as in the '94 NATO summit to have a formal relationship between NATO as NATO, whose mission had been pretty straight-forward, but now in a formal cooperative relationship with Russia.

Q: We are talking about the old Soviet hands in our Foreign Service, how about on the Russian side, did you feel that you were meeting a new generation coming along that thought differently, or were you dealing with people who were trained the way most of our older people were trained?

WESTON: You had a problem. The Russian diplomatic service remained the Soviet diplomatic service for all intents and purposes. What you saw happening to some extent was supplanting normal diplomacy by direct diplomacy with some of the new Russian elite. There were a series of people in the government, I can think of a couple of deputy foreign ministers for instance, who were frequently going back and forth between Washington and Moscow. In fact, when we got a little bit later, when I was up in Canada we had some very discrete meetings at the Residence in Canada between the United States and some of these Russians. It was a time of transition in Russia to some new people. What we found ourselves doing more than anything else is pursuing diplomacy with really new people in Russia itself within the government. We were spending far more time than we had ever done in the Soviet past with whatever Russian "democrats" we could find. At that time there were all kinds of people founding a Christian Democratic Party or a Russian-Out party or whatever, and there was a lot more direct involvement in diplomacy with these new political forces than was the case with the Soviet Union. It to some extent left to the side the traditional Russian diplomatic service. To this day it has not changed completely.

Q: I imagine too that the old Soviet military would be, as things were going they were undergoing great strain.

WESTON: This was when the military was really being asked to show its loyalty to the new forces of democracy, this is under Yeltsin. Remember the attack on the Russian White House? So yes, certainly, the military, the intelligence services, the security apparatus was in a period of transition, and you tended in your dealings not to deal with those folks. You tended to seek out newer forces in Russia some of which turned out to be pretty old-think type forces anyway but that's how it is. Society has changed very slowly in fact.

Q: Well how did we view the EU? As you are working on this, it wasn't all Soviet stuff but were we seen, I mean EU in a way was a culmination of what we always wanted back from the end of World War II but at the same time were we a little worried about this Frankenstein monster creation that...

WESTON: Well, there were elements of both. I think those who really worked in the area and thought about it, and certainly in the State Department, saw the development of the EU as an American interest. Certainly an American economic interest and in terms of the United States ability to work with Europe on the whole range of domestic political issues, law enforcement, whatever, emigration and all those sorts of things. There were some who thought, and I would include myself here, that this deepening enlargement of the EU, was in the security interest of the United States. If you ever got into a situation where NATO was called into question, as the premier security instrument in Europe, the only thing you would have left to manage security, among European states not vis-ï¿½-vis non-European states but among European states, would be the European Union. So the integration of defense and security policy within the European Union could ultimately, if need be, take the place of the denationalization of defense and security policy which happened in NATO among European states, in particular Germany.

There were others, however, and they tended not to be in the State Department as much as they did in the Department of Defense, who saw the EU not in its economic aspect but in its attempts to develop a European security and defense identity, a European army, whatever, as not in the interest of the United States. Not that it was ever seen that it would be a threat to U.S. prominence. It didn't take you long to add up the number of tanks and number of airplanes to see that for decades out there was going to be a huge disparity between the capability of the United States and even a fully integrated European military force. It was seen as a potential threat to NATO, as an alternative to a NATO in which the U.S. clearly enjoyed dominance. It was more that sort of concern about the EU's development.

In the economic field, at the time we would have a trade war every six months or so, about chickens or malt sprout pellets or whatever it happened to be, bananas. This continues to this day. There is no one who works whit the economic relationship between the United States and Europe, no one who despite those economic disputes - and they tend to be in a few very specific areas like agriculture - who does not see on the other hand the incredible benefits to the United States from European integration. It is a complicated answer; I divide it into different fields.

Q: This is the outlook. How about the OSCE or CSE because in a way this sort of straddled, the Russians were sort of signatory too. How did we look at this?

WESTON: There was a lot of concern that because the OSCE was a very different institution in terms of its membership because it included all the former Soviet Union and included everyone in Eurasia. NATO in addition to being a security institution was a defense alliance while the OSCE was never remotely a defense alliance. It was a security forum. It was more than a security forum because of its arms control components and confidence building. I think there was concern that if the OSCE emerged as the security forum for Eurasia that could reduce the salience of NATO as a security forum leaving NATO only as a defense alliance especially if it were combined with this other kind of fear of the EU becoming the security instrument of the European member states, the EU. So even though they were completely different institutions in the way they functioned and everything else, there were some of these concerns about the development of OSCE and what implications could be for NATO. Its quite amusing to see it today. The OSCE is basically a multilateral organization not unlike the UN. It is for regional areas, but in terms of its abilities to do conflict prevention, conflict management, peace building, things like that. That is what it is now, in essence, something very, very different than NATO which is basically using hard power for some of these things. You would never think of using the OSCE in a hard power sense.

Of course, now the big issue is Russian discontent with OSCE. Russia, or the Soviet Union, was the big booster of the CSCE and then the OSCE as an alternative. They would argue why do you need NATO when you have the OSCE because they were members of it, felt they had a veto in its decisions. Now, of course, they have withheld funding and call it into question because of OSCE activities in the former Soviet Union and in Russia itself, in Chechnya. Its been an interesting evolution but at the time when there were some of these concerns.

Q: How did the UN fit into this? I'm thinking from your perspective in the State Department; in a way everything overlaps particularly as soon as you get into this multinational arena. It's hard to even describe the architecture.

WESTON: The really effective instrument of the United Nations is the Security Council, not the General Assembly. In the Security Council it's the P-5 (five permanent members); and of course three of the five were very much entwined in all the things I was doing, that is the United States, the United Kingdom, and France. At any point in time you had two other Western European members of the Security Council and it would change with the rotating members of the Council. But because of the way the Security Council works there would always be a minimum of two permanent European members and two non-permanent members on the Security Council, plus the United States. Now that is five out of the fifteen members of the Security Council plus, of course, another P-5 member, Russia, which was involved in all the things we were doing multilaterally. There was a UN component to all of this. The component was very complex and would vary in different ways. For instance, I can remember doing work in OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) with basically an economic organization with a different, I was doing OECD as well in those days.

Q: OECD?

WESTON: Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, based in Paris. We were doing a lot of work because it was clear that it would be a long time before there would be enlargement of the EU to incorporate Central and Eastern Europe. We were doing a lot of work on potential membership sooner in the OECD. In particular, a lot of these countries - and I'm talking about the Polands, Hungarys, Czech Republics of the world - being taken on board in the OECD in a less than full membership role by adhering to some of the codes which made them more attractive as investment destinations. It also prepared them ultimately because they would start changing their laws to meet EU member standards. It was all very complicated but in the OECD we ran up against similar work being done in the UN's Economic Commission for Europe, which is a regional UN body, but part of the UN not a specialized agency in Geneva. There was always the need to coordinate these things.

We had the most difficulty with European multilateral institutions, and transatlantic multilateral institutions, and the UN per se, was always trying to come to grips on whether it was a NATO communiquï¿½ or a U.S.-EU summit talking about ESDI (European Security and Defense Identity) to decide the legitimate use of force. This was at the time of the Yugoslav breakup and the need for use of force in the Balkans. The issue which would always come to the fore then and was also, very prominent in the Iraq debate, is who is the legitimate authority on deciding on the use of force and for what reason. The United States has always reserved to itself the ultimate right to decide whether or not it can legitimately use force. It does not believe in all circumstances it would require approval of the Security Council to use force. That goes back to the founding of the United Nations, it's incorporated in self defense doctrine, UN charter and all that sort of thing. But, you know, there's what's in the charter and how you interpret it and so this debate was going on very much then and would come up every time when you think about what are the new roles in NATO. NATO's defense alliance using force outside the NATO area, for example in Bosnia-Herzegovina; could it do that without a Security Council mandate? There was always a lot of controversy then on this point which continues to this day. We would find ourselves, if not completely isolated, because the UK was always iffy on this point, almost completely in a different place than our European allies and our European friends and Canada, all of whom except for the UK. The British continue to take a somewhat different, more nuanced position. All of the rest believe that for force to be used legitimately it should have a mandate from the Security Council which of course was not and is not the view of the United States.

Q: You were doing this in '93 to when?

WESTON: '93 and '94.

Q: What was the situation in the former Yugoslavia, Bosnia, when you were there? I get my dates...

WESTON: Absolutely terrible. I mentioned Steve Oxman as the assistant secretary for Europe who was there when I joined. He basically lasted less than a year in large part because of the inability of the State Department, now you can identify this as the Bureau of European Affairs, the Secretary of State, the Clinton Administration, whatever, to come to grips with the ex-Yugoslav question. What happened is in June of '94 he was basically fired from the job and pretty much immediately stopped working. His successor was Richard Holbrooke who was then ambassador in Germany but Holbrooke did not come on board until the fall of '94. During the summer of '94 was the time of Shevardnadze, do you remember that term, the massacre there? The bombing of the markets in Sarajevo, all of these horrible events in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Things weren't great in a lot of other places like the Crimea, and the United States was not dealing with it. It was still in a the posture of Baker and the Bush Administration before that. "We don't have a dog in that fight," was their attitude.

Q: And post Somalia and...

WESTON: Exactly, absolutely, absolutely. All of those things played a role. We will have to get into post-Somalia later because there is a good story about Rwanda when I was in Ottawa. So what happened is Oxman was fired, but Holbrooke didn't come on until six months later. Remember I said there were three DAS's. I stayed on during this period of time. I left as Holbrooke took over because basically Holbrooke swept out, fired, everyone. There were about six months before he took over that Oxman was technically still assistant secretary but he was up in New York not even in Washington. So you had an acting assistant secretary. Sandy Vershbow had made previous arrangement to go over to the NSC (National Security Council) so he left at almost exactly the same time. He had been dealing, in so far as we dealt with it, with the former Yugoslavia. This left two DAS's. I was the acting assistant secretary then for this extended period of time and the other DAS was a woman named Mary Anne Peters. So, you had a situation in this huge bureau in which you didn't have an assistant secretary and you only had two DAS's from June until, about six months, about June until September, but a significant period of time. And at a time when our policies with ex-Yugoslavia were changing drastically. Holbrooke was coming in and he believed that there needed to be a turn around policy - that the United States had to take an active role in stopping what was going on, and he was right. I mean I don't disagree...

Q: During this sort of interim period and even before, was there a feeling of among people who dealt with this "damn it, let's do something". Warren Zimmerman - I'm not sure if he was there or not - was saying "a whiff of cannon will take care of it".

WESTON: Absolutely. We had at that time the resignation of, what was it, four or five officers from Yugoslav Affairs in protest about U.S. policy, that it was inadequate. This was the time of transition. The feeling I think, on the part of I would say universally among professionals, was that something needed to be done, more than had been done. But that was not the view of the Administration.

Q: How about one Tom Weston?

WESTON: I certainly thought that we should do something more than we were doing but that was not the view of the President or the Secretary of State.

Q: Was it that they were gun-shy or where were they were coming from politically, or what do you think?

WESTON: I think it was a combination of factors. I think it was the administration then, this is the first Clinton administration, at the same time the whole grade, remember Hillary Clinton was writing the new health care system. There was a wish to concentrate on domestic policy. We had the incident at that time in Haiti, remember where first we decided to try and dispatch some forces by ship to deal with the situation and the people were on the docks so the navy ship turned around because these people at the dock. Not wanting to be drawn into the morass of the Balkans. The Balkans is a rough place, and has been forever as we all know, and just a lack of policy on how you deal with failed states, with ethnic conflicts and whether or not the United States should be involved in this process, whether or not the United States should use force, and if so how, that was a big NATO question as well as in the UN. All of this was going around, and there was no policy, no decision. As I say, I think most career Foreign Service people who are at all involved in this, you mentioned Warren Zimmerman, he's absolutely typical of the feelings of most of us then. I was not working on it directly until Vershbow left and then he went to the NSC and he continued to work on it there and I was working as assistant secretary doing all this great architecture stuff, but all of us kind of uniformly felt that a hands-off policy on this, trying to have someone else take responsibility, just wasn't going to work.

I should say something else though since this is an oral history. I had been through in Brussels in the early '90s. You remember what happened in ex-Yugoslavia, this is George Herbert Walker Bush's administration in which we had a really hands-off policy on ex-Yugoslavia. The Secretary of State's quote "We don't have a dog in that fight" and Europe, meaning the European Union specifically, believed that they could deal with this situation. You had the Luxemburg Prime Minister saying this is the hour of Europe; you had the European Union for the first time as a kind of coalition of the willing among European member states. They were actually sending a military force for peace-keeping to Bosnia-Herzegovina. In Brussels then I would be meeting with my NATO colleagues in the U.S. Mission and we'd be joking about the European Union sent all these helicopters and you know the symbol of the European Union is this blue flag with a circle of gold stars and they put this right over the fuel tank of a helicopter and on their soldiers uniforms they have the EU seal right over the heart. I said, "What are they trying to do, give a target to everyone?" It obviously failed drastically and this failure was going on as I was back in Washington as well. It was not hard to figure out that this situation would not be, I'll phrase it diplomatically, "adequately addressed without the involvement of the United States".

Q: Were you picking up, I mean obviously you were and I'm talking about the Bureau particularly when you were in various modes there including the head of it, picking up emanations from Europe, from the Brits, from the French and others saying "for god's sake fellows we are wrong, get in here?" Or were they still trying to say this is our thing?

WESTON: No, no, by this time, not from the French in particular but certainly the British, the Germans, the Dutch were really looking for a way to bring NATO, as the only really viable military force available to deal with it, which meant the United States.

Q: Well, you do get this feeling and it continues until today that the European Union with the exception of the British have a wonderful way of pontificating and saying "oh, don't do this and don't do that" and unwillingness to accept responsibility or to do anything.

WESTON: Yes, I would argue that quite differently. Certainly, if you are comparing the EU to the offensive military capability of the United States, Europe is a pygmy both in capabilities and in willingness to use force. That does not necessarily mean that the use of force, and the offensive military ability of the United States as often as we use it, is necessarily the right policy or a good idea.

Q: No.

WESTON: And, there are now increasing numbers of instances where Europe and the European Union, it sometimes is a coalition of the willing, sometimes the European Union is willing to use force, offensive military capability in particular to perform peacekeeping peace building functions, address ethnic conflict, that sort of thing, within the limits of their technical capabilities. You had the Artemis operation in the Congo, for instance, that was completely European coalition of the willing turned into an EU operation. You do have the main military operation now in Macedonia, as an EU military operation, the main military operation in Bosnia-Herzegovina will be an EU operation. So, I think you got a caveat, if you are comparing it to the U.S. and what the U.S. is willing to do, rightly or wrongly, Europe is a pygmy. But that is not to say that Europe does not have some capabilities far more limited than the United States and some willingness to use those capabilities to address some of the security problems that the world faces. I think that's a fair description of the situation.

Q: Another factor we might put in and correct me if I am wrong, but our Secretary of State at the time, Warren Christopher, was a lawyer par excellence, in bringing people together, making not a dealmaker, it is the wrong term, but being a lawyer and avoiding conflict. So he was almost physically designed to do that sort of thing.

WESTON: And not the forceful voice in policy within the Administration, I think you understand.

Q: We are still talking about the Yugoslav situation. What were you getting from the military, the Pentagon, and all of that? Were you getting...

WESTON: Great reluctance to get involved. Remember, Powell was Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff at this time, the Powell Doctrine, all of that sort of thing and no uniformed military person could look at ex-Yugoslavia and say I want to jump into that one.

Q: No, no.

WESTON: If I were a military person I could see why not and certainly not in a piecemeal basis, certainly not ala Somalia or anything like that.

Q: That seemed to be the pattern until the decision was made and all of a sudden "whomp", I mean there is the First Division. First armor sitting in the middle of Bosnia which is quite a different matter than the way things had been done before.

WESTON: And later on Kosovo. I think it was inevitable.

Q: I spent five years in Yugoslavia and four years in Greece so I guess I could go as a Balkan in and trying to explain it to an outsider about all the different ethnic problems in territorial disputes, you go back to 800 and...

WESTON: Christianity vs. Orthodoxy and then you toss in the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the remnants of Islam. It's the Balkans.

Q: It's the Balkans.

WESTON: Balkans, yeah.

Q: You lay down all the things that you were dealing with. By the time you left with the exception of the Balkan thing which sort of absorbed everybody, did you feel things were beginning to shape up by then?

WESTON: I think on the stuff that I was most involved with, which was not the Balkans, I thought had gone very successfully. I mean, remember the '94 NATO Summit initiated this Partnership for Peace, which was the way you could make a Europe whole and free, use whatever language you want, not only Central and Eastern Europe, but the Caucasus and Central Asia as well as Russia and Ukraine. Yet, to do that and we are talking '94, that is not that long after the collapse of the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet Union.

Q: '92.

WESTON: At the same time the relationship with Russia, the relationship with Ukraine, the advancements of European security integration, which was also dealt with in that '94 NATO Summit, there was the beginning of NATO's new role, the acceleration of NATO's new role relating to such things as combating proliferation. If you go back to all of the agreements which were reached at that summit, we had developed this very complex institutionalized structure for dealing with the EU. Europe was integrating so you had an instrument to help assist and enforce the pace of integration, and expansion of the European Union. So, you went through a transition with the OSCE, the great building of its capabilities in conflict prevention, crises management, defense of human rights. So if you look at all of that in total the architecture part of it was a very successful period of American diplomacy.

Q: As a professional Foreign Service Officer did you see particularly in the EUR Bureau, which has always been a dukedom unto itself, a change in the power structure and in the career development of officers coming up because all of a sudden the multilateral thing...

WESTON: Absolutely.

Q: Before that it had been kind of NATO and you did NATO and maybe but basically it was all bilateral with the overview of NATO and all of a sudden you've got all these other things.

WESTON: There was another thing that happened. EUR until this period of time, of course, also included the Soviet Union so you had the whole Soviet policy crowd but the Western European part was very NATO centered. Centered bureaucratically around RPM (Regional Political-Military Affairs), and the NATO desk. On the other hand, RPE (Regional Political-Economic) was, even the title of it, was economic which dealt with the then European Communities LEU or EU after Maastricht. Its focus was almost exclusively economic. That office did almost nothing on the political side of the European Union. This is why it was an interesting job I was in because it combined responsibilities for both of these offices. The diplomacy of it is you had RPM, which was very NATO centric branching out into a lot more soft power, because it was also responsible for the OSCE as well as for the development of European Security and Defense Identity, instead of the economic side of the house. At the same time the folks who were responsible for the EU, they became far less economic centric in two senses, one, getting much more into the politics of cooperation across the Atlantic, that is cooperation with the EU in dealing with third areas, Africa, Asia whatever. The U.S.-EU relationship was the platform for cooperation in the rest of the world, development assistance, and its expansion in this whole new area of integration in Europe which was the so called Third Pillar. It did justice, immigration, law enforcement, environment, food safety, health, all of these sorts of issues. You had a changing dynamic which expanded everything that I was doing and also broke down to some extent what had been the historic division within the bureau between the hard power folks doing NATO and basically economists doing the EU. A lot of those divisions I think broke down at that time.

Q: Also the new officers coming up had to know a lot about environment, immigration, you know...

WESTON: And they had to know a lot about NATO and the EU. It wasn't enough to know that the member states of the EU is this list of countries, it's that the decision, where do you go to influence the EU? You have to know something about the Commission and how the Council functions and what about the European Parliament and things like that. You have to be, at the same time, cognizant or conversant with the way NATO works because you are going to be using these instruments in tandem in pursuit of U.S. interests. It's there that you had the new emphasis on multilateralism and institutions as well as the expansion and what you had to know about it in terms of subject matter. Much more subject matter being a subject of U.S. diplomacy.

Q: I shudder to ask this Tom but was there anybody sitting down and saying "look we're going to need officers with this broad experience so let's take junior officers and make sure that they start having a clear path, exposing them to various things" or was it the usual throw people into the job and hope they learn?

WESTON: No, there was some thought put into that and it actually predates when I was in Washington. It's more in the early '90s with the kind of the increasing integration of the EU before Maastricht. I think it came out of the Bureau of European Affairs but a whole series of kind of programs were initiated in the training field, the idea being to develop some complex of training that people would benefit from to be able to do multilateral diplomacy. This included such things as a big expansion of the Fellowship of Hope Program which was, I don't know if you are familiar with it, an American diplomat would serve in the German Foreign Ministry or the Italian, Dutch, whatever, and then one of their diplomats would serve here; it's still going on. We had the establishment of one position a year to do EUR law at the University of Edinburgh added to the long term training for mid-career. There were area studies courses here. NFTAC (National Foreign Affairs Training Center) was revamped so that European area studies course which before had been comparative politics of Germany, France and the UK more than anything else, was revamped to focus on multilateral European, entry European trans-Atlantic institutions. So, there was mainly increasing training, some of it pretty hard academic training like this year in Edinburgh. There are all kinds of other things happening, like we increased the number of State interns, what did we call them, PMFs (Presidential Management Fellows), I think they are still called that at all of the multilateral missions, people who are potentially coming into the Foreign Service.

Q: Pickering established one of them.

WESTON: Well, Pickering came later, that's later, that's late '90-2001 or something, but it is the same idea. It was not only at the Mission in Brussels but at U.S. NATO at the OSCE Mission. There was also something else that I noticed at the time and that was you started to see more and more officers thinking about assignments both domestic and abroad trying to get both the pol/mil and econ or the EU and the NATO, or the OSCE and OECD training. If you had a tour at say U.S. NATO it was a good idea to come back maybe and work in ERA, that sort of thing happened in a consequent diminishing of interest in working on the bilateral desk, which is what I came out of, the German desk.

Q: That was the name of the game.

WESTON: Exactly, so all of those things were going on and I think all of them have accelerated since then.

Q: That is very encouraging. Tell me, speaking about relationships, while you were doing this, can you evaluate the cooperation or how you worked with particularly the British, the French and maybe your German colleagues. Were the French being a bit prickly and different, but how did you find it?

WESTON: Well in this period of time and for the rest of my diplomatic life I have worked very closely with literally all Europeans and Canadians, meaning including Russians and Central Asians, Scandinavians, Iberians what have you. There has always been and remains particular attention paid to diplomacy between the United States and what we used to call the quad, Berlin, which is Germany, UK, France, United States and developed into the quadripartite mechanism which was...

Q: It was Russia, wasn't it?

WESTON: Well, no.

Q: No, excuse me...

WESTON: The occupation included Russia. The quad is used as an expression of a diplomatic instrument used by the United States and used far outside of Germany. You would have a Quadripartite meeting before a NATO ministerial and your agenda would include Burma, Tanzania and God knows what else, non-proliferation, Middle East and everything in it. That quad instrument, even though it became less and less structured in the post cold war period, remained the place where U.S. diplomacy was concentrated and does so to this day. Now, it has taken a real blip in Bush 2 because of Iraq and because of personal relationships between the President and Schroeder, and all that sort of stuff, but it remains the focus of certainly American diplomacy with Europe. I would argue broadly for a series for reasons. You still are talking about the group of four who, if you are talking about almost any field of power still, you have to throw in Japan with economic power and increasingly China, if you are talking about military power you have to throw in a Turkey or Russia and what have you. But, if you are looking at power in total to influence events in the world, you are coming up with these same folks over and over again whether it is in a quartet or represented as the EU, or a contact group on Bosnia, or a quint or a quad or the P-5 in the United Nations, or whatever, you're still concentrating your diplomacy on a relatively small group. During this period of time that was certainly the case.

As long as I have been doing this stuff I would say overall American diplomacy is obviously the most closely involved with the United Kingdom, not necessarily in terms of what I did, I guess maybe my strong German background, or maybe it was because I went to school in France, I'm not sure which, but I've always felt that we need more balance in our European diplomacy and more continental diplomacy and maybe a little less with the UK, but that's just me. At that particular period of time clearly our closest diplomacy was with the United Kingdom and secondarily with France and Germany.

With Germany it was an unusual period because it was of course in the wake of German unification, the end of the division of Germany. There was a very mixed thing going on, we talked in an earlier session about the kind of change in the German political elite from the war generation to the postwar and what was going on was a kind of a duality, a contradictory duality in a sense that German diplomacy was still feeling its way as this now big, much bigger economically and everything else power in Europe. The integration with the GDR economically and socially the Federal Republic...

Q: I was reading in the Economist today that Germany looks like it is heading for a recession and it doesn't seem like there is any real ...

WESTON: This was all going on there. You know, people who could see it and at the same time you had the continuation of this "let's look after German interests" especially since the big threat, the reason Germany was contained is gone, or was perceived to be gone, so you had a contradictory duality. I continue to this day to work along with the Germans but it was a different kind of mix at this particular period in time. With the French you basically have a division in French diplomacy the main weight of which in French diplomacy is on the Euro Gaullist side. That is, 'if it's good for anyone but France, and certainly if for the United States, it certainly has to be bad for France.' That still is a prominent element of French diplomacy. It certainly was then and it was reflected more in the relationship with the EU and in the limits of what could be done in NATO than anywhere else. You also always have members of the French political elite who are more trans-Atlantic. You have a duality in French behavior as well.

Q: When I do these interviews part of the thing is almost a shrug when you talk about the French, oh well, the French being the French, but obviously we've worked with them and essentially worked well with them over a period of time but it's difficult, I take it?

WESTON: It takes a lot more diplomacy, is what it takes. Look what just happened on Lebanon with France and the Security Council.

Q: Yes, France and the United States have really gotten together.

WESTON: Exactly.

Q: The height of disagreement over Iraq.

WESTON: And Syria is moving out of Lebanon. This is a real accomplishment of diplomacy, but you really have to practice a lot more diplomacy with the French. This means talking to them a lot more, talking to a very wide range of the French, you have to spend a lot of time, you have to flatter them, and act like you believe in it, its diplomacy. Lie, cheat, bribe, and flatter but it works and the results are good with the French.

Q: I would think one of the problems that you would find in dealing with European affairs, alright, you've learned the flattery, how to approach the French in a way it sounds very much like courting a rather skittish young lady or something like that. But the problem is that you have within the American body politics an awful lot of people who look at the Service and blow off, I'm talking about congressmen and politicians and others which must send the French up the wall.

WESTON: Well it does and of course it is the equivalent...

Q: How does it work?

WESTON: It abandons an instrument of U.S. influence in power, is what it does. That is the worst thing. You have an ability to influence French behavior in favor of U.S. interests and you either choose to do it or choose not to. If you blow them off, you can't deal with them, you are choosing not to use that instrument. There is some cost to U.S. interest there, hard to quantify, but there is a cost. It is not a very wise thing to do.

Q: Absolutely.

WESTON: It is not a rational assessment of U.S. interest.

Q: Looking at the other side, the other side of the hill, how did the French deal with the Americans? What would you say if you were a French diplomat, how to get the Americans to do things?

WESTON: I think if they think, and this includes Euro-Gaullists, French Gaullists of whom there are many especially among the French political elite, so called "midday Yak" from the Great Ecoles (great schools). If they have the perception that they have some ability to influence U.S. policy through diplomacy, whether or not that perception is accurate is not the point, if they perceive that they have some ability to do it, they can be very effective and they know that. The French are better than anyone else in Europe at seeking out those they think would be susceptible to French influence.

Q: Did they work on you.

WESTON: Sure, I'm on the surface susceptible to French influence and a Francophile.

Q: What is your particular susceptibility?

WESTON: I'm not sure that there really is one, but there is a perception of one and it is my willingness to spend a great deal of time listening to people talk and responding to them in a you know... I hadn't thought of it that way, if they had or not didn't matter. You know, it's diplomacy, it's what we do.

Q: I take it you left this job; Holbrooke came in and cleansed the whole...

WESTON: Right, all the deputies left. Well, one, Sandy had already left many months before but there were only two left so it wasn't a big deal but just before Holbrooke came back in his principal deputy arrived, who was John Kornblum, who is a life long friend. I had been his deputy and everything else. A German type and also a graduate of Michigan State where I went to school and that is where I was last week at Michigan State's 150th anniversary. In the fall of '94 I left.

Q: So whither?

WESTON: Remember we had come back from Brussels only two years before and so we were not ready to go out again. The normal thing when you leave a DAS job is you go out to an ambassadorship. But my younger daughter was in high school, my oldest daughter was at William and Mary and we had just moved back and were not ready to do anything. What happened is, we knew this was coming up a couple months in advance I'd be leaving, and at that time I got a call from an old friend at Georgetown who had just taken over with this Institute for the Study of Diplomacy.

Q: Bob Gallucci?

WESTON: No, this was long before. Gallucci at that time was still in the administration. He was doing the North Korea stuff. We were on planes all the time and he would be doing North Korea and I would be doing NATO.

No, his name was Cass Yost. He had just taken over this Institute and he was looking for someone that he could get on a detail from the State Department to kind of build it up and do things. Cass and I have been friends for a long time and when he called he wasn't thinking of me in particular, he was calling to know if I knew anyone who might want to do this. In responding to him I said well, I might want to do this because we didn't want to move again, didn't really want to go through or move that soon, wanted to stay in Washington. This is a senior officer off-cycle or whatever it is, so you look around at the prospects and thought maybe I should go over to Georgetown and do this for a while. As it turns out, I decided to do that and worked out an arrangement to go over to Georgetown University on detail. I wasn't a Diplomat in Residence, which are these recruitment jobs that we have all over the place, but I was paid completely by the State Department on detail to this University. I went over and ended up spending two academic years teaching in the School of Foreign Service and doing a lot of projects to develop this Institute for the Study of Diplomacy. It had been in existence since '78 or something like that. It was started by the first director, David Newsom.

Q: Smith Simpson, I think was there.

WESTON: He was there for a while, right. At any rate this was right after Cass took it over. He did fundraising and I developed a lot of the programs.

Q: So you did it essentially from '94-'96?

WESTON: '94, '95, '96 school years, academic years.

Q: What was our approach to the study of diplomacy? I know some Europeans when they talk about diplomacy they end up by giving courses in international law which strikes me as being rather almost a counter productive study. It really doesn't advance you very much but this may be...

WESTON: Well, we are jumping ahead a lot in this oral history because what I do now of course is I'm teaching exactly that. I mean my graduate practice is the practice of diplomacy and I also head the foreign policy concentration in the school. So I put together the curriculum for graduate students on diplomacy.

Q: We will come to that but let's talk '94-'96.

WESTON: Right.

Q: What sort of things were you looking at then?

WESTON: What I was teaching? I basically taught one course which was called Key Global Issues which was basically looking at contemporary foreign policy issues broadly. These were all graduate courses. I taught another course which was about security interest in the United States which was a security course, security issues but worldwide so it concentrated more than anything else on Europe and on Asia. Those were the courses.

Then I was doing program type work, developing the programs used for the study of diplomacy and for those I did a lot of work on the United Nations and multilateralism. This was during the 50th anniversary of the United Nations. That is when I got to know Kofi Annan who was then Under Secretary General for Peace Keeping in the UN. He did a lot of work on the UN in multilateralism, did some work on comparative diplomacy between the United States and Russia which was of course changing at that time. I'm trying to think of different projects. The Institute for the Study of Diplomacy has at any point in time about a dozen practitioners, that is, American Foreign Service Officers, Chinese or whatever, Portuguese who spend a year there either doing research or teaching. So we spent a lot of time in assisting them and becoming teachers as well.

Q: Was there any tie, unofficial or anything between what you were doing and what the Foreign Service Institute was doing?

WESTON: Not at Georgetown then, there really wasn't. I can remember they did invite me over to do sections in area studies on EU, NATO and things like that but not on really the practice of diplomacy. That's changed some now. I now do part of the A-100 course. Mainly I'm teaching diplomacy over at Georgetown. There is more now but at that time it was more in the regional area and I don't know of anyone at Georgetown who spent time over here except in the area studies program.

Q: The students you were getting, where are they going, both American and non?

WESTON: Graduate students of the School of Foreign Service are about 40-60 percent, 40 percent foreign and 60 percent American. That has been pretty steady at Georgetown. It is a professional degree, a Masters of Science and Foreign Service. These are rough figures and they will change in any given year but it's roughly about a third go into government but government defined very broadly. That might be the American Foreign Service, it might be the diplomatic service of another country or it might be an international organization that falls under the government category. About a third go into some form of business, usually investment banking, and about a third go to NGOs (non-governmental organizations). That's very, very rough.

Q: We are talking about this time, were and maybe even referring back to the time you were in European Affairs, NGOs (non-governmental organizations) have become an increasing tool of whatever we want done.

WESTON: True.

Q: Were we paying would you say sufficient attention to that when you were in European Affairs and then when you moved to Georgetown? Was this sort of moving higher on the priority list would you say?

WESTON: I would say it was moving higher on the priority list, I'm not sure we were paying sufficient attention to it. Back in the '80s when I was doing a lot of the funding stuff, appropriations, was when this whole National Endowment for Democracy started. This was a funding mechanism for the National Democratic Institute. I think it was the '80s where you saw a real explosion in NGO work. Initially not so much in Europe, certainly not in Western Europe, but in Eastern Europe in human rights. In Western Europe it tended to be related to the environment and things like that, as it was in North America, the United States, and Canada. Were we paying sufficient attention to NGOs from the point of view of the State Department? Almost assuredly not. Was there an attempt being made to pay more attention to them and to see how they could fit in as instruments to advance U.S. interests? Certainly there was, especially when you'd gone into areas where I was working in like the CSCE or OSCE which tapped NGOs all over the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe to do a great amount of their work.

Q: Well then, after these two years you worked until '96, then what happened?

WESTON: Then it was time to do something again in the Foreign Service. We were going through the usual selection exercise, D Committee, what's the list of ambassadorships coming up. Remember I'm a European specialist so the list of ambassadorships coming up for career people is of necessity somewhat limited. I got a call from Jim Blanchard, up in Ottawa, and I think we spoke earlier that I had had something to do with convincing him to go to Canada in the first Clinton Administration, when he had hoped to become the cabinet secretary for transportation but I'm not going into that.

At any rate, Jim had decided, I'll put it that way, that he was going to have to leave Ottawa to campaign for the President's reelection, the '96 election, not only in Michigan, but there is a mid-western head of the campaign. He hadn't announced any of this and he was going to do this at a particular time but the situation would be created that there would not be a U.S. ambassador in Canada until after the election. It is the sort of thing that if the ambassador leaves and there is an election, especially at a post like Canada, you've got to have the election, new guy has to be selected, go through confirmation, etc. So, it looked like there would be about a year gap in Canada. His idea was that I come up and be chargï¿½ for that year. The person who was there who would have been chargï¿½, the sitting DCM, had been there three or maybe four years and wanted to leave and was going to go to Madrid or something like that. At any rate, would this be a good idea? Of course it was going up there as chargï¿½ so it's the chief of mission job up in what turns out to be our largest mission in terms of executive branch personnel. It also was Ottawa and at this particular time my youngest daughter was about to enter the 12th grade so we didn't want to pull her out of school to go somewhere else especially the range of other possibilities in Europe were somewhat limited for a career person. So this sounded like a very good idea and I went up to Canada as chargï¿½.

Q: And you were there for how long?

WESTON: I was there for almost two years. I thought I was going for about a year, there would be the election in '96, the President inaugurated, they'd choose a new ambassador, he would get confirmed sometime in the spring. I went up in the spring of '96 and I thought by the spring of '97 I'd be gone. So, even when I first went to Canada I was working with the bureau...what are you going to do in '97, we talked about going to Croatia and all kinds of places like that to another chief of mission job. As it turns out, there was a disagreement among two political appointees about who would be ambassador to Canada, this is after the election. In essence it did not get resolved until one of those appointees, London, opened up surprisingly. Admiral Crowe left London early and one of the people who was interested in going to Canada of the two was what's his name, he was Renaissance Weekend, Phil, anyway he ended up going to the Court of St. James as ambassador. That finally left the other guy to come to Ottawa, a fellow named Gordon Giffen. By the time this all got accomplished I ended up staying in Canada as chief of mission for about two years which for a career guy is pretty good because Canada was really interesting.

Q: We are going to talk quite a bit about Canada next time so we have gotten you to Canada in the spring of '96 and we talked about how you were assigned there but we really haven't talked about Canada so we can do that the next time.

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Q: Today is May 12, 2005. Tom, first of all you were in Canada in '96 until when?

WESTON: It was until '97, it was the middle of the fall in '97.

Q: What was the sort of diplomat's view of Canada in '96 when you got there? American views in Canada?

WESTON: First of all, the relationship between Canada and the United States is one of the most complex you are going to run into. There is so much integration in almost all sectors of activity, you know, environment, health, trade, obviously a billion dollars a day in trade. It's an incredibly complex relationship and hence a complex Mission. I think your question, what was the American diplomats' view of Canada is that it is a northern neighbor that you don't know much about. You can count on them for just about anything you need to count on them for but they are not terribly important in the greater scheme of things even though they are members of the G-7, G-8 and all of that, but seen very much as someone you can count on. But the relationship itself I think is viewed as almost self managing in the sense that the relationship is so close that the view is that an awful lot of the activities you would undertake in diplomacy with another country are basically done directly. Not only with the federal government but with state governments a lot of the time like on law enforcement and things like that. I think that was the common view. I don't think that's how things actually work with Canada because what actually happened is that the only place where all of this relationship comes together is in the Mission in Ottawa. You have this really complex situation. First of all you have 1700 executive branch employees under Chief of Mission authority. That is a big group of folks. Now, a lot of those folks are in law enforcement in one way or another. You have every law enforcement agency of the United States represented there which is a complex management problem to say the least, if you are the Chief of Mission. But, you have all kinds of issues that you are dealing with all the time and the Mission reflects that. Canada itself at that time was just coming out of the most recent referendum on Quebec sovereignty, which took place in '95. That vote was very, very close, I mean to the point where the expectation was that if another referendum were to be repeated any time in the near future Canada could break up. It was kind of an unusual thing if you think of this stable northern neighbor that you could have break up on you. There was a new premier in Quebec, a separatist premier named Lucien Bouchard who was incredibly charismatic. The United States had quite a solid policy on the unity of Canada which was to support unity including an intervention in the referendum campaign which probably was helpful in assuring that Canada didn't break up in '95. I would say probably the most sensitive area in dealing with Canada at that time was the U.S. role in the continued unity of Canada along with this incredibly complex Mission and relationships covering all areas of endeavor by the two respective governments.

Q: How was the Canadian government constituted when you went out there in '96?

WESTON: The premier Jean Chrï¿½tien, the Liberal Party head, only left the prime ministership about a year and a half ago so he was prime minister for a long time. Relations with the United States in particular were very much the province of the prime minister. You had a full liberal government, so the foreign minister was a fellow named Lloyd Axworthy, who was very active in all other aspects of Canadian policy and the relationship with the U.S. The real relationship with the U.S. was kept pretty close by the prime minister. It is a parliamentary system of course and it was a majority liberal government at the time but with these kinds of political dynamics of Quebec separatism accelerating.

There was another thing going on politically. The Conservative Party of Canada had basically for a whole series of reasons some of which are scandal related, some of which are the tired old party had pretty much become weaker and weaker throughout Canada. they had traditionally been the opposition. When I was in Ottawa the opposition in the parliament was actually the Bloc Quebecois, the Separatists Quebec Party. It is unusual to have an opposition party dedicated to the break up of a country. You had a reconsolidation of center right, right wing politics in a growing movement which turned into something called the Reform Party which was centered in the prairies and Alberta and found some support in Ontario. It was a party which was in flux at the time and which eventually became a party but it was a movement at the time which looked a lot like Ross Perot and his momentum, it was that kind of a populist movement. So, you had some interesting political dynamics but the government itself was a majority government.

Q: How did we view the Bloc Quebecois and the leadership there? How serious were they about the consequences, or was this more a stance than a real driving force? How did we view it?

WESTON: The Bloc Quebecois or the Parti Quebecois which is what the provincial parties called it in Quebec, was dedicated to the sovereignty of Quebec, taking Quebec out of Canada, having Canada break up. That was their motivating force, that was what they campaigned on, got elected in Quebec and everything else. That being said, whether it was the Bloc Quebecois in the federal parliament or whether it was the Parti Quebecois as the Quebec government, Canada is a federal system. Because of the nature of the relationship a lot of the time you are working in provincial politics as much as you are in federal on both sides of the border. That is another interesting thing about Canada for an American diplomat. Because they were the provincial government and the opposition they had to deal with the full range of issues facing Canada, passing the budget, health reform, whatever the issue of the day might be as well as some very significant foreign policy issues. This was the time when we, the United States, were trying to have Canada play a leading role in police operations in Haiti. We were trying to have Canada play a leading role in dealing with post-genocide, well, genocide and then post-genocide Rwanda, as well as the usual range of policy issues be it on the European side, Canada being a member of NATO, OECD, OSCE all the European institutions we dealt with, but also being a member of all the Pacific organizations like APEC that we dealt with as well. All of these foreign policy issues are all involved in a relationship that both the Bloc Quebecois at the federal level and Parti Quebecois at the provincial level had to deal with in addition to the question of separatism. Our job is to influence these things in a direction which is favorable to U.S. interests. Their motivating force may well have been sovereignty for Quebec but you had to deal with them as an important decision maker in their own right on a lot of issues of importance to the United States.

Q: What was your judgment on Chrï¿½tien and also other members of the political section? Was he a solid character, a slippery character? What? How did he feel about the United States, what were you thinking of?

WESTON: Now there is a huge scandal going on in Canada and the government is about to fall because of things that Chrï¿½tien was doing on funding and an advertising campaign related to sovereignty in Quebec at the time we were talking about. I think the view of him was as a very tough but skilled political figure who certainly could deliver politically things seen to be in U.S. interest, so very important from that point of view. As to his personality, he is very easy to work with, very easy to talk to, to talk to very frankly, exceptionally easy to work with for someone like myself. He is also a very likeable person as a human being which made it very pleasant. There was an element in liberal politics which he used which was an issue with the United States and that was any Canadian who wants to be successful for a long time in Canadian politics has to have some perceived independence from the United States. It is the same kind of problem Tony Blair just had in the most recent election although it works for Blair because of Iraq. A Canadian prime minister cannot be seen as doing the bidding of the United States all the time; it's just part of the Canadian political culture.

Chrï¿½tien, I think, had no problem working with the United States, had a very good relationship with the President, a direct relationship with the President which did play to that posture of "I'm independent from the United States." This could, did, sometimes create difficulties in the press because of statements. I remember one very specific one. I don't remember what the meeting was but it was in Ottawa, there was some meeting about Europe and Chrï¿½tien was sitting next to the Belgian prime minister and the microphone was left on at his table and he said - it was picked up on the microphone - something to the Belgian prime minister along the lines that the United States is very easy to deal with. You just pretend you like them and they'll do everything you want. which was extensively an accident that the mike was left on. I believe it was part of dealing with Canadian political culture about how you deal with the United States but of course it became public and created a bit of an incident with Washington at that time. That's just a little illustration.

During the time I was there, Chrï¿½tien made an official visit with the state dinner at the White House and two days of meetings and all these different things in Washington. Because I had worked in European Affairs so much where Canada used to be and was at that time in the Department of State I had seen a lot of these. This was one of those best sorts of visits, a lot was accomplished, a lot of deliverables, a lot of movement on issues of concern to both sides, in particular law enforcement, things like that. So, a fairly easy relationship with the United States. That's not unusual for Canadian political figures as long as they take care of this one element of Canadian political culture, not being seen as instruments of the United States.

Q: I can see two things. In a way wasn't Cuba sort of the designated point to show we are independent, sort of, Chrï¿½tien I don't know if it was during your time, made a well publicized trip to Cuba and then asked for some things which he didn't get?

WESTON: Right, it was actually before my time but you are right. In part it wasn't only to differ from the United States but it was something you could point to as being a big difference with the United States because there were a lot of other interests involved. For example, when I was in Ottawa we had the initial implementation of the Helms-Burton Act, if you are familiar with that, which related to assets which could be seized.

Q: That was directly pointed to Canada wasn't it?

WESTON: The first case involved a Canadian mining firm. I don't know how familiar you are with Helms-Burton, but it prevents officials of the company (doing business with Cuba) and their families from entering the United States. You can seize assets and do all kinds of things under it. There was a Canadian firm which was first chosen for this, an Alberta mining firm. That was one area but it wasn't the only one. Another little incident we had when I was up there was you had the seizure of a ferry between Alaska and Seattle, a car ferry, by the fishermen of Prince Rupert protesting the salmon wars, fish war, all over the place, but to the point of seizing a vessel which technically is piracy.

Q: These were pirates?

WESTON: Well, they were Prince Rupert fishermen but Canadian officials did not rush to end the difficult situation in which we found ourselves.

Q: How was that resolved?

WESTON: Eventually an agreement to release the ferry and no one would be prosecuted for it and we appointed a special envoy to work again on the salmon issue or something like that.

Q: With Canada if you are going to point to a continuing thing, talk about fish. I mean this goes back to the beginning of the Republic...

WESTON: Remember, we still have unsettled maritime boundaries with Canada. On three separate boundaries, the Alaska-Yukon, Alaska-British Columbia and then Washington state-British Columbia and then Maine and New Brunswick. We do not have settled maritime boundaries with Canada and we still have some disputed territorial islands in these waters.

Q: As two diplomats talking to each other, this is giving employment to Canadian and American diplomats for well over two hundred years, so let's not knock it.

WESTON: Well there aren't many fish left in the Atlantic. Where it's still an incredibly active issue is in the Pacific and in particular over salmon. Once again a limited resource like all fish in the ocean and all kinds of complex issues in both the United States and Canada related to it both politically and economically, people's rights, all kinds. You spend more time on fish than you might think; you do on whales as well of course because of Inuit native people and all kinds of whaling issues. That is what I mean, a place like Canada is so fascinating to do all this sort of stuff.

Q: At the ambassador/chargï¿½ level it gets turned over very quickly to commissions and such doesn't it?

WESTON: Well, there are in place a whole structure of U.S.-Canadian instruments for resolving issues. You see these most importantly in water issues, Great Lakes Commissions and things like that. Those are formal structures with regular meetings and participation and ways to deal with it and they negotiate what the water level ought to be, Lake Ontario and that sort of thing, it works very well. What happens on a lot of other issues and certainly fish, a lot of environmental issues which are harder to manage than water, air pollution and things like that, trash, solid waste, whatever, an incredible number of law enforcement issues as well as a lot of agricultural issues, mad cow is the big deal now but there is always something. You know, pine wood nematodes or some biological issues going on with Canada as well. What tends to happen is something will bring an issue to a head, an act by the United States, or an act by Canada, or by Americans or Canadians or whatever, and it will be a crisis and sometimes it will get resolved very rapidly and then ambassador/chargï¿½/chief of mission is deeply involved in it. But if it is something, like many of these things are, which inevitably lead to incredibly complex arrangements to deal with them which usually involve either law enforcement or regulatory agencies on both sides of the border then they do get referred to not so much commissions but special negotiators or experts. It will be something like you pull someone out of the Department of Agriculture, APHIS, to work out a system for tracking cattle across the border and things like that. It is not so much turned over to commissioners as it gets turned over to technical experts, if it is the something that can't be resolved very rapidly.

Q: NAFTA (North Atlantic Free Trade Agreement) was still fairly new. How did it work at that point? How were the Canadians evaluating it and how were we evaluating it?

WESTON: The Canadians were perfectly happy with the Free Trade Agreement (FTA), between Canada and the United States, which was the predecessor to NAFTA. NAFTA brought in Mexico and I think it was working perfectly well in terms of increasing openness between the North American market which would have been Canada, the United States under the FTA and Mexico. Depending on the sector you were talking about, you could get very different views. For instance, people in the automobile sector were quite worried about the export of jobs from Canada, as they were in Michigan and Ohio, to Mexico, because of lower labor costs under NAFTA, so you had some mixed feelings about it. It clearly was successful in the sense of increasing trade throughout North America, that is Mexico-U.S. and Mexico-Canada. There were a lot of technical problems with it. Under NAFTA there were all kinds of commissions set up to deal with its implementation. Look at trucking regulations across the United States. If a truck is going from Mexico to Canada it's got to cross the United States, environmental issues, what have you, but there was a structure to deal with these matters and it functioned quite well. It was very active but it functioned quite well. There were misgivings about it in Canada more than in the United States, although in the United States there were the same misgivings and they tended to be centered in the mid-west and related to the auto industry. As an example, you had a very powerful congressman from Michigan in those days named David Bonior who was a great supporter of the FTA, the free trade area between Canada and the United States in particular because of the great effect it had on the automobile industry, a very positive effect, but he was a diehard opponent to NAFTA. Some of the things that you saw in Canada related to NAFTA you would also see in the mid-west in the United States. Then they played out politically.

Q: Did Canada's military turn into a sort of peacekeeping operation, as a military force it is not much. It's basically got some battalions to help in peacekeeping, I'm not discounting it but one of the stances they took great pride in was an anti-mine movement. Was that...

WESTON: Yes, the Ottawa Convention.

Q: Were you there when that happened?

WESTON: Yes, which we of course opposed.

Q: I've talked to people who have been involved with this and these are Foreign Service Officers who tried looking at it saying this whole thing could have been taken care of very nicely and we could have signed it but it was designed almost to make sure that we couldn't sign it. Did you pick that up at all?

WESTON: No, I wouldn't agree with that assessment at all.

Q: The only place that we used mines was in Korea, and then an exception could have been made for that.

WESTON: I think it's important to remember how this came about, basically through NGOs, not governments originally. Canada lobbies NGOs who are Canadian-American in nature, like everything else an integrated kind of peace movement. Canada picked up on it much more rapidly than the United States because it was one of the issues that Canada is into: soft power and conventions and multilateralism for all of the reasons you understand when you are in bed with an elephant like the United States. It also found great resonance politically in Canada; that Canada was a leader in eliminating this class of weapons which were clearly very destructive to a lot of people. It was responding to a very strong NGO movement. So to say that it could have been fixed with an exemption for the United States for Korea, you know, once it had taken on the life it did I think that it is a real stretch. I don't think that was a real option then, not when you had the support of the rest of the world for the convention as it was.

Q: So then, the two main producers which are Russia and China?

WESTON: Yes, and of course Russia has adhered to it now.

Q: At the time I don't know, maybe.

WESTON: Yes, but it was a real issue, because the Administration then was supportive of the goals of it, this is the Clinton Administration, which had the problem that you have to think a lot about what the administration's relationship with the military and everything else. It really could not find a way past this Korean problem. Was a quick fix possible? I don't think so, certainly not by the time I got involved with this in Ottawa.

Q: How about the military to military relationship. Were there problems or over flights or cooperation or various things?

WESTON: It's really complicated because it depends on what you are talking about. We of course have a joint air defense command (NORAD) with Canada and that's more integrated than anything you have in NATO.

Q: Canadian generals have been in charge of...

WESTON: Cheyenne Mountain in Colorado Springs. You've got American officers at every Canadian military facility from all over the place, all of whom, incidentally because they are not under a regional command come under the chief of mission. So you are technically responsible for these folks up in the Arctic and their security, a very complex thing. At any rate, I think relations between the two militaries were absolutely excellent, including NORAD, the most integrated military command the United States has. Most integration that the United States has with any military in the world is with Canada. There is a lot of frustration on the part of the American military that the Canadian military has become, "hollowed out" is the normal term that is used, but that frustration is just as problematic in the Canadian military so it's not a military-military issue. I think there is a lot of appreciation, I mentioned already that a couple of things we worked on at that time were Canadian civilian forces to police Haiti. You have the Mounties, you have a lot of French-speaking policemen and also in the Great Lakes region in Africa, but there was a counting on Canada for the military peace-keeping role both military and civilian and that was a Canadian niche and still is. I can't think of a single instance where there were any real difficulties between the American military and the Canadian military in any of our cooperative enterprises.

That being said there was a real policy difference which lead to a strange situation in the Arctic. Canada asserted sovereignty over a lot of the waters of the Arctic, which we use by nuclear submarines for various purposes. We had a situation of American submarines under the Arctic ice all the time, passing between Canadian islands in the high Arctic, ostensibly against the will of Canada because we hadn't sought permission because we didn't recognize these Canadian claims. Canada couldn't do much about it, but it was a strange situation given you have an integrated air defense command. It was more something which came out of Canadian political culture than anything else. The one "we are sovereign, we don't do everything that the United States demands of us." Secondly out of political culture concerns about the North, the Arctic, the Inuit, a lot of nuclear submarines, what impact is this having on the ice and on the temperature of the water, all kinds of things like that. It's the one instance which was very anomalous in the military-military relationship. Of course, when you go into military matters you also get into the whole intelligence area which we can't say much about here but of course we have a very different relationship with Canada in that area than we do with anyone else.

Q: Did the genocide in Rwanda come up during your time there? And as I recall the Canadian military was immediately called upon to do something.

WESTON: Yes, the UN Military Commander in Rwanda was a Canadian, General Dallaire. If you've seen the movie "Hotel Rwanda," he's played by Nick Nolte. He has been very active since over at the Holocaust Museum, talking about failure of prevention, what have you. The UN force was headed by a Canadian. It was a very small force obviously. There were other Canadian officers there but it was UN not Canadian.

Q: Was there any thought of putting Canadian troops in there?

WESTON: You know the history of the period. There is difficulty in creating an adequate UN force and more particularly a mandate and rules of engagement to prevent genocide which most people say was blocked in large part by the United States and the Security Council. While that was going on, this is a year and a half after Somalia; reluctance of the U.S. to get involved in Africa. We were pursuing certain policies of the UN related to the Great Lakes Region in Rwanda, which was not necessarily geared to stopping the genocide, and that is an understatement, obviously, and a sarcastic one at that. We were at the same time exploring with Canada the possibilities for a unilateral effort. At that time, and we've talked a little about the Canadian military which was basically a peacekeeping operation, which is not a bad description, it is not totally accurate but it is not a bad description. If you start looking around, a number of Canadian military were already deployed in the Balkans. That helped us in Cyprus of all places, you know all over the place, because they were very active in peacekeeping. They were talking to them about Haiti about a civilian operation that which was not needed in Rwanda right then, that was a straight forward... you needed military intervention then. You can call it peacemaking or to stop genocide, it would have been a military action. When you started to look at the available forces, of course, there were very few without pulling them from somewhere else which we didn't want Canada to do, certainly not from the Balkans. The fact of the matter is you couldn't have gotten them there without the United States, I mean Canada has no real independent lift capability, certainly not logistical capability reaching into Central Africa. We were exploring all of this and Canada was willing to take a leadership role in all of this. But then one starts to look at the available assets, and what you can do is try to recruit others to participate, starting with the United States because of the need for lift capability. It didn't get very far. Meanwhile the genocide was going on. You could describe it in all kinds of different ways, whether it was the fault of Kofi Annan for not pushing hard enough, whether it was blocked in the Security Council, you will find all kinds of explanations. I have my own view as to what happened. I think the United States did not play a positive role in this in the Security Council in New York. Dithering resulted in no real action being taken by a coalition led by Canada, not that there wasn't a willingness to do it, but the ability to do it on their own. Meanwhile the genocide took place and that was that, but it was a very active account when I was in Ottawa.

Q: A theme has come by, I think, I don't know if it's still going on, but do we have the cultural wars when you were there? Can you describe how they were when you were there?

WESTON: These were related to almost every sort of intellectual endeavor, print, film, whatever, and television. When I was there the two really active issues were related to advertising in magazines. Unless the magazine had X-amount of Canadian content, it couldn't use its tax deduction for advertising. But, it was a measure which discriminated against non-Canadians in print material, magazines in particular. There was another issue on requirements for Canadian content on television which related once again to how you dealt with advertising revenues, because much of television is cross-border. You know, if you are trying to sell something in Ogdensburg, New York, more likely than not you were advertising on Canadian television not Syracuse or whatever it is. It's all part of the same issue, measures which are discriminatory to foster Canadian culture which would translate normally into Canadian content in either print or broadcasting or whatever medium it happened to be. In other places it could be the issues of subsidization of cultural production. That was not the big issue with Canada because it was about Canadian content regulations and the relationship of those to tax issues, but it was part of the same issue.

Q: What was their stand?

WESTON: Well, we didn't believe any American company should be discriminated against under Canadian law. Pretty straight forward.

Q: Were we doing anything regarding Canadian firms who were using American TVs to reach their people?

WESTON: No, it was more if they are discriminatory, remember by this time we are all members of the WTO (World Trade Organization) and have signed all of these commitments including the audio/visual exemption and WTO rules and such. We would be opposed to using the retaliation mechanism which is what you are suggesting. By then we were at the point where you would threaten a WTO case which could lead to retaliation but it would not be in the same way. Remember you had the end of the Uruguay Round in '94 and then it moved to WTO.

Q: It moved away from direct confrontation...

WESTON: To putting trade issues into another mechanism.

Q: Calling on the international people to beat up on the guy.

WESTON: Right, but with more transparency and a set of rules of the road.

Q: How about anti-Americanism there? I've talked to Bud Shinkman, was he there, anyway he was a USIA PAO there at one point. Anyway a former PAO there at some point during the '90s. He was saying that his son went to a prep school and found it was supposed to be one of the most prestigious in Ottawa...

WESTON: I even know the prep school of what you speak.

Q: His son came back with tapes of lectures which were quite anti-American. They were teachers, sort of a virulent strain of anti-Americanism in that particular academic setting. Did you find, was this a, the academics of any country can be a peculiar group anyway.

WESTON: Now remember you are talking to an academic.

Q: All I'm saying is. These interviews are essentially designed for academics to a certain extent but at the same time it is a place where extreme prejudice can come out when someone is lecturing you.

WESTON: You have a complicated factor in Canada. I agree with whatever you said, but there are two issues here. One, you do have in Canadian culture, not only political Canadian culture, the clichï¿½, how do you define a Canadian? They are not American; they are not from the United States. Even being Canadian you are defining an opposition to something else, that you are not something else, and there is in Canadian culture a very strong strain of not only are we not the United States but we're more communitarian and socially responsible, We have a health care system which covers everyone, we are better than the United States socially, and that is an element of Canadian culture. You have another and that can have elements of what can be seen as anti-Americanism to it. I would not tend to see it as anti-Americanism but remember I spent a lot of my life in Germany with people beating down the walls over the Dual Track decision on nuclear weapons. So if you want any anti-Americanism, I can point to some anti-Americanism, but this was pretty soft if it is anti-Americanism.

There is another strain, though, and I think it has particular relevance to the academic community, primary, secondary and post-secondary education, and that is you have the whole Canadian academic establishment heavily populated with ex-Americans, and there's a whole generation which are basically folks who went up during the Vietnam war. These numbers may not seem big by U.S. standards but you're talking of a country of 30 million people, as opposed to the size of the United States, concentrated in a very small area. You go into any school and in particular you notice it in British Columbia but you notice it also in Ontario, and you'll find out at the university faculties, you have large percentages of Americans. There is a whole generation which is basically there because of opposition to the Vietnam war, children of the '60s, Americans of the '60s, counter culture, call it what you will, but it is embedded in the academic establishment. I think that that is another source of something which can be called anti-Americanism. Thinking of this particular prep school of which you speak, which I know, it is in Rockland, just outside Ottawa, that's particularly an issue.

It is anti-Americanism with an American source. It finds resonance because of this Canadian cultural phenomena which is "we are not you." It translates into political behavior that the prime minister of Canada can't be seen as being the instrument of the United States. Okay, he is not alone in the world in that position, that's for sure, but I guess I just don't see it as a hard anti-Americanism which has a deleterious effect on the relationship or on policy issues. It is certainly very hard to find anything remotely compared to anti-Americanism on a personal level. It is really almost non-existent in Canada. That's not true in a lot of the world, but it's almost non-existent in Canada, and of course you have a contrary phenomenon with a lot of Canadians who think boy we ought to be joining these guys. If you get out in the prairies or the Maritimes a lot of folks who really wonder whether being Canadian is all its trumped up to be.

Q: How about on the cross boarder thing, did the Native American issue come up much?

WESTON: All the time, all the time. We talked about the salmon fisheries. There's a native people, big native people issue there. We've talked about the whaling issues, big natives issue there. We had the Circumpolar Conference which is an international Inuit organization with Canadian-American participation, along with Laplanders and Russians and what have you. We had all kinds of issues of native peoples on reservations/reserves which cross the border, in particular the Mohawks in upstate New York which has a tremendous amount of smuggling going on. You had a large number of legal issues because Canada, in its judicial decision making, is ahead of the United States in restitution if you will of the wrongs done native peoples which were just as bad or worse in Canada as they were in the United States but there's been a lot more judicial restitution based on judicial decisions, return of land. Right now the city of Sanya in Ontario is basically almost all native peoples' land and all those refineries that people had to build are now long term leases on someone else's land as a result of judicial decision. There is a whole complex of issues involving native peoples that they will be different with the Inuit, they are different from the Athabasca and so on. It's the only place I know of where as charge, chief of mission, you are dealing with native people's issues literally all the time in one form or another.

Q: How did you find the utility of our consulates around Canada?

WESTON: I think they are incredibly important. Canada is a federal system; it's stretched across almost 4,000 miles just along the border, if you add the Alaskan border. For the political point of view, from the economic point of view, they are incredibly important. Three of them are also huge consular establishments in which is kind of strange because Canadians don't need visas to come to the United States, but the Mission in Canada is the largest issuer of visas to non-Canadians, non-Americans, getting their visas, or they are folks in the Untied States who have to leave the United States. So, we have really big, really huge consular establishments in Vancouver, Toronto, and Montreal. There are also on any given day, I don't know what the statistics are now but there used to be something like a couple million Americans in Canada which is another big consular function.

There are all kinds of cross border issues, economic, political, law enforcement, all kinds of other things in which the consulates play a crucial role. There is so much province-to-state work to be done, and they are there to do it. You have things like the consulate in Vancouver working very closely with the state of Washington government or up in Toronto it's New York and Pennsylvania, Ohio and Michigan, whatever. I think they are very important. In fact, one thing that happened wasn't actually established when I was there but shortly thereafter we even reopened a consulate in Canada in Winnipeg that had been closed, just because you had this big gap in the middle of Canada at a time when throughout the rest of the world, of course, you weren't opening a lot of consulates. I think they were very important. Once you ended up having this, if you are the chargï¿½ this is your mission, all these consulates as well. I traveled I don't know how much of the time, about 40 percent of the time around Canada. I was not in Ottawa all the time and you can't effectively do your job in Canada. What you would see happening is a tremendous amount of, well, almost all relations with third countries, third world issues, getting the Canadians to police in Haiti, dealing with Rwanda, getting the right decision out of the G-7 communiquï¿½, right support of NATO, whatever, whether Security Council in UN, whatever, you did in Ottawa, because that was all Federal Government. The vast majority, whether it is economic work, commercial work, law enforcement work, political work, is done in the provinces by the consulates.

Q: Did you see observing on the whole, I mean you had the Quebec separation there, did you see much of a distancing say from Saskatchewan, Manitoba others to the West? I mean, did you see almost a disconnect with Ottawa?

WESTON: Yes, I mentioned before at this time you had this growth in the Reform Party, what became the Reform Party that was centered in the prairies of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and to some extent Alberta. You have a lot of centrifugal forces that play in Canada and they are different depending on what part of Canada you are talking about. You have obviously the Quebec situation which is sui generis linguistic, it's historic French Canada, well it's not French Canada, it's Quebec, because other parts of French Canada will want to separate Arcadia and what have you. But Quebec and the rest of Canada issue. You have another issue in the Maritimes, which tend to be far more depressed economically and they feel very neglected by the rest of Canada and tend to look towards New England for most of their ties as much as to Ottawa.

Q: The Boston Red Sox...

WESTON: Absolutely, they talk about the Boston Sox. A lot of this is historical, romantic almost, history to some extent, but you have a degree of some sense of non-integration with the rest of Canada in the Maritimes.

You then have the prairies which feel very far from Ottawa. I think there is a good solid strain in the prairies in western Canada of independence of a type you see to some extent in the United States in the Rocky Mountain states and on the west coast. You then have Alberta, which is the richest province in Canada because of oil and natural gas. These revenues are provincial revenues not federal for the most part, so it feels it's in a very different situation from the rest of Canada. British Colombia which most Canadians describe as la la land, which is very, except for the cold, very much like southern California. Vancouver, you could be in either Hong Kong or Bombay, you have a very cosmopolitan place, yet the capital is Victoria where you think you are back in the last century in the midlands of England. It feels different from the rest of Canada, and then of course you have the whole North. At the time I was there of course it was the Northwest Territories in Yukon. Now it's Northwest Territories Nunavut and Yukon, Nunavut being Inuit territory now, also, for all kinds of reasons feeling separate from the rest of Canada. When you look at it as a whole, we think we have regionalism in the United States, but it is nothing compared to the regionalism you find in Canada. I think it's made more complex because of the Quebec question, the separatist tendency right at the heart of Canada because of Quebec. It is very strong.

Q: I realize you probably could never put it on paper because it would leak and there would be a horrible mess but what about a war plan that if Quebec, I mean, do we feel let's say, that must have been something you had to think about for anybody who has served in Canada? Let's say Quebec votes to secede, one, would it happen, could it happen and two, what would that mean for us?

WESTON: It certainly could happen because I don't think there is a will in the rest of Canada to prevent it from happening in any way which would prevent it from happening, if it passed in a referendum, for instance. I don't think you can find many Canadians willing to go to war or to have a civil war to keep Quebec in Canada. I just do not have that sense at all. What it would mean in the first instance you'd be dealing with two sovereignties there. There would be immediate economic consequences which would have a great effect on certain elements of U.S. business and so on which would have to be dealt with right away and would be dealt with. There are technical sorts of ways of dealing with those sorts of things. I don't think there is or should be a great concern about stability in the sense of when other countries break up, like former Yugoslavia, you are not going to have that happen in Canada. You would have a far more complicated situation. I should add that if Quebec left Canada, I think that would start the breakup of Canada in all kinds of other ways because of some of these differences we've been talking about.

Q: Like the Maritimes...

WESTON: What do they do? What if they don't enjoy any of their current transfer of funds from Ontario and Quebec to the Maritimes? If the Quebec part of that is gone, what do they do? I think it would set in motion all kinds of other ways to think about what Canada is, was, and would be in the Maritimes, and in the prairies in particular, which are very oriented towards the United States. I mean you get out there and the whole orientation of people is not looking towards Ottawa or Vancouver for that matter, they are looking towards Chicago and Minneapolis. All kinds of things are set in motion. It's not something with great economic and stability and economic implications, you're not talking about anything in terms of violence.

Q: No, but...

WESTON: You are talking about a situation in which the range of things the United States traditionally thought it could count on from Canada, support and all kinds of efforts, peace keeping in Haiti, whatever in NATO, whatever it happens to be, obviously it wouldn't be the same situation because you wouldn't have only one Canada. Then there would be real questions about how you dealt with that. I think over time the worse problem would be what it might set in motion for the rest of Canada. It is hard for me to see a kind of a rump Canada led by Ontario given the other regional feelings. I think you would likely see further splintering with economic consequences and all kinds of political consequences. You know we just completed an agreement for a smart border, trying to deal with the border traffic in the age of combating terrorism. All of a sudden you'd have to do that not only with 'x' number of entities to your North, if you are the United States, but you would have to deal with those entities just because of the geography involved. It creates all kinds of higher costs in terms of a lot of U.S. interests but it is not the sort of thing that you really worry about in the same way in the breakup with other entities.

Q: No, but in looking at this, let's say there is a referendum and it comes out 51 percent for leaving...

WESTON: That was pretty close to what it came out to the last time.

Q: I was saying it was very close to that. I mean that's a very dubious thing because often there is a vote of "Oh screw you", people who don't expect something to happen...

WESTON: In a referendum all kinds of things can effect it, unhappiness with the tax collector from Ottawa, whatever.

Q: But, what were we, how were we playing it? Do you think there would be another referendum and say, fine, this is going to happen, but this time we really mean it, or something like that?

WESTON: I think that what happened after the last referendum is you basically had efforts starting to concentrate on consolidating Quebec, in fact I mentioned Lucien Bouchard, who was the Premier of Quebec at this time, is no longer. In fact, Parti Quebecois is not governing Quebec right now, it is the Liberals. You had a consolidation of Quebec in the sense of economic consolidation and a lot of attention being paid to improving the competitiveness of Quebec industry, to prepare the ground for the day when Quebec might be sovereign. That was the view that ultimately there would be another attempt to achieve sovereignty, and I think that's still the operating mode of the Parti Quebecois. The strange thing about what is going on in Canada now, there was a vote of confidence which the government lost just three days ago, rejected on procedural grounds. There will be another governmental fall elections. The net effect of it will be to increase the representation in the Federal Parliament of the Bloc Quebecois, and in all probability lead to the collapse of the liberals in Quebec and a restoration of the Parti Quebecois in Quebec. You are getting rapidly back to where you were back in about '94 before the last referendum, and it is I think the Parti Quebecois has every intent in making another go at this.

Q: How about water power? Was that much of an issue when you were there?

WESTON: Yes, well water or water power? Because water is a huge issue.

Q: Is there much of a difference?

WESTON: They are very different things. Water power is basically centered on Niagara Falls, where we have a common grid.

Q: I thought there were some big dams up in Quebec?

WESTON: Well, there are, but those are plugged into the grid system, it is an integrated electrical grid system, and you have the rolling of electricity basically, well it's the whole north, at least northeast quadrant, actually it goes deep into the south of the United States. It's all tied into the same grid. It's all basically run by either private corporations or parastatal co operations sometimes like Hydro-Ontario, is parastatal. It all works perfectly well until something blows outside Toledo and we lose electricity over half the country.

Q: But basically that isn't a particular issue, that's a technical issue more or less.

WESTON: It's a technical issue. Insofar as you get involved as chargï¿½ it would be doing things to improve the conditions of business behavior between these various corporations. You don't have the same sort of border crossing issues like in the auto industry where the big concerns are you can't get the truck across the Ambassador Bridge with the transmission you need for just-in-time assembly. But you don't have the same problem with electricity. It's kind of creating or reducing as much as you can, skewing effects whether it is investment or taxation law, whatever, so it that it works free of government interference, understanding that this is a regulated industry.

Water more broadly, of course is a huge issue, and it's from quantity of water, environment. The Great Lakes, use of fresh water or salt water marine resources, ultimately sale of water, remembering that we're a water short world. Roughly a third of the existing fresh water supply of the world happens to be in Canada and you won't have to guess very long until you figure out who the biggest consumer of water in the world happens to be. We have this issue up in the Dakotas and Manitoba, the Red River keeps flooding and it floods all of North Dakota and so we built this huge Army Corp of Engineers project called Devil's Lake to control flooding but it risked the ecosystem of the whole Red River Valley through Manitoba. Water, water everywhere and some kind of issue attached to all of it. This has been going on for a long time, having to deal with these sorts of issues.

Q: Well Tom you left there, is there anything else? We've covered a lot of issues.

WESTON: What was interesting was several months before I left, this visit to Washington which was the first since Clinton had been to Ottawa. Traditionally, until the Bush Administration, the first visit an American president makes abroad is to Ottawa. That's changed now. This was the first visit of Chrï¿½tien during the Clinton Administration but I don't know that we have to go into detail, it's just a terribly interesting time to see how the personal relationship between two people can make such a difference in the relationship in every way. The closest relations between any two countries on earth, I think.

Q: You left there, when? '97?

WESTON: '97 right, the fall of '97.

Q: What happened? Where did you go?

WESTON: Let's see, I came back because I had gone up there as chargï¿½ and then left...

Q: This was strictly on that that was how you were sent up there, as a fill in?

WESTON: Right, right. I thought it would be a year but it ended up being longer. I came back and there was no readily available job because I had not been on that cycle for a chief of mission job because we didn't know how long I would be in Canada. You can't leave a post like Canada without at least a chargï¿½, at least it was thought that you couldn't. I think we have done similar things since. I came back without really having an on-going assignment. The first thing I did is I went up to New York, the General Assembly was going on, and I was the EUR Senior Advisor for about two or three weeks, something like that. It was just because there wasn't anything else going on so we had to get back on cycle. I was up there just a couple of weeks and I got a call from Tom Pickering who was then undersecretary for political affairs. He asked if I would come back and take over an office within P, I can't remember if it was the Office of Reorganization or something like that. What was happening then was USIA was being integrated, USIA and ACDA, were being integrated into the State Department. AID was supposed to develop an arrangement so it wasn't integrated with State Department but was basically operated under policy guidance of the State Department. Part of that same package was the State Department was supposed to reorganize itself to deal with all of these changes. There was an office in M (Management) which was integrating the personnel systems of USIA and ACDA and all that sort of stuff, but the office to do the overall stuff was under Pickering. He called, would I do this, and since I didn't have anything better to do, I went down and did that.

Q: You did that for how long?

WESTON: About a year, I started doing it in late '97 and I think I did it through late summer of '98.

Q: What were the issues that you particularly got involved in?

WESTON: I think the biggest issue was at the same time, all of these elements of USIA were going into various bureaus. I don't know if you remember all of this reorganization. It was the usual kind of move things around on organization charts. The issue on which we spent the most time was the reorganization of the bureau structure of the Department of State and how they all related to the undersecretary level. There was a tremendous amount of activity about how to do this. The net effect was almost nothing except to move Canada where I had just come from, to what was then ARA (American Regional affairs) and is now WHA (Western Hemisphere Affairs) because of adding Canada to it. That was in essence the only thing accomplished in the bureaucratic reorganization of the State Department. Because this was the Office of Reorganization, we were supposed to be doing all kinds of other things. We did such things as establish the so-called American Presence Posts, these one person consulates in a lot of different places in the world. We did a lot of work on redoing the authorities of chiefs of mission to take account of the changed structure of the State Department, anything you could think of as bureaucratic reorganization seemed to end up there.

Q: A clash of empires.

WESTON: A clash of empires and in the end you know not much was going to happen. I mean you know that, you don't have to be around the State Department very long to see that. That being said, I was working with Pickering all day and he is an absolutely great guy and the job was fine.

Q: You did that until about '98 then?

WESTON: Then until '98. What I should have been doing is going out to a chief of mission job but I'm a Europeanist and there aren't a lot of jobs for career folks in Europe. I had a visit from the DG (Director General) who was a very close personal friend, with a list of the upcoming chief of mission jobs. It was not a list in which I had any particular interest. I told her at the time: you have all these jobs. They are tiny jobs in Africa. Even though I love Africa, if I take one of these that means one of these poor guys who has been sitting around Africa their whole career, counting on getting one of these and not getting it. I'm going to be taking a job from someone I shouldn't be taking a job from. I didn't want to do that and I didn't particularly want to go to any of these places. I had just come back from a couple years being the chief of mission at our largest overseas posts. She was really trying to talk me into doing one of these...

Q: Ruth Davis?

WESTON: Exactly, but I declined the honor. The reorganization thing was ending, so I went off to the Inspection Corps for what was to be a year and turned out to be, only, I only got in two inspections. It turned out to be only two inspections: Japan and the other Israel and Palestinian authority, then I got pulled out of that.

Q: How did you find the inspections, what came out of these?

WESTON: It was really interesting because by that time I had been in the Foreign Service a long time and had been inspected any number of times abroad. I actually believe in the inspection system. I think it is something which an organization like the State Department absolutely needs. Without it we would have such incredible problems, especially overseas, if we didn't have this monitoring and control mechanism. So, I believe in the process but I ended up doing two very different inspections. The first was, the way it worked in those days is if you were coming in as the senior inspector, you went out as a deputy the first time and then you were the head of the team the second. I went out as a deputy to do Japan with Rick Melton. I don't know if you know him, he was in Brazil, a great guy.

Q: Ambassador to Brazil?

WESTON: Brazil, exactly, a terrific guy. We are doing an inspection of a place which was running like clockwork. We had a hard time finding; you have to come up with something, an operation like that has got to have some problems in it. We had a hard time finding problems. But then, the next one I did was Israel/Palestinian Authority. This had the whole complex of security issues, interagency issues because of the role of the CIA in dealing with the Palestinians, the terrible difficulties between the consulate in Jerusalem and the embassy in Tel Aviv, and a significant number of typical inspection problems, personnel related problems. Just about any kind of thing you can imagine. You go through the one, it was just a joy to see something operating so well, which is not perfect but really operating well given the complexity, and then you go to something which is an absolute mess in any way you can think of it.

Q: This was still the Clinton Administration?

WESTON: Yes.

Q: Towards the end, I understand there was a tremendous disconnect between our Israeli desk and the Israeli operation and you might say the Arab operation. I mean, I'm talking within the bureau.

WESTON: There was that disconnect, which was traditional, I mean that's not new, but you also had the separate Dennis Ross operation which was outside the bureau to bring peace to the Middle East. It was complicated.

Q: Did you do anything or was this so politically sensitive so you couldn't do much?

WESTON: You're right, there was a lot of tension between the two groups. There wasn't so much between Israel and Jerusalem itself as there was back in Washington. Ned Walker was the ambassador in Tel Aviv. He had come to Tel Aviv from Cairo. The assistant secretary was Martin Indyk who is more of the Israeli side of the equation whereas Ned was more the...

Q: Arab side.

WESTON: Arab side of the equation. Remember, the inspection was of the field operation, not the Bureau, although you obviously did things about communications and what not and how you dealt with the Dennis Ross operation. It was not as severe just because of the individuals you were dealing with at the top. This did not translate into a good situation when you got below the top over there. The interesting thing to me was the contrast between the operation in Japan, Tom Foley was the ambassador then, a political appointee but a very accomplished person in his own right and then you look at the other which had political complications to it, no question about it but...

Q: Did the inspection make any difference in Israel and Palestinian Authority?

WESTON: I think it did. Did it make any difference in this real inherent conflict between the peace process itself? No. Did it make a difference in addressing some of the more management issues related to it, yes I think we did. Did it have an effect in dealing with some of the personnel issues which were at least exacerbated if not created by the difficult environment in which these people were working, whether in Jerusalem or Tel Aviv, or Gaza for that matter. Yes, but did it have a profound effect on policy or resolving differences like that? No.

Q: Well Tom, I am a little disappointed. You went out there and I didn't see you come back with peace in the Middle East.

WESTON: I know it's one of my great regrets in life. I was talking about an hour ago to the new UN envoy to the Middle East peace process who was my counterpart on Cyprus with the UN, a very close friend, and he is back in Laayoune, in Western Sahara.

Q: Oh boy, well then what did you do? We are talking 2000 about?

WESTON: I was supposed to go on to do a third inspection, you know that's the cycle, you do three a year and it was going to be Haiti and the Dominican Republic. The Inspector General got a call from EUR, could I be released for a special project in EUR? The special project at that time was we had a whole series of summits coming up with Europe. One was the G-7, G-8 and the other was U.S.-EU and the third was the establishment of the stability pact for the Balkans, that turned out to be ministerial not summit level, but we had these two summits.

Germany was in the presidency of the G-8 then; it was also the presidency of the EU. We are talking spring of '99 and they wanted me to go out as something called a Summit Coordinator, this was drawing on Germany, all my work with the EU in the past and the G-8 and basically manage these summits which was a job which periodically occurs in the Bureau of European Affairs. This was the first time it had been done, but it was this strange link with Germany. They asked if I would do it and then I got a call from the Inspector General asking me. They hadn't asked me actually ahead of time which is kind of strange. I said okay, sure, I know all these folks and Germany and the EU and the G-8. Pickering, of course, was one of the sherpas here so I suspect that he had some role here as well.

I went off and spent the next several months basically between Washington, Cologne and Bonn doing summitry. More than anything else it's spending hours, and hours, and hours negotiating lengthy, lengthy documents on every issue before the American foreign policy establishment, G-8, G-7, USEU and then this other additional separate exercise for the stability of the Balkans. I can't remember the actual dates but both of the actual summits took place in what would have been early June from what I can remember. I was many months doing that.

Q: Were there any major issues that this...

WESTON: For a lot of people it was every major issue on the foreign policy agenda. The real issues that we had to spend a lot of time with were some economic issues related to trade, that was on the U.S.-EU side of things. We had a big issue dealing with Chernobyl and Russian nuclear power, which was part of G-7, G-8, but all the money from it was coming from U.S.-EU. A lot of hours were devoted to dealing with nuclear weapons in the former Soviet Union; a lot of Europeans were trying to make these unsafe nuclear civilian nuclear reactors safe in the wake of Chernobyl. That was a big money issue between the United States and Europe. It led to a new initiative on Cyprus, in both the G-8 and U.S.-EU, and the establishment of the stability pact for the Balkans. That was a mechanism in which you held out the prospect of integration in the Balkans, economic and political leading to ultimate integration with the European Union. A long term prospect of membership as an instrument to implement the Dayton Agreements, foster democratization where it needed to be fostered, foster compliance with the court in The Hague, promote economic development and all those good things. That was the big, big agreement that spring related to the Balkans.

Q: After that what happened?

WESTON: What happened was at the ministerial to establish this stability pact for the Balkans. I was there because I had been preparing this stuff. I'm sitting there with the Secretary of State and I think it was the Azerbaijani Foreign Minister who gave a speech to which we were listening very attentively, but we were just chatting and reminiscing about when we had first worked together which was back in 19...

Q: Madeleine Albright.

WESTON: Madeleine Albright, on the lifting of the Turkish arms embargo which had been put in place in Cyprus, so we were just reminiscing. At any rate we finished up with that activity, and I was coming back and basically the idea was EUR was going to find a chief of mission job for me. This was now in the next cycle and I was one of the candidates for Germany. It was never going to happen because it was never going to be a career appointee but none the less it was an exercise because of my background and so on, Germany.

There had been along with a dozen other things this new Cyprus Initiative coming out of the G-8 and then the U.S.-EU Summit. At that time you had two envoys on Cyprus, one was Dick Holbrooke, who was called a special presidential envoy. He was basically in the job while waiting to be confirmed to go to New York as Permrep in New York. The other was Tom Miller, who was special coordinator on Cyprus. Miller was leaving to become our ambassador in Sarajevo. At the last minute this other officer who was scheduled to replace him left the Foreign Service, went with a private corporation, retired. So here we had this new initiative on Cyprus and basically no one to carry it out except Holbrooke who was on his way, ostensibly getting confirmed, he didn't actually get confirmed until I think September or something. So they needed a Special Coordinator for Cyprus to do this. As luck would have it, we had just had this conversation so my name came to the forefront; I got a call, would I do this. I agreed to do it. It must have been June/July, it was before early July but I made the transition and took on this new job, Special Coordinator for Cyprus. I had to do it because we then got the Security Council Resolution in early July to implement an initiative from the G-8 and U.S.-EU which was a new mandate from the Secretary General to undertake new negotiations on Cyprus associated with a positive decision by the European Union to give candidacy to Turkey at the Helsinki European Council in December 1999, so it was all linked together. Here was an EU type so it seemed the logical thing to do, so I started before July because I did the Security Council Resolution in July. So it was June I made the transition to the Special Coordinator for Cyprus which I continued doing for the remainder of my career in the Foreign Service.

Q: That was from when to when?

WESTON: I only left that job last August, so August of 2004, so five years. Now there were several things happening during that period. My name went forward as the Department candidate for a chief of mission job in Europe which, would have had me leaving the job, but none all of the jobs went political.

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Q: Today is May 19, 2005; we are doing five years of Cyprus. You ended up with island fever or something?

WESTON: Well, that is a long time.

Q: From when to when?

WESTON: I started doing it in the late spring of '99 until August of this past year, August 2004.

Q: Okay, tell me first, what was the job and then describe in '99 when you took it over, what was the Cyprus situation? First, what was the job?

WESTON: The job changed during those years. This job, Special Coordinator for Cyprus, has existed, it has been mandated by law since the '80s. But there's been some kind of a special Cyprus envoy on and off certainly since the '70s, and periodically back into the '60s including a lot of very eminent types like Dean Acheson and George Ball and Cy Vance and so on. In the Clinton Administration the Special Cyprus Coordinator job was supplemented with something called the Special Presidential Envoy on Cyprus. The first of whom was someone named Batey who wasn't there very long. By the summer of '99 the Special Presidential Envoy was Dick Holbrooke, and the Special Cyprus Coordinator was Tom Miller, so you really had two people doing Cyprus. That situation continued for two of those years in essence, the remainder of the Clinton Administration.

What happened is that Holbrooke had then been this special Cyprus envoy, special presidential envoy, basically to give him a link, a job with the Department, a plane ticket through the Balkans, however you want to describe it. He had done very little with it. He had made a couple of trips out, quite unsuccessful, but not done much with it. Miller, who was basically a Greek specialist had had several tours in Athens and so on, had acted as his deputy and worked away on it but not much happened until this series of events that we described earlier which led to this new initiative in the summer of '99 on Cyprus. I came on as the SCC (Special Cyprus Coordinator) replacing Miller, who went off to Bosnia. Holbrooke was leaving to go up to the UN, finally getting confirmed after almost a year, confirmed to be Permrep to the UN. That initial summer I was really the only one working on Cyprus until the fall when a successor to Holbrooke was named, Al Moses. Moses then acted as the Special Presidential Envoy for the remainder of the Clinton Administration; about a year and a half.

Q: He was ambassador to Romania.

WESTON: To Romania exactly. Then when the Administration changed, which would have been 2001 roughly, the inauguration, the new Bush Administration, more importantly the Secretary of State decided to do away with as many special envoys as possible. So there was kind a of cleaning out of all these special envoys. They did not do away with the Special Coordinator for Cyprus in large part because it was mandated in law and secondarily because of the political backing for it.

Q: Basically a slot for Yugoslavia.

WESTON, Yes, exactly, they did away with the special presidential envoy position. For about half of this period I was the only one doing Cyprus. This changed the nature of it quite a bit and I continued on doing that until August of 2004, which is related to the events that took place in Cyprus. That was the job, and the chemistry of it.

Initially the whole effort on getting a new Cyprus Initiative going was intimately tied in with the candidacy of Turkey in the EU. That actually happened with a positive decision on candidacy for Turkey in the EU at the Helsinki Summit in '99, and the commencement of proximity talks on Cyprus following the mandate of the Secretary General the previous June or July, whatever. Initially all of the activity was in actually getting the talks started. Al Moses during this time was doing all of this basically pro bono while he kept up his law office and so on. He came basically in and out of it a lot, whereas I was the continuity, doing it every day. The talks started as proximity talks alternating between Geneva and New York. We basically were there supporting the Secretary General's efforts ostensibly, but what we were really doing was diplomacy with Turkey in particular during these proximity talks. They lasted roughly a year.

An awful lot had been done on the Cyprus issue before, by the UN but this was all aimed at finally getting a settlement. In the proximity talks, basically the outline of what would come to be known as the Annan Plan was developed. In particular the very complicated scheme for dealing with properties which were lost by the Greek Cypriots or Turkish Cypriots during the period around '74 was resolved. It is an incredibly complicated scheme and one on which even though it was ultimately the product of the United Nations, they were the drafters of it, Al Moses, who is a very good lawyer among other things, played a very strong role when actually coming up with ideas on how to do this very complicated thing. I would say the other thing that happened in that period was the development of the so- called security regime which came to be incorporated into the Annan Plan. This was seen to be fairly easy to come up with because of the very forthcoming attitudes of the then Greek Cypriot negotiator, Glafcos Clerides. That was the main activity during these proximity talks. The proximity talks then ultimately broke down because of Denktash.

Q: Denktash?

WESTON: Denktash.

Q: When you say Clerides and Denktash, I mean they've been going at it for...

WESTON: A long time.

Q: A long time.

WESTON: With a very interesting personal history between them. Clerides basically having saved Denktash's life and that of his family once but they have been going at it a long, long time. Clerides had come to the conclusion, these were two very elderly gentlemen who had been going at it for a long time, but he had come to the conclusion that it really was time to get a settlement. I think he had come to a personal conclusion that he had been wrong in torpedoing the last real possibility of a settlement, which was called a Set of Ideas, in the early '90s. He had basically run for president of Cyprus on a platform in opposition to this particular settlement which I think he regretted later. He really was working very hard to get a settlement, and consequently he was the one who would keep coming up with ideas and compromises in these proximity talks for the UN to work with. Denktash at this time was stonewalling, eventually to the point of walking out, and the proximity talks collapsed.

I think the important part in these proximity talks was the development of what turned out to be the basic property settlement. It was an incredibly complex piece of legal work, and the security regime for what would eventually become the Annan Plan. We then went through a relatively fallow period which pretty much coincided with the change in administrations.

Q: What administration?

WESTON: Our U.S. administration. What happened then remember is we did away with the special presidential envoy leaving only me doing it. So it was a different kind of role, when you are basically the only one in the American government who is really doing it and everyone defers to you which is I guess good in some ways but not so good in other ways. We went through a very difficult period in which Turkey very much wanted to get the process started again but was dealing with a very difficult situation with Denktash who was very intransigent and didn't want to. Turkey for its own reasons focused on its path to the EU, its relationship with Greece and so on. We went through a period of backdoor diplomacy with Turkey in particular to try and devise ways to return to talks and continue to develop this plan. I'd have secret meetings with my Turkish counterpart and we would both meet in Frankfurt and run over to the Turkish consulate and try and put together things. This was very difficult for Turkey because it was working to some extent against the perceived position of Denktash who was quite intransigent. We succeeded in getting talks started again. Those talks basically alternated between proximity and direct talks but basically became the presentation of positions by the two sides. The Greek Cypriot side, meaning Clerides, would continually put forward ideas to move the process forward which were compromises. In fact certainly compromises from traditional positions and Denktash would put forward well defined, well known positions and he wasn't moving. That left the UN in the position of acting as to some extent an arbitrator. The Secretary General and his Special Envoy, who throughout this period was Alvaro Desoto, a Peruvian diplomat who had done a lot of work with the UN in the past on Central America, brokered the peace agreement there, human rights in Burma, has just been appointed the Middle East negotiator now for the UN. It left the Secretary General, the special adviser on Cyprus, Alvaro Desoto, that team and all of us supporting this effort. We were trying to merge these two to take advantage of these openings which were clearly coming from the Greek Cypriot side and develop positions which would ultimately be part of a comprehensive settlement plan, so-called Annan Plan. These positions would always obviously contain compromises or suggestions from Clerides tempered in many instances to make them more palatable to the Turkish Cypriot side if not to Denktash himself. It would be a mistake to think of this as a traditional negotiation, these two sides coming to an agreement. What was really happening is the UN pulling, and those of us who were supporting the effort, pulling out of the two sides respective positions and then merging them to come up with a plan that somehow the two sides could ultimately agree on. The other two key elements of the comprehensive settlement plan were developed: one was the system of government for a new Cyprus, one which basically assured the political equality of the two communities and a territorial settlement. The Turkish Cypriots or the Turkish army, depending on which formulation you choose to use, having control of far more territory on the island than would be justified by their population. They had about 38 percent of the territory, their population was about 18 percent. It was very clear when the Turkish took their action in '74 that they took relatively more territory to be in a better bargaining position. This territorial adjustment was a big part of it. That was always going to be the ceding of territory occupied by the Turkish side to the Greek Cypriot side. That is what went on during this period. As luck would have it, ultimately Denktash walked out again, much to the dismay of Turkey but Turkey felt it had no choice except to support him.

We then went through another period of trying to lure Denktash back to the talks and so on which wasn't very successful. This eventually evolved into a decision by the Secretary General and those who supported him that he should forge ahead with a comprehensive settlement plan and present it to the two sides for negotiation. The idea was if you had a comprehensive settlement plan which gave something to both sides, a lot of the compromises in it having been suggested through the negotiations up to this point, that you had a better chance moving toward a settlement. A methodology was developed to put forward this plan to the two sides which was going to happen in the fall of 2003. It was actually delayed a bit because Turkey was facing elections. The idea was it would not be very good to put this forward immediately before the elections as it might have an adverse impact. It was delayed a little bit but in essence Turkey had its elections and changed its government and wiped out a whole class of political figures that fall, and the Annan Plan was then put forward shortly thereafter, so-called the Annan I Plan. You end up with an Annan V eventually of this sort. This Annan I Plan was for all intensive purposes except for maybe a couple of relatively small elements the settlement plan which persisted through this whole process.

There were some other developments going on including most importantly the change in government in Turkey and the great weight that the new government put on Turkey's acceding to the EU and its realization that the Cyprus problem had to be solved, if that was going to ultimately happen. I said 2003; it was actually 2002, the fall of 2002.

There was a growth in sentiment among Turkish Cypriots which could only be described as pro-settlement. They could see that Cyprus was going into the EU and they didn't want to be left behind. There was growing sentiment that Denktash's tactics in negotiations were going to result in a situation where they did not enter the EU, Turkish Cypriots. There was a real change which was taken advantage of by some political forces in Cyprus in particular the fellow who is now the president the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, Talat, as well as a couple of others to foster this pro-settlement feeling among Turkish Cypriots. This meshed of course very well with the positions of the new Turkish government to really try and solve this problem. The Annan Plan was put forward in the fall of 2002 with a view to getting agreement on it or something very close to it in time for the Copenhagen European Council of 2002. At that time a decision was to be taken, one, on the accession of new members of the European Union which included Cyprus, and a date set for that accession, as well as an evaluation of Turkey's candidacy. There was hope of setting a date for the beginning of the negotiations for Turkey as well, Copenhagen 2002. Of course, as we had done in all of these things, the attempt was to use the leverage of those decisions as a means of fostering an agreement on Cyprus. So we all found ourselves in Copenhagen. In what was really unusual, we had the whole European Council going on and this separate Cyprus activity. It resulted in a situation in which for the first time I had been working with the EU for a long time, but it was the first time I know of where you had an American diplomat sitting and working out of the foreign ministry of the presidency country of the EU during the European Council which was the case in Copenhagen. These things were so intimately related it was very unusual; we always talk about the United States having too much influence in the European Union.

Q: It does bring up a question Tom, that is, the cold war is over, Cyprus is essentially a European problem, accession to the EU and all that, why were you and your colleagues as Americans messing around with it?

WESTON: First of all it was not an EU problem; it was a UN problem because all parties agreed that the only way to get to a solution was with the UN. The Greek Cypriots because they had several Security Council resolutions which backed up their positions and negotiations, the Turks because they were not in the EU, nor likely to be for a while, and would only accept the UN as a figure. It may well have been an EU problem in terms of needing a lot of EU support which was the case to get a settlement, but it was a UN problem. You can argue about it or describe it in a lot of different ways: whether it's because of the interest of the United States in ultimately solving this problem which divided two allies, the pressures of the Hellenic-American lobby, our role as a Security Council member, are a good part of it. I was willing to personally devote the time, the resources to keep doing this and was able to do it in a UN context and a EU context as an American diplomat which was quite unusual. We have never managed to bring that kind of American voice into EU deliberations on this before. Whether we should have or not is a separate question, but those are some of the factors that played a role. We were doing it very much in support of the Secretary General's effort. That was important in itself. This was a time when support for the Secretary General and the United Nations, remember we are now moving into the Bush administration and deliberations on Iraq and everything else, instances of support for the Secretary General and the United Nations by the United States were few and far between as well as cooperative working relationships with the European Union. Apart from the Cyprus issue I saw a value in this activity in terms of the U.S. approach to the United Nations and U.S.-EU relations as well. The Cyprus issue could have separated the United States even more than it was already separated from those two institutions.

Q: I don't want to interrupt your story here, I was just wondering, you must have had people like Senator Sarbanes and others of Greek extraction or those who owe their election to the very powerful Greek lobby breathing down your neck all the time.

WESTON: I met with Senator Sarbanes continually. I met with the Hellenic caucus continually. I met with Hellenic-American organizations. I did the same with the Turkish caucus and so on, much weaker, but that's the part of doing this job. I would say throughout this period a lot of it was because of Glafcos Clerides being the negotiator on the Cypriot side and support of Greece for the process this was not a terribly difficult thing to do during that period of time, but it was an important part of the activity, the domestic politics of the United States.

Q: How did you find in doing this with Denktash there must have been a great temptation to try to flank him or get over to...

WESTON: Well that's exactly what we did, that's part of the story. He is no longer the president of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus and by this time he was no longer even a negotiator, but that's kind of a little ahead of where we are in the story.

Q: Continue.

WESTON: But that's exactly what was done. At any rate, at Copenhagen in 2002 we got to the point where we had an Annan Plan on the table. By then it was Annan II. It had a couple of revisions presented at Copenhagen to try to get agreement by the two sides. I think Clerides came to Copenhagen prepared to agree to this plan, if the Turkish Cypriot side agreed, which meant if Turkey could induce the Turkish Cypriot side to agree. Clerides was never tested in that because what actually happened, Erdogan was not yet prime minister of Turkey. Although he was leader of the party which had won the elections, the prime minister was actually Abdul Gul, now the foreign minister, because Erdogan was still banned from having a seat in parliament because of a felony conviction in the past which had to be overturned in court and they had to have a parliamentary election. He eventually became prime minister but he was clearly the decision maker but very new to this issue and to dealing with it in a European context and to dealing with Turkish Cypriots. He was also not prime minister yet and I think there was an issue about how to manage this issue with the Turkish military, the TGS (Turkish General Staff). Denktash took advantage of this and instead of coming himself to Copenhagen to negotiate this settlement he sent his so-called Foreign Minister Taksin Erturuolglu who was a complete rejectionist, always had been, and in Copenhagen did nothing but sit in a room, agreed to nothing, and that's what Turkey was presented with at Copenhagen. We are talking about a 48-hour period of time to get this done. Turkey could not manage to bring the Turkish Cypriot side along and hence did not feel it could move on its own.

There was a complicating factor. That was the decision of the European Council which ended up as a decision to not name the date when accession negotiations would start for Turkey. Instead they took a decision to take a decision on a date in December of 2004 if all so-called Copenhagen political criteria had been met by Turkey, then it would decide to start accession negotiations promptly which it eventually did do. But that was the decision at Copenhagen, which was less than what Turkey wanted hence less perhaps than an incentive for going the extra mile, moving enough to get a Cyprus settlement. In essence, the strategy to get a settlement at the Copenhagen European Council coinciding with the Copenhagen European Council was not unprecedented if you remember the Helsinki European Council where the two were associated again, and that also failed. At that time my British counterpart Sir David Hannay left the scene, well no, he actually stayed on until a couple months later but was about ready to leave the scene; I'll phrase it that way.

When you have a failure in diplomacy, you pick up the pieces and decide on your new strategy, right? Right! In working closely with the UN the strategy was developed that we had come so close to this agreement - even though I think the assessment of the Secretary General was that it was unlikely that there would ever be agreement. There was perhaps another way of doing things. That was by getting this settlement put into effect through referendum on the two sides. There had always been the idea that you would legitimize an agreed settlement through a referendum to establish the new Cyprus, Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot referenda, the thinking which we were intimately involved with the Secretary General was that maybe we had to turn this into a way to an agreement, putting it to a referendum. A strategy was developed to make a few more revisions in the Annan Plan because you couldn't have exactly the same thing, and to try to move towards a decision not to get agreement between the two sideto a settlement itself but to get the agreement of the two sides to put a comprehensive settlement, the Annan Plan by now Annan III, to separate simultaneous referenda. We worked with that and I in particular in my role was very much working with Turkey to get agreement to this. It, of course, flew directly in the face of Denktash who had always insisted any settlement had to be one he agreed to. But, of course, the dynamic had changed in Turkey and among the Turkish Cypriots, so there was some prospect that you could move in this direction.

An associated event, however, was that Cyprus was facing presidential elections. There is much detail here I'm leaving out but in essence Glafcos Clerides, who had been such a positive force in these talks, by then for three and a half years, was defeated by Tassos Papadopoulos who won the election with the support of AKEL (Progressive Party of the Working People of Cyprus). We had a change in the government of Cyprus and hence in the Greek Cypriot negotiator. Now this all came together in a very narrow period of time along with another key event which was a vote in the Turkish parliament which was the vote on whether or not Turkey would allow American forces to deploy to Iraq through Turkey. This was defeated in the Turkish parliament. The details of that are very interesting. All of this was going on, a change in the Greek Cypriot government hence a new negotiator, a vote in the Turkish parliament and Turkey maneuvering to find a way around Denktash. The week after the elections in Cyprus and the week before the vote in the Turkish parliament I went to Ankara. I met with Erdogan. We planned out this new strategy. It was to summon the two leaders to The Hague. The Secretary General just happened to be in The Hague for the opening of the International Criminal Court. This was another instance in which I as an American found myself in an unusual situation. The policy of the administration was totally against the International Criminal Court but we had the Cyprus meeting in the same building, so what can you do? Basically Erdogan agreed to a methodology that they would be summoned to The Hague and the attempt would be made to get them to agree to referenda. Not to agree to the settlement plan but agree to put it to referenda and that Turkey would support that and would support it vis- a-vis Denktash. This was pretty spectacular stuff actually for Turkey to take that sort of position. My meeting with Erdogan was followed the same day in fact by the Secretary General who met with him and heard exactly the same thing and we then headed to Nicosia where the Secretary General presented the revised Annan Plan, Annan III, to the two sides and asked them to meet with him in The Hague two weeks later to agree to put this plan to referenda. He presented it to the two sides and that was all done. Three days after doing that the vote took place in the Turkish parliament.

Q: This is the vote on Iraq?

WESTON: On Iraq, totally unrelated to Cyprus but very related to the position of Erdogan, the prime minister, his relationship with the military in Turkey for which Cyprus was an issue. The vote was defeated basically I think, it passed in the majority but it needed basically a super majority and it lost by three votes in an almost 600 person assembly. You will find a lot of explanations for this round because it was such a significant vote from the point of view of the United States. Obviously it changed our whole strategy for the invasion. I think what happened was really quite simple and that was inexperience in parliamentary management on the part of Erdogan.

Q: It was a party that had never been in power?

WESTON: It had never been in power. It was not a public vote and it was not made clear to the members of AK that party discipline was expected which was another way of saying either you vote the right way or you're not going to be a candidate for parliament next time, which is how this works in Turkey. At any rate, the next vote on Iraq, which was a year later taken by Turkey, ready to transit through Incirlik and things like that, a U.S. air base in Iran. Erdogan made sure it was a public vote, had scheduled a meeting of the Party Congress to choose the candidates for the next parliament the week afterwards. It was very clear, you vote, forcing party discipline but that was not the case so it was defeated. I think it led to a situation internally in Turkey, what I mean is Erdogan was faced with a terrible situation vis-a-vis the United States. It was obviously a real question about parliamentary management and his skill to be the prime minister of Turkey and real questions about his relationship with the military, always a key question with Turkey. When that vote took place it was quite clear that we had a problem and of course we were only ten days away from The Hague at that point. So I got on a plane to Ankara and continuing my support of the Secretary General's role on all of this and had another meeting with Erdogan. Remember, these two meetings with Erdogan are roughly ten days apart and it was a totally changed situation. Instead of reaching agreement on this methodology in The Hague, it was I can't take this on now, Denktash is going to thwart me, he has support of the military, you know, a totally different situation so clearly we had a big problem. But, the Secretary General had already gone ahead and had given the plan revision. The meeting in The Hague was scheduled but we had some concerns about what Papadopoulos would be doing. During this time Papadopoulos was inaugurated as president of Cyprus. This was the week before going to The Hague. I was actually in Nicosia, I remember the day before his inauguration. I was paying a farewell call on Clerides and he came in and joined the meeting I was having with Clerides and we had a discussion, I will call it that, of what to do with The Hague. But at that time Papadopoulos was very much sticking with anything Clerides had agreed to, he was going to support, he was not going to back away from it, he was not behaving like a rejectionist at all. But this was immediately after his inauguration, not that long after his election.

We had all these meetings and we were clearly heading to The Hague in a situation in which it was pretty clear that Denktash would not agree to put this to referendum; and Turkey would not be in position to force him to do so. We showed up in The Hague and I was having meetings with Desoto all the time trying to develop other strategies. We came up with some. We got to The Hague, we had 19 straight hours in negotiations through the night. The Secretary General had a cold, I mean, it was just awful, and we tried a lot of different strategies - if we couldn't get an agreement on putting it to a referendum, can we get agreement on at least making preparations for referendum. We got nowhere. Denktash said, "No, no, no, no". Turkey not being in a position to do anything. At one time it was actually kind of amusing I went down to talk to my Turkish counterpart, the under secretary from the foreign ministry, and I said, "We have to do something this is just going to fail utterly and it is not going to be to anyone's benefit particularly for Turkey". He said, "You go talk to Denktash, I can't get anywhere". So he sent me in to talk to Denktash for Turkey, which was kind of an unusual role. Nineteen hours, the whole thing failed. At the end the Secretary General put out a press statement that in essence this process was at an end. He would go back and make a report to the Security Council and point out who was responsible for the failure and the Security Council could decide what to do. It was at that point then my British colleague then left the whole process, Sir David Hannay. We were left with what then to do to carry on, once again, as it happened in Copenhagen, we had failed again and so we pick up the pieces.

Picking up the pieces this time involved the Secretary General doing a report to the Security Council on the whole history of the negotiations. He said that they had failed because of Denktash, and Turkey's inability to do anything about him, and having that report endorsed in a resolution by the Security Council. This had the effect of the Security Council putting its stamp of approval on the Annan Plan as the settlement plan. I'd worked on resolutions in the Security Council off and on again over the years. This was the hardest, because even though on the substance there wasn't that much dispute in the Security Council, it was in the wake of the repeated failure by the United States to get its second resolution passed before invading Iraq. The atmosphere in the Security Council was absolutely poisonous, there was a resolution in the Security Council co-introduced by the United States and the United Kingdom. It was very difficult because of the mood in the Security Council, but ultimately we were successful, we got a resolution, 15 votes in favor, unanimous in the Security Council which endorsed the report of the Secretary General. Now the importance of that is that it put Turkey in a very bad position and Denktash in a worse position in terms of their aspirations for the EU. At the same time this indicated that the Security Council really thought the Annan Plan was fair and balanced and it gave us the material we needed to make another go.

The next go after getting this resolution in the Security Council took place in a series of conversations which I was doing, because the Secretary General was very distraught with all that had happened with Turkey and the Greek Cypriots. With Turkey I had a whole series of discussions in Ankara about this. The United States being the biggest supporter of Turkey acceding to the EU, "we have got to solve this problem, we have got to get past this," so on and so forth, and it's going to take some Turkish initiative now and it is going to take Turkey taking on Denktash. At the same time I was trying to convince Papadopoulos, using what I was using with Turkey, which was trying to come up with some Turkish initiative for a Cyprus settlement and working basically against Denktash to convince Papadopoulos that he should take some initiative so that he was not left in a position where Turkey was taking all the initiatives. I ended up being very successful with Turkey and only marginally successful with Papadopoulos; marginally successful in that Papadopoulos eventually sent a letter to the Secretary General expressing his agreement that we had to have a new initiative, he really wanted a settlement and so on. This turned out to be very important for the new initiative and that was to set up a kind of negotiation, if you will, another attempt to get a settlement to referendum. This was based on bringing the parties to New York, not only the Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots but also the Greeks and the Turks and the UK as the other guarantor power on Cyprus. We were there assisting, the United States assisting the Secretary General.

In February of 2004, the strategy was to bring everyone to New York and Turkey would put forward some ideas for how to reach a settlement. Those ideas would then be brokered by the Secretary General in an effort to get agreement on all sides. We had indications of support by Greece for this strategy. I should tell you we were also going through this period with elections in Greece. So, at the time we were in New York we had one government in Greece, Papandreou, and by the time we completed this strategy we had another government, but I will get into that. But, we had indications from both the sitting government and the prospective new government in Greece of support for this and so we went ahead. The idea was everyone would run to New York and we once again had all night meetings and trying to hammer out an agreement. Turkey did put forward two basic big compromises which it would have been very hard for Papadopoulos to refuse. He was ready to refuse but at the last minute Papandreou was solicited to convince him that he couldn't refuse. This resulted in an agreement on Friday, February 13, I remember it because it was Friday the 13th, among all parties with the Secretary General. The two parties would go back to the island and attempt to negotiate whatever changes they wanted to the Annan Plan. They would complete all the necessary drafting of laws, some 9,000 pages of laws which would make the new Cyprus function from day one. They agreed to do that and they also agreed in the event they were not able to reach an agreement that they would convene with the Secretary General outside of Cyprus, it turned out to be in Burgenstock, Switzerland, and attempt to reach agreement on a plan with the assistance of Greece and Turkey and that, in the event they were still not able to reach an agreement, that they would have the Secretary General finalize the plan to be put to referendum. The agreement in February was the agreement we had sought in The Hague, that something was going to be put to referendum of the two communities which was very painful for Papadopoulos to accept. We had a very, very difficult meeting on that. I had a very interesting meeting with Denktash.

Q: Why was he so concerned about the referendum?

WESTON: He did not want to accept this plan that he had never agreed to. He actually campaigned against the plan in the referendum even though he had agreed to doing this under pressure from Greece, remember. At any rate, this was all agreed; the Secretary General announced it and the parties went back to Cyprus. Remember, Denktash was clearly only doing this because Turkey said he had to do it. I had a meeting with Denktash after it was done where I complimented him on his statesmanship, because he had been, or was, in the process of being pushed aside and overruled by Turkey, which had never happened to him before. Nonetheless I went and congratulated him on his statesmanship and he managed to grit his teeth and not throw me out of the room.

The two parties went back to the island. The two leaders, Papadopoulos and Denktash got nowhere, not a big surprise. What did happen is a whole series of technical committees convened to draft these laws and the fact of the matter is these 9,000 pages of laws were drafted in about six weeks. I mean there were drafts that had been prepared ahead of time but actually getting through this work it is kind of remarkable. There was competition on a national anthem, a national flag for the new Cyprus, and all kinds of things like that. That all went very well but there was no real movement on the part of either Papadopoulos or Denktash. Then we went to the second stage of the February agreement which was to convene in Switzerland. Now, this was, of course, the Greek Cypriots, Turkish Cypriots, the UN, Greece, Turkey, the United Kingdom as the guarantor power. The United States had been playing a particular role so we were there too, but we actually acted as a part of the British delegation because there was no real role for the United States as United States technically. For the first time after 1776 we rejoined Great Britain, which was fine. Everyone showed up on this snowy mountain top. For these people coming from the Eastern Mediterranean there was ten feet of snow and they're all falling on ice and no one had an overcoat. They had a terrible snowstorm and it's a mountaintop in Switzerland. Everyone was there including the prime ministers of Greece and Turkey who then were having separate meetings, since the government had changed in Greece the week before. Even though Karamanlis had spent time with Erdogan in the past in a new democracy this was the first time they were meeting with Karamanlis as prime minister. We went through several days of attempting to reach agreements. A bit more was done on the plan but we got to the end of the period which had been agreed to in February and it was quite clear that the Secretary General would have to finalize the plan. So it was down to about a solid 24 hours, around the clock, finalizing the plan which became Annan V and was presented to the two parties as we left Switzerland, with the agreement which had been reached in February to put this plan to referendum. Everyone returned to the island. I should also point out that Denktash did not come to Switzerland. In his stead Talat and his son Seder Denktash, the so-called foreign minister, Talat having by then become prime minister of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. But they came fully empowered by the Turkish Cypriot Community Leader Denktash to negotiate, come to an agreement. At least in terms of the negotiations that was the first time where Denktash was actually out completely, had been sidelined completely.

The Turkish Cypriots started a very active campaign for a yes vote on this agreement. Rauf Denktash expressed his misgivings about it but it was quite clear that the pro-settlement forces were going to pass this. Turkey made statement after statement, did everything it could to elicit support for the agreement. Ultimately Greece, though in a lukewarm way, did give its formal endorsement advocating a yes vote in the referendum, but Papadopoulos, who had been expected to wait to have all of the various political parties in Cyprus give their views before taking a position, went back and gave a very nationalistic, xenophobic anti-Turkish speech about this whole agreement urging a no vote, much to the, I don't know if surprise is the right word, chagrin, for all kinds of other people. That was met with, I remember, Gï¿½nter Verheugen, who is the Commissioner for Enlargement of the EU, put out a statement that Papadopoulos had betrayed the European Union, just as Cyprus is supposed to be entering the European Union. There were investigations started in the European Parliament about some of his activities related to the referendum, whether they were undemocratic, just the whole European Union and of course Greece had endorsed this and called for a Yes vote but he called for a No vote. He took other measures. For instance, Desoto, Special Advisor for the UN, was not allowed on Cypriot television to explain the agreement or anything else. The referendum took place on April 24th just before Cyprus was entering the European Union, was passed two to one by the Turkish Cypriots, was defeated three to one by the Greek Cypriots so it did not come into effect. Cyprus went ahead and entered the European Union a week later as a divided island without a settlement.

Once again a failure, but a totally different sort of failure this time. Everyone blaming Papadopoulos and the Greek Cypriots for the failure to get a settlement, the Secretary General, the European Union that it was just joining. Greece was very muted in its criticism. They said this is a decision that the Greek Cypriots would have to abide by. But it was a complete change from the situation of Denktash being the obstructionist, and Turkey which was very good. Of course Turkey was facing the decision in December of 2004 to get a date for accession negotiations and had to be in the position of doing everything it could to get a Cyprus settlement.

We went back to New York and the Secretary General drafted another report for the Security Council's consideration. There were a lot of other things going on here during this referendum period. We had a veto of a resolution to establish a peace keeping force by Russia, no doubt at Greek Cypriot behest, a veto in which the fourteen other members of the Security Council voted for it. We had a Donor's Conference in which the United States came up in a four day period with $400 million in assistance to implement a settlement as well as others but at any rate, the long and the short of it is in the wake of the referenda we went back to New York.

The Secretary General drafted another report making very clear that he no longer was convinced that the Greek Cypriots actually wanted a settlement. They'd always said they wanted a bicommunal, bizonal federation by referendum. That's what they had been presented with and they had rejected it overwhelmingly for whatever reason - whether it was Papadopoulos or they didn't like being called into question whether they really wanted a settlement. He did not believe he could continue his efforts, and the good offices mission under these circumstances if one side clearly didn't want settlement. The Secretary General basically did three things in his report. He noted that Turkey and the Turkish Cypriots had obviously done everything possible to get a settlement. He cited the agreements in New York and the Turkish initiatives which was very favorable in terms of Turkey and the EU. He also left a door open to the Greek Cypriots by including language in his report which said something like "If I can be convinced that there is a willingness on the part of both sides to get a settlement, meaning the Greek Cypriots, I will resume the good offices mission. But in order to be convinced of that I have to know the actual language, with clarity and finality, what the Greek Cypriots found wrong with this settlement." But, he left an opening in other words, he said that he would support or advocate with the Security Council measures to take account of the concerns of the Greek Cypriots if they could be articulated. The third thing he did was to call for an end to the isolation of the Turkish Cypriots. You know that the Turkish Cypriots were not recognized, they were subject to a whole series of restrictions, so-called embargos. They aren't really that but that's the term which is commonly used. He advocated that any of these which weren't really necessary, should be lifted to end their isolation; they had clearly demonstrated themselves to be in favor of the settlement moving toward the EU.

We then went to try and get this once again approved in a Security Council resolution and were thwarted in that basically by Russia at the behest of the Greek Cypriots. It was very critical of the Greek Cypriots but it was quite clear we could not get a resolution through, so we used the occasion of a vote on UNFORCYP (United Nations Forces in Cyprus), the renewal of the UN peace-keeping force on Cyprus, to reinforce, well, several members of the Security Council used that occasion to reinforce their support for the report of the Secretary General and these three things he had advocated, the United States most strongly but there were others, the UK, Romania, Pakistan and others endorsing it. But we could not get a resolution through the Security Council because of Russia, clearly at Greek Cypriot behest. It has always astonished me and I to this day can't figure out why a power which styles itself as a great power does the bidding of Nicosia whenever it's asked without question, but that's a whole separate subject of conversation, meaning Russia.

At any rate, we got all these statements out in the Security Council and we started to, we the United States, to take actions to carry out at least an end of the isolation of the Turkish Cypriots. We developed a series of policies, went through a deputies committee meeting and all of that sort of thing to do a whole series of things for Turkish Cypriots. I was very careful to be talking to the more moderate members of the Hellenic-American Committee and the Hellenic-Caucus, like Senator Sarbanes, all of these things we were doing and they related to an assistance package of some $31 million we put through, some symbolic acts and so on. All of which turned out to be opposed by the Greek Cypriots but by the time they got their act together we had put these through. It was quite clear having been through Copenhagen and The Hague and Switzerland and these referendums, I decided there was not going to be a Cyprus settlement any time soon and I was going to leave. So, that August after tidying up this work in New York, I left the account.

Q: Something that troubles me is that, looking at the situation today, and even the situation later, I mean prior to this, in a way the Turks were acting on a presumption that seemed very problematic and that is the ability to get into the European Union, I mean, for example right now the French have stated that they are going to take a referendum on it.

WESTON: Well, they have added it to their constitution.

Q: Yeah and the French are already ready to vote down the EU constitution, in other words referenda allow for people to be bloody minded.

WESTON: (agreeing)

Q: And the Turks are just not, I mean they are not European and there are a lot of Europeans who don't like Turkish workers at all and there are a lot of things that...

WESTON: You know apart from Cyprus I've been working on Turkey acceding to the EU for a long, long time both with Turkey and with the member states of the European Union. I know this is very difficult and there is no certainty that Turkey will ever be a member of the EU. I think that they should be and they certainly are not going to be a member of the EU that exists now because the EU is not going to be the same EU by the time they ever, if and when they do get membership.

Nonetheless, the prospect of membership has been incredibly important for Turkey: obviously in terms of the reform process in Turkey, in terms of stabilizing its economy, in terms of moving on the Cyprus issue which is fairly minor compared with what's happened in Turkey with the prospect of entry into the EU. I think it's also been very beneficial for the member states of the European Union and for Europe as a whole. It's brought to the fore the question of if Turkey isn't European anymore, neither is Germany which has some three to four million Turks in it, nor is France which has some seventeen percent of its population is Muslim right now. So it brought these questions to the fore in a way that I think led to a very beneficial debate within Europe. There are all kinds of reasons why Europeans oppose Turkish membership, cheap labor, if they have the current system of common agricultural policy, all kinds of reasons, but I think what has happened in this process is the whole question of Islam in Europe, not completely by any means, it's still a problem with the CU in Germany and with all kind of anti-immigration forces in Scandinavia, the Netherlands, France. To some extent this whole prospect of Turkey being European, meaning being part of the EU, has led to a increasing realization by Europeans of who they really are which are not homogenous little societies of Volksdeutch (German people) or whatever they thought they were. Whether or not Turkey ever becomes a member of the EU, I think the process, or the prospect of it has been very beneficial for Turkey, I think it's been very beneficial to Europe as a whole and hence to the United States ultimately which is of course our interest in the affair.

Q: Tom you've had a, I mean this is long hard work but a unique position. Could you comment a bit on watching the European Union system and the United Nation system, I won't say collide but cooperate, try to get something done because you look at the EU and it is very easy to look at and say this place may be a good customs movement but as far as having a common foreign policy or something like that it just doesn't seem to be in the cards and the United Nations has got so many different interests that it there are a lot of issues not going to go anywhere but you saw these things coincide on a really very small, essentially rather minor area...

WESTON: Right, on Cyprus.

Q: But at the same time it's one that has been rankling for a long time.

WESTON: But one in which you did have a common EU foreign policy on Cyprus, or at least until Cyprus joined the EU. You had very strong and coherent U.S.-European cooperation within the United Nations and with the Secretary General. There of course is the problem of Russia, but I'm not sure what your question is because I take a different view of the EU. I think it is a very dynamic and vibrant organization which is quite creative.

Q: I mean this is what I want you to, this is just...

WESTON: But it takes a lot of work. It takes especially a country like the United States. It takes a tremendous amount of patient diplomacy which means talking to a whole series of institutions and people over an extended period of time building relationships, building a capacity to influence and be influenced by these various institutions in terms of developing coherent and common policies because that's how they are more effective. We were able to do that and sustained it.

Q: You were doing this at a time when we had an Administration that was dumping on the UN.

WESTON: And the EU. That's right.

Q: And the Iraq war going on and everybody, I mean really ranking Bush next to Stalin and Hitler, I think Bush would, I'm not sure if you would call it a popularity contest, I mean, President Bush was not one of the figures popular in a lot of these places. How did that affect you?

WESTON: It made what I was doing, I mentioned this earlier, keeping at least one area where we could really conduct diplomacy in cooperative efforts with the EU and with the United Nations, the United States could do it working well. There was at least some, albeit minor, minor issue, although Turkey in the EU is not a minor issue, Cyprus may be but Turkey in the EU is not. We could keep something going. I mentioned already, going to the Security Council and getting a resolution supportive of the Secretary General led by the United Nations was very important, I think, at this point of time after Iraq and our problems there. But it was lonely out there. I can remember one time that Haviea Salata, our representative for foreign policy, this was during the Greek presidency of the European Union and he and George Papandreou were in a meeting. It was one of the usual ministerial level meetings with Powell, the Secretary of State going all through all these things, the U.S.-EU relationship and Salata came out with, because they were having difficulties in all of these different things said, "You know we need," he actually said to Powell my name, "we need Tom Weston working on this stuff. He's the most effective diplomat in dealing between the United States and the EU". Then Papandreou agreed with him in the meeting even though they weren't talking about Cyprus. It was lonely. There weren't a lot of relationships going on and the same was unfortunately true with the UN in terms of policies where the United States was actually using the UN to foster its policy interests successfully.

Q: Do you think there was another factor going here. Things are so abysmal at that time because of Iraq and the attitude of the Bush administration. Do you think that other parties, for God's sake, let's find someplace where we can all, I mean, let's show a little light over in this corner...

WESTON: Absolutely.

Q: And everybody would be kind of nice to Tom Weston.

WESTON: Absolutely, and this was both sides of the Atlantic, in Washington too, and it was, you know, this is one thing and let's highlight it. It comes out if you go through a kind of U.S. EU communiquï¿½s at these very summits during this period in time you will see that we are really cooperating strongly on the Cyprus issue and it was seized upon as an example in the UN. Absolutely.

Q: These things coincide, right now we are talking of the fact that the United States and France got together...

WESTON: On Lebanon.

Q: To get Syrians out of Lebanon and I think everyone is delighted because we are looking for some place we should show that it's not this confrontation. Did you ever sit down and have a serious talk with the Russians and find out what the hell they were doing?

WESTON: Oh I had a lot of serious talks. Remember at the time, for instance, of the veto. We were trying to get the Security Council resolution passed before the referendum which established the follow-on UN force on the island. The reason we were trying to get it passed before the referendum is Papadopoulos was saying, "Look, this will never be implemented, this agreement, so don't vote for it." The idea was if you could get the Security Council and the United Nations to start implementing the settlement by establishing the force that would be a sign that it indeed would be implemented. That was the reason we were trying to do it. As I say, the foreign minister of Russia by this time was Lavrov who had been their permrep in New York whom I had met on numerous occasions on Cyprus before he became foreign minister. We had all kinds of talks. Russia had a special envoy on Cyprus this whole time who is a contact. I was in Moscow a couple different times they would come to Washington for talks and so on, so we were talking to them. The only way I can explain Russian behavior here is its traditional Russian behavior. Russia has traditionally supported the Greek Cypriots. This goes back to getting a foothold in the Mediterranean and all kinds of things like that, anti-Turkish, but I think most recently it is Cyprus as a member state of the European Union may be able to do friendly things for Russia on visas or something like that. Now there are a lot of other factors at play here. Cyprus for a long time was the destination for an awful lot of Russian mafia money. All of those connect; I think that's far less the case now because of changes and Cypriot banking laws.

Q: When you say the mafia you are talking about, these are sort of basically robber baron types who are...

WESTON: Well, including a lot of the Russian political elite as well, robber barons though they may be. To really understand how all of these things play a role, but I think it was very interesting when we were trying to get this resolution. Especially in the face of 14 positive votes from the entire rest of the Security Council, how do you explain it? I think the explanation is in some of these traditional relationships with Cyprus, including the financial one. I think part of it is Lavrov personally, the Russian foreign minister, feels that on the Cyprus issue maybe Russia as a member of the Security Council has not been treated as the great power that it is. He will say the whole Annan Plan was written by the Americans, for instance, or the UK which is not the case but he will say things like that. I think it reflects his history as the Russian permrep in New York, dealing with the Security Council. Whether there are some darker reasons I mean, is someone on the take here or not? I don't know, but it is very hard to explain the absolute obedience of Russia to doing whatever Nicosia wants it to do. I mean it is very difficult to explain.

Q: Well looking at it today, you've got Cyprus in the European Union, and you've got this hunk of thirty percent or something like that, 38 percent of territory and Cyprus which is under Turkish sway. What's going to happen?

WESTON: Well, first of all I think you got to move off Cyprus. We are in a situation where insofar as you can remove this as an issue affecting Turkeys' prospects in Europe, that's important whatever happens on the island of Cyprus. What's going to happen on Cyprus? I think that there is not going to be a settlement as long as Papadopoulos is the president of the Republic of Cyprus. I think he will continue to do whatever he can within the EU as an EU member to thwart Turkey's relationship with the European Union as a negotiating tool to get what he wants on Cyprus. The only settlement I think he would be willing to accept is one of majority rule, minority rights, that is Hellenization of the island which is not something which I think Turkish Cypriots or Turkey would ever accept, nor should they. I think where we are right now is with each passing period we are moving more and more towards ultimately either a change in the politics among the Greek Cypriots. This would be more than Papadopoulos leaving the scene. Remember, you had a vote of three to one in the referendum against a settlement, a bicommunal/bizonal federation settlement, so I think that absent a change in the politics of Greek Cypriots and their attitudes, which I do not necessarily believe will ever happen. If there were a change, then I think you might have a chance for settlement. The longer you go on after having had this referendum and the obvious refusal of Greek Cypriots to accept what they said they always wanted in a settlement, I think you are inevitably driven in the direction of partition of the island and I think the way that the situation will change over time is that you have this Turkish Cypriot part of Cyprus sitting there with the European Union trying to develop a relationship with it despite Cyprus being a member state. You will have more and more de facto partition which ultimately could translate into the Turkish Cypriots becoming part of the European Union as a different entity. The legal status right now is all of Cyprus is a member of the European Union and that the difference with the North is that technically the acquis communautaire is suspended, the body of the EU law, so you can imagine somehow the European Union trying to find a way to apply the acquis communautaire in the North thereby bringing the benefits of European Union membership to the Turkish Cypriots without a settlement. I think that would be thwarted by Papadopoulos as a member state in the European Union but I'm not sure about his successor.

Q: Is there any possibility that it might become sort of an Andorra or a haven for putting your money there or...

WESTON: Not really, because the Turkish Cypriots are trying to adapt all of their laws so they are consistent with European Union law anyway. You do this in financial services and Andorra is no longer a place where you can keep your money. Lichtenstein is but...

Q: Is this going to become sort of a pustule sign of sort of a Mediterranean...

WESTON: I think more likely it will move toward taking advantage of the European Union without being in the European Union. You have an example on the island now. The two British sovereign base areas are not technically part of the European Union even though the UK is. Remember they are UK sovereign territory but they are not part of the European Union yet the whole acquis communautaire applies in both of them so it's the same status as the Isle of Man and Jersey and Guernsey. You work out these strange arrangements and I think that's probably where it is headed.

Q: You've got to have a passport how does that work in Turkey's case?

WESTON: A lot of Turkish Cypriots have been applying for Republic of Cyprus passports, thousands and thousands and that works particularly well. They've got a European Union passport and they can go and work in Germany or anywhere else. That, of course, does not deal with the so-called settlers, because the Republic of Cyprus will not issue a passport to someone they do not consider a Cypriot citizen, they will to Turkish Cypriots but they will not to Anatolian Turks. About half the problem is taken care of but not the whole.

Q: Well Tom it's been a long voyage. What are you doing now?

WESTON: Now, when I left the Foreign Service, August of 2004, I had been moving to go back to teaching for some time. In fact during the time that this was going on in Switzerland and the referendum I was actually teaching a course at Georgetown on European multilateral diplomacy. I had decided that I wasn't going to wait any longer before going back to teaching. I knew I was going to leave. I didn't want to leave it at a time when there was still a prospect of getting a settlement but I knew I was going to do it. So what happened is after tidying up loose ends in New York, as I say, that summer in the September semester I started teaching at Georgetown. I started doing it on a part time basis which is what I wanted to do because I am doing some things with the Center for Trans-Atlantic Affairs at Hopkins and Brookings and all these different things. I'm actually going to go full time teaching this next academic year just because I got certain courses which are required for students in particular kinds of students and we need more sections of the course so that they can all get in.

I kept up when I left in August with the State Department, the Bureau for European Affairs, wanted to keep me on as a consultant on Cyprus because of historical memory and all of that sort of stuff and even offered to pay me to stay on as a consultant, part time whatever. I declined because part of that would be because of the ethics requirements. I would have had to submit anything that I wrote or speech that I gave for approval to Public Affairs before I did it including my course syllabi which I said I can't do that. That is totally unethical and irresponsible from the point of view of the university to have your syllabus requiring the approval of the government, so I said I don't want to be a paid consultant but I will stay and be an unpaid consultant and I have continued to do that. In fact, last week I was over there all day because there is now a lot of activity trying to start a new initiative on Cyprus and it's not going anywhere but it has to be dealt with so I am kind of the institutional memory on the question, I guess.

Q: Did you have the rank of ambassador?

WESTON: Yeah, confirmed, hearing and all that sort of stuff.

Q: How did you find the Greek lobby today, is it...?

WESTON: Once the referendum was defeated by the Greek Cypriots the Greek lobby didn't know what to do. A lot of members of the Greek lobby and even more the Hellenic Caucus on the Hill, are not necessarily fans of the president of Cyprus. They really thought Clerides was the greatest thing since sliced bread but have some different views of Papadopoulos, so it's a very mixed sort of picture. I think that the fair characterization would be that there is still a tendency on the part of the Hellenic Caucus, the Hill component and Hellenic-American organizations in general, to be supportive of the government of Cyprus no matter what it does and to advocate on its behalf but there are real variations depending on which part of the community you're talking about.

Q: Well what little I've touched on this I was in Greece from '70-'74 and I remember I left just before, I left first in July of '74, just before all hell broke loose. Talking to so many of the Greek Americans they don't seem to understand what happened. They somehow think that the Turks did them in.

WESTON: I mean it depends on who you are talking to. I've had conversations with some people including very prominent people in the Hellenic-American community up in Astoria who will say, "I know that we really roughed up the Turkish Cypriots" and remember we had an attempted coup, against the government of Cyprus going on and there are all kinds of Hellenic-Americans who were, starting with Senator Sarbanes, who were very opposed to the military junta at that time. There's perhaps not as much recognition of history as you would like to see, but there are variations.

Q: As a typical immigrant quite frankly I mean the ones I've talked to, the so-called hyphenated Americans, I think were moving beyond that stage now, it's a different generation.

Q: Well Tom, I want to thank you very much.

WESTON: Okay.

Q: Great.

WESTON: I think we finished up.

End of interview