

Interview with Herbert Levin

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

HERBERT LEVIN

Interviewed by: Mike Springmann

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Q: This is March 5, 1994, Mike Springmann interviewing Herbert Levin for the Foreign Affairs Oral History Program. It's roughly 10:00 in the morning.

Maybe we could start with you giving us a brief rundown of places you've served in the Foreign Service and what your positions were in each place.

LEVIN: I came into the Foreign Service in June 1956, and after our entry A-100 class was assigned to the Bureau of Economic Affairs for two years. I then went into Chinese language training, first at FSI in Washington, and then (1959) to the Foreign Service Institute Field School in Taichung, Taiwan. After Taichung, I went (1961) to the Consulate General in Hong Kong for three years, then (1964) to the Embassy in Taipei; followed by the Embassy in Tokyo (1967). I then went back (1970) to Washington and was on the National Security Council staff during the period when we prepared for the opening with China, which culminated in Henry Kissinger's unannounced trip, etc.

I went back to the State Department and served as Deputy Director for Japanese Affairs and then went (1974) as a Fellow to the Center for International Affairs at Harvard; followed by DCM in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania (1975); Colombo, Sri Lanka (1977); New Delhi, India (1979); back to Washington (1981) where I served on the staff of the

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National Intelligence Council; Policy Planning Council; in different parts of the Department; ran the Task Force devising the U.S. international response to AIDS. I was loaned as Staff Director to the House Subcommittee on Asian Affairs, the Chairman of which was Congressman Steve Solarz.

For two years I was Executive Director of the office in charge of our policy towards COCOM and subsequently in the same number two position in the office in charge of our policy governing Nuclear Nonproliferation and Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy. I retired from the Foreign Service at the end of 1991, and went to the United Nations Secretariat. I was asked to serve the America-China Society as Executive Director in October, 1994 by the Society's Chairman and Co-Chairman, former Secretaries of State Henry A. Kissinger and Cyrus R. Vance, and that is where I am.

Q: Could you maybe give us a little bit of a rundown on how you got into the Foreign Service and what your family background was?

LEVIN: I was born and brought up principally around New York City, though we lived for short times in Los Angeles and Chicago. My interest in the Foreign Service came from it having been a time when there were refugees arriving from Europe, and my family assisted refugees both organizationally and personally. When we had a large house in Northern Westchester—Amawalk—people came for temporary periods until they could be launched organizationally. So I was very conscious of what was going on in the world.

When I went to Harvard in 1948, my entering class was the first post-war class with a majority of non-veterans of the Second World War. So we 17 year old freshmen were looking up at 21 year old veteran sophomores, etc., for the most part. We graduated into the Korean War which began in 1950. So my life has been continuously directly affected by events in the world.

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Q: You mentioned your father was involved with dealing with refugees. What did he do, what was his position?

LEVIN: My late father was a CPA with his own accounting firm in New York City. Both he and my mother were always organizationally involved in various kinds of refugee assistance, through Community Chest and other more direct refugee activities. These were subjects which we discussed around the dining room table, people showed up at home involved with these problems and I was very much aware of them.

Q: When you left college, what did you do until you joined State in '56?

LEVIN: I passed my examinations for the Foreign Service while in college. The Korean War was on, and because of Senator Joseph McCarthy's crusade against the State Department there were no appointments to the Foreign Service. So I "requested induction," because if you requested induction you were drafted for 2 years. If you enlisted or accepted a commission it was for longer periods of time and I didn't want to obligate myself for a longer period of time because I wanted to go into the Foreign Service.

While I was in the army in Japan the Foreign Service offered an appointment and I asked them to defer due to military service. I asked them to defer again when I was getting out of the army so I could go to graduate school, and they did. I went to the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy and came into the Foreign Service in '56.

Q: You went straight into International Economic Affairs.

LEVIN: Yes. My MA in Fletcher was in Economic Affairs.

Q: And then you went from there, you said, to Taiwan?

LEVIN: My freshman roommate at Harvard was a Chinese Communist, Ji Chaozhu. He went back during the Korean War when Premier Zhou En-lai asked loyal Communists to

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return. Though a devoted patriotic Chinese and a Communist, when Americans who had doubts about Communism discussed this with him, he would give answers such as—"if we had in China what you have in the United States we wouldn't need Communism; we've tried other things and they don't work." We stayed in contact over the years, with the State Department security people quite content to have me exchanging letters with him through Pakistani friends and that kind of thing.

Q: Was this State Department security or the folks behind it, our friends at the CIA?

LEVIN: This was strictly State Department security. I don't recall being asked for copies of the letters or anything like that. It was simply that we had to report contacts with Chinese Communists, this was a contact and they said go right ahead.

Q: But they would have been hysterical at your dealing with a real dyed-in-the-wool Communist.

LEVIN: I don't think they were. Obviously I was writing to him. The letters were either carried or they went by mail through censorship. I wouldn't write him anything that would get him in trouble. The letters that he wrote to me often had a beginning and an end which would sound politically nice to anybody else reading them, and then the center would be something personal about family and that kind of thing.

Q: Did you get a good picture on what was happening? We're talking about your Chinese Communist contact over the years, to whom you'd be writing letters.

LEVIN: This friendship was part of the reason that I became interested in Chinese language and area study. I was interested in going into the Foreign Service for the reasons we already discussed, but the particular Chinese interest came out of this fortuitous assignment to the same dormitory room my freshman year in Harvard. Then we stayed in touch and State Department security didn't have any problems with this. We exchanged fairly innocuous letters back and forth.

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Q: What happened to him eventually, do you know?

LEVIN: Ji was Zhou En-lai's interpreter in Zhou En-lai's capacity as Foreign Minister not as Prime Minister. The Chinese combined those jobs as many countries did at that time. Ji was a Chinese Foreign Service Officer and served in Washington twice. He retired from the Chinese Foreign Service in '91 to become Under Secretary General of the United Nations. He asked me to come up and work with him.

Q: That's amazing.

LEVIN: So that's why I was in the UN Secretariat.

Q: That's incredible. You were in Taiwan, you said, initially in Chinese language school.

LEVIN: That's right, in Taichung, Taiwan.

Q: This is about the time that the Quemoy business was going on.

LEVIN: Right. The Quemoy shelling would have been in '58; I went in '59.

Q: What was that like; both Taiwan and the People's Republic insisting there is only one China? What was it like working at that point, saying "there is only one China" from the small rump state of Taiwan.

LEVIN: Getting to Taichung in 1959, ten years after Chiang Kai-shek's government had evacuated to Taiwan, it was quite clear that Chiang was not going "to reconquer the mainland," the phrase in use then. At the same time, many of the people who came from the mainland didn't have any other rationale for their preferred position. They felt they had moved a national government to Taiwan. In their eyes, to dissolve a national government and to turn it over to the local provincial Taiwanese Chinese was both legally and personally anathema. Some of them were motivated by selfish reasons. They wished to retain their politically justified positions which provided them with authority and money.

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Others were motivated by a kind of patriotism. They thought that communism was bad and that they should hold out an alternate for China. After all, who knew what opportunities the future would bring the Chinese people.

The Chinese have a long history and they sense history when viewing a contemporary problem. On Taiwan, some felt that Communism would dissolve or fall apart in the future and they would have preserved another Chinese system. Others felt that the Nationalist—Kuomintang—government of Chiang on the mainland had done a bad job. It had been corrupt, it had been inefficient, it had been warlord ridden, and so forth, and they would show in a different place, in a different time, when they weren't fighting the Japanese, that non-Communist China could do a good job with the local people. So among the mainland Chinese in Taiwan, there was a whole range of rationales for their situation.

The Taiwanese majority viewed things differently. Along with the rest of China, Taiwan had been under the Manchu Dynasty. The Manchus were foreigners to the Chinese, though highly Sinicized towards the end. In the 19th century the Chinese in Taiwan had not liked being ruled from Beijing. Then they were under the Japanese, who had been an efficient but not a cruel colonial regime the way they were in Korea. It was a relatively benign civilian colonial regime. And since 1945 they were again under the mainland, so the Taiwanese had a long history of adjusting to people from outside their province ruling them. Many of them resented this but historically there were relatively few Taiwanese martyrs in these situations. Perhaps more a demonstration of adaptability than cowardice.

Taiwan was a relatively prosperous place. After the economy got going in Taiwan, due both to a great deal of American aid and a lot of educated, highly motivated people who were anti-Communist from the mainland, both Taiwanese and mainlanders saw their daily lives improving. Also, the people from the mainland were not a monolith. In addition to the Kuomintang—Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalists—there were a lot of other minor political parties and individuals who came from the mainland to Taiwan who were anti-Communist but were also highly critical of the Nationalists.

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For politically minded Taiwanese, this meant that they were dealing with a non-monolithic ruling group. The situation has evolved the way optimists thought it would, relatively peacefully into a kind of Chinese democracy. Of course, Foreign Service Officers whose reports suggested the possibility of this benign outcome received much less attention than those predicting Taiwanese-mainlanders violence like that which occurred in 1948, or a Communist invasion, or other dramatic events.

Q: You were in language school for a couple of years?

LEVIN: In those days, FSI had sufficient money so that the first year in Washington was half language and half area training, which was a sound investment. FSI discontinued this shortly thereafter because they didn't have enough money. We had full-time at FSI, Professor Harold Hinton, a distinguished scholar of China who died very recently. This was important because an FSO who doesn't know a great deal about China and speaks good Chinese, is more dangerous than someone who doesn't speak Chinese and doesn't know about China. It was excellent that we had a full year in Washington, serious area studies and language instruction. In addition to his own rigorous efforts, Hinton brought in leading China scholars from all over the U.S. to lecture and meet with us—historians, economists, etc.

And then to Taichung. The Taichung assignments were approximately a year, some were longer, depending on when you were needed at a post.

Q: Is this at the university there?

LEVIN: No. This was a separate institution, the Huayu Xuexiao. This was the descendent of the language training that the State Department had started in Beijing in the 19th century to train in those days what were called “the student interpreters,” before there was even a career Foreign Service, starting in 1926.

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Q: How would you describe your language training? I've had people tell me that they took German in FSI, and could discuss the gross national product in German but they couldn't get their hair done.

LEVIN: Chinese language training took a long time, and most of it took place in Taiwan where you had to get a haircut. You had training to discuss the GNP or agricultural reform, etc., in Chinese. We developed technical vocabularies in the classroom and went downtown in a pedicab to try and buy aspirin. We didn't have the kind of a problem you describe. Quite clearly, language training should take place in the country where the language is spoken so you do both of these things simultaneously. The German problem you cited was not a problem for us.

Q: Then you went from there to the then Embassy in Taipei as an Economics Officer?

LEVIN: No, I went from Taichung to the Consulate General in Hong Kong. In Hong Kong I first worked on the Chinese mainland economy. We realized that even though our Hong Kong commercial officers were doing important work in trying to stimulate American exports to Hong Kong, separate analysis of the Hong Kong and Macau economies would provide insights into the Chinese economy.

For example, the Chinese prefer to eat fresh rather than frozen pork and therefore you had railroad carloads of live pigs coming into Hong Kong. When there were suggestions that there were food shortages and crop failures and so forth in China, you could see what provinces the carloads of pigs were coming from, whether they were coming like previous years, whether they were thinner or fatter, and all that kind of thing. This gave you some idea of what was going on in different parts of China which supplied food to Hong Kong.

There were literally hundreds of thousands of Chinese in Hong Kong who were exchanging letters with their families all over China. There were also visits of Hong Kong Chinese who were Cantonese to nearby parts of China which was always relatively easy.

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Visits to the North in those days were a bit more difficult, but nevertheless there was an enormous flow of people, mail and information between China and Hong Kong.

If one was immersed in the local Chinese community, not just studying paper about the mainland, we could do a better job and that's the way we worked.

Q: How much pressure was there at the height of the Cold War to shade reporting, to show that China was worse off than it really was? We were allied with Chiang Kai-shek and the Republic of China, was there any of this kind of pressure in there? Because for example in Germany, people didn't want to report what the Kubla Khan were doing because it made the German government, Helmut Kohl, look bad.

LEVIN: In Hong Kong, at the time I was there, there was absolutely none of that. Because the purging of the people who had been on the mainland was so recent, some of these people were personally known to us, like Jack Service. There was not only a lack of pressure, there was a strong effort to make sure that everybody should know that there was no pressure of that kind.

Most of the time I was in Hong Kong, the Consul General was Marshall Green. Marshall Green had come into the Foreign Service in Japan before the Second World War and he was personally and intellectually a very stimulating and honorable person. Under him, there were no improper pressures of any kind—personal or professional.

However, in Hong Kong we were conscious of one situation of that kind not in Hong Kong. We were the R&R point for that part of the world. People liked to come to Hong Kong, because it was pleasant and in those days it was relatively cheap. We had a constant flow of people to and from Saigon. There were always a couple of Chinese language officers assigned to the Embassy in Saigon because of the importance of the Chinese community in Cologne and its ties all over the country. These people did mostly political reporting but

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they often were slotted in the economic section because it made it easier to justify their having access to the business oriented Chinese community.

The reporting by the Chinese language officers in Saigon, based on what the Chinese community was saying, was that the government in Saigon was extremely corrupt, that it was not becoming more effective, that there was a tremendous gap between the urban elite origin South Vietnamese army officers corps and the bulk of the ordinary soldiers of the Vietnamese army composed of peasant youths from the countryside. Based on their contacts with the Cologne Chinese business community who traded all over South Vietnam, the Chinese language officers generally did not take an optimistic view of the abilities of the Saigon government to mobilize the country against the Communists.

The dominant group in the Embassy, the Ambassador and others in Saigon often were people assigned from France who were French speakers, because we didn't have enough Vietnamese speakers. They considered that the Chinese Language Officers, though they had not personally been on the mainland, were so conscious of the reasons that Chiang Kai-shek had failed against the Communists, that they insisted on looking at the Vietnamese situation through Chinese eyes, so to speak. They felt that the Chinese Language Officers were so intellectually overwhelmed by the recent Chinese historical experience with Communists that they couldn't judge Vietnam on its own merits. They gradually pushed these officers into the Consular and Administrative Sections and then decided that they really didn't need them at all. There were a number of Chinese Language Officers who had very bitter professional experiences in Saigon. Others, who served in operational roles in the provinces were not involved in this brawl.

I can not say for how many years this was the case in Saigon, but during the period that I was in Hong Kong there was a phasing down, and perhaps out, of the "need" for Chinese Language Officers in Saigon.

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Q: So they sent them primarily to talk to members of the local Chinese community of which there were a substantial number?

LEVIN: Cologne, part of Saigon, was a vast Chinatown. It was the dominant economic force in the country, particularly after the diminution of French interests. These people were involved in rice milling, the movement of crops and commodities around the country, trucking companies and so forth. The Vietnamese government in Saigon and sometimes the U.S. military would tell the American Embassy that a province was loyal and pacified and completely under their control. The Cologne Chinese would tell the Chinese Language Officers that they had to pay enormous taxes to the Communists who actually ran the province, or that it was no longer possible to operate in a province where the Communists had taken over complete controls and they were pulling out. So Embassy Saigon would have this kind of reporting quite different from what it was being told by the Vietnamese government and the U.S. military.

The Chinese in Vietnam were anti-communist bourgeois minded, merchant-class Chinese. The Chinese community as a conduit for Communism was not a problem in Vietnam as, for example, it had been in Malaysia in a previous period where the Communist effort was largely through a minority of ethnic Chinese.

Q: And then from Hong Kong you went to?

LEVIN: From Hong Kong I went to the Embassy in Taipei in Northern Taiwan. (The language school was in Taichung in the middle of Taiwan.) There we watched a government which was interestingly embittered over the fact that it was not going to attack the mainland of China. Obviously, it could not succeed, and the U.S. Government was firmly opposed to their trying. Trying to maintain a rationale for keeping the levers of political and military power in their hands was therefore the principal preoccupation of the mainlanders.

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They could see that their children, for the most part, were not interested in succeeding them in this role. They either emigrated to the States or married a Taiwanese and merged into the more numerous and increasingly more affluent Taiwanese community. You could see the clear beginnings of this process which was unsatisfactory to some mainlanders and acceptable to others.

Taiwan was an interesting place. There were people from all over China who were quite concerned with what was going on in Sichuan and Shandong. There was little tourism in Taiwan in those days, but you moved around easily and people were generally friendly. Americans came to Taiwan from Vietnam on R&R. They had their families there so the men in Vietnam could easily visit their wives and their children. Living in Taiwan was safe and relatively quiet.

At the time, the Taiwan economy was becoming increasingly intertwined with the Japanese economy.

Q: The Japanese were setting up car assembly plants there at that time?

LEVIN: The Japanese were just starting to make investments. The Taiwanese were quite happy to resume their pre-WWII ties with the Japanese. The mainlanders preferred the Americans for both political and historical reasons. There was a kind of a competition, whether the Japanese or the Americans would be more acceptable. This probably was good for the Taiwan economy.

Q: What position were you in the Embassy in Taipei?

LEVIN: When I arrived I went into the Economic Section, and then in about a year I was transferred to the Political Section.

Q: Did this reflect your interests or did somebody just say, Herbert Levin you go and be a political officer next week?

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LEVIN: Going first into the Economic Section was useful because I got a good grounding in the economic forces that were at work in Taiwan and providing a basis for its growing prosperity. American AID ended while I was there and the USAID mission was closed.

This was good background for moving over to the political side. The Political Section was becoming much more active. The American government was criticizing the Chiang Kai-shek government for lack of democracy, for violations of human rights, arrests and imprisonment without trial, etc. We made representations against this kind of thing. I enjoyed the political work. Arthur Hummel set the tone during my time in Taipei as a long time Charg# d'affaires and DCM. He was outstanding.

Q: How much of a difference did you see in the situation on the Island from the time you were studying language in Taichung to the time you were a political/economic officer in Taipei. Was there much of a difference?

LEVIN: You could see the increase in prosperity. The government in Taipei, because of its experience of loss of the mainland, was anxious to have the rural area prosperous. Chairman Mao used to say that the relationship between the Communists and the peasants was like the fish and the water.

Chiang Kai-shek's government decided that if they were to maintain themselves in Taiwan they had to have a satisfied "peasantry," so they had a whole system of devices to favor the rural areas. There weren't too many privately owned cars in those days, but bicycle and motorcycle licenses were cheaper in the countryside than they were in the city. There wasn't television but there was radio. As in many countries there were radio licenses and those were cheaper in the countryside than they were in the city. Bus fares were subsidized in the countryside but the buses in the cities had to pay for themselves.

They also had a system of population control. You needed a permit to move your residence from the country to the city but they didn't want to do it by police control. They

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had inducements for people to be happy and remain in the countryside. Loans for houses from government sponsored housing banks were cheaper in the countryside than they were for apartments or houses in the city.

People going through the teachers colleges were obligated for a certain number of years of teaching in exchange for their tuition free education. In many places in the world where you have systems like that, the rural areas are not the choice of the best teachers. They want to stay in the cities and you tend to get the teachers who did not do as well in school going to rural areas. The National Government turned this around by offering higher salaries and other subsidies so that good teachers would be attracted to go to the countryside at least for the first few years after they got their degrees.

The Nationalists wanted to maintain the Taiwanese population on the land but they wanted to do it by economic and societal inducements rather than police coercion. However, they certainly used police power if anybody really seemed to threaten their control. It was just interesting to watch them operate this kind of a system where the mainlanders considered themselves to have failed if inducements—and threats—did not work and they had to use force. Similarities to Beijing's rule are obvious.

Q: Was Marshall Green the Consul-General in Hong Kong?

LEVIN: Correct.

Q: Who was the Ambassador in Taipei at this time?

LEVIN: When I was in Taichung in language training the Ambassador in Taipei was Everett Drumright who previously had been the Consul General in Hong Kong. Then there was Walter MaConaughy who came to Taipei after being Ambassador to Pakistan. MaConaughy was a pre-war officer of Marshall Green's generation who had actually served in the then-American Consulate in Taipei—Taihoku in Japanese—before the war.

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I imagine Taihoku must have been his first assignment in the Foreign Service. Admiral Jerauld Wright also served as Ambassador while I was in Taipei.

Q: How did the Embassy work? I keep thinking the Cold War, the good Chinese and the bad Chinese. Was there any of this filtering through the Embassy? Did you have people you were allowed to see and not allowed to see because it might upset the local government?

LEVIN: In Taipei, we didn't have any acknowledged Communists to deal with, but the government would get upset over other things. They were upset when our China Language Officers also learned to speak the local dialect, Taiwanese or Minnan; they grumbled and asked why we were training people in that language. All the schools were in Mandarin, the government spoke Mandarin, so why were we bothering with this local dialect? Since most of the people spoke better Taiwanese than Mandarin it was obvious why we were doing it. Interestingly, few of the Mainlanders ever became fluent in Taiwanese at that time.

The government tended to focus its attention on our officers who spoke the local dialect. Our officers would of course meet with Taiwanese who were critical of government practices. The government would grumble about that—why are you Americans meeting with that fellow, he is just a loudmouth, he is not important, you are giving him status in the community by having your people meet with him, etc. Our Ambassadors were pretty sturdy in saying that there were no restrictions placed on members of the Chinese Embassy staff in Washington meeting with Americans of all political attitudes, and they assumed that this would be reciprocated in Taipei, and we would not pay official attention to their grumbling “advice” to reduce contacts.

At the same time, our guys had to be careful because if they met with a Taiwanese, and he then disappeared and was found to have “volunteered” for farm work on a remote island off Eastern Taiwan, this wasn't very good either. We had to weigh carefully how

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valuable these meetings would be to us, and how dangerous they might be for the other fellow. The other fellow might think that since he'd been meeting with the Americans, the Americans had the ability to protect him from his government, which of course we couldn't. That element of danger to our contacts was always on our minds.

Since I was not a Taiwanese speaker, I rarely got into that kind of situation. Sometimes I would be at a meeting with them along with other Embassy officers but I rarely got into the most delicate contacts with Taiwanese. I did take the lead in some direct not entirely pleasant encounters with the security authorities both in Taipei and at some remote locations.

Q: Did the Ambassador get his fingers into every section or did he pretty much leave you all to do your job?

LEVIN: I would say that both Drumright and McConaughy were both very professional and had good balance in the extent with which they worked through the chain of command, through our superiors, as distinct from calling somebody in directly. Hummel was superb in balancing discipline and informality. It was a small Embassy and you had daily direct contact. The chancery was a ramshackle building between the main freight railway line and the wholesale fish market. Everybody met on the stairs daily. It wasn't a stuffy place. Admiral Wright also adapted easily to this—as if he were serving again on a small ship.

I don't recall resentment of any of our Ambassadors for the way they operated. Just about everybody in that Embassy in Taipei, from the DCM on down spoke Chinese. I think our senior economic persons sometimes did not speak Chinese because it was most important that they had strong technical backgrounds. But almost everybody including consular officers spoke Chinese, had been through Chinese language training, had an interest in the Chinese people and so it was a motivated staff.

Not everybody loved everybody but it was a pretty congenial group; we were concentrating on trying to understand a society that was evolving with some very unusual problems. So

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I would say that most of the Ambassadors seemed to be quite pleased with the qualities of the staff and we got along. Hummel had been born in China—he was a missionary son and fought with the Nationalist guerrillas behind the lines against the Japanese. His Chinese was fluent and we all learned from him both how to get along with the Chinese and how to argue with them.

Q: Were most of these positions language designated or were people assigned to Taiwan out of an interest in things Chinese?

LEVIN: I would think that every position in the political section must have been language designated as they were always filled by language officers. Probably in the economic section, some were and some weren't. Probably in the consular section the same. But certainly the Embassy was dominated by Chinese language officers. This was necessary because in those days Taiwan, not yet a substantial international trading entity, was looked upon in much of the world as sort of the last life boat for Chiang Kai-shek, who lost the mainland and probably would eventually lose Taiwan. There weren't a lot of foreigners around. I don't know if the educational system in Taiwan at that point even encouraged learning English. You could not have operated in Taipei in those days without speaking Chinese except in a very narrow area of senior bankers and the small numbers of international traders.

Q: Then you went from there to the National Security Council.

LEVIN: No, I went from there to Tokyo to the Political Section. The Embassy in Tokyo in the Political Section always had a Chinese language officer. Not exclusively to utilize the language skill but because Japan's relations with China, both the mainland and Taiwan, were of importance to the United States. You had to have someone with a strong background in Chinese affairs to have any kind of serious dialogue with the Japanese government and Japanese business people and scholars on China. There was always someone in Tokyo doing this job.

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Q: What was your title at this point?

LEVIN: What was I? I guess I was a First Secretary.

In the Japanese Foreign Ministry, the China Section was headed by a very able, active person who later was the Japanese Ambassador to China, among other places. His name was Hiroshi Hashimoto. There was a great deal of interest in China in both the U.S. and Japan. We both were trying to understand what was going on there.

The Japanese were more forward with China than we were in terms of trade, travel and everything else. At the same time, they had no desire to play a prominent political role with the Chinese. The last thing they wanted was a brawl with the United States over China policy. So I worked on China and Taiwan, North and South Korea. It was really Japan's relations with Asia, including Siberia and Vietnam.

Q: What kind of insight did you get into the workings of the Japanese government on their China policy? Did you get that out of them by conversing with these guys or did they kind of play it close to their chest?

LEVIN: I would say that they were quite open. After they accepted that we would be discreet, that they weren't going to hear themselves quoted back either by other Americans in my Embassy or, worse yet, by people in the State Department in Washington, they were quite helpful in trying to get you to understand what was their system of decision making and what the various forces were which affected the outcome.

Since the Liberal Democratic Party was in office and was likely to remain in office for the foreseeable future, they weren't going to have changes in policy due to elections. Factions within the LDP and also bureaucratic and business groups had distinct interests. The Japanese were quite helpful in describing these and what goals they were striving for. I found them quite frank in that respect.

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Let me describe one incident which might help explain the atmosphere in Tokyo at the time. The United States had decided to recognize Mongolia. This had been an off-again on-again thing for many years, with the Russians repeatedly vetoing the Mongolians desire to have an international relationship with the U.S. The Japanese wished to normalize relations with Mongolia whenever the U.S. did.

The long-standing U.S. arrangement with the Japanese was that when the U.S. had reached the actual point of decision with the Mongolians, we would tell them in advance and permit them to announce their recognition of Mongolia first before the U.S., as a courtesy. This was done. We informed them in advance when we were going to announce, perhaps it was to be a week later, that it was all decided. The Japanese promptly made their recognition announcement, as agreed with us.

The Americans had also notified Chiang Kai-shek in Taipei that they were going to do this. The Nationalist government in Taiwan claimed that Mongolia was part of China and they energized their friends in the U.S. Congress, in the Republican right wing, to cancel our agreement with Mongolia to enter into diplomatic relations, and actually got the President to turn around.

The U.S. then had to go to the Japanese and say, forget what we told you, we've changed our minds. The Japanese, not looking for public fights with the Americans and being a country where forms of courtesy are observed, avoided any public reaction. At the same time the Japanese were shocked and in a fury that the Americans, after literally years of working on this, could be reversed by Chiang Kai-shek and accept this kind of humiliation from him. The question was also privately raised, "Could Japan really count on anything the Americans could say when something like Mongolian recognition could be changed?" What was more important to Washington, the assurances that the American government had given the Japanese or Chiang Kai-shek's ire? Since I agreed with the Japanese that

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Washington was guilty of poor judgment, I had little difficulty in meticulously reporting Japanese anger to Washington.

I felt this was significant because it showed that the Japanese wanted to trust the United States. They wanted to be able to rely on us and we had been unreliable without any really compelling reason.

Another interesting responsibility was in regard to a series of incidents along the northern border of China with Russia, around Damansky Island in Russian, Chenpao in Chinese, and the question of who was provoking who in minor skirmishes and shootings reported. It was obviously part of the world where there were not too many travelers. It was also a situation where satellite photographs couldn't really tell you much because these were small groups of people involved with small arms fire.

I asked the Japanese if they had any views on this. They made available the Japanese Imperial Army archives and retired Imperial Army officers who talked about their skirmishes with the Russians when they had been "defending Manchukuo" in exactly the same place. They explained that this island was really a mudbank and it moved around depending on the spring floods. Sometimes it was attached to one side of the river, sometimes it was attached to the other side. Recent military academy graduates on first patrols could rush out there in the spring when the water was low and plant a flag and say, "It's ours." If the counterpart new lieutenant on the other side wanted to show that he too was a hero, defending the soil of the Motherland he would shoot at them. It was really a kind of a crummy little game over an insignificant wandering mudbank.

This didn't mean that Beijing or Moscow might not be choosing to push the other, and a small number of casualties was reportedly involved. But it really wasn't a situation wherein there was an agreed border and one side was engaging in calculated belligerency, acts of war, by crossing it.

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I think this information from the Japanese may have been helpful to Washington to understand that though one side or the other was letting their patrols be resolute, it was a muddy area in both senses of the term, where there could be people blundering into each other on patrols and other local confusion. The Japanese were cooperative and helpful in trying to figure out what was the real intent of Beijing and Moscow.

This was also the time when the Nonproliferation Treaty was being negotiated.

Q: This is early '60, '61, '62, '63?

LEVIN: No this was late '60s. The Soviet Union and the United States were the co-chairmen of the international committee that was negotiating the Nonproliferation Treaty. The Japanese were obviously not about to build nuclear weapons. Indeed, they probably have the greatest anathema toward nuclear weapons of any country in the world, because they're the only country that was bombed with nuclear weapons. At the same time, the Japanese were having difficulty in accepting the Nonproliferation Treaty draft because the Washington and London naval disarmament conferences before World War II had put Japan in an inferior position in terms of numbers of battleships and cruisers to the Americans and the British.

It appeared as if an international treaty was coming into existence which would permanently label Japan as a second class country. While on one hand they weren't going to develop nuclear weapons, and they were prepared to commit themselves to this, on the other hand to sign a multilateral treaty which permanently put them in an inferior category was something they were having trouble with. It was necessary to have a long and difficult negotiation with them to put wording in the Nonproliferation Treaty about the commitment of the nuclear countries to denuclearize and to eventually become equal to Japan, and a lot of other things to make it more palatable. (I think that Germany may have taken a similar stance.)

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In the Soviet Embassy in Tokyo, there was an individual who had been assigned to Tokyo because due to the deterioration of Sino-Soviet relations, the Soviet embassy in Beijing had reduced its staff. The Soviet system had these people coming out of Chinese language training. They didn't have a Consulate in Hong Kong, they didn't have anything in Taipei, and they couldn't go to Beijing, so somebody said, go to Japan and be a China watcher.

This was a period of detente between the United States and the Soviet Union. When this fellow arrived in Tokyo, he found out that there was somebody who spoke Chinese in the American embassy. He did not speak any Japanese or much English and he was kind of isolated even in his own embassy. He gave me a call and asked if he could come over and see me. I agreed. When we met, he told me the background for his unexpected assignment to Tokyo and said he wanted to be a China watcher. I told him that was not too easy from Tokyo but he could be a Taiwan watcher. He said, "Great." I got to know this Soviet officer and he was a responsible and serious person in terms of trying to understand China. His name was Valentine Kovalenko.

At any rate, at one point in the NPT negotiations, an instruction came out that the Soviet and American Embassies in Tokyo should make a joint demarche on the Japanese in regard to one point in the negotiation. Both the American and Soviet Ambassadors, Alex Johnson and Troyanovsky had the same reaction which Kovalenko and I did. This was that if you wanted to increase Japanese resistance, the best way was to have a joint Soviet-American demarche. To have Japan's only ally and its long-standing enemy (there was still no Soviet-Japanese peace treaty to end WWII), going in together would drive the Japanese crazy.

We concluded we were not going to have the two Ambassadors go in and make the joint demarche. However, we could say to the Foreign Ministry that in order to save the Japanese time, the American and the Soviet representatives could drop in together because they had the same instructions. So Kovalenko and I did all the NPT negotiations.

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We later had American technical negotiating teams coming out. This took a great deal of my time, and was very worthwhile.

All of my work on the NPT in Japan with Kovalenko was done in Chinese. In the Foreign Ministry, when we discussed things, it was in Chinese. The Japanese would have one of their Chinese language officers participate. But it was an unusual interlude. It was a period of detente with the Soviet Union when people in the Soviet Embassy in Tokyo, who clearly wanted to have normal relations with the United States, were allowed by their system to have them. They came forward and some of them were personally interesting and professionally useful to work with. They stood out clearly from the more usual Soviet types around them.

Q: And you went from Tokyo to where?

LEVIN: I went from Tokyo to the National Security Council staff where I was responsible for Japan and the Koreas, and worked on devising the opening with China. We had a person full time on Vietnam, and I assisted him by doing Cambodia and Laos, since Vietnam was a very demanding job and he was traveling with Kissinger on the secret peace negotiations.

Q: Could you maybe talk a little bit about how the National Security Council staff operated and the origins of this opening to China because it hit the world like a thunderbolt.

LEVIN: In terms of the opening to China, Henry Kissinger has written about this. I read his book when it came out, and recall it as quite accurate. This preparation was very closely held and my role was modest. I recall Kissinger laid it out in his book the way it happened.

The part that I worked on the hardest was a review of all of the controls we had on our relations with China. There was legislation in Congress, there were State laws, there were formal federal regulations which had been published and registered, there were various U.S. Government statements on the record, and then there were simply practices—how

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we refer to “Communist China” on the VOA or in the State Department spokesman's statements—that sort of thing.

I ran an exercise with people from throughout the government to put together a compendium of all of this. It was amazing to us that we got all of this done and it didn't leak. We didn't want it to leak because it would alert Chiang Kai-shek that the United States was about to recognize China, which we were not about to do. Or it would tell Beijing that we were about to recognize them even though they were doing things that we didn't like, which was not the case. There were many sound reasons for trying to keep this quiet. It remained quiet, though a lot of people were involved in it.

When we completed this compendium, we recommended that some of the easier steps be taken, such small things as having the VOA and the State Department spokesman no longer refer to Red China or Communist China, but the “People's Republic of China.” We periodically reemphasized that you could send food and medicine to the PRC under certain circumstances. All of this came under the heading of “signals” to the PRC.

Also, I participated on behalf of the White House, in a scholarly group which was seeking to get permission from the U.S. government to have scholarly interchange with China. Scholarly materials could be sent and individuals could travel because we thought this was a good non-government way to start contacts going. A great deal of preparation was done through these scholarly discussions. These were scholars, not government officials. They were discreet but obviously they would talk about this on their campuses to the biologist who wanted to exchange specimens, that sort of thing. This was fine because public opinion could then see that there was U.S. Government interest in opening to China.

I think it had the desired effect in that it fostered non-hysterical, non-polemical public discussion. Clearly, people who either accepted Taipei's view of the world or felt this could endanger Taiwan were unsympathetic to this process. People who felt that you “Could not

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continue to ignore 50 percent of the world's population etc.," argued for going in the other direction. This was really healthy.

When the Chinese ping-pong team in Osaka invited the American ping-pong team to go, my successor in the Chinese job in Tokyo, Bill Cunningham, not only reported this but phoned me. We were able to get quick approval because we had made this thorough preparation. We had been pleased at the generally positive public discussion of the possibilities of non-government contact and travel, so those people were able to go. We certainly had not anticipated that this would begin with a ping-pong team in Osaka.

It also happened to turn out fortuitously that the people on the ping-pong team, the coach and the manager and the players, were the kinds of Americans that you pray to be involved in something like this. As you know, you can have American sports figures who can be disappointing as personalities or representatives of the United States. This was not true, this was just a wonderful bunch of people who had good common sense, and conducted themselves with dignity. It was fortunate, and we were very pleased. We couldn't have picked a better group.

Things moved from there. As I believe was laid out in Henry's book, the formal contacts, the trip and so forth, this was done through the Pakistanis. A number of countries had offered to be helpful but the Pakistanis had good relations with both countries, they were discreet, and they were the actual channel.

Q: Did they know what we were doing in a general way or were they just trying to open doors between the United States and the Peoples Republic?

LEVIN: Pakistan? They carried the mail. They did not read it, they did not comment on it. They were reliable and modest.

Q: They came to us first?

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LEVIN: A lot of countries who had decent relationships in both Beijing and Washington made offers. I think that Henry felt that some of them would seek to aggrandize their positions, either with us or the Chinese. Some countries wanted to be brokers, to get involved in the exchanges, and he didn't feel this was necessary. The Pakistanis wanted to be just a discreet channel of communication. They weren't about to tell the Chinese how to handle the Americans or tell the Americans how to handle the Chinese. They simply wanted to help, which they did. They did it with great discretion and care, nothing ever leaked. They wanted to be the channel to help us get together, and they handled that well and we were grateful to them.

Q: How do you characterize the relationship between the NSC and the State Department, because Kissinger went from being National Security Advisor to being Secretary of State. Sort of, if you have a State Department why do you need another shadow organization pulling the strings on the President's staff.

LEVIN: I would say that the story has been documented in their books—Kissinger's book, Nixon's book, Secretary of State Roger's book—about the kind of personal and political rivalries which they had. At that time this did not filter down to the staff level in the specific area that I'm talking about. I am not suggesting that just because nearly everybody involved had been through Chinese language training, this made them a band of brothers. At the same time, these were all experienced professionals, different from the National Security Council staff today or the previous administration which includes inexperienced people with strong political views brought in from outside the government, frequently with personal factional backing from groups of the left or right. Henry looked to his staff to be professionally competent individuals, not spokesmen for political or ideological points of view.

The National Security Council staff in the area I was working, the "Asian cluster," were all professionals from different institutions, and the people in the State Department, CIA, Defense, USIA, were all professionals. The Nixon administration rarely put political

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appointees at that level, as is the case today. Yes, we were aware by rumor or innuendo that our masters had disagreements and rivalries but this simply did not affect the kinds of judgments we made, or operationally the way we did things.

We knew there was a competition going on but it really didn't have a direct effect on what we were doing. In the area that I'm discussing, whether it was trying to support the secret and the non-secret negotiations to end the Vietnam War or the opening to China, there was a pretty clear problem to be solved or goal to achieve, and there were many different views as to how to do this. But we had a responsibility to try and move proposals forward which were pretty specific. The fact that our bosses may not have loved each other or they were competing didn't really affect what we were trying to do. We sent our best efforts to the ultimate decision-makers.

Q: Then you went on from the NSC, you said to the Senate Intelligence Staff?

LEVIN: No. I went from the NSC to the Japan desk in State. I had come from Tokyo to the NSC staff where I also did Japanese relations which were very important. Then I went to the Japan desk.

Q: As Desk Officer?

LEVIN: I was the number two.

Q: There are Country Directors and then Desk Officers?

LEVIN: I think they had created the title of Deputy Country Director at that point. It was a large desk by State Department standards, including some seven economic and political officers. Relations with Japan were always extremely active. Basically there were no bilateral political problems between the U.S. and Japan. There were bilateral trade problems, though less than there are today. You always have American economic

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interests who are unhappy with the way the Japanese are handling them, so this takes a lot of work.

There are few major problems in the world that can be solved if the Japanese and the Americans are on opposite sides. There are few global problems that cannot be affected favorably if the Japanese and the Americans are working together. It was true then and it is true now. While we have this endless squabble about Japanese protectionism and the trade imbalance and so forth, which has a life of its own, we also have a tremendous desire in both Tokyo and Washington to have us working together on nuclear Nonproliferation or limiting the spread of conventional weapons, on international environmental matters, on what to do about Russia, on what to do about North Korea, about foreign aid to Turkey, etc., etc., etc. All those things require a great deal of work by the Japan Desk.

These pieces of business are not very secretive or sensitive, but they don't attract the same kind of headlines as another fight over whether or not the Japanese are giving a license fast enough for some American company to sell cellular telephones in Tokyo. We were spending a great deal of time on what was really important to the U.S. national interest, I think with a lot of success. We did not allow the urgent to take precedence over the important

Q: This was the early '70s?

LEVIN: Yes.

Q: Where did you go after that? Well let me ask you, I guess I should ask you about the ins and outs of the Washington bureaucracy. When you were at the Japan desk at State, what kind of interrelations did you have with Capitol committees or individual congressmen on Japan or the Commerce Department or the CIA or other parts of the bureaucracy?

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LEVIN: On the Hill, there would be a rare congressman or senator who would take the time to pursue a sustained interest in a single country. Most congressmen or senators don't take any interest in international affairs. The small number who take an interest in international affairs have to spread themselves globally. To find someone who wants to maintain a particular interest in Japan—there just isn't enough time for members to do this.

There were a handful of members who would designate someone on their staff to keep abreast of Japanese affairs, or occasionally ask for a briefing for themselves. Of course, we were delighted to try to work with these people. But the international interests of the Members of Congress tends to be episodic. If something is in the headlines, if there is a public problem, then they will focus on it. It is very hard for the Hill to maintain a continuous interest over a long period of time in something like the totality of a single country relationship.

I think this is best illustrated by the fact that contrary to what many Americans believe, our number one trading relationship is not with Japan, it is with Canada. We have more people moving back and forth between Canada and the United States than with any other country, and a whole range of other sorts of relations. But the number of American congressmen or senators who really take an interest in that relationship, who have some idea of what its dynamics are, are really few. You may have a member from a state that borders on Canada who is worried about too much fresh bread coming across the border because his bakeries don't like it or something like that, but sustained interest in the number one economic relationship the U.S. has—with Canada—is unknown.

Basically, Congress is not a place to which you look to set substantial long term international policies for the United States. There are individuals up there who have this kind of an interest. So I'd say the Japan Desk's relations with the Hill were a continuous search to try and find people who did have time to receive this information, and to help them understand the problems with Japan.

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We always were the targets for wild crazy attacks, “The State Department is selling out the national interest,” the usual nonsense. You didn't respond directly, but you could hope to have enough people on the Hill who would say, “Well, what is the full story on this issue?” This kind of defanging effort.

The Hill relationships tends to be sporadic, episodic, very short term, and I think that's just in the nature of the way the Congress operates.

As far as the other departments of government are concerned, you always had Defense Department professionals who had long term commitments to understanding not only Japan's military situation but the policies in Japan, as they affected the military security interests of the United States. These DOD officials, though they were focused on maintaining the military security interest which was their job, generally had a good knowledge in depth of the way Japan operated. Where it was appropriate, they could be brought in to remind the people consumed with the economic problem of the moment, that there were other things involved. The quality of the Defense professionals, civilian and military, was quite good.

The Commerce Department is not a policy making or policy oriented organization; it is a service organization. It does quite a good job in providing services but when people get strange ideas that the Commerce Department is going to determine American economic policy towards Japan, you get in trouble because this is not the way the place is set up, it is not constituted that way. It really cannot play that kind of a role.

Q: Okay, then you went on from the Japan desk to where?

LEVIN: After the Japan Desk I was a Fellow at the Center for International Affairs at Harvard. I was offered the National War College. It is prestigious, you get to know more officers who are going to become generals and admirals. However, I thought if I was going to take a year out of Foreign Service work, it should be out of the government.

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So I went to the Center for International Affairs. I had known a number of Foreign Service Officers who had done the same thing and I thought it was a good idea for this kind of a year not to be in a government context.

Q: Did you see this as a career enhancing professional development, or you just wanted another year in the States, or everything all rolled up into one?

LEVIN: It wasn't a question of wanting another year in the States, it was a normal senior training assignment. Everybody wants it, it is a good idea, and so the only question for me was whether it would be more interesting at the War College or more interesting at Harvard.

As I said, I wanted a year outside the government. I wanted to be with people not involved with the government because I was ordinarily surrounded with government people all the time.

Q: Was this more studies or kind of a think-tank operation?

LEVIN: At Harvard the Center for International Affairs has diplomats, government officials from all over the world, scholars getting their Ph.D.s, and post-Ph.D. scholars doing research for books, and so forth. It was quite a mix.

As I recall, the definition of a Fellow was that you take courses. You can teach a course if requested by the faculty, but nothing you do can be counted as credit for a degree. You could take an exam but you could not get credit towards a degree. This permitted you to get involved in a very broad range of readings and classes. You wrote a paper; that was required.

I was asked to give a graduate seminar on the American alliance system—NATO, the Japan Treaty, etc. This was a great deal of work because I had to locate the background materials and put together the readings and lectures which took a lot of time. The graduate

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students who came to the course were a terrific group. They had widely different views as to whether these alliances were good or bad for the United States or for the world. Some of them figured alliances were the way American imperialism imposed its will to exploit the rest of the world. Others thought U.S. alliances should be strengthened and extended in order to stop the influence of communism. They were a wonderful bunch of people. It was a busy, useful year.

Q: And where did you go after that?

LEVIN: Then I went to Dar es Salaam.

Q: Which is a big change.

LEVIN: Which was a big change. There was a program enforced then in the State Department, GLOP, "Global Outlook Program." You were asked whether you had been "glopped," which meant sent to a post of the world outside your area of primary experience.

Q: This was Kissinger's idea?

LEVIN: Yes. I have no idea whether it's true, but the legend was that Kissinger was at a meeting in Mexico City when he was Secretary of State, that a cable came in which required a response to Moscow. He asked someone to please draft this and the fellow responded, "I don't know anything about the Soviet Union, I'm a Latin American specialist. I'll go find a Russian specialist for you."

He was annoyed at this, feeling that he had to handle the whole world, and other people should be more flexible. He said that people should be moved around to develop a "global outlook."

My assignments had been in East Asia and I was asked to go someplace else. I said, "Sure." Tanzania at that time had 20 or 30,000 Chinese building a railroad. The President

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of Tanzania, Julius Nyerere, was one of the more reasonable and durable African leaders. He heavily influenced the ideology of the Nonaligned Movement. There was therefore an enormous diplomatic corps in this objectively unimportant place. In Dar-es-Salaam, everybody from Albania to Zambia had embassies.

Q: You were Political Counselor there?

LEVIN: No, I was DCM there. The biggest American AID program in Africa was in Tanzania. It was the Carter administration and there was a buildup of assistance to African countries. I think there were over 100 Americans in the AID mission alone.

Q: You kept your hand in with the Chinese, even though you were DCM.

LEVIN: We had no diplomatic relations with the PRC which meant that I could not invite the Chinese to lunch and they could not invite me to lunch. But shortly after I arrived in Dar-es-Salaam, I think it was at the Pakistanis, there was a party and I was introduced to the Chinese Ambassador. As soon as I started to talk with him, he said, "Oh yes, I heard there was somebody in the American embassy who spoke Chinese." This man didn't speak a word of English and did not read English.

In China the railways are run by the Chinese army. They really are railway workers who are in the army for historical reasons. They are a kind of elite. They build and operate the railways and are highly respected in China.

This man was assigned as the Chinese Ambassador in Dar-es-Salaam because the Chinese were building a railway to Zambia. He had no international experience of any kind. He was a railway builder, a frank guy.

He pulled me off in a corner and said, "Listen, I can't communicate with anybody in this country except my own staff. And that's bad, one should not be a prisoner of one's staff. We have to meet and talk." I said, "Fine, at your disposal."

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I got a phone call one day from the Canadian High Commissioner saying, "I've received a very strange message through the assistant to the Chinese Ambassador. The Chinese Ambassador says he would be grateful if I would invite you to lunch and him to lunch and I don't have to be there. What am I to make of this?" "Well," I said, "it sounds as if he wants to talk to me."

He was a very helpful Canadian. He invited the Chinese Ambassador and me to lunch at his house, looked at his watch and said he had to leave.

Q: Very diplomatic.

LEVIN: The Chinese Ambassador was having difficulty getting the Chinese railroad builders out of Tanzania on time, in terms of completing training of Tanzanians to run the railroad. On the one hand, the Chinese wanted to leave, they were almost done. On the other hand, they didn't want the railroad to stop operating a few months after they left. The Tanzanians ran another existing railroad themselves, not very efficiently. The Chinese were having terrible problems getting Tanzanians trained to take over the new railroad.

We discussed how we ran training courses for Tanzanians in our AID mission. The Chinese, reflecting their own cultural experience, considered that when you got someone selected into a training program to be a diesel locomotive mechanic, this was so prestigious that he would be highly motivated to complete the course. In China, if you wanted to have 100 diesel locomotive mechanics, you would start the course with 125. Maybe 25 would flunk or have to withdraw for health or personal reasons but at the end of the year, you'd have the 100 mechanics that you needed.

Our experience in Tanzania was that due to bad nutrition, poor previous academic training, a desire for desk jobs, etc. it was difficult to put Tanzanians through a course of this kind. The fallout rate was enormous. If you need 100, you should probably start out with 250. You were working in a society where academic excellence and a desire for training were

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not embedded and you had to give many more people the opportunity to start in order to end up with the number needed.

We had unclassified AID training evaluation reports, which the AID Director got for me quickly, and I gave them to the Chinese. The Ambassador told me some weeks later that he couldn't read these reports but he had people on staff who could. They were amazed at the numbers but grateful. He said there were other people who said, "This is obviously a CIA trick to make us look bad with the Tanzanians, by assuming such a high rate of failure, and we shouldn't fall for this."

Using some very rich Chinese curse words, the Ambassador said to me, "You see how stupid these people are in my organization. I told them I asked the American for this on Tuesday and on Thursday morning he sent these over. He had the CIA concoct these reports in 48 hours just to make fools out of us?" He said, "You see the mentality of some of the people I have to work with?" He had a job to do to complete the railway project and he wanted it done and he was not at all shy to discuss the fact that there are stupid Chinese, just as there are stupid people anywhere, in order to get the job done.

If you can find them, and if they can develop sufficient authority, these are individuals who seek practical results in most countries behind the confrontationalists and the ideologues, and you can work with them.

Q: Did you do reports back to Washington or memorandums of conversation?

LEVIN: Oh yes, all of this went back. I think that the American decision not to build that railroad was a smart decision. The railroad was being built because the Zambians had to get their copper to the sea. They had previously always sent the copper out through the South African and Mozambique railroads. There was no direct rail to Zambia from the sea. The Zambians didn't want to send their copper out through apartheid South Africa and they were boycotting the Portuguese in Mozambique. The Americans took the attitude if you believe that Mozambique is going to be liberated some day—anti-Portuguese fighting was

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going on there—then why build a railroad when it will be useless and uneconomic when Mozambique becomes liberated?

And also the route was wrong. This cheap route to build a railroad to Zambia, was not a route which would open up areas of Tanzania to economic transportation and therefore generate economic development along the way in Tanzania. The more productive route was longer and more expensive to build. You cannot pay for this railroad on the basis of just the freight from one end to the other. You have to generate local freight, so the Americans, and I think the World Bank, said they weren't going to build the cheap route.

The Chinese, because they wanted to back the freedom fighters and what-have-you in Africa, went ahead and built it. I have no idea what's happened to the railroad now.

Q: This is Saturday, March 12, Mike Springmann interviewing Herbert Levin. We had talked the last time about your career from when you entered the State Department on up to Dar es Salaam, is there anything you want to add or subtract or modify?

LEVIN: When I came into the Foreign Service in June 1956, after having passed the examination, the Foreign Service was then being “Wristonized.” The modern Foreign Service as we know it began with the passage of the Rogers Act in 1926, with the consular and diplomatic corps having been merged.

During the Second World War in the 1940s, because of the draft and a whole lot of other reasons, there had been a Foreign Service auxiliary. People were brought in without taking the examination, for obvious reasons, and after the war there were questions of what to do with them. They were treated quite well.

But then a feeling grew up, and I tend to think it was more ideological on the Hill than a reflection of real problems, that the Foreign Service, which staffed the embassies abroad and the geographic desks, the country desks in the State Department, should be merged with the Civil Service. The Civil Service staffed the rest of the State Department and rarely

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went abroad and then usually only for a single assignment. Some on the Hill felt that there was something wrong with this and that there should be a merger.

There were various studies conducted. I think the President of Brown University, Henry Wriston, was responsible for the recommendation. His basic recommendation was that there should be a merger of the State Civil Service into the Foreign Service. This was supposed to be done over a considerable period of time as appropriate positions opened up abroad for civil servants, many of whom did not have a foreign language capability, as they were given language training. And as assignments opened up in Washington, in places where Foreign Service officers could be used more would be assigned to State, for example an economic officer abroad could go into an economic assignment in the Department.

Included in the implementing legislation was that members of the Foreign Service who were assigned to Washington would get housing allowances just as the Foreign Service received abroad. The Foreign Service salary structure was based on this, the same way that military officers and others who moved around at frequent intervals get housing allowances. The housing allowance was in the legislation. Of course somebody opposed this, saying you'll have to start paying the whole civil service housing allowances.

Those critics in the Senate of the housing allowance got the Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, on the phone. When the administration position—that the housing allowance was necessary to bring Foreign Service people without independent means back to Washington—was being articulated on the floor, a Senator stood up and said, “I just talked to Dulles and he said he really doesn't need this.” It was voted through without the housing allowance. This was of course a financial blow to people who were due to come back. In order to end the resulting controversy, Dulles issued an instruction that this whole thing was to be completed within two years—transfers from the field to Washington, and Civil Servants posted to the field.

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We had substantial numbers of resignations on the part of good groups of civil servants in the State Department, particularly the economic specialists. They got jobs elsewhere in the government, or went into the private sector. The State Department's economic work suffered enormously. You had people suddenly brought back with salaries that couldn't sustain Washington housing costs, to a place where most of them had never lived. It was a lesson to me because it showed how a good idea, which is not carefully looked into as to how it is to be put into force, can be quite devastating.

Also, it suggested something which I think is still true, mainly that the top leadership of the Department, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, his successors, go into this because of their concern with high policy. They generally are not too concerned about the care and feeding of the people who work for them. This is different than the leadership in the Defense Department and in the CIA, who take an enormous interest in the institutional arrangements which govern the lives of the people who work for them.

Morale in the military is a very big thing. If the military reportedly don't have good morale, the Secretary of Defense has a problem. I don't think any Secretary of State who I worked for ever really concerned himself very much with that sort of thing. Having learned that in 1956, I think that it is an absolute continuum; I don't think it's gotten any better or any worse since.

My A-100 entering class at the Foreign Service Institute was composed of approximately half individuals like myself who passed the Foreign Service examination in the traditional way, and about half "Wristonees"—civil servants who had chosen to come into the expanded Foreign Service and had been accepted for this. A number were civil servants who had failed the Foreign Service exam, usually the oral, and now were pleased to be able to start a Foreign Service career. Others were resentful after having been good civil servants now to find themselves, and their unhappy wives, being dragooned to go off

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to some godforsaken place. Anyway, it was an unusual A-100 class in that we did have people with different backgrounds.

Towards the end of our training in 1956 there was the uprising in Hungary against the Soviet occupation. Hundreds of thousands of Hungarians headed across the border into Austria. Many of these people had a claim, a piece of paper or something, documenting that they were related to someone in the United States or had once lived in the United States, some basis for a visa to the States, or help of some sort.

Our entire A-100 class at the end of our FSI training was put into the Passport Office which adjudicated the Hungarian claims to preferential treatment for visas abroad. Why the Passport Office rather than the Visas Office? I think it was because most of these people were claiming American citizenship to begin with. Even if they didn't qualify for that, they might get a visa due to family relationships, refugee status, etc. Most of our A-100 class, as I had done, had lived abroad, had some idea of the kind of confusion that occurs around refugees. At the same time we were not about to let anybody into the United States with no claim or obvious counterfeit documents. The old line adjudicators in the passport office considered these people were just a bunch of Hungarian wetbacks trying to get into the United States and using the uprising as an excuse. We new FSO's had some frank discussions with our temporary superiors in the Passport Office.

You could not use the telephone in the Passport Office to make even an "inside" personal call. All incoming calls went through the supervisor who would ask, "Is this a personal call?" If it was, the caller was told, "I'll pass the message and they can call back during lunch or after hours." To make a long distance call to a Hungarian refugee's alleged relative in Detroit, you first wrote out a memo which had to be approved by your supervisor and the administrative office before you could call. This could take 1-2 days and was sometimes refused.

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The “Wristonization” I referred to had particular impact in the Bureau of Economic Affairs, as it was then called. They had started an internship program. You went into the Bureau of Economic Affairs in your first year. You served in rotation in three or four principal divisions of that Bureau, and in your second year you were assigned to a regular staff position. Then you would go to the field as an Economic Officer. I had come from the Fletcher School with an MA in Economics and I was pleased to do this.

It was satisfying professionally because of the shortage of experienced people. There were literally empty desks with unanswered phones ringing. You were given an enormous amount of responsibility quickly. The Under Secretary for Economic Affairs, Douglas Dillon, was an open and approachable man. He himself, because he came out of an investment background, was interested in the younger people. He understood he had a staff shortage, and he paid attention to it. Some of his people who were in key jobs were in the process of being “Wristonized.” They became some of the leading Economic Officers in the Foreign Service. Ambassador Joe Greenwald and others.

In my A-100 class there was one woman who had come in through the examination, not the “Wristonization” route. As far as I can recall there were no minorities; the rest were all white males. We learned in that class and subsequently in the Passport Office, about the small number of women officers. A relatively small number applied and there were problems assigning them to African and Arab countries where they didn't want to go to, they weren't welcomed by governments and so forth. We were all aware of the inhibitions on women coming in, on being assigned, etc. The fact that probably there were more women coming in was fine, nobody saw any problems with this.

There weren't any minorities around in my entry period. In Taichung at the Chinese Language and Area Training School run by FSI in Taiwan at that time, there were Chinese-Americans. These were officers who spoke no Mandarin Chinese. They had grown up in Chinese immigrant families where a sub-dialect of Cantonese had been spoken which was generally useless. They couldn't read anything. They wanted to learn

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Mandarin and learn about China. They looked in the mirror and they looked Chinese but they hadn't inherited much more than that. Some of them had studied about China in university and then they had gone into language training. These were interesting people, some indistinguishable from the rest of us as students.

I mention this because the number of women gradually increased and was never the subject of much discussion throughout my career until later. I first ran across substantial number of minorities at a single post in Tokyo; these were first generation Americans of Japanese ancestry—nisei. Many of them had “inherited” Japanese language skills and they served in various special categories.

Back to Dar es Salaam. In Dar es Salaam, we had a huge AID mission. I think it was the largest American aid program in Black Africa at the time, with over 100 Americans in the AID mission. The head of that mission was a distinguished senior professional AID person, who was a Ph.D. in Development Economics, who happened to be black.

The AID inspectors uncovered some classic wrongdoing, the black-marketing of tires, batteries and spare parts, out of the big AID motor pool and an assistant AID-GSO was brought up on charges by the AID inspectors. I was aware of this, to the extent that I should have been officially, because I was Charg# at the time, but this was an AID investigation. It was quite amazing to me that most of the AID mission's black officers protectively closed ranks around this fellow. The GSO himself didn't argue about the facts. He confessed to the thefts and said he would make restitution. Because he had been a Supply Sergeant in the U.S. army in Vietnam and everybody black-marketed there, and a lot of white boys had gotten away with the same sort of thing that he had done, he shouldn't be punished, argued his black AID colleagues. The small number of black officers who did not agree with this approach suffered social ostracism. I observed and was shocked.

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Q: The guy who was actually involved in the black market, it didn't happen to the people under his control.

LEVIN: No, he did it. The AID inspectors had discovered that the tires, batteries, and other components of the AID vehicles required replacement after mileage which was about one-fifth of the mileage of State and USIA motor pool vehicles. Even making some allowances for the fact that more AID vehicles spent more time in rough country than the State and USIA vehicles did, it was inexplicable to the AID inspectors.

When they followed this through, they found a Tanzanian employee who told them exactly where the stuff was. They found it in a warehouse downtown where it was being black-marketed and confronted the GSO. He confessed and he said that he was doing this because he had to pay the tuition of his kid in college or some such excuse. The facts of the case were not argued. The reaction was: let him pay restitution and go on, this kind of thing happened in Vietnam and that's where he came in, and white guys had done this there and gotten away with this.

The black State Department Embassy FSO's were appalled at this. But this was the institutional environment in a very good, very effective AID mission headed by a senior professional who happened to be black.

A separate, more conceptual problem was the desire of some AID personnel "to keep away from the Embassy." They were reluctant to view themselves as an instrument of U.S. foreign policy. Sometimes it was necessary to remind them that their boss was Uncle Sam, not the Ford Foundation.

Did we talk about Beverly Carter, my black Ambassador in Dar es Salaam?

Q: You mentioned that he had the initial advantage.

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LEVIN: He was a unique man, former newspaper editor, Republican candidate for Congress, etc. It showed that with good leadership like Beverly Carter or his successor Jim Spain, though working in difficult circumstances, the Embassy ran well. Nobody was starving in the Mission but we had food shortages, transportation shortages, and medical care shortages. The population was friendly, the Tanzanians are nice people, but the government was ideologically African socialist. Every day in the newspaper you read an attack on the U.S.—not the best atmosphere.

But where there was good leadership in the Embassy, people were highly motivated, they extended their assignments. The country had two newspapers, one government, one party—one Swahili, one English—both attacking the United States every day. We had press officers who were working away, trying to get the Tanzanian editors to be more reasonable. Serious, professional leadership of a U.S. Embassy is very important.

Q: And you went from there to where, New Delhi?

LEVIN: No, I went from there to Colombo, Sri Lanka. Ambassador Howard Wriggins was a professor at Columbia University who specialized in South Asia, most particularly in Sri Lanka. He had first gone there as a graduate student, as a Fulbright scholar. He wrote a book on the history of Sri Lanka which was so respected by the Sri Lankans that they used it as their standard English text. Even the communists considered that he had treated with them absolutely scrupulously. The Carter administration appointed him Ambassador to Sri Lanka. I honestly don't know how that came about, but he is certainly America's ranking expert on Sri Lanka.

He and his wife interviewed us to be his DCM and wife, for we had not met before. I think in the customary academic way, he checked around as if he was appointing someone to his faculty, if you will. We went to Sri Lanka.

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Howard Wriggins knew more about Sri Lanka than anyone else in the U.S. government. The nature of the Foreign Service being what it is, it is unlikely that we would produce Sri Lankan experts. It is a small country, fascinating but not terribly important, so it is unlikely that anybody would really be able to focus their career on it. Having as the head of the Embassy a noted scholar who had resided in Sri Lanka a number of times, visited regularly, had written about it, and was respected, as I said, by all shades of local political public opinion, was extremely useful.

In short, he looked to me to manage the Embassy. He was far from ignorant of the U.S. government. At one point he had been on the National Security Council staff. The reason I'm mentioning this is not only because I learned a great deal from Howard Wriggins about Sri Lanka and South Asia, but also because this experience made it very easy for me ever after when I was asked to give an opinion about non-career ambassadors.

It seems to me that the answer is simple—I realize there are women involved in this also—does the office bring distinction to the man or does the man bring distinction to the office? Howard Wriggins brought distinction to that office. He brought into the office of the American Ambassador an enormous knowledge about that country that the Sri Lankans, and the few American official travelers or others who came through, recognized.

He had been preceded by a Lieutenant Governor from Maine, who was I think a distinguished potato farmer. Probably for that man, and I'm sure he's leading an honest life back in Maine, I think for that man his greatest distinction was being Ambassador to Sri Lanka.

Q: What made you, the resident Chinese expert, pick Colombo as a place to lay for a couple of years?

LEVIN: I would say that the assignment was determined by the incompetence of the Director General's office in assigning senior officers. Because after Wriggins interviewed

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me, and after everything was set in motion the DG's office suddenly came to life, and said, "Wouldn't you rather do something else than Colombo?" I said, "Look, I've been interviewed by Wriggins, I've accepted his invitation to come, if you guys want to change the assignment, you go ahead but I'm not going to slip away from it." So that was that.

Anyway, we went there and we learned about South Asia and we learned about Sri Lanka. It was a country that used American aid and the economic assistance intelligently, and their debates among themselves were about real problems. The subsequent insurrection of the Tamil separatists against the majority Sinhalese community was not initiated from New Delhi but was aided, abetted and nourished by Mrs. Gandhi—all that happened afterwards. The Tamil-Sinhalese frictions and resentments were there when I was but hadn't yet reached monstrous proportions.

Mrs. Gandhi felt that if she supported the Tamils in Sri Lanka, this would put her Congress Party in a good position to have the Tamil party, which controlled the important state of Tamil Nadu in India, voted out of office. She was going to out-Tamil the Tamils. She caused the loss of tens of thousands of Tamil and Sinhalese lives.

Q: The papers never picked any of that up. They always said what a good job the Indian government was doing to help defuse a terribly tense situation.

LEVIN: This was eyewash while Mrs. Gandhi was alive. At any rate, when we were in Sri Lanka, President Jayawardene had come into office replacing Mrs. Bandaranaike who had been an ideological socialist—she sought to drive out foreign investment, the International School had been harassed to near nonexistence, all of this kind of thing had gone on. But during the time I was there, it was an improving period. The island is beautiful, the people are nice, literacy is high, there is reason to be optimistic about Sri Lanka.

Near the end of my assignment in Colombo, the American Ambassador in New Delhi, Robert Goheen, former President of Princeton University, etc., needed a DCM. I was not anxious to have another South Asian assignment and I was therefore not particularly

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interested to go to New Delhi. But apparently he had rejected various candidates and he had met me though we had no previous association of any kind. The DG's office worked out that I was to go to Delhi for a short time as Political Counselor (he was needed back in Washington), the DCM was going to become Ambassador someplace, then I would be already at post ready to move into the DCM slot.

This was all wired up by the DG's office and the South Asia Bureau. I had not known this but the decision was being made in Washington to recognize Beijing. This would mean the withdrawal of the Ambassador, and the downgrading of the Embassy in Taipei. The East Asian Bureau wanted me to go to Taipei to be the Charg# when the Ambassador was withdrawn, so I got frantic phone calls to change the assignment. I would have much preferred Taipei for obvious reasons. I said, "Well you guys in Washington go and fight it out. I'd been asked to do this in Delhi, I've said okay, now you're calling and asking me to go to Taipei. It's really not up to me to start walking out on this. You work it out in Washington."

Ambassador Goheen had not wanted other candidates, whoever they were, he did want me and I had accepted. So we went to Delhi. This worked out badly because my friends in the East Asian Bureau were annoyed with me for not going to Taipei, somebody else was pulled out in mid-tour elsewhere to go there and they were disappointed with me.

I got to New Delhi and the DCM, for reasons that had nothing to do with me, was denied his ambassadorship. He stayed as DCM as an extremely embittered person, and retired thereafter, a very unhappy man. I stayed for two years as Political Counselor and never became DCM. India was professionally challenging and the Indians were serious people with whom to do business. But from the standpoint of positions and promotions, New Delhi was not a plus for me.

Q: Goheen wasn't there very long.

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LEVIN: He was there for the full time that I was there. He had been born in India, as had, I think, his father and his grandfather, they were a long line of committed Indian missionaries. He had received his education through high school in India; he went to the Kodaikanal School in Tamil Nadu. The village where his family had their mission was not far from Bombay. He had served on various boards and commissions to assist India, to provide scholarships for Indians, this kind of thing, his whole life. He had always gone back for visits and maintained his connection with the village.

He had been a Professor of Greek and Latin. He had gone to Princeton. He was a scholar, and had remained at Princeton teaching Greek and Latin and became President. His interests in India were personal and sentimental, to assist India with the best academic training, etc. I think he was pleased to be back in India. He had his children come out, his grandchildren, he took them all down to the village. The villagers, when they visited Delhi, were always cheerfully received by him which was a great honor for humble rural people in India.

I don't think he thought of Indian-American relations as an area where he was now the instrument of trying to get the Indians to do things in the American interest that they might not want to do, and to stop doing things that we didn't want them to do. I think that was a difficult role for him. He saw himself as a friend of India and someone who wanted to help India. I don't think he saw himself as a friend of India who was there to try and advance American interests, even if it made the Indians a little bit grumpy. I think that was a role uncongenial for him.

His wife was a nice person but India was his inheritance, not hers. I think she found the climate difficult. She had children and grandchildren in the U.S. and wasn't around a great deal of the time. Goheen was a nice man, a courteous man, always accessible, always approachable, but I'm not sure it was the happiest time for him.

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Q: His outlook was entirely different from his successor, Harry Barnes who, the way it was described to me, was to accentuate the positive and eliminate the negative. And whatever the Indians wanted, we were going to give it to them.

LEVIN: I would say that Goheen didn't want to be the cutting edge. It wasn't how he had run his life. Even if we were doing something to assist the Indians, I don't think Goheen would want to push himself to the fore on that. As a President of Princeton, a high quality but small university, he had not had to take on prominent heavy fund-raising burdens as many university presidents have. He wasn't used to going around pressing people to do this and not to do that. He was a person a bit above the fray, highly respected, fair minded, who people would come to with a problem and he would advise them and they would follow his advice.

He was U.S. Ambassador in a country which had had a nuclear explosion and was working against the Nonproliferation Treaty; it was backing terrorists in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka; it was using transit and trade agreements with the Nepalese to try and squeeze them into concessions in violation of its UN commitments and international law, etc. Bob Goheen had a clear understanding of these things but I don't think that he considered himself the instrument to work against them. That was just not the way he had run his successful and respected life.

We saw a lot of India, visited Pakistan, Bangladesh, etc.

Q: You'd mentioned that the Indian government was supporting terrorism in Bangladesh, the wisdom given in the American press is: oh well, this split up between east and west Pakistan occurred because of the evil terrorist religious fanatics in Pakistan, who hated the poor people in the eastern part of the country.

LEVIN: The split occurred long before I got to India. The basis for the split was the West Pakistanis contempt and cruelty towards the Bengalis, no doubt of that. At the same time,

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it was quite clear that the Indians looked upon this as an opportunity to split Pakistan. They did everything they could to worsen the situation, to make each side more distrustful of the other, and they achieved their goal.

The reason for the split was West Pakistani stupidity and bad treatment of the Bengalis, but the Indians certainly acted upon it as an opportunity, not a problem.

Q: To get back to the embassy a little bit, I'd had New Delhi described by a guy who spent 9 years in India, all told, that it's a place where people were never very happy. But you had mentioned that the DCM, the Deputy Chief of Mission, had been very, very embittered. Did he have any influence on this? Because at one time there was a scandal similar to what was going on in Tanzania. Where the husband of the Naval Attach#, or the Assistant Attach#, found the guys running the commissary at the embassy lining their pockets, had everything but cyclosound pictures of them doing it, and the DCM didn't want anything done, he let them walk with their pensions.

LEVIN: No, there was nothing like that when I was in India. I also think that DCM probably would have been very starchy, proper and correct faced with something like that. His disappointment was that he considered that he should receive an ambassadorship, and the people who were handing out ambassadorships didn't think so. But he had been led to believe he would be an ambassador, so his embitterment was personal.

He did take this out on people around. I understood his disappointment and was naturally sympathetic but since I was there to take his job, in a sense I was the symbol of his not getting an ambassadorship. I kind of accepted this as the sort of thing that just happens on occasion. I think that he considered that I was disappointed with him for not getting his ambassadorship, and I didn't become DCM, so our relationship was not good.

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He went after people in the mission, for no reason that I could see. He bragged about how he was getting rid of people, he had fights with secretaries who then entered formal grievances against him. He was a melancholy figure.

Q: Who were some of these people that he was bragging he was getting rid of?

LEVIN: He just went after our Commercial Counselor. I think this was a “class clash” in an almost English sense. The Counselor was a bit of a New England aristocrat, though not a personal snob. He was fastidious in the way he dressed, the way he conducted his personal relations, and so forth. I don't know what part of the country the DCM was from, but any kind of personal formality and set dignity was not acceptable to him.

He just resented the Counselor and would say so, “I'm out to get him,” giving no reason. The Commercial Counselor, I think, was professionally a rather effective person. But he also got into fights with secretaries over little things. There were actually formal grievance procedures. It was a sad conclusion to both of these careers.

Q: A couple questions on New Delhi, he's the Commercial Counselor, though people had described him as taking bribes for recommending corrupt Indian businessmen to American companies. One of these Indian businessmen was a known Russian agent, the kind who sold Soviet black money in India.

LEVIN: I never heard of anything like that. If that had been true then the Counselor would have been whisked out for security reasons. That must have been a different era. In a security case, the subject leaves instantly. That didn't happen for he finished his career there.

In Delhi, we had a black officer, who had been recruited into the Foreign Service without passing the examination, as an administrative specialist. He had not done well as

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administrative specialist, so they gave him the consular course and sent him out as the head of the Consular section, which was very active in New Delhi.

Q: He had not passed the exam?

LEVIN: No, he had come in through some special recruitment program because there weren't enough black officers. The fellow was manifestly incompetent. The organization of the consular section in a busy place like New Delhi consists of a number of people "manning the line," doing interviews. The chief of the Section does some interviews, but primarily he backs up the line interviewers when there are appeals or complicated transactions. This person often wasn't in his office and never manned the line. There was great bitterness and unhappiness on the part of his subordinates, both career consular officers and FSO spouses employed as consular assistants.

This had nothing to do with me. I was Political Counselor, and this was in the Consular section; these staff members would go to the DCM and complain. I may have been acting DCM part of the time.

It also turned out that the fellow had evaded getting a medical clearance for his wife to come to Delhi. She would not have been cleared because she was a very serious alcoholic, and home all the time. She would bribe her servants to get alcohol for her. Our Embassy doctors were not supposed to take care of her because she had come out without a medical clearance. At the same time she was an American and she was a sick person. But this fellow successfully stopped every attempt to get him out of there so his wife could be treated. They would appeal on the basis of prejudice. From the standpoint of the officers in the Consular Section, this man wasn't doing his job, so they couldn't do theirs properly.

Delhi was a large post with a number of highly competent black officers from State, USIA, AID and so forth. What it demonstrated to me was that if you depart from a single standard for admission, and you bring people in other ways, when you have had a single standard

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that's worked pretty well—you're not doing the privileged individual any kindness. It isn't just the question of bringing in someone slightly less efficient, it affects a lot of people around them. This was a melancholy situation, this woman drinking herself to death, a guy not doing his job, and many people affected professionally, personally and even emotionally by this.

Q: There was a large AID presence there and a big CIA station. How did all these groups interact and how did things work, you had people buying books for the Library of Congress, all this stuff?

LEVIN: The Library of Congress office that bought books and also provided American materials was very good. They traveled around and they were responsible folks. That was a well-run operation, favorably regarded in the region.

The AID mission was relatively small. India doesn't have a shortage of trained people. Therefore, it wasn't necessary to have a large number of American technicians. You could hire good Indian technicians. The handling of funds and the decision making on the projects required Americans. There were also high quality Indian staff who were employees within the AID mission itself.

It was a well-run mission, it was responsive, we worked with them. They would drop by if they were thinking of doing something and ask if there were any political problems or other factors that they should take into account. We would go to them if we were going to have a traveler calling on provincial officials, looking into local politics and ask AID about projects in that area and what should we know about them. I would say that was a good relationship with the AID mission. I don't think they were at all uncomfortable with their role as an instrument of U.S. foreign policy, albeit of a longer range and more public nature than other U.S. Government activities in India.

When I arrived there Mrs. Gandhi was out of office, having disgraced herself, by declaring "The Emergency," with her undemocratic activities. The government that was in office

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fell in a parliamentary way by losing a vote of confidence. India was going to vote. In a country as large as India, with paper ballots and an historically strong commitment to honest ballot counting and handling, it takes a while to get the ballots printed and to get them distributed. In the interim there was a caretaker government. In Britain or Japan, this might be for only a few weeks. In India, it actually takes a few months to get this all cranked up. Indians know how to do it and they do it well but it takes time.

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, Christmas '79, took place while this caretaker government was in office. The politicians were out in the provinces electioneering to become the government. Therefore, a lot of important decisions were actually being made by the career Indian civil servants. During this period the embassy got along with these career ICS officials very well. We well knew that when there were governments in power in India that felt their interests were served by being highly critical of the United States and internationally noncooperative, the Indian civil servants would do their job and support that. What this '79 interlude demonstrated was that if there ever was a government that leaned the other way, the ICS would support that.

What was illuminating was that here the ICS was kind of left on its own and they were in many areas quite cooperative with the U.S. One could ask, why be surprised? If the ICS could send their kids abroad for education they didn't send them to Moscow, they sent them to the United States. Nevertheless, it was a positive moment, considering that the usual dialogue with the Indians is not without problems.

My point is that after the Russians went into Afghanistan, the responses of the Indian government were pretty much determined by the senior civil service; the career military, intelligence, and foreign ministry officials across the board were extremely cooperative. India had developed an intimate relationship with the Soviet Union, because they did not have good relations with China, had eternal quarrels with Pakistan, and therefore they cultivated the Soviet Union to give them a powerful friend in the region.

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The specter of the Russian army in the Khyber Pass was as frightening to the Indians as it was to the Pakistanis. The Indian military told the Pakistani military, if you want to move your troops from the Indian border to the Afghan border, we will pull back from the Pakistan border so that you will know nothing could possibly happen there. The Indian military was very concerned about the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

Indian intelligence was also cooperative with us. But when Mrs. Gandhi won the election and came into office, this turned completely around within 24 hours. The Indian Permanent Representative in the United Nations gave a pro-Soviet speech about how this move into Afghanistan was understandable and necessary; India just flipped the other way very fast.

You could say, India is a democracy, they're supposed to obey their elected leadership. But this also suggested something about Mrs. Gandhi and her long term ruling group's view of the world, their view of where India's interests lie. She came into office having thought through what she was going to do. And so things became normally acrimonious with the U.S. again. I make no pretense of keeping up with Indian internal politics but noticed that India banned our supply flights to the Middle East during the Iraq-Kuwait war despite UN resolutions so I wonder if anything fundamental has changed.

Q: Then you went on from New Delhi to where?

LEVIN: From New Delhi we came back to Washington. I had had two assignments within the area of the Bureau of Near East and South Asian Affairs, since split into two separate bureaus. This Bureau is traditionally and understandably dominated by Arabists. The South Asia component of the Bureau never was of any great interest to those running the Bureau. The Bureau's top leadership is constantly taken up with Arabs, Israeli and oil problems, so they're really not going to worry too much about India and Pakistan, which are peripheral to these things.

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Many of the problems of South Asia are narrowly indigenous to South Asia and don't spill over elsewhere. If you're an Arabist, and you've had a couple of assignments in Arab countries, and you want a non-Arab assignment, you'd ask to go to France, Italy or Greece or someplace that takes an interest in the Arab area and that is pleasant to be in. You sure as Hell are not going to ask to go to Bombay as Consul General. So there were no Arabists serving in South Asia that I knew of.

At the same time, the South Asian experts who spent a lot of time there didn't study Arabic, and weren't going to serve in Arab countries. When I came back to Washington after two assignments in South Asia, a reasonable expectation was that I probably would go into that Bureau.

I was called in and told, "Look we want to tell you the truth so that you don't think that there's anything wrong with you. You're a terrific guy, you're highly regarded but we already have one Country Director in the Bureau who's Jewish. We really can't have a second one because we deal mostly with the Arabs and they watch our staffing very carefully. It would get them terribly upset. We really can't have a second Jewish Country Director, we hope you understand." I'm not sure that my understanding was exactly the same as their understanding, but I sure understood.

My East Asian Bureau friends then said that there was an unusual position where they wanted an East Asian hand with South Asian experience. In 1946 the legislation which established the Central Intelligence Agency and the National Security Council, gave the Director of Central Intelligence two statutory responsibilities. One was to run the Central Intelligence Agency. The other was to be the Director of Central Intelligence, in the sense of coordinating all intelligence activity throughout the whole government including the DIA, INR, NSA—anybody else who was involved.

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In order to carry out this coordinating function, there were mechanisms set up to assist the Director as DCI, the Director of Central Intelligence, in terms of overseeing all intelligence activities.

In his DCI capacity, he had, among other things, the National Intelligence Council staff, an interagency group of National Intelligence Officers. Some were senior CIA officers, others were military officers, there were professors directly recruited from universities, and there was one Foreign Service Officer, who I guess was retiring, John Holdridge.

They wanted another Foreign Service officer to do East Asia, etc. So I went to be interviewed by DCI Bill Casey.

Casey had been Under Secretary of State for Economic Affairs at the time I had been on the Japan desk. I had gone to brief him often. He was an omnivorous consumer of information. He liked to get documents and then discuss them. He was cordial, workmanlike, easy to talk to when at State.

Q: This is Bill Casey, Reagan's appointee?

LEVIN: Yes, that's right.

I had not had any continuing relationship with him afterwards but I saw quite a bit of him at State. He said to me that he was Under Secretary of State for Economic Affairs, Japan was a very important factor but he had not previously done a great deal with Japan, so he wanted to know more about Japan.

At any rate, when I went out to Langley in '81, after coming back from Delhi, he was interviewing for a Foreign Service Officer for this Asian position.

He asked, "Did you have any questions?" I said, "Why do you want a Foreign Service officer out here?" He said, "Do you know much about the CIA?" I said, "No, not really."

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Casey said, "It began after the OSS, where I served, finished up. It is not a military organization but it has a very strong military tradition. The Director says he wants something done, there's a strong tendency around here for people to say, 'Yes, Sir!' and go do it. Then after they leave my office to say, 'My God, this is stupid!'"

He said, "One thing I learned from you Foreign Service Officers, when I was in the State Department, there is nothing you relish more than arguing with your superiors." He said, "I gave an instruction and five guys came in and told me I was wrong and why it shouldn't be done."

"I didn't mind this. As an attorney/investor coming from New York, that's why I had junior partners and others to tell me things so as to avoid making mistakes. It's not like this out here. I say something and everybody rushes off to execute it. I want people who will come in and argue with me if they see things going wrong."

I said, "Yes," so I was out at, but not of, CIA on the National Intelligence Council staff. I didn't rush and argue with Bill Casey on a daily basis but anytime that I saw something that I felt was incorrect, improper, inaccurate or so forth, I'd ask to see him and usually did the same day. My office was just a short distance from his physically, in the National Intelligence Council staff area.

Q: So you worked at the Agency?

LEVIN: Yes. Casey was always rapidly accessible, I'd get a hearing, and sometimes he would repeat these conversations at staff meetings. My impression of him and his work, in the two years I was there, were very different from what subsequently was alleged with Oliver North.

I don't claim any insights into Bill Casey's character, but I am inclined toward those who say he was dying of cancer and on medication which he hid from everybody, that later he was not normal. The kinds of things that were alleged which were illegal and improper

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were inconsistent with what he had done at State, and certainly during the period that I was at the NIC.

In the small area where I needed direct contact with him, I found him straightforward. If I didn't like his judgment I would go to him and say I didn't think this is a smart move. Sometimes he would agree.

I can give you an example. There was an effort to cut off sales of technology and equipment to the then Soviet Union for oil exploration and pipeline construction. There were those in the U.S. government who felt that we could weaken the Soviet Union by denying them an increased ability to get more energy. There were also people in the U.S. government who didn't agree with this, who felt that world energy is fungible, that it would hurt the West Europeans more than it would hurt the Russians because they needed access to Russia's natural gas, oil, etc.

There was a great argument about this within the U.S. government. Casey did not interfere with any of the intelligence estimates about this. The estimates focused on the physical side—how much energy was available, what kind was the need, what the Russians could or could not do with various kinds of imported technology and equipment.

I was involved in a small way because the Japanese wanted to export petroleum industry equipment from Japan to nearby areas of Russia in order to enable the Russians to produce oil in the Soviet Far East, which the Japanese wished to import. If we put this ban into effect—much of the Japanese equipment was licensed from the U.S.—the Japanese would be responsive to our pressures and probably not sell it to the Russians. This was a small part of the overall problem, but I felt that this ban was foolish, would prove counterproductive very quickly, and make us look dumb to Japan, and I told Casey this.

We had good estimates that if exports to them ceased, it would not take the Russians long to develop an indigenous capacity to build this equipment and then you would have no control whatsoever. Now you could slow down the shipments or speed them up. If you

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cut them off, they would produce it themselves, and then they might even start exporting which would hurt us.

Casey did not fool around with those estimates, he let them go forward as written. But he let it be known that his recommendation was that the ban should go into effect, because he wanted to hurt the Russians in this important area in the short run. When after about eight or ten months because of tremendous uproar from our European allies, and the fact that the Russians were making very rapid innovations overcoming the ban, it was dropped with some embarrassment by the U.S.

To my amazement, at a large staff meeting months later, when Casey was reviewing this whole matter, he said, "The only person to come and argue with me against my position on this, was the only Foreign Service officer here, Levin." He went through this exercise, acknowledged that he had made a mistake and singled out for praise in front of his senior staff, the one guy who had gone to him and told him that this was really a bad idea and that he wasn't doing the right thing.

I'm not trying to say that overcomes other things that he is alleged to have done later on. Nevertheless, my impression of him from my periods with him is a different impression.

As far as being "at" but not "of" the CIA, I would say after two years in that building that just about every story that you ever heard about the CIA, good and bad, is true. Extremely intelligent, dedicated, highly trained people, very impressive in many areas, plus some extraordinarily narrow "ide# fixe" zealots. The CIA staff is a pretty good spectrum of the human race, like any place else—with additional pressures from not being able to discuss their work outside of a relatively small group.

One thing which was very satisfactory working at the NIC was that in contrast to the State Department, where anything you do is always so constrained by budgetary problems, it was great to work in a place where there was a realistic budget. People were serious

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about formulating and adhering to it, but it was more like a corporate budget. It was supposed to help get the job done rather than always constrain.

If a problem was coming up and it had been decided that there was going to be some work done on it, when you convened the first meeting, automatically from the NIC Executive Office staff—the people concerned with money, positions and personnel, hiring, traveling, and so forth—automatically a person from that office would be in the room, taking notes. When a decision was made that there would be a task force, it was going to involve travel, overtime, and so forth, the Executive Office would come to you and ask, would your own secretaries be able to handle this or do you need other secretaries assigned to you TDY? Do you anticipate overtime? If you're going to pull in people from other agencies we'll have to get them passes to come here—what can I do to help you get the job done?

Q: At State you get an argument for getting a rolodex?

LEVIN: That's right, at State the assumption always is that anything that you're going to take on is on top of everything you're already doing with no additional resources.

I never saw examples of waste, or misuse of funds. It was built into the system the same way it was built into Union Carbide or IBM that if you're doing business, you'll have expenses. That's the way the NIC and CIA ran in that regard. It enhanced the ability to get work done. You had people who automatically showed up at that kind of a meeting, who would keep track of the resource implications of what was being decided—aren't you going to need this, aren't you going to need that, and so forth. It was well run.

They also had something called the Senior Review Panel. The Senior Review Panel were all people who were retired out of State, Defense, CIA or elsewhere and then hired back. They were full time but they didn't come in when not needed.

On any kind of major assessment or estimate, the Senior Review Panel would be notified. One of them would come to the meetings, and usually not say a word. At the end of

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the process, the Senior Review Panel would give a judgment on the estimate. It was a way of having people who did not have operational responsibilities or continuous drafting responsibilities give a view, which was helpful. Sometimes their point of view was maddening but still helpful. It was a relatively inexpensive device but a way of getting a little more wisdom, another kind of input.

The NIC had another more ad hoc device. If analysts in a particular area or different areas working on a common problem sharply disagreed, they would put their differences in writing. Then other people who had no knowledge of the subject or were not currently working on anything to do with it, would be asked to read the papers and comment.

For example, there were great arguments about the relative strengths and capabilities of different groups in Central America, the Communists, the Contras, etc. I had never set foot in Central America, I don't speak Spanish and it was not an area of even peripheral concern to me. Occasionally, individuals like myself would get these sharply conflicting views and we would be asked as outside readers to comment on them: which did we find were more persuasive? what questions did they raise?

The local joke was that the Senior Review Panel members knew a great deal and they could be helpful but they also had their own ideas. Whereas, outside readers would be as stupid as Presidents. Presidents are assumed not to know anything about these things. So we would be reading them the same way the President would. What kind of questions would come to mind? It was a useful process.

Q: So the National Intelligence Council was essentially to be an outside advisory body to the American intelligence services?

LEVIN: We chaired the National Intelligence Estimates process. Sometimes we drafted ourselves, more often we got drafters from CIA or State or Defense, depending on the subject and who was available. We sought out the best information, the best people from inside and outside the government to bring to bear on estimates. Some of these things

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took weeks and were complicated, with substantial documents covered by Executive Summaries. Some of them were done very fast. There's going to be a National Security Council meeting by Friday, we want this by Wednesday to circulate to NSC members—and today's Monday!

Q: This is kind of an unusual relationship. You serve on the other side but then you're on the inside.

LEVIN: That's right.

People were genuinely cooperative in the intelligence community expecting that the NIC staff took its responsibilities seriously. We didn't have ide# fixes, and they wanted to get their information considered, so we generally had quite good cooperation. State/INR is small and could not make as big a contribution to these interagency proceedings as DIA or CIA, which had much bigger resources. But when State made available good people, they played significant roles.

Q: Mike Springmann, interviewing Herbert Levin on April 9, 1994.

LEVIN: Last time we had talked about the efforts that were made to increase minority representation in the Foreign Service. Since then I recalled that in the mid-1970s the then-Director General, I think his name was Brown, put together a committee on this particular question. I was on that committee.

We focused then on Black recruitment. Women and Asian-Americans were joining the Foreign Service in reasonable numbers, but there was an obvious lag in Black recruitment. We decided to ask for advice from the Presidents of the traditionally Black colleges, feeling that these were people who knew educated, young Black Americans best and would have their interests very much at heart. In a practical way, they could help us understand what to do.

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Information on our situation was put together by our committee and sent to the heads of traditional Black colleges. They were invited to come to Washington to discuss this question with us. We managed to get some money to invite them properly. They all came except one who had a previous engagement he couldn't break. They were an impressive group, they had been asked to help us and felt honored and they took time to come. They told us that they were pleased that we had sought them out.

What they told us, and this is the mid-70s, was that regarding the criteria of examinations, etc., that we had for admission to the Foreign Service, only a very small number of people in the traditionally Black colleges would be capable of passing these.

They also said that as discrimination against Blacks had begun to go down in the prestigious American universities, they knew they were losing some of their best. On one hand they were sad because they wanted to keep the best people in their colleges, on the other hand they were happy that the obstacles against young Black Americans gaining access to wherever they wanted to go were coming down.

They also said that if they were to counsel bright undergraduates as to careers, probably they wouldn't counsel them to take the Foreign Service examination because they would be lost to the Black community. They would spend much of their lives overseas, working for their country, which was good. But there wasn't very much that they could do to help the Black community and other Black Americans in that role. When they were in Washington, they would be government servants in policy oriented positions, and it would be very hard for them to be politically active on questions of concern to the Black community.

On the other hand, if a young person in one of their institutions came to them and said they wanted to join the Foreign Service, how do they go about it, of course they would help them to the maximum extent.

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They suggested more State Department visits to their colleges, of both White and Black Foreign Service Officers to demonstrate that Blacks were really wanted. Advertisements in Ebony magazine and other publications the way the military services did was also helpful to get career opportunities to the attention of their students.

One of the men was particularly impressive. His background was as a statistician. He said we have a country of well over 200 million people. The Foreign Service takes in less than 200 people a year. It's statistically impossible for a group as small as the Foreign Service, less than 3,000, taking in less than 200 a year, statistically to replicate the population groups of the United States. He said you wouldn't expect to find fat people or thin people, red-headed or blond people, or Black people or White people, duplicated statistically. This FSO group is too small. He said, numerically it would probably work out that in close to 30 years it should replicate the U.S. population distribution if there was no change but of course there was constant change, people leaving all the time.

So he said, keep at it. You're doing the right thing, we're glad to come to Washington to help you. But just remember, it isn't ever going to work out statistically.

We did reports and we tried to be helpful. There was an increase in visits to those colleges and I hope we got more people.

Q: We talked a little bit after the tape was shut off once, you had talked about how you thought it was unfair to a lot of these people who had come in through the regular process to be watching some of these minority groups getting special handling and having admission requirements being waived for them.

LEVIN: My Black and Asian-American colleagues who passed the regular examination are indistinguishable in the way they perform from other FSO's. There was resentment as people came in specially privileged on a racial basis. People came in as special minority

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appointments when they had had well provided upbringings and excellent education but didn't happen to pass the exam.

I recall Japanese-Americans from Hawaii, actually as a group, protesting when another Japanese-American from Hawaii came in as a minority candidate with special assistance to overcome discrimination. They pointed out that Asian-Americans in Hawaii were the overwhelming majority and Japanese-Americans were the dominant group, and this fellow came from an extremely successful and prominent family. He'd been known as a goof-off playboy at the University of Hawaii. They just felt that this was a total distortion of how minorities should be treated and this young man should never get in without passing the examination.

Q: How do you think this will affect the operation of the Foreign Service in the future?

LEVIN: This admission without passing the examination is not fair to the individuals who get these special privileges because they eventually get selected-out, they don't get good assignments and they become embittered. It is not fair to the overwhelming majority of FSO's from minority groups who enter after passing the examination. And it's not healthy for the overall system to have this kind of a problem growing within it.

I hope what will happen is that we will get back to a single standard; for groups that are manifestly underrepresented, we will have to have terrific recruitment efforts, we have to get out there and compete. We have to make it clear that the absence of significant members from that group in the Foreign Service is not because of discrimination, and make a genuine, sincere, credible effort to do this. But you have to get back to a single standard. Everybody who enters must pass the same test.

If the test is culturally biased, if it was drawn up by a bunch of middle-class White guys in New Jersey, then you clean up the exams so that any reasonable person could say it's not culturally biased. I am no longer in the State Department, but the press reports constant

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distortion of appointments, to fill quotas so that embassies abroad represent racially the great tapestry of America. I tend to think this is nonsense.

I was DCM to a Black Ambassador in Africa, Beverly Carter. I remember members of the Black caucus coming to visit Dar es Salaam, and one of them asking Bev, "Do you find it an advantage to be a Black American serving in a Black African country?"

Bev said, "Yes, I refer to it as my ten minute advantage." They said, "What do you mean?" "Well," he said, "I go to see the Foreign Minister or the Prime Minister or the Agricultural Minister." He said, "It's quite obvious that my ancestors came from this continent. It's quite obvious that I don't have any prejudice against my fellow race people. We can talk about that and they can joke about how I look, as though I really came from East Africa rather than West Africa, and so forth."

He said, "After the ten minutes are over, they speak for their government and I speak for my government. I don't give them a thing because we're the same color, and they similarly don't give me a thing."

"So," he said, "I have an advantage, it's about ten minutes, sometimes it's longer, sometimes it's shorter."

I think that Bev's point is very important. The idea that if embassies or delegations are made up of different ethnic, racial groups of Americans, they're going to be more effective in a trade negotiation or a nuclear disarmament negotiation, I think that's utter rubbish. The other side will be interested in what is the U.S. position that affects their interests, not the ethnic origin of the articulator.

When we're negotiating with the Brits, I don't think we care whether they have a Scotsman or a Welshman, or someone from Northern Ireland; it doesn't make any difference to us. I don't think it makes any difference to them who we bring. The idea that the American people will have more confidence in their government's negotiations if delegations have

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people on them with whom they can ethnically associate, I think is very questionable. Norwegian-American wheat farmers will find more acceptable an international agreement on wheat if there was a Norwegian-American on the U.S. delegation? Forget it!

It seems to me that the people in Detroit, the unions and the companies, would like to see more American cars get into Japan. They don't give a goddamn whether the American delegation has got representatives of West Virginians, or Poles or Blacks on it to do this. I think a lot of political slogans which are catchy when competing for votes don't translate into effectiveness in staffing our foreign policy establishment or that terrible word—"implementing" our foreign policy.

Q: In some ways, I sort of wonder about the State Department. Women were for years, the way I understand it, were steered away from traditional male oriented societies like the Islamic world. Apparently there was a policy change in which the Bureau of Near East and South Asia, NEA, began assigning women to these countries as Ambassadors like April Glaspie, or as visa officers. I know there was tremendous pressure to be nice to the Saudis and never offend them in any way, shape or form. But to have a woman visa officer say no to an Arab male to get a visa, struck me as being a double slap. Because, one, he's not getting a visa, and two, it's a woman saying, no. Would you comment on that?

LEVIN: I think that there was a shock in some foreign countries when women showed up in some of these roles. But they got over it. I remember in Tokyo the first time that we sent a Japanese speaking female political officer over to see a member of the Japanese Diet. We had phoned and asked could he receive an Embassy officer about something that was under discussion in the Diet. He said, "Sure." He was always a readily accessible politician. We sent this competent young woman over and she came back in a barely suppressed rage, saying he had refused to have a serious discussion with her. He had talked down to her as he might have talked to his youngest daughter home from college. He wouldn't have a serious discussion.

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So we phoned over and politely said, we hope that if he had more time, he could perhaps see this officer again, because there were some things that could be explored more thoroughly. The answer we got was that she was a nice woman but we're not used to discussing these things with women. There aren't very many women in the Diet, there aren't women political reporters in Japan, though there are some television interviewers, and so forth. We said, we understood that, and we were not in any way suggesting that this member of the Diet change what he would say to her. But would he just talk to her as if she were a man because that's the way we treated her in the Embassy. After a silence, he said, oh, all right.

She went back over and he talked to her as if she were a man. In the Japanese language, you really do talk differently to people of different sexes. At the same time, once he was asked to accept her as a man, he talked to her as a man, she had a wonderful interview. She was very good and came back and said, I don't know what you guys said to him over the phone but this was totally different. Well, he had made the adjustment and they developed quite a good professional relationship.

I think that this happened in some other countries as well. I would agree with you that it wouldn't make it any easier for a Saudi to be refused a visa by a woman officer. At the same time, the whole process of being interviewed by a woman officer would be kind of strange to him. Behind the walls in Saudi households they've got all these foreign educated sisters and daughters who are very liberated. So Saudi society is much more complicated than some Saudi men and women would have us believe.

The first woman who went into a non-traditional woman's role in an American embassy in that kind of a conservative society, had enormous frustrations or a lot of amusing experiences, or both. Even in those societies, often there was their own token woman in that kind of professional role, so they couldn't object to it in principle. I don't think that's a permanent problem. And the women we've got in the Foreign Service are terrific.

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Q: You went from the National Intelligence Council to where?

LEVIN: From the National Intelligence Council to State Department Policy Planning. Policy Planning has its ups and downs. The Policy Planning staff is part of the Secretary's office. It is what the Secretary of State wants it to be in a much more personal way than other parts of the Department.

If you have a Secretary of State who is used to thinking where do we want to be in this situation, in three years or five years what's our goal? How are the decisions that I'm being pressed to make today, how will they advance us towards our generally agreed goal? That Secretary would be interested in using Policy Planning in that thoughtful way.

The idea that the Policy Planning staff plans a policy over the next three or five years—that we write a document and then it is carried out for five years from the date it was approved—is wrong. Almost everything is constantly changing; where you think you might want to be in five years? When you look back five years later, you wonder why that was what you wanted. Policy is always changing.

Nevertheless, if you're constantly ad hoc, if you're always deciding everything in the rush of the moment, without any idea as to what might have happened 3, 5, or 10 years before that produced this, and where in a paradoxical world you might want to be 3, 5, 10 years hence, you're likely to make more mistakes.

I think some Secretaries of State have not had this historical view. Everything that we do today is an inheritance from what was done before, and everything that's going to happen in the future is an inheritance of what we're doing today. If you don't have that view, if you take everything as being isolated, to be handled in reaction to the pressures and headlines of the moment, then you don't see any reason for the Policy Planning staff to do any “policy planning” for you.

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Some Secretaries of State without much international experience, we've had quite a number of those, have not seen much utility in a Policy Planning staff in the beginning of their term. Then a good Policy Planning Director sends papers forward in a non-confrontational way, saying I wish we had a chance to discuss with you what you've approved, I'm worried that such-and-such that you didn't consider may happen in the future. Then the Secretary may find an hour Saturday afternoons when he can start meeting with the Policy Planning staff and go over things.

The Policy Planning staff has to be extremely discreet. If it's known that they are pressing different points of view, or raising doubts about things which their colleagues in the geographic bureaus favor and that they're trying to influence the Secretary through their proximity to him then there's going to be real heartburn. Which doesn't mean it shouldn't be done, but it has to be done extremely discreetly. It has to be understood that this is their function. There'll always be a certain amount of tension but once it's built into the system, people will accept that this is a proper role.

In addition, the Policy Planning staff usually includes within it the Secretary's speechwriters. This is not a bad idea, some of these people come from outside, sometimes they're Foreign Service officers, all function as wordsmiths. But by being in that milieu, in addition to reflect accurately the policy the Secretary wants to articulate at the moment, they can put some things in for the future and try and have it be a little more statesmanlike. It's nice to have them around.

Secretaries of State speeches often tend to be their most important policy articulations, even more than, say, their testimony before Congress where they're immediately confronted and have to defend themselves. When the Secretary goes to make a speech at some vast gathering, nobody is able to ask them, "What do you mean when you say that?" Speeches are important, and it's a good idea to have the speechwriters in Policy Planning.

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In addition, an increasing number of governments have developed Policy Planning staffs of their own—the Japanese, the French, the British, the Chinese, the Canadians, the Australians. Sometimes this was a reflection of what we have done, because I think the U.S. was the first government to do this.

The Policy Planning staff meets with its opposite number in other governments. It gives you a chance, completely out of the public view, to have discussions of major questions that are bugging the two countries at the moment, or are likely to do so in the future, in a responsible way because these people are fully informed and they're officials. At the same time, it is always clearly understood that the positions put forward, pro and con, are not binding and are not to be misconstrued as proposals for negotiation.

Usually you meet alternatively in each other's capital, perhaps once a year, and you could always say—Ah, Mr. Shimizu, you've changed your mind then since last year, or two years ago, when you said “X” and now you're saying “Y.” You're allowed to do this within the Policy Planning meetings but you couldn't refer to the content of Policy Planning taken at a trade discussion or a security meeting, even though some of the same people would be involved. Because that would lessen the ability to be frank and relaxed, to float trial balloons at Policy Planning talks. “We are thinking that this might be a better way to handle this with you in the future, what do you think?”

So in addition to assisting the Secretary, the Policy Planning staff had its own web of relationships with counterpart organizations in other governments, and this was often productive.

The relationships with the operating bureaus varied enormously. Some operating bureaus welcomed the Policy Planning staff even if the Policy Planning staff had a different point of view. They'd say, what the Hell, we don't claim to have a monopoly on wisdom, they're honorable competition. They would loan their officers to assist us in drawing up papers,

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would invite a Policy Planning staff member to their innermost policy meetings with their Assistant Secretary and their senior staff, regularly once a week or something like that.

There were other bureaus who wanted no part of this. Their people were not to respond to requests from the Policy Planning staff for information without front office clearance, and really viewed us as unwelcome competitors in their areas. I don't think the substance explained this, I think it was rather the personalities of the individual Assistant Secretaries.

Generally where the Assistant Secretary was a professional and had some ideas of the past and the future, they were more relaxed about people coming up with competitive wisdom. Where the Assistant Secretary was a political appointee and considered that this might be his or her only moment in history, this kind of intrusion by someone outside their jurisdiction was most unwelcome. When he or she had accepted the invitation to become Assistant Secretary, they had been told that they were going to be responsible for their area and now somebody else at the senior level was nipping at their heels on their turf.

So we had better relations with some bureaus and not as good relations with other bureaus. The East Asian Bureau always welcomed Policy Planners—in order to co-opt them!

Q: How does the Policy Planning staff plan? What do they use for input, and obviously they go to the regional and functional bureaus, and talk to them.

LEVIN: I would say that you tend to get middle and senior officers on Policy Planning. In some cases, they will spot something that is being argued about and with rigid positions taken, and consideration of it can't get anywhere. Since none of them have been implicated in the past decision making, none of them have a record to defend in the present impasse, so they can take a fresh look, go at it again, and see what the points of real agreement and disagreement are.

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When an important matter goes to the Secretary of State, and the Assistant Secretaries and Under Secretaries are in disagreement, the Secretary usually wants this laid out carefully on a piece of paper. He wants to know what the points of agreement are and he wants to know what the points of disagreement are and why they have been unable to agree. When he's asked to make his decision, decide between the two or more competing advocacies, he wants to have some idea why these officers who have been working on this so hard, are now bothering him, because they can't settle this themselves.

At that point some Secretaries of State will send it to the Policy Planning staff, and ask what's your view on this? The Policy Planning staff would make a recommendation which he frequently accepts because very few Secretaries of State have the time to go through all of this all over again themselves. Sometimes, if it's something they're personally working on, they will make the decision themselves. Other times, if it's something they haven't been working on, the Policy Planning staff can go and talk to some people and say, this really is not a substantive difference. It's rather that these two officers have been working on these two things, and they have an enormous investment of their energy, and by this time their prestige, in this approach and it's very hard for them to back down and compromise.

One instance I remember, the Assistant Secretary himself didn't really care, but he had members of his senior staff who had devoted years to an approach. It would mean that he would have to turn down his staff in favor of somebody else's advocacy. Getting overruled by the Secretary of State was really fine with him. He just didn't want to be bothered fighting with his own senior subordinates.

The Policy Planning staff can be utilized by the Secretary of State as his immediate substantive staff when he needs help in handling one or more of his major geographical or other functional bureaus. Different Secretaries of State handle this kind of thing differently.

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The Policy Planning staff would sometimes be recruited by a bureau to assist it because they cannot get the attention of the top of the Department. The Secretary, the Deputy Secretary are not interested, they want the Assistant Secretary to handle it himself. The Assistant Secretary at his level has been unable to get NSC approval, or negotiating authorization to approach a foreign government, will come and say, can Policy Planning move this to the top? We would try to be helpful that way.

If you have a Secretary of State who is on the road a great deal, and leaves the operating of the Department to a Deputy Secretary, then limited time and proximity affect the relationship with Policy Planning. A Secretary who stays more at home might have more chances to use this staff. Some Secretary of State had Policy Planning staff members travel with him; George Shultz did this.

It varies enormously. How effective Policy Planning is depends on how effective the Secretary wants it to be.

Q: What attracted your interests to the Policy Planning staff, why did you apply to a position there or were you recruited by somebody?

LEVIN: I had finished the normal two years at the National Intelligence Council. I was doing Asian things at the National Intelligence Council and had worked with the Policy Planning people who were working on Asian affairs.

There was nothing wrong with a senior person in the State Department asking the National Intelligence Council directly for assistance, keeping the INR Bureau informed. These channels shift from time to time.

I had worked with Policy Planning and there was a vacancy there with it and it was time for me to leave the NIC. I went to Policy Planning and there was a great deal going on.

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The most demanding Asian question at that time was the Philippines. There was a general consensus among those who knew the Philippines well that President Ferdinand Marcos's rule was coming to an end. He had gone beyond the acceptable bounds of corruption in the Philippines. He was getting increasingly repressive and the communist-inspired New People's Army, and other opposition was growing. We faced a serious deteriorating situation in the Philippines but Marcos's public reputation was a factor. He had the reputation of being the most decorated Filipino hero of the Second World War. The undeniable charms of his wife made them a popular couple with the Reagan administration.

There was a great deal of reluctance in the White House to move against the Marcoses. So we faced a long process of trying to get the American government to accept that to continue to do business as usual with the Philippine President, who was not doing business as usual within his own country, was to assist in creating a disaster in the Philippines. We had to begin the process of disassociating ourselves from Marcos.

As the turmoil increased there, we sought a publicly defensible way of getting rid of him which would not be criticized as interference by the former colonial power, which would be sustained in the United States, and would not be resented by Filipinos. At the time, we were being misperceived in the Philippines as supporting him.

When Ninoy Aquino went back and was killed, and Mrs. Aquino went back, this produced changes in the country. Eventually President Reagan got concerned and finally, in what I think was very well done, he used Senator Laxalt, and the Marcoses went to Hawaii. There are still some Filipinos who charge the U.S. "propped up" the Marcoses which was not true.

I remember that during one visit out there, the AID Director explained to me that in part of his annual public report he tried to make clear why he had such enormous overhead costs. It cost more percentage-wise to administer our bilateral AID program in the Philippines

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than it did anyplace else. What was the reason for this? The reason was that he had a tight system of auditing and checking of everything to keep money from being skimmed off, either by the Philippine government or by corrupt contractors which was quite effective.

If you were building a highway someplace, the cement bags were counted before and after, then the cubic footage of the cement was figured, the iron reinforcing bars were counted. Then you came along and smashed a hole in the new road every mile or two, to see how far down that cement came and were the bars really 6 inches apart, checking to see that it was all there. The honest contractors, who of course is who AID wanted to do business with, loved this. They took pictures and videotapes because then they could show the crooks and Marcos guys why they couldn't kick back anything because there wasn't any opportunity due to the stringent USAID system.

The Marcos government of course was furious about this, charged that it was demeaning, and so forth. But honest Filipinos knew what was going on, and supported us.

I remember an abattoir which we built in Pampanga Province—Mrs. Marcos wanted to come and cut the ribbon although it had nothing whatsoever to do with her. There was no Filipino government money in it. She was told that we hadn't fixed the date yet when it was going to be opened. She thought she learned that it was going to be opened on Thursday so we opened it on Wednesday. When she helicoptered there it was all over, she was in a rage and honest Filipinos knew what Uncle Sam was doing.

There was constant effort to disassociate from the Marcos government. But that kind of tactical effort had to be supported as a U.S. national policy. Why was it costing us so much to administer this program? What were these fun and games, and why was Malacanang, the Presidential Palace being grumpy about our AID program? Why was this being done?

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Marcos was smart; he wouldn't accuse us of excessive honesty. He accused us of using incompetent and corrupt contractors—instead of his followers. There would be people in the United States who would report these charges, not knowing what was going on.

The Philippines was a problem.

Q: So was there any real blowback from people in the rest of the government who opposed this policy? I got the impression from reading the paper that Reagan kind of hung on to the last and didn't really want to have a clash with the Philippines.

LEVIN: I would say that it was a kind of personal and sentimental reluctance. He had met the Marcoses and he liked to think they were really okay.

Q: But did this translate into pressure on you people—why are you saying this, why are you recommending a major policy shift?

LEVIN: No, I don't recall that they tried to stifle us in the sense of please don't send over anymore recommendations like this, we don't want to hear about it. In some cases they simply didn't respond to our recommendations. There was already public debate in this country, stimulated by Filipinos here, and there were members of Congress who felt very strongly about this. So the open debate was ongoing.

Though we didn't prevail as early as I would have liked, no one told us you're endangering your future by suggesting this change. It was in bureaucratic terms a fairly honest argument. The President may have been the last to agree.

The Defense Department made a helpful and important shift. There were people in the Defense Department who had a good understanding of the Philippines. They had served at the bases there and understood Manila politics as well as the bases, and realized that in the eyes of many Filipinos our bases were increasingly associated with Marcos personally. They wanted to get the bases to be viewed for their own worth and not just associated with

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Marcos. They felt he would soon go, and they didn't want our bases to go automatically at the same time.

Another aspect was that with the changes in the way the services deploy, more and more military began to see less and less need for the Philippine bases. They were a convenience, they had always been there, they were efficient, they were comfortable places to go to, but they were no longer really essential. There was practically no U.S. Army left in the Philippines. The Marines liked to come down from the Okinawa bases for jungle training, but the Army was basically no longer concerned with the Philippines.

The Air Force did like Clark Field but longer range aircraft reduced the need for having planes based in that part of the Pacific. The Air Force principal interest was in the bombing ranges. Air Forces have to stay combat ready, have to practice bombing and bombing ranges take a lot of territory. You not only have the area where you drop the bombs, but you fly around nearby; it's noisy, the planes are flying low, they're strafing. These were in areas in the Philippines that were not suited to agriculture and had been military reservations for many years. The Air Force liked having these facilities but if they didn't have them there perhaps they could make do someplace else.

It was cost effective for the Navy to have Subic Bay. There were repair facilities there, and the Filipinos are low cost superior workers. The point of repairing there was that they didn't have to steam all the way back to Pearl Harbor or San Diego for maintenance and overhauls. They could spend the money on facilities in the Philippines or you could spend the money on more ships. It's a question of steaming back two weeks across the Pacific and two weeks out.

From the standpoint of a Naval officer, he'd rather have more ships because it gives him more commands and more global flexibility than to spend it on bases in the Philippines. The Navy was delighted to be at Subic but if they couldn't be there, they would survive. They shifted positions gracefully.

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Q: Besides the Philippine transition, what other areas of interest were you involved in on the Policy Planning staff?

LEVIN: The Koreans were beginning to move from a series of military governments toward the kind of democracy which they finally achieved in the 90s. There was less controversy within the U.S. government over what should be done in Korea than in the Philippines.

The Koreans were going at their own pace, sometimes falling back to bloody suppressions. The U.S. put pressure on them but the main thing was a mounting desire in Korea for democratization, and a mounting ability to do it. There were more educated people, more middle class people who obviously could operate a multi-party democracy. They were pressing for it.

Though some political activists again claimed that the Americans were propping up the militarists, I think the Korean people seemed to see through that and understood that this was really their show. The Americans didn't get in their way and were often helpful.

The depiction of the American role was bloated in the Philippines, not a sparrow would fall that somebody didn't think the CIA poisoned it or at least they'd accuse it. We were considered to be able to bring about anything if we wanted to. If the Americans really wanted Marcos to go, he'll go, that kind of thing.

The Koreans for some reason were always more realistic. The Koreans have an ancient culture and live in a tough neighborhood with the Chinese, the Russians and the Japanese nearby and they've always been more resolute in trying to determine their own future. The Philippines was a Spanish invention, before the Spanish there was no Philippines. As the Filipinos like to say, we went from a medieval Spanish convent to Hollywood, give us a little time to sort things out for ourselves.

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The Philippines had this singular foreign experience, first the Spaniards, then the Americans, the Japanese for a few years, then the Americans again. The Koreans were used to dealing all the time with a whole bunch of very big foreigners nearby.

Q: How did this play out on the Policy Planning staff?

LEVIN: I would say in terms of Korea, what we tried to do was to get the Secretary of State, even the President, in the course of other business, to say the right thing about what was going on. There's a certain tendency at the top to avoid getting involved in things that don't require it. You might give the dictator of the moment in Seoul some heartburn and then you would hear from his friends in Congress. But generally, there was a willingness to try and be on the right side.

The point is, we were seen as moving on Korean questions at the behest of the Koreans themselves. We could protest to the Korean government when there were horrible violations of human rights and we did. But this shouldn't be viewed as an argument between the Korean government and the American government as to what the political institutions of South Korea should be like. This was an argument among South Koreans and we should be seen as being on the right side, but not as determining actors bringing this about. I think that things didn't go badly, though there will always be people who will say we should have said more publicly. It is hard to prove that they were wrong or right.

The pace of normalization and trade relations with China picked up markedly during this period. The Carter administration had made the final formal move for normal diplomatic relations. In other words, instead of a Liaison Office in Beijing, Carter had transferred the Embassy from Taipei to Beijing. When Reagan came in, the Reagan Administration included people who had opposed the original Nixon opening to China and had been unhappy with normalization with Communist China. There wasn't any serious effort to reverse that. However, there was a strong tendency early on to have a public love affair with Taiwan and to pretend that the agreements with Beijing for normalization and the

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Taiwan Relations Act, which give the legal basis for our non-diplomatic relations with Taiwan, really permitted us to have de facto a “Two Chinas” policy. They sought ways to do things with Taiwan as you might with a state with which we had normal diplomatic relations.

These people did not attack the relationship with China so much as they tried to focus attention on creating a bloated official but non-diplomatic relationship with Taiwan, which is really not sustainable. We tried to clarify our real as opposed to fictional options. We had a Taiwan Relations Act, unusual in that we had a law that said what we could do and what we couldn't do. We laid out what the various commitments of U.S. Presidents had been with China, and where we thought we had some flexibility. We also tried to differentiate what you might do with Taiwan to expand the economic relationship, which would be good for us and good for them, from what would be a politically symbolic act which would be neuralgic to Beijing and wouldn't achieve anything for us or Taiwan, except to those who might feel a sense of accomplishment if they had provoked a Washington-Beijing brawl.

I would say generally the Taiwan people understood this. You had a few people who like to provoke controversy. In the United States, you had a few people who also felt this way. What did become clear was that as relations between the United States and Beijing improved, relations between Beijing and Taipei improved, and that economic relations between Taipei and Washington could improve and that didn't bother Beijing. But if you had bilateral PRC-U.S. problems, then they became very suspicious of things going on with Taipei.

Q: This was a subject of Policy Planning.

LEVIN: This was a constant subject of Policy Planning work because there would be advocacies from the right wing of the Republican Party to do things with Taiwan of an official nature which would obviously get Beijing in an uproar, and then they would start harassing Taiwan.

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There was an internal Taiwan split with some of the Kuomintang people oriented towards getting the U.S. to provoke Beijing, an attitude left over from an earlier era when Taipei was in competition with Beijing. They would come up with these forays and find their friends in the U.S. The vast majority of the population, particularly the Taiwanese running a burgeoning economy wanted increased trade with China, more investment there, travel and so forth, and saw no point to this at all. They had this internal split which eventually in Taiwan became open and political. This was fine, let them argue out among themselves what they wanted to do with China without the U.S. relationship with Beijing becoming a casualty. We had to handle and explain that.

There were questions of arms sales to Taiwan. We had not wanted Taiwan to be militarily defenseless, not that Beijing had shown much propensity to attack Taiwan. Our long-standing policy was that they were entitled to be able to defend themselves in a non-nuclear way against a nuclear power. The question of what arms you would sell them, was always something to review. Obviously the American manufacturers of military equipment took a more generous view of what could be sold to Taiwan than others might.

Q: For the benefit of future historians, what years were you in the Policy Planning staff?

LEVIN: I was on the NIC from '81 to '83 and Policy Planning '83 to '85.

Q: And you went from there to, was it the Senate Intelligence Committee?

LEVIN: No, I went to the House Foreign Relations Subcommittee in Asian Pacific Affairs where I was the Staff Director. That was unplanned. The Staff Director there, a highly regarded person whom I had known slightly before, had received an attractive offer to head an institution in Washington and he had to leave quickly.

The Chairman of the Subcommittee found himself suddenly bereft of a Staff Director. This was Congressman Stephen Solarz whom I had met only once before in my life, when he visited New Delhi when I was there. He phoned around to a lot of people, he said,

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and asked who's good at Asian Affairs? He said to me he had done this and my name kept coming up, so he asked, would I go see him. You never refuse to see members of Congress.

I went up to the Hill and he said, would you like to be my Staff Director and I came back to the Department and went to see Mike Armacost, who was the Under Secretary for Political Affairs at the time. I asked Mike, should I do this? This is a Republican administration, Solarz, though not an aggressive partisan person is a very prominent Democrat in Congress. He wants me to go up there, what do you think? Mike said, by all means go, we'll work out the bureaucratic niceties. Congressman Solarz has his points of view and his advocacies, not all of which we agree with, but he is very helpful to the administration quietly on a number of subjects. We consider him among the people on the Hill that we work closest with and we'd be delighted to have somebody we know well in his office.

I went up there for one year because Solarz was looking for somebody to stay permanently, and I was filling-in. I found that Steve Solarz, and the Chairman of the full committee, Dante Fascell from Florida, as you would expect were very committed Democrats. At the same time, they did really take the view that to the maximum extent possible—politics should end at the waters edge. They wanted to work with the Administration to develop policies, and legislation that both Parties could support. There was continuous discussion with the State Department, and the NSC as we tried to work things out.

I saw the difference between the Solarz/Fascell kind of member of Congress whose goal was accomplishment and others who sought issues for partisan games. The latter saw themselves as Democrats in continuous confrontation with a Republican administration and their job was to weaken the Republican administration so that the Democrats would do better in the next election. There were also areas where there was just complete lack of confidence and continuous charges of untruthfulness.

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The office of the Subcommittee on Latin American Affairs was directly across the hall from mine. Their relationship with the State Department, particularly with Elliott Abrams, who was their Assistant Secretary, was one of constantly producing evidence that they'd been lied to. Abrams said it was all partisan, they said what he provided was all untrue.

The African Affairs Subcommittee wanted a much tougher line towards South Africa. That was partisan but there were serious differences of opinion as to how you could help the South Africans get rid of apartheid. It was sometimes acid debate but it was an honest debate over different policy advocacies.

With my Asian Affairs Subcommittee there were a whole range of questions from Cambodia to North Korea but they never became dominated by partisanship or accusations of untruth. It was a lively intellectual environment. Solarz and Fascell had to be politicians to get elected but they were statesmen in their fulfillment of their responsibilities on the House Foreign Affairs Committee.

Q: I'm interested because I've met some of the congressional staffers and they look like a bunch of kids and they act like a bunch of kids. Sometimes I think most of the problems of Congress results from these people essentially meddling or feeding information to congressmen. On the other hand, some of the congressmen I've seen seem more interested in posturing than actual policy accomplishments. You walk in as this professional on foreign affairs and work in a structured environment where you go from A to B to C. You're dealing with adults and you're in the middle of this 3-ring circus. How did that work out?

LEVIN: Everything you said is true. But it doesn't apply to everybody all the time. There are different cultures in the two institutions, the State Department and Congress.

The State Department in an ideal world would like to do everything privately, with nothing disclosed, the way most Foreign Ministries and the CIA operate. State knows it can't do

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this because it has to have public support for much of its business, which CIA does not need.

In contrast, the Congress does not want to do anything unless it will be noticed. A Congressman does not want to give a speech which does not appear on television or in a newspaper. That is the same as not giving a speech, because if it just appears in the Congressional Record, who the Hell reads the Congressional Record? State Department people very reluctantly give speeches, praying they can get "it" done without discussing it in public.

The institutional cultures of State and the Congress are totally different and there's no reason to expect they will change. The Members have to demonstrate constantly to the people who elect them that they're active, that they're earning their pay. We don't elect a Senator for six years or a Member of the House for two years and then he's just simply gone out of sight to Washington. He constantly has to find ways through the national television or the local press or his own newsletter to reassure the folks back home that he's working hard to change the world, since we're talking about international affairs, in the way that the people back home want the world changed. This means he has to take positions about Muslims in Bosnia or Chinese in Indonesia or Christians in South Korea all the time, because people back home want to know what he's thinking about this and what he's going to do about that.

Once you understand these political realities, you can work with Congress. I'm not sure if there are fewer people in the Foreign Service who understand the culture of the Congress or fewer people in the Congress who understand the culture of an international affairs bureaucracy. But there are enough thoughtful people in both places and they tend to find each other to get things done. You also learn to identify the posturers rather quickly.

I think it's important to remember that Congressmen make fire-eating speeches, denounce each other on television, call into question each others honesty, parentage, everything

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else, accuse each other of the most acid, destructive partisanship, and so forth. Right afterwards they go off and have lunch together in the Members dining room because on another issue they're co-sponsoring a bill. You have to learn that talk is a lot cheaper on the Hill than it is within the Executive Branch or between governments.

State Department people go to brief a Congressman and act as if they're dealing with a Foreign Ministry. They may never get access to that Member again. Congressmen say the most outrageous things and nothing really bad ever happens to them. State officers have got to be much, much looser when dealing with the Congress. Not more open in the sense of giving away sensitive material, but much more open in discussing the problems, the difficulties involved in the business at hand. You can't just present a finished product to the Hill. They never will call you back.

The staff in the Foreign Relations Committee in the House was experienced and had continuity. I think Fascell wanted to keep people and people liked to stay there.

A Chairman of a Committee, a Chairman of a Subcommittee, gets a certain sum of money to operate the Committee. They cannot put 200 people on the payroll at a \$1,000 each or two people on the payroll at \$100,000 each, but they do have an enormous amount of flexibility in hiring and salaries. What you tend to find in those committees that have more experienced people who stay a long time, some for life like the taxation committee which has real experts on taxes, is that they tend to have a smaller number of people at higher salaries. It is worthwhile staying on these staffs for you can make a real career out of this.

Members own office staffs are distinct from the professional committees staff, these are two different things. A Member has his own office and his own staff but the budget system is similar. In many cases, a Member will put a larger number of lower paid young people on his own staff, the eager gofers you see running around. Sometimes they have people to whom they pay nothing. For example, a young attorney says, "I'm very interested in the legal questions surrounding the problems of 'X,' the environment, the chemical industry,

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something. And I would be prepared to work for you for two years for nothing as a member of your staff on this and other questions.” That's quite allowable, many Congressmen will take somebody like that.

The young attorney is doing this to get valuable experience, to get a unique line on his CV reading “Hill experience,” to develop future contacts. He's not going to stay there forever, everybody understands that. This attorney operates in a different way than someone who says, “How are we going to handle this over the next ten years?” “Where is the country likely to be in this area or should it be in ten years?” and so forth. The person who is there for a short time wants to get legislation introduced, wants to get the Senator, the Congressman continuously taking public positions in his short time span and generates enormous pressure, to be seen as publicly active. Other staff members begin to compete.

Different congressional offices have different attitudes on this. Different members use their staffs differently. Lee Hamilton, the present Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs, had unusual continuity in his staff. There were other members where there was almost a 100 percent turnover every year or two. There were members who were unreasonable, who treated their staff in demeaning ways, who really didn't understand conceptual staff work, who made up their minds on the basis of what friends or others advocated to them, and never recruited or used their staff as adult professionals. Not surprisingly they end up with staffs that acted like children.

There's no central congressional hiring for staff, every member hires his or her own office personal staff, every Chairman hires his own committee or subcommittee staff.

Q: I thought things had changed and that there was more people on a committee staff sponsored by individual congressmen.

LEVIN: This varies from committee to committee. For example in House Foreign Affairs, there was a minority and a majority staff. The Republican members could get papers done

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and have advance work done for them before hearings, etc. But everybody was closeted together in one warren of rooms and they all worked together with considerable harmony.

On the Senate side, the two staffs were physically separated and had nothing to do with each other. When the Republican leadership on that committee changed, every single professional staff member was immediately fired even though it was a change from one Republican to another. It was amazing to me. Each committee chairman makes up his own mind and each senior minority leader makes up his own mind.

On my small staff as Staff Director of a Subcommittee Staff, there was a minority staff, but we were totally physically integrated. The Republican staff had physical privacy, but our work was integrated. For example on questions for hearings, we would do all possible questions in advance, obtain relevant documentation and send it to all Members. If the Minority wanted more material, they would get it. This was a matter of some delicacy because it was a Republican administration and our Minority was Republicans, but some of them wanted to be more critical of the administration witnesses than the Democratic majority. Wheels within wheels but quite manageable.

Probably the most liberal person in the whole Subcommittee was a Republican, Congressman Jim Leach of Iowa. Certainly the most conservative was a Republican from upstate New York, the very gentlemanly Jerry Solomon. His desk had been next to Chairman Solarz's desk when they served together years before in the New York State Assembly. They sometimes came at things from different directions but their personal relations were warm, cordial, of longstanding. This obviously helped me keep the staff professional and unpressured.

Q: What were the backgrounds of both the staffers and the congressmen when they select the staffers, were they politically connected or people like you who had expertise in foreign affairs and had come in from somewhere else?

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LEVIN: On the Subcommittee professional staff, we had one person who was my deputy and became my successor, Stanley Roth, who came out of the political side. He had come from Solarz' constituency in Brooklyn and was an autodidact on foreign affairs, hard working, utterly without partisan bias, the kind of person who really knows how to use analytical material and how to be briefed. Stanley was a good example of how you don't have to be an undergraduate major in foreign affairs or do graduate work in international affairs, or work in an embassy, how you could educate yourself derivatively, and with a lot of travel develop into a real expert. Stanley certainly was that way.

With a Ph.D. in Chinese affairs, Richard Bush would be an addition to a major prestigious university faculty but I think he just found the Hill to be fun. As the recognized scholar on the staff he was very respected. He was also a terrific guy to work with.

The person who did human rights and refugee matters, Dawn Colabia, later worked for Catholic Welfare and now she's doing that for another refugee organization. This is something that she's been doing all of her life, it doesn't make any difference whether it's Catholics, Italians, Kurds, the problems that she works on are human problems and she has always been a serious professional in a number of different places.

They were a serious professional staff. Richard Bush has moved on to the full committee staff where he's in a higher ranking position now. Stanley Roth is now in charge of Asian Affairs on the National Security Council staff in this Democratic Administration. Dawn is working for one of the big refugee organizations, in a higher position. The minority staffers have moved on to similar prestigious jobs.

Q: And the Members, are they the people who would have an abiding interest in foreign affairs or they just sort of stumbled on a committee as a result of say seniority or something.

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LEVIN: My impression was that the House Foreign Affairs and Senate Foreign Relations Committees were no longer sought after assignments in the Congress, that they were not prestigious. It was not something that Members got on to because they thought it would do them some good at home.

There was a feeling in the Congress that anybody running against you could say, "What was he doing in Ankara when we have all these problems with drugs and homeless back here? Why was he more interested in them than he was in our problems." From the standpoint of calculating what kind of a committee assignment in the Congress would aid political survival, I don't think Foreign Affairs or Foreign Relations were viewed that way anymore. They had been at one time when the American people were more concerned with the world than they are these days.

I think there were Members who had an abiding personal interest in the world. Congressman Leach had been a Foreign Service officer in ACDA. Steve Solarz, because of the Second World War and the large number of foreign born people among whom he grew up in Brooklyn, clearly always had this interest. A few had been in the Peace Corps, and had a single adventure in the Third World. One of the Republicans had this as part of his background, Congressman Beiruter.

There were conservative Republicans who were opposed to foreign aid and considered that foreigners always wanted to have their hands in our pockets. They wanted to get on the committee to save the nation from global loaning. They believed the State Department was always being out-negotiated, our trade was going down the drain, and they wanted to save the nation from the soft-headed liberals. There was a whole range of people who were simply against something.

Fascell was a fair and correct Chairman. Nobody ever complained that their point of view was suppressed. The mechanics of running his large committee and Solarz' subcommittee I felt were handled in a proper way.

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Q: What was the Subcommittee or the Committees connection to the American intelligence service and international affairs committees, intelligence gathering seemed to have some kind of overlap.

LEVIN: There was a separate intelligence committee. The tradition was there shouldn't be too many people with membership in both.

As far as HFAC access to intelligence there were two ways to do this. The State Department, on a regular basis, made available key telegrams and documents on subjects they wanted committee members to be aware of, or subjects that Committee members had asked about. These were brought up by the classified courier and were kept in a safe and could be read by Committee members in the offices of the full Committee or the Subcommittee; we also had a safe in our office; or if they asked, one of us who had a clearance would carry it to the Member's office and they would read it in our presence and we'd bring it back.

Thus, documentation was available. Most Members were too busy to bother reading it. A few would. They could also request oral briefings and some did regularly, some did sporadically depending on the subject that was coming up. State, CIA, Defense, whoever the Member wanted would brief them on the intelligence side, policies, operations, or whatever they wanted.

Some understood this process and I think used it wisely and well. Others were uncomfortable with the idea that they couldn't use in public any of this classified material. Why can't I use that in a speech, it was also in the newspaper? They never understood this and found it frustrating. There were a few members who never wanted any classified briefings. They would ask for unclassified briefings that they could refer to in public as either coming from State or CIA or as their own views, but they didn't want anything classified. Some relied on the Congressional Research Service to give them documentation that was all unclassified. CRS did a splendid job.

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Members of Congress don't have any difficulty getting access to information from the Executive Branch, either classified or unclassified.

Q: To follow onto this, given your background, member of the National Intelligence Council staff and your service abroad, what is your take on the comments that would come out in the New York Times and criticism about... You know the intelligence services are pulling down \$30 billion a year or more, and most of what they're dealing with, or 90% as the New York Times say, comes out of State Department reporting or apparently unclassified sources. Do you feel that we're getting our monies worth?

LEVIN: When I was in the National Intelligence Council, that came up in this manner. As I think we discussed, under the 1946 legislation, the Director of Central Intelligence is the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency but he also coordinates all U.S. Government foreign intelligence.

Casey said again and again in my presence and to others, that 90 percent of the information which CIA analysts were using came from open sources and most of it from the State Department. He saw no reason to put case officers in CIA stations abroad to acquire clandestinely information which any Foreign Service officer equipped with the price of a lunch could get by asking someone in the local Foreign Ministry. Therefore, he would be happy to go to open and closed sessions of any committee on the Hill to appear in favor of increasing the State Department budget.

The intelligence committees, just like the defense and military affairs committees of the Congress, can be very critical of the agencies over whom they have oversight, but they also make sure that adequate budgets go through. They really understand the need for fiscal resources. The Director of Central Intelligence and the Secretary of Defense have as a high priority, at least their second and sometimes their first priority, getting enough money for their agency to do the job.

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When you move over to the State Department, where the budget is minuscule compared to DOD and CIA, it's different. The Secretary of State is rarely a corporate executive or a big investor or somebody who is used to managing large budgets. They tend to be lawyers and aspiring statesmen who are interested in the job in order to become engaged in high policy. The idea of going up to the Hill and fighting for another 500 positions and some more money, is not why they took the job. Secretaries of State don't want to get involved in that kind of demeaning haggling. The committee members in the Senate and House every day when they have to see somebody who they know could be a better Secretary of State. They are not drawn to fight for resources for the State Department, they too want to dabble in high policy.

The State Department bankrupted itself in the sixties opening embassies in Africa without any additional money, the Soviet Union broke up and State opened 17 embassies there with no additional money. I travel a lot, and there is not much left of the State Department in a lot of American embassies. Phone and you get a voice mail if you're about to be arrested. There's just not much out there anymore in terms of substantive capability. The Secretaries of State travel a lot and they sometimes remark that they don't understand what embassies do in between their visits. There's just much less out there in terms of State Department capability and therefore effectiveness. Three thousand FSOs 40 years ago when we had relations with some 60 countries, and about the same number today for relations with 184 countries.

We have CIA case officers running agents to get information which could be obtained by an FSO over lunch but you don't have FSOs to do it. In my experience in Washington and in embassies, there have been few instances where I have found the Station Chief to be competitive in the sense that they would prefer to have their case officers get information in order to make them look good. Their guys could be exposed. They are in danger. If the Foreign Service officers have got access and government officials consider it in their

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interest to make known information to the U.S., then if they are there, FSOs go to it, that's what they're there for.

I would say that the complaints about the intelligence community are valid but misleading, in that the State Department leadership has never fought for the kind of resources to do the job which would lessen the need for the intelligence community to go and do it in a more expensive and risky manner.

Q: I was reading that mostly the really useful stuff that comes out of the intelligence system comes from NSA, National Security Agency's intercepts or satellite photographs or things like this.

LEVIN: When you get something like North Korea or Iraq with a nuclear program and you have a lot of difficulty getting people in there then the spy-in-the-sky photographs are useful; there's no substitute for them. The ratio of gold to garbage, in the NSA intercepts, not because the NSA isn't hardworking, just because of the nature of communications, does raise some cautionary flags.

NSA can point to things they have obtained that have been useful but whether they're worth the billions that are spent, is a genuine question in my mind.

Q: This is Saturday, April 23rd, we're recording Herbert Levin on his career with the State Department. This is Mike Springmann doing the interviewing.

We're ready to talk about your career, depending on whether you want to go back and add some more on the intelligence services or entry into the State Department of minorities or fill-in the last couple of blanks in your career.

LEVIN: I think just the last couple of blanks.

I was assigned as the Diplomat-in-Residence to the Asia Foundation in San Francisco. This was a non-government assignment which I recommend because it gets you out of

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the government bureaucratic context. The Asia Foundation was interesting because it is an operating foundation, it receives and makes grants, it runs its own programs and has representatives in many Asian countries.

In grant-making, it gives money to people to do things that are worthwhile in Asia. It is grant-receiving, from such organizations as the Ford Foundation and the Rockefeller Foundation. This is unusual, since most foundations are either one or the other. It gets about a third of its resources from the U.S. government, a third from private organizations, and a third in the form of books from American publishers.

The book program is not prominent in the United States but is visible all over Asia. It's been going on for many years. When publishers run a new edition, they give the old edition to the Asia Foundation. These are things like law books and case books and medical dictionaries and mathematics textbooks. Books that are expensive and a new edition may be wanted here but the previous edition is still useful. You will find these in national libraries, universities and Supreme Court libraries all over Asia. It is a program with enormous impact. American President Lines carry these books free.

The Asia Foundation was expanding, starting a new center and I was Director of Studies. This suggests to Foreign Service people that the further away you get from Washington, the more impact you can have. Foreign Service officers doing something around Washington, are about as rare as potholes in the spring. Whereas, when you get to the other end of the country, Foreign Service officers are more rare.

Traveling and doing programs for the Foundation out in Asia as a non-official was also interesting, listening to people's attitudes towards the local American embassies and American policy.

Some FSOs, when they get a chance to be Diplomat-in-Residence, want to write a book. I think that's understandable and commendable, but it can be used for other things as well.

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It doesn't have to be teaching and writing, one can get involved in operational activities in foundations.

They had never had a Foreign Service officer before. I think they've had Foreign Service officers since. The Mayor of San Francisco had a Foreign Service Officer advise her on international affairs and there were some Diplomats-in-Residence and mid-career FSOs at the universities in the San Francisco area. We didn't have any kind of an organized group, but were aware of each other.

When I finished at the Asia Foundation, I was asked if I wanted to be number two in the office concerned with strategic technology policy. Basically, though not exclusively, this was the U.S. position at COCOM in Paris, the Coordinating Committee on strategic exports and technology.

The Cold War was dissipating, we were concerned about exports of weapons and various kinds of technology.

Q: What time frame was this?

LEVIN: This was late '80s. There were strong views in some parts of the government to try and keep the export control lid on. You had views in other parts of the government that if you couldn't get the agreement of, let's say, the French or the Germans not to export product "X" into the Soviet Union, then it was pointless for us not to export it. Maybe we didn't think it should go but our exporters should have an equal chance if it was going to go anyway. Needless to say, group A didn't agree with group B on this.

One observed wonderful things in Congress where a Member could be most hawkish in wanting tight controls, but when the machine tool company in his district wanted to send two lathes to East Germany, he said this was a ridiculous interpretation of the regulation, of course those lathes could go. You got to know members of Congress and their staffs arguing both sides on these things.

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Q: You worked out of Washington on this assignment?

LEVIN: Yes, this was in Washington in the State Department which headed an interagency group. The head of the office was Ambassador. Allen Wendt who's now our Ambassador to Slovenia. The actual intergovernmental work was in Paris, where the COCOM coordinating committee sits.

The American government was divided as to what the implications were of the slow disappearance and eventual dissolution of the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union hadn't dissolved yet but it was clear that unprecedented things were going on there.

Q: You were dealing with Commerce, and State and Treasury?

LEVIN: That's right, Defense and Commerce are the two main players on this. We had a Republican Administration which was conservative but not wildly conservative on this subject. The Bush administration was concerned about communism and weapons Nonproliferation, but at the same time it was a very business oriented administration.

The U.S. businessmen who were unhappy with these restraints, which they thought were foolish, did not want to stand up in public and be counted on this issue. They were scared that somebody would accuse them of being soft on communism. So the business communities approach was to try and stiffen up the backs of the State and the Commerce Departments to fight in their interests but they wouldn't get out and lobby for themselves. So it was a bureaucratic fight. The business community had a strong interest but did not want to get involved in it.

Q: Where did you get the facts and figures for this? Did they go to CIA reports and say, well Agency says Russian scientists are hawkish and intent on world domination, some people seem to think they are?

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LEVIN: That kind of thing you could argue about forever because you're talking about the intentions of Russian rulers who may change.

Mostly it was on a more mundane basis, whether denying them the acquisition of a computer which could operate at high speed and could be used in a nuclear weapons program, was something which we should continue to do.

On the one hand, anything which could contribute to the Soviet nuclear weapon program is not something we want to export to them. On the other hand, the Soviet Union already has nuclear weapons. They say they want to use the computer for weather forecasting which is what we use it for, why not sell them the computer for weather forecasting?

You could sit around a table for weeks and argue this kind of question. The White House staff and the President didn't want to get involved. These questions dragged on and on. You had people who had been working these questions for years and were wedded to positions which might not really be valid anymore.

The attitudes of allies on this kind of question differed all the time. For example, the French had good export controls, were generally frank and cooperative except when there was a French government corporation that needed export business.

The Germans would tell you something was controlled. But their export control system was terrible because their political parties were so subservient to their export oriented business community, that they deliberately underfunded their export control system. The number of people they had checking export licenses, actually checking things going out, was so small that any German businessman who wanted to evade, could, and frequently did.

The German government was always in the position of saying, we have forbidden the export of this item. Then somebody would visit a factory in Russia and comes back with

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the name of the new German machine and the serial number on it. The Germans would then try to explain this away as an aberration, a different model, etc.

Q: What went on before and after the Gulf War—they were fighting among themselves.

LEVIN: The Japanese had a good system, and were very responsive, and the things that got out of Japan were relatively small but significant. This was due to great rivalry among companies.

The Russians would offer a Japanese shipping company official a large sum of money if the man would provide false exports documents. These shipments are frequently very technical. A lathe could go to the Soviet Union that was capable down to so many microns but if it was just one micron finer then it couldn't go. Just one number had to be falsified. Customs officials can't be experts at everything, they can miss something like this. The shipper would put the acceptable numbers on the documents, and the lathe inside was different.

Or the shipment goes down to the airport or to the port loading dock. It's encased in air-tight plastic, it's totally sealed, every piece with special dehydrating equipment and then custom boxed in wood. The customs agent is supposed to tear the whole thing open to get in to check the microns? You're talking about tens of thousands of dollars in just packaging. With the Japanese an improper shipment could usually be traced back to a bribe of a particular company officer.

In the United States there was always a certain tolerance of the German body politic which really was winking at this. In contrast, the Japanese government which had quite a good system, and was knocking itself out to keep tight controls, they would get hosed down by the Americans when a private company had contrived to evade the government's system.

The North Koreans fly around in Bell Corporation helicopters from the United States because a Bell Corporation man was bribed. These things were sold to somebody who

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sold them to somebody who sold them to somebody else and they ended up as intended in North Korea.

This suggests how with the intelligence community, the Defense Department, and among civilians who had worked similar problems for a good part of their career, you need political decisions at the top to get them to act differently, otherwise they continue to fight the same battles. They were like old Indian fighters who look for Indians to fight, even after all the Indians have been put peacefully on the reservations.

Q: How did this actually work, did you decide to have a policy in Washington and then give marching orders to COCOM in Paris?

LEVIN: That's correct. We took over our technical people so we could answer questions on them. The technical people would sometimes want to represent agency points of view which were supposed to have been fully agreed in Washington before you left. Sometimes you had to suppress your colleagues in Paris. So there was a bit of hemming and hawing but generally it worked well.

We had neutral governments not members of COCOM, Finns and Austrians and so forth, who were neutral but quite prepared to cooperate because their own national policies said their equipment should not be popping up in war making areas. They didn't have any capability to analyze the military industrial capacities of the Soviet Union or East Germany so they would rely quietly on advice. The Finns were extremely cooperative.

The COCOM office in the State Department, a small office, was next to the office which was concerned exclusively with nuclear matters, both Nonproliferation of weapons, and peaceful uses of nuclear energy internationally, promoting it and safeguarding it. This was the office that sent instructions to our representatives in the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna. The head of the office, this office of Nuclear Nonproliferation

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and Energy Affairs, was also our representative to the IAEA Board of Governors. He didn't reside in Vienna, just went for Board of Governors meetings.

This was exclusively nuclear work and I was asked to move next door to be the number two in that office. I worked a great deal on North Korean nuclear questions, another colleague worked on Iraq and we could see what was coming in those and other areas.

Q: Did you feel any lack of a technical background in this kind of stuff?

LEVIN: You're always better off knowing a lot more technologies, there's no doubt of that. At the same time you're dealing with so many diverse and very specific technologies, that no one person could be a master or mistress of them all.

Let us say you're looking at a country seeking to develop the capability to have nuclear weapons. We need to know how their reactor is configured to utilize a certain kind of fuel, and whether that fuel, after it has been burned, will come out in a form which includes in it weapons grade plutonium possibilities. One expert knows about reactor technology and another about reactor fuel.

If you take that spent fuel and try to get the plutonium out, that process of removing the plutonium, that's another expert who doesn't know how to build a reactor.

The plutonium that was separated out from the spent fuel needs processing into a form that is usable for weapons. This is done by other experts who don't know anything about reactors. When you've got plutonium which is of a weapons grade and in a form usable for weapons, the conventional trigger to make that explode—you don't hit plutonium with a hammer—you have to set it off in a certain way, that's devised by other experts who may never have seen a reactor.

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You then package all this with controls so it blows up where you want it to blow up, not when you're assembling it, which is done by other experts. Other technicians, rockets and missiles, devise the delivery system.

It would have been nice to have a strong technical background but a strong technical background in pressure vessels in nuclear reactors really doesn't help you much regarding the electronics, or the missile delivery systems. I respected and worked with all these people, for if they didn't know more than I knew in a particular area, they shouldn't have been with me.

At the same time, none of them knew very much about each others speciality; we had to put it together some way. You could think of examples, conductors leading orchestras though unable to play all the instruments, illustrating how we sought to bring these experts together.

Q: How does the office of Strategic Technology relate to the rest of the Department, to the regional bureaus, and the desks?

LEVIN: These were two different offices. Strategic Technology was the COCOM office, and the other was the nuclear office related to the IAEA. In both cases, these offices worked to bring a policy together from all over the government under the lead of the State Department, though the State Department didn't have a veto over the other agencies.

The idea was to try to forge an agreed policy. If you couldn't, then you had to go to the White House. The White House was not eager to have you come over there with your interagency brawls. This played into the hands of the most stubborn element.

If you were working on South Africa's nuclear weapons program, then you were involved with the South Africa Country Director or the Deputy Assistant Secretary there. If you were engaged with the North Korean nuclear program, the East Asian Bureau.

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We did turn off the South African nuclear program. We got Argentina and Brazil to physically scrap their nuclear programs which were quite threatening. When we were involved with the Latin American Bureau we would rely on them heavily for political advice on negotiating tactics, who were your friends on this issue in these governments. Our relations with the geographic bureaus were important and cooperative. I don't recall strong differences of opinion between our office and geographic bureaus.

Q: There were no differences of opinion between your office and their offices?

LEVIN: The basic policy of trying to get them to get rid of their nuclear weapons was generally accepted.

Q: You didn't get any clientitis that you'd run into?

LEVIN: No, because in any of these countries, Argentina and Brazil and later South Africa, there were always people in those countries who were very much opposed to their weapons programs. It wasn't as if you had a monolithic Argentina, and if you wanted to do this, you'd be getting all Argentinians against you. The Argentinians were divided about this. This effort was narrowly based in Argentina, perhaps only the navy really wanted these things. We usually could work with people in the country who were like-minded.

The relationship with the desks was quite good. There was no clientitis as far as Iraq was concerned. There was a general underestimation of Iraq's clandestine acquisition capability.

Q: Didn't they bring up this nuclear program in Iraq rather late, to justify Bush's war against the country? First it was attacking Kuwait and then possibly attacking Saudi Arabia. The reasons kept changing and then the last thing they tied it to was a nuclear program.

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LEVIN: The effort against Iraq was because they already controlled a great deal of oil and having taken over Kuwait, they could go on rolling into Saudi Arabia. So I think the effort against Iraq was for the stated reason.

After we got into the fight with Iraq and we got Iraq defectors, the suspicions about Iraq having a nuclear program, which were already there, were increased. The things we already suspected proved to be minor, in fact much bigger things were going on. The major revelations in the nuclear area did not come out as a means of justifying Desert Storm against Iraq, because we found the compelling evidence after the invasion. Desert Storm took place because Iraq invaded Kuwait, but thank God that it happened because we were thereby able to destroy a very menacing secret nuclear program.

The IAEA inspection system was set up, you might say, in the manner of a gentleman's club. The idea was that there were going to be peaceful nuclear activities, and it was in every country's interest to reassure other countries that its activities were peaceful. Countries wanted to be inspected by a neutral respected body so that nobody would worry about them.

This was the original idea. Not that the IAEA were a bunch of cops who were going to go around and arrest international law breakers. That was not the concept. The IAEA was not given any means to do that.

We found that the Iraqis, who were members of the IAEA, and had a small number of peaceful reactors inspected, were liars. This introduced a whole new problem—how should a neutral intragovernmental body like the IAEA, respecting the national sovereignty of its members, act on the basis of suspicion that one of its members is lying?

This is a whole different role for the IAEA. The IAEA statute does give them the right to demand special inspections and if dissatisfied to go to the Security Council; this was

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written in by some farsighted people. This has been utilized, for Iraq and North Korea, so the IAEA has moved into another phase.

Q: You're talking about Iraq and places like this but what about Israel, and India? What did your office do about those countries?

LEVIN: Israel never signed the Nonproliferation Treaty. India never signed the Nonproliferation Treaty. The United States policy is to get everybody to sign the NPT and to get rid of weapons and to reduce them.

It's one thing to try and pressure the Israelis and pressure the Indians to do this because we think it's a good thing. But they are not in violation of any international obligation or any international law by doing what they're doing. They have the sovereign right to do this, though we try bilaterally to dissuade them from doing so.

The Iraqis and the North Koreans wanted two things from the IAEA. They wanted assistance, which the IAEA provides for peaceful nuclear programs, such as the power reactors. Seemingly they wanted the traditional IAEA "gentlemanly" inspections as a fig leaf to hide what they were doing in their weapons program. They were misusing the IAEA inspections of their peaceful nuclear activities to mislead the world about what they were doing at other sites.

The Indians had their nuclear explosion before the Nonproliferation Treaty. The Israelis have not had a nuclear explosion but are generally suspected of having weapons more or less like the Pakistanis but they never signed the NPT. Our effort with them has to be on the basis of "we think this is a bad idea," and we don't give them any kind of assistance in the nuclear area, we don't help them with various kinds of research and a range of other things.

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Argentina and Brazil are not NPT members but when they dismantled their efforts they arranged for an inspection system under the regional Latin American treaty which provides for this. South Africa signed the NPT, dismantled its effort and that was the end of that.

These countries were differing cans of worms.

Q: You talked about being at The Asia Foundation. Exactly what did you do for them? You mentioned that they passed outdated copies of textbooks and things, how did your office actually run?

LEVIN: When I went to The Asia Foundation, it had as a principal part of its operation, symposia, workshops and conferences on subjects which would fulfill some of its goals in Asia.

For example, they had a general goal like "Building Democracy." What do you do specifically under that? One of the components of the democratic system is fair elections. What does fair elections mean? It means access to the media for different candidates, it means handling of ballots in a way which is absolutely transparent and in which all of the political parties and the public can have confidence. Getting people from one country to see how this is done in another country and have confidence in it is a useful endeavor. We had training programs and workshops to try and get these things known, acknowledged, and accepted, and have the police and the media understand. This was one area.

Another area which the Asia Foundation has concentrated on for many years, is acceptance of the concept of the independent judiciary. This is not something which comes naturally out of any tradition in Asia. Judges customarily in Asia were simply part of the administration. They weren't a separate, independent branch. Simply announcing that if you call yourself democratic, you should have an independent judiciary, is insufficient.

The judiciary itself must want to be independent, must not itself feel that its proper role is to support the government. Second, it has to be of such stature, of such capability,

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its judgments of such broad appeal and so decisive that people would say, yes, we will support the Supreme Court against the President, we're proud to have these independent justices.

What did we do? We had a continuous effort of workshops and seminars and visits and lectureships to try and increase the knowledge, prestige, capability, and self-confidence of judges in Asian countries. We brought them together, we had a stream of literature and books going to them about the role of the judiciary.

In the past, the Asia Foundation when it perceived a need of this sort, had then gone to an American or an Asian university, or to say a Bar Association, depending on the subject we're talking about, and say, we think it'd be a good idea if this kind of a thing were done. The organization would come up with a project proposal and the Asia Foundation would fund it.

If we wished to train clerks of the courts, who are important, then having say a California State Clerk of the Court run training programs made sense. California is bigger than most members of the United Nations, and has a good court system. We could go to them and contract with them to do it.

But for a lot of more conceptual operations, the Asia Foundation was finding that it was paying too much or that the recipient professor or university or association had its own particular interest. Not necessarily wrong or bad, but its own particular interest and the program that was carried on reflected more their needs than precisely what the Foundation sought.

The Asia Foundation decided that they would operate more themselves in this conference, workshop, symposium area. They would commission some, directly operate some and bring more people in as temporary employees to run these things.

Q: After the Asia Foundation and Strategic Technology, where did you go after that?

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LEVIN: The nuclear office was my last office in the State Department.

In '91 I was invited by Ji Chaozhu who was going from being the Chinese Ambassador in London, to being Under Secretary General of the United Nations, to come into the UN Secretariat. I decided to do this and I took early retirement. I had a few more years in the Foreign Service but I decided to do this because the UN would be a new challenge and I liked living in New York.

Q: Ji was the fellow you had met while you were going into university in the United States?

LEVIN: That's correct.

Boutros Ghali became Secretary General a few weeks after I arrived. He has been less interested in the longer range economic and social role of the UN than he has been in peace making. In some ways this is understandable because people are getting killed and that's where public attention is focused. I think in trying to meet some of these dramatic questions, he is disproportionately eliminating some of the longer range activities of the UN in which the UN might be more effective than it is in peace making for the same amount of money.

I think it is unfortunate what he's doing.

Q: Do you want to expand on that or do you want to go back and touch on some points you've handled earlier that you feel need to be elaborated on? Or do you want to talk about the future of the Foreign Service?

LEVIN: The latter. People who are thinking of going into the Foreign Service should always look at it in comparison to other things at the moment. In other words, young people who are considering the Foreign Service should look at other jobs that might be of competitive interest to them and if the Foreign Service looks better, they should go in. If there is something else that looks better, they should go into that.

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They should not try and build their careers in the belief that the Foreign Service in 10, 20 or 30 years will have the same problems or the same good prospects as they see at the moment, because it's completely unpredictable. To say, "I will not go into the Foreign Service in 1994 because the Clinton Administration is putting in more political appointees in the State Department than anybody has ever seen and I don't want to work for a bunch of amateurs," I think is wrong. In your first assignments you're really not too concerned about who staffs the seventh floor of the State Department. In 10, 20 or 30 years, who knows who'll be president and what their view will be on that sort of thing?

Q: They had a big article in the Post this past week on the State Department. How Clinton is trying to make it more representative of the United States as a whole and how it's creating problems for people like Zimmermann who resigned.

LEVIN: I didn't see that. I will say this, I think that the State Department has had and should always have a vigorous program of getting out and demonstrating to women, Black Americans and Mexican Americans and Native Americans that they are wanted. There may be relatively few in visible positions but that doesn't mean there's any kind of discrimination, on the contrary, there's a strong desire that everybody gets an equal chance to join up.

But when it comes to actual admission, there must be a single standard. When you're working with your Black colleague, your Aleut colleague, your Navajo colleague, you both know that both of you are entirely qualified.

I think the idea that the United States has a more effective Foreign Service, that you're going to be more likely to get the Japanese to let in more imports if your negotiating team is carefully calibrated to represent different groups of Americans, is absolute rubbish. I don't think it has any effect on foreigners whatsoever.

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The idea that all groups in the United States take the same interest in international affairs, and are going to show up in the State Department in numbers approximately proportional to their component in the population, I think is wrong. You've got more Southerners in the American military and you've got more American military bases in the South, because there is a tradition down there of southern military officers. I don't see anything particularly wrong in that. Some groups are over represented in some areas of federal endeavor, some are under represented. The rule is equal opportunity of access under a single standard, not quotas, entitlements.

Q: Because they're pushing this particularly, they always have charts on how many women in the population as a whole and how many women are in the federal government and how many of them are in each particular branch of the federal government.

LEVIN: I don't care whether its dermatologists or political officers, the fact that some ethnic or racial group in the American population is underrepresented in a profession suggests that there's discrimination against that group, is nonsense. People in groups don't all take the same attitudes. You have states that have strong schools of mining, and you're going to find more mining engineers from those states than you're going to find from other states, and this will be reflected in the groups in those professions.

The races are not evenly distributed in this country. There are more of some races in some parts of the country than there are in other parts. Educational opportunities are different in different places. You cannot reconcile all this in the Foreign Service.

You had asked about Foreign Service officers in the UN. I think I could just comment about Americans, including Foreign Service officers, who work for the UN. I'm not talking about the U.S. Mission to the UN.

Q: Discuss Americans who say I want a job with the United Nations in this particular section.

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LEVIN: Foreign Service Officers can go into the UN on contracts for a few years. There's not enough of them. Other governments do a great deal of this and it's quite a good idea. It brings an American point of view within the UN Secretariat and it brings people back into our diplomatic service who understand how the UN works.

The U.S. State Department has an office of UN recruitment but this is not aggressively pursued. I think this is a mistake, I think more attention should be paid to this. It's not only UN/New York, there are UN offices in Geneva, Vienna and all over the place. I think getting more people on an in-and-out basis, as part of their Foreign Service career would be useful to both the UN, the individuals and to U.S. policy interests.

Separate from that, there's the question of people entering the UN system more or less at the bottom through their professional examination. I don't think the U.S. government is sufficiently aggressive in getting the word out on that. Americans do take that examination but they tend to take it because they heard about it through UN announcements. There isn't the kind of concentration and effort on the part of the U.S. government to bring Americans in. I think it should be an important responsibility of the State Department to get Americans to consider this as a professional option and go after it.

There is also a system at the UN which, as far as I know, the United States has never utilized and other governments do. You can take your entering diplomats after they go through the basic course at the Foreign Service Institute, and have their first assignment be to the United Nations Secretariat.

The United Nations will take people like that. If they find they like that, they stay in the UN system and they resign from their own Foreign Service. If they don't, then they come back to their Foreign Service. But they've had this year or two years in the United Nations and it's something they'll remember for the future. It's a good way of getting good quality people interested in the UN.

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Q: I've always been told that the UN and the other international organizations discourage Americans from trying to enter because Americans have traditionally been over represented and they want to flesh it out with people from other parts of the world.

LEVIN: No, in general Americans are underrepresented. UN agencies in Geneva generally do not have very many Americans. I think there are two reasons for this.

First, the U.S. government does not recruit for these UN jobs the way other governments do. The French and the Germans and the Scandinavians, they're out all the time as soon as they hear of a vacancy, pushing their nationals. The U.S. government doesn't do this.

Second, because other governments are pushing, when an American comes along, the American frequently is alone. He's just an individual filing an application, he doesn't have his government backing. Though there are examinations and professional requirements for UN jobs of any significance, after the professional requirements are satisfied, then it's straight politicking. It's political patronage and pushing. The U.S. government says, this is very bad, recruitment should be just on the basis of objective criteria, we're not going to mess around with pushing Americans. The end result is that the American applicant loses out.

The U.S. government should start to act on the understanding that this allocation of significant positions in the UN is a part of the political process in the UN and should be much more aggressive on behalf of Americans. I'm not talking about Under Secretaries General, the top political level, that's a different thing. I'm talking about the director and the professional level.

I was in the UN Secretariat for three years. I saw embassy after embassy representatives coming through and saying, this change during the next budgetary year, are there going to be the same number of senior French officers as before? This kind of thing. The Americans never ask. I think that the Americans have to understand that effectiveness

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at the UN is a seamless web. If you don't push your people, if you don't protect your nationals, then there's less respect for your policy advocacies across the board.

The Japanese do not allow Japanese nationals in the UN to be pushed around. They don't support incompetent Japanese, they recommend a Japanese, the Japanese is good, the Japanese gets the job, they keep an eye on this person and make sure this person is well taken care of because he/she is an extension of Japan within the UN.

Americans don't do this. Therefore American policy, advocacies are not taken seriously because the Americans don't seem to take the UN seriously. None of this would require new money but it requires a commitment to a long range nourishing of the relationship with the UN.

For many years the U.S. government view of the UN has been the elephant as seen by an ivory hunter, when you want something out of the UN, you go and you get it. The U.S. view of the UN should be a mahout view, how do I train this beast and make it responsive, to lumber in the direction that I want it to lumber. This takes long term planning and training.

There are some small countries that do this very well. Finland concentrates on having good people go into the UN, and takes care of its people. You probably have more understanding of Finland's role in the UN, in many ways, than you do of the American role because they take a steady long view.

I think the U.S. could accomplish a great deal at the UN just by being a little more thoughtful on personnel matters.

End of interview