

Interview with Howard B. Schaffer

Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

AMBASSADOR HOWARD B. SCHAFFER

Interviewed by: Thomas Stern

Initial interview date: March 10, 1997

Copyright 2000 ADST

Q: Let me start with the usual question. Where were you born and where were you educated?

SCHAFFER: I was born in New York City. I attended public schools in Queens, graduating from Forest Hills High School. I then went to Harvard where I majored in American history and literature. I graduated in 1950.

There had been no previous involvement in international affairs in my family, which was essentially a New York business family. Both branches—my father's and my mother's—had been in business. To my knowledge, none had ever taken a professional interest in national affairs, let alone foreign affairs.

In 1951, I was drafted into the Army after the Korean War broke out. Eventually, I was assigned to Japan, in two different contexts. I was part of the occupation forces, but my unit, which was an anti-aircraft battalion, was also a back-up for forces fighting in Korea. We were stationed in Kyushu. It was during this tour that I began to have some interest in a foreign affairs career because I was enjoying living in a foreign environment.

Library of Congress

I approached the American consulate in Fukuoka and talked to a clerk—never got to see anyone as important as consul (I was, after all, only a sergeant at time). I just wanted to have some information about U.S. government activities abroad; I got a little information, but nothing world-shaking. I traveled a great deal around Japan and was fascinated by the country. Of course, Japan of the early 1950s was considerably different from that of today or even of the last 20-30 years. I remember it as quite poor, still showing great evidence of the war's destruction. Americans were treated with considerable respect; GIs were for the most part treated with good humored affection. I came away with a thoroughly positive view of Japan and of the Japanese.

I did visit Hiroshima; that made a very strong impression. I had been a senior in high school when atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Like other Americans, I was very much affected by those events. So when I got to Japan, I wanted very much to see Hiroshima so that by looking at the actual scene I could visualize in my own mind what had actually happened. That was a shock. On the other hand, so much had been written about these events, starting with the John Hersey book, and so many thousands of photographs had been taken. So it was not quite the shock it might have been had I not seen and heard so much about it before.

I pursued my new interest in a foreign affairs career when I returned to the United States early in 1953 as a sergeant first class. Needing a job, I went to work for McCann-Erickson—an advertising agency—in their marketing research section. By that time, I had made up my mind to take the Foreign Service entrance examination.

The exam in those days was much longer than it is today. It tested the candidates' detailed knowledge of history, political science, economics, and current affairs as well as a broad variety of more general subjects. So, much more than is the case with the current form of the examination, you could usefully study for it and were well advised to do so.

Library of Congress

I began to prepare for the examination which was to be given that Fall (1953). For one thing, I tried to refresh my rather shaky knowledge of economics—which had not been my strong suit in academia. As I said, I had majored in history and literature, although I had taken some economic courses at Harvard. But I felt that it was most important to become more familiar with economics. I also read newspapers assiduously—more so than I would have had I not been preparing for the exam. I also began to review French—which I had taken in college—because in those days the language exam was given as part of the overall written test. But I knew that even if I did not pass the language test, I would have an opportunity to take it again. So I focused mostly on economics, current affairs, American history—which I knew would be an important part of the exam—and current international developments. At the same time, I was pursuing other professional interests. I regarded these as fall-backs in case the exam proved to be too much for me.

I took the written exam in Manhattan in a mob scene. There were lots and lots of aspiring Foreign Service officers taking the test in a decrepit federal building in the downtown area—a thoroughly unpleasant environment. The proctors were tough; it reminded me very much of college days. It was a tremendously grueling process that lasted three and a half days. At the end, I was so weary that I decided to hit the open road and hitchhike—I had done a lot of that while in college. I hitchhiked to upstate New York; that was a relief after the exhausting exam.

I should add a comment here about that examination. I remember that during one of the three-hour essay sections of the examination, I looked up from my desk after about two hours to see other candidates leaving the examination. They had finished their essays. In fact, one could have written a whole book on each of the four topics that we were given to discuss in writing. And yet, after two hours, there were a number of candidates leaving the room. I felt a moment of panic, but continued to the end of the allotted time. Fortunately, my stamina paid off because I was told subsequently that I had passed the written part of the examination. In fact, I found out that I had done quite well—in those

Library of Congress

days, candidates were given their exact scores in total and for each of the segments. My recollection is that my over-all score was 88, which was well over the 70 passing grade. In the summer of 1954, I moved to a better job at Lever Brothers—in the famous glass house on Park Avenue and 53RD St. I was still in the marketing research field and what I did was typical of my generation—we moved from organization to organization in order to improve our earnings. At the same time, I also took courses at night at the Columbia Graduate Business School to enhance my curriculum vitae for the private business sector. I was able to take those course with the cooperation of Lever Brothers, which allowed me to leave the office a half hour early. The GI bill paid my tuition. I was shooting for an MBA.

Later in 1954, I was told that I had passed the written part of the Foreign Service examination. I then moved to improve my French language capacity. The exam was exclusively a written test of the candidates' proficiency in the spoken language was not tested. I recognized that my vocabulary needed work. To develop a modern French vocabulary, I assiduously read *Le Monde*, the French newspaper, every day. I recall that I used to purchase it in the French bookstore in Rockefeller Center. At the same time, I began to plow through *La Chartreuse de Parme*- *The Charter House of Parma* - the Stendhal novel, very carefully memorizing every word that I didn't know. That was very slow going at the beginning, but as I moved along the learning process accelerated. Between *Le Monde* and *Stendhal*, I improved my score spectacularly—I had failed during my first try, as I thought I probably would, although my score was a respectable failure—something like 65. But on the second try in 1954, I was graded at something like 90. That was more than good enough to get me through.

In early 1955 I was called to Washington to take the oral examination. No one was being appointed at that time to the Foreign Service. The Eisenhower administration had come to power in early 1953 just as I was leaving military service. In fact, the new president-elect was heading for Korea just as I was leaving Japan. As one of its first acts, Secretary John Foster Dulles decreed a reduction in force in the Department. That brought recruitment pretty much to a halt and that was still the case in early 1955. The Department continued

Library of Congress

its pre-employment processing even though essentially no one was being taken on the rolls. So I proceeded to take my oral examination which then was considerably different from what it is today. I found myself confronting a rather starchy group of senior Foreign Service officers— at least they looked starchy to me — and one public member. The chairman of my panel was the head of BEX [Board of Examiners], Cromwell Riches. His name seemed to me very appropriate; in appearance and manner he came across to an outsider as very much the old-line Foreign Service officer. I found the orals very interesting and very unusual. We talked a lot about what I was doing at Lever Brothers, about my background, etc. When they heard what I was doing, they became very eager to learn more, somewhat to my surprise. I treated them—as I now recognize in retrospect—to what must have been for them a truly eye-opening discussion of the soap and dentifrice business, such arcane matters as the chemical composition of the various Lever Brothers products as well as those of rival Proctor & Gamble and Colgate-Palmolive brands. This was obviously a whole new world to the panel and they did not seem to tire of my discussion. They learned, for example, that “Rinso Blue” was exactly the same as “Surf”— except that one was blue and the other white. This was the time when chemical detergents were being brought to the market place to supplement the soaps that had been used in the laundry. I had a grand time lecturing—it must have gone on for 15 minutes.

I knew that I was almost sure to get the panel's approval following a specific exchange I had with a panel member. I was being quizzed about American history. The public member, who seemed quite different from the rest, asked me if I could explain what the “Hampton Roads Conference” had been about. I thought and thought and finally had to admit my ignorance. The public member began to complain: “I have asked the last eight or 10 candidates the same question and all of them gave me the same reply as you have! What has happened to the study of American history?” While he was expressing his concern, something came to me. I said, “I do remember now. It was a meeting between Abraham Lincoln and Alexander Stephens, the vice president of the Confederacy, which took place on a warship anchored off Hampton Roads in early 1865. The Confederates

Library of Congress

hoped to work out some kind of compromise with the North.” When I gave the reply, the public member just beamed; he was absolutely delighted. He followed with a question on why Stephens had been chosen and I answered that. After that, I felt quite confident that I had his vote at least. Soon after the end of the session, I was told that I had passed. Strangely enough, I never encountered any of the panel members after I came into the Service.

I was not told then when to report for duty because obviously, in light of the virtual freeze on recruitment, the panel was not in a position to tell me. So I went back to New York to resume my life at Lever Brothers which together with my course work at the Columbia School of Business kept me pretty busy. No one at Lever Brothers, except a couple of close friends, knew that I had just taken the Foreign Service oral examination or, for that matter, that I was interested in a diplomatic career.

Of course, I was well aware that the Department was processing my application since security people were interviewing my friends and neighbors. The security clearance was somewhat ludicrous; I was being investigated by some guy who spoke with a heavy Eastern European accent. When he called some of my friends, whom I had listed as references, they thought it was a gag and gave answers that might not have been entirely appropriate for security clearance process, particularly if the investigator did not have much of a sense of humor. And security officers rarely had a sense of humor in the early 1950s. I must say that I had some concern about joining the Department in light of the McCarthy witch-hunts and their aftermath. Fortunately, by 1955, the worst aspects of that period were over. But I am certain that had I been offered a job in 1953 rather than in 1955, I would have had more severe doubts about joining the Service. By 1955, although I still had some misgivings, I felt more comfortable. I recall that when I was interviewed by the security officer with the accent I was asked about my political affiliations. As I remember, I replied that I was a member of the Thomas Jefferson Democratic Club of Forest Hills, Queens. To which he replied—rather grandly, I thought—, “I didn’t mean that!

Library of Congress

Every American has the right to join either of the two major political parties.” I thanked him with some irony that I am sure he failed to detect.

In June, 1955, there was an unexpected phone call from the Department. Since I wasn't at my desk in Lever Brothers, the State person just left a message for me. This gave me a bit of a scare because I was concerned that my boss and others would find out what I had been up to and conclude that I was about to jump ship. As it turned out, when I returned the call, I was asked whether I could start my Foreign Service career the next week — almost two-and-a-half years after I had taken the written examination. My years in the Army had made me familiar with “hurry-up and wait.” This was just the reverse. As I mentioned, the Department had not been hiring at all. Then, all of a sudden, just like a dam, the water broke through and new recruits had to be brought aboard immediately. I was told later that the Department had suddenly concluded that the hiring freeze had gone too far, particularly as it had followed a reduction in force, and that it desperately needed new blood. One of the reasons for this need stemmed from the new Refugee Relief Program that required a significant number of junior officers to process applicants.

In any case, the question was whether I could start to work for the Department the following week. I knew what Washington was like in the summer and that I had some vacation time due to me from Lever Brothers. I decided that I would not report in the summer and sweat it out on the banks of the Potomac. I wanted to wait until September and that is what I told the Department's recruitment officer.

But aside from the matter of heat and vacations, my reluctance to leave everything behind and dive into a new profession immediately also stemmed from the need I felt to give considerable thought to whether I really wanted to make this drastic shift in careers. I was doing very well at Lever Brothers. Furthermore, the Columbia courses I was taking in the evening had brought me into contact with an adjunct professor who was employed by SOCONY Mobil during the day and taught in the evenings. He gave a course in marketing

Library of Congress

in which I had done very well. He was in the process of working up a job offer for me at SOCONY Mobil, so I had that prospect as well.

So I was very fortunate to have a number of attractive options in the summer of 1955 and I needed time to sort things out. I consulted an uncle, Professor Jerome S. Bruner, a professor at Harvard, who was something of our family patriarch and was more a man of the world than my immediate family members. He and I had a very close relationship and therefore I naturally turned to him. He strongly advised me to join the Foreign Service on the grounds that it was an offer that would not be repeated. He also pointed out that if I didn't like the Service, I could always resign and pick up my old career in New York. My family was quite supportive; they were not really concerned about possible drawbacks in my living overseas. In fact, I think they were quite proud of me.

My uncle's point of view was reinforced when in advising my boss and others at Lever Brothers about the Department of State's offer, I was told that if I didn't like the Foreign Service I was welcome to come back to the company. So it was a kind of “no lose” proposition as far as Lever Brothers and I were concerned. With that backup, I decided to take the plunge. So I drove to Washington in my old battered Chevy in late September, 1955, and joined what was later called the A-100 FSI course in early October.

I remember the A-100 course monitors, particularly Jan Nadelman. I thought the course was fairly useful. Its basic problem was that far too often the lecturers who came from other agencies weren't sure whom they were speaking to. They knew they were supposed to talk about their areas of expertise, but I didn't think they fully recognized that we were brand new recruits into the Service. They would turn to the monitors and ask who we were—right in front of us. These lecturers were an important element of our course and I only wish they had targeted their comments a little more to their audience. On the whole however, the A-100 course was a satisfying experience and in retrospect I think prepared me well for my first assignment. The course consisted of two months of learning the trade

Library of Congress

and one month of intensive language training—Malay in my case. Somewhere along those three months, I began intensive briefings on my new post.

There were 21 students in my class. I was not overly impressed with the caliber of talent; I had expected something higher. I thought my own educational background was better than that of most of them. That may be the Harvard snob in me speaking! But I found my classmates to be very nice. They came from a variety of backgrounds. One of them, I recall, was an aeronautical engineer who quit a job at Boeing to join the Service. Most of them were non-Ivy League; in fact, I can only remember one who came from the Ivy League or one of the better known smaller Eastern colleges. That sort of surprised me. I guess like many others in those days I had come to believe that the Service continued to be drawn from the so-called elite schools. The fact that they were not was due in part to a conscious effort by the Department to increase diversity in the Service. On the other hand we had only three women in the class and no African-Americans nor any other people of color.

The A-100 course gave me a pretty good feeling about the Foreign Service, although we only got a worm's eye view. We were located in an annex on 23rd Street near the main building. It was a fairly decrepit red-brick building and has since been torn down. We didn't get to see many other FSOs; I may have spent a day or so on the Malayan desk in the Far East Bureau, as it was called then. We were not encouraged to do much of that. So we were fairly isolated as a group.

I took Malay at FSI with an American instructor; there was no native speaker available. It was a language course for me alone; no one else was going to Kuala Lumpur. I enjoyed the three weeks greatly although in that brief a period I could only get the fundamentals of the language. I was encouraged to continue further training after reporting for duty at my new post and was promised that sufficient funds for such training would be made available. But I was warned that since there wasn't any language training program at the post, I would have to make my own arrangements, which I did. I enjoyed continuing my

Library of Congress

Malay studies in Kuala Lumpur, though it was difficult for me to arrange a program that was acceptable to FSI. There just wasn't very good material at the time available for the study of the language.

Q: So in early 1956, you were assigned to Kuala Lumpur? How did that come about?

SCHAFFER: I had decided, probably based on my Japanese experience, that the Southeast Asia area seemed interesting, although I had never been there. I wasn't that interested in returning to Japan; China was closed; Korea had not shown up on my screen. I wanted to do something different and therefore Europe was not a great attraction—I had traveled there during my senior year in college. I was looking for different cultures and sights. Southeast Asia seemed to fit my requirements. So I asked for Indonesia or Thailand. In those days officers did not get a list of upcoming vacancies; you were just asked to indicate country or regional preferences. As it turned out, there just happened to be a vacancy in Kuala Lumpur, which was halfway between Indonesia and Thailand. So I was assigned there.

I knew where Kuala Lumpur was because I had followed the military moves of the Second World War closely as a high school student. I remembered plotting on maps the advance of the Japanese forces down the Malay peninsula in late 1941/early 1942 as they headed towards Singapore. So I knew exactly where KL was. Many of my classmates, not to speak of people outside the Foreign Service, did not have the vaguest notion where Malaya was. I soon decided that if anyone asked me where I was going, I would explain that KL was near Singapore. Of course I didn't know what KL was like in the mid-fifties. So I was amazed and delighted when I read the post report and other material and found that of all the cities in South East Asia in those days, KL was the most comfortable and most livable. For example, the city had a 36-hole golf course and water that was safe to drink out of the tap. I told my friends that all of this was the result of the Imperial Amenities Act of 1876" which established the basic living requirements in colonial headquarters towns. Some of them believed that foolishness.

Library of Congress

At the time, the U.S. establishment in Kuala Lumpur was a consulate general. I got there in a most interesting way. My uncle # Dr. Bruner, the one I mentioned earlier # happened to be teaching in Cambridge, England, in the 1955-56 academic year. He suggested that I route myself through the UK on my way to Malaya. In fact, the Department encouraged me to stop in London to talk to the embassy people since Malaya was then still a British protectorate. So I did that; I flew first class—as was the practice in those days—to London. We were unable to land there because of the customary January fog and were diverted to a small airport in the west of England. Then I boarded a train to London—Waterloo Station.

I made my way to the embassy where I was told to talk to someone in the political section who dealt with Asia. That was a strange conversation; it was an eye-opener then—I don't think I would find it strange today. The officer knew I was coming, but I found that he was not particularly interested in talking to me about policy. He wanted to know the latest gossip about personnel that was making the rounds in Washington! That struck me as very strange indeed, particularly since I was junior officer—hardly a good source for that kind of information. But he was looking for any scrap, even though my larder was pretty bare. His interest just surprised me; only later did I learn that such gossip in the mother's milk of the Foreign Service.

I stayed in London and then went to Cambridge to see my relatives. Then I returned to London and flew on to Bangkok on a PAA [Pan American Airways] flight 1 - that well-known globe-circling flight. I changed planes in Beirut, where I got to see something of the city by night because of the delayed arrival of a connecting flight. Then I flew on to Bangkok, with stops in Karachi and Rangoon, my first brief exposure to the subcontinent where I would spend so much of my career. After a night's rest, I went on to Singapore, where I changed for another plane that would take me to Kuala Lumpur— a DC-3 of the Malayan Airways. All of this was a new experience; I was very proud of my brand new diplomatic passport and my new role as a diplomatic representative of my government—

Library of Congress

at the age of 26. I was met at the airport by one of my new colleagues from the consulate general.

I was told before leaving Washington that I would be the fifth officer in the consulate general, which until my arrival had consisted of four experienced officers under the leadership of Consul General Thomas K. ("Ken") Wright. They dealt with all of the functions of a standard diplomatic establishment—political, economic, consular and administrative. I was to be rotated from one section to another, starting with consular affairs, while also helping John ("Jack") Knowles, the administrative officer. I was the first rotation officer to come to the post. I think at first there may have been some question how best to use me, but eventually all concerned in the Department and at post agreed to the rotational program. As far as I know, this program was the post's idea and not Washington's.

Being the first rotational officer, I received a lot of attention. Furthermore, KL was a small post and all the staff were very friendly. Indeed, until I found an apartment of my own, I lived with three of the officers at one time or other. They showed great interest in my education as a Foreign Service officer. It was a warm, rewarding assignment. I got a chance to use my Malay and enjoyed that very much.

I found both consular and administrative work somewhat routine and not particularly challenging. Then I worked in the economic section with William J. Ford, a knowledgeable and conscientious officer indeed. Following a few months there, I was shifted to the political section, working first with Charles T. ("Chuck") Cross and later with John Farris. Consul General Wright took a great interest in me and met with me periodically. As I said, KL was a small post; the atmosphere was one of considerable informality. We would inevitably meet when off-duty; we belonged to the same clubs, went to the same movies, ate at the same restaurants. KL had all of the attributes of a small town. Since we all got along quite well, we would see each other both in the office and outside. My exchanges with Wright were both very pleasant and professionally rewarding.

Library of Congress

My contacts went beyond the British and American communities. My knowledge of Malay helped me to become particularly well acquainted with the Malay community. Of course, the better educated segment of Malayan society knew English quite well, but I found Malay useful. After having reached a certain level of proficiency, I was able to carry out some of my political reporting responsibilities in the language. I was never tested, but I would guess that I reached a 3 or 3+ level in speaking.

I think the whole staff tried to pass on to me some of the flavor of the Foreign Service—its do's and don'ts. I learned many of the established diplomatic practices when I was named protocol officer in connection with Malayan Independence ceremonies that took place in August, 1957. I would become more proficient in these matters later in my career. Consul General Wright was probably not the best officer to initiate me into the rites of the Service. He was a “Wristonized” officer—a term that I quickly learned meant that he had been brought into the Foreign Service from the Civil Service without having to go through the three-and-a-half day entrance examination. So he did not fully share the punctilio of people who had come in at the bottom and had risen in the old Foreign Service in the 1930s and 1940s. Furthermore, I was still very much unmarried at the time and I think a good deal of the protocol folkloric atmosphere of the Foreign Service was maintained by officers' wives — there were no officers' husbands in those days. Junior wives had been taught the rites by “dragon ladies”—the wives of ambassadors or DCMs [deputy chiefs of mission]. Mrs. Wright, like her husband a wonderfully outgoing if somewhat naive person, had not had that learning experience. She was as much a newcomer to the Service as I was. So the protocol dictates in Kuala Lumpur were considerably less stringent than they might have been at another post. My colleagues were quite knowledgeable about Malaya, particularly Chuck Cross, who later rose to become ambassador to Singapore, consul general in Hong Kong and our principal representative in Taiwan. He had made himself familiar with all aspects of Malayan political and social life. As the son of an American missionary, he had grown up in prewar China and spoke Mandarin well. So his connections with the Chinese community were particularly strong. But he had also made many contacts among the

Library of Congress

British authorities—the Army, the police, the civil government—and the Malay officials and politicianI came to have the greatest admiration for him professionally and personally; I still do.

Living in KL was very pleasant, particularly for someone who had been living first with his family in New York and was then cooped up in a small room in McLean Gardens in Northwest Washington. As I said, it took me a while to find permanent quarters. There was still a very large British element in KL. In fact the “good” clubs had very, very limited Asian membership. So during my first half year at post, I lived in a succession of temporary arrangements. In July, 1956, I managed to rent a lovely bungalow right next to a golf course together with a couple of Americans in their twenties—a businessman and a U.S. Army doctor who had been assigned to Kuala Lumpur to conduct research in tropical medicine. We had a couple of servants and lived very well. I had no complaints.

Just as I was arriving in January, 1956, the British and the Federation of Malaya government headed by Tunku Abdul Rahman, had come to an agreement on the future of the country. Malaya was then wracked by disturbances (“The Emergency”) sparked by communists—all of Chinese background. Nevertheless, the British and the Malaysians were able to reach agreement to grant Malaya independence on August 31, 1957. So during my first eighteen months, I was able to observe a process leading to independence —called “Merdeka” in Malay. The original time-table was adhered to.

The consulate general kept very close touch with political developments on the road to independence. We had to be very careful— and I think we were— because there was wide- spread suspicion in the British community and elsewhere that the United States was seeking to supplant the British as the dominant power in Malaya and the region. I don't really know how deep this British concern was, but we heard it enough so that we were quite careful in our comments and actions not to give this prejudice any basis. Ken Wright made it his business to keep in close touch with all major elements in the political community. As I recall, he would have a formal dinner monthly with the British including

Library of Congress

whenever possible the high commissioner, who played the role of governor. He would also meet monthly with the predominantly Malay leaders of the government. Cross would keep in touch with the Chinese community, as well as the Malays and the Indians.

As I have indicated, there were three principal communities in Malaya—Malay (the largest or about 50% of total), Chinese (38%), and the Indians. The Chinese were divided into several major groups—one called itself the “Queen's Chinese.” They traced their presence on the peninsula to the 17th or 18th centuries. They were quite proud of their past and spoke of it in the same terms as would New Englanders in the United States who could trace their ancestry back to the Mayflower. They were particularly prominent in Penang and Malacca as well as Singapore, which then and now is separate from the Federation. They drew a distinction between themselves and the Chinese who had immigrated more recently. These included large groups in the countryside who were being resettled as part of the British anti-communist terrorist campaign—a pattern of anti-terrorist strategy which we later copied in Vietnam.

Most Chinese had no right of citizenship in Malaya. Politically they were left out in the cold. They were also for the most part very poor. They suffered discrimination in government employment. In other words, they were ripe for the kind of political activism that the mainland government was involved in at that time. So many Chinese became terrorists. They had support—weapons and money—from mainland China. The leadership was home-grown. All of us, even in the cities, had to be aware of this security threat. Europeans, a term that included Americans, were certainly targeted, but the activities of the communists were not a daily concern as I went about my job. Nonetheless, we were all mindful of instances when CTs (communist terrorists) would infiltrate the cities. For example, there was a shooting on a golf course not far from my house. The year before I arrived, the British high commissioner, Sir Henry Gurney, had been assassinated by a CT. There was a state of emergency in effect, which limited travel for example. When a traveler left KL, there were a series of check points; the military checked vehicles for such things as food which you were not allowed to carry—as a means to quarantine the

Library of Congress

terrorists. However, in actual practice, a white person had a much easier time passing these road-blocks than did Asians.

The Indian community was interesting because it comprised two very distinctive groups. The larger group were descendants of people who had been brought from India to work on the rubber plantations. Rubber plantations were described in the 1950s as “Little Indias.” If you visited a plantation you would meet the manager who was British and spoke to his workers in a demotic Tamil. The others on the estate were Indians from Tamil Nadu, Madras as it was then called, plus some Malayalam-speaking Indians from the state of Kerala who occupied many of the administrative and clerical positions. They had lived their whole lives on the estates and had been educated in schools there. They had very little to do with the indigenous population, who were not at all attracted by the work on the plantations—routine, demanding labor. The Indians worked hard. They would go out every morning and tap the rubber trees, drawing off the latex. They also worked in the processing plants, preparing the sheet rubber which was exported to be used in manufacturing.

I visited a number of the plantations which I always found fun. But that life was separate from that lived in the rest of the country. As I said, the government had had to import labor from India because the life on an estate was too different from that to which a Malay was accustomed. That is not a unique situation; we find the same thing elsewhere in parts of Indonesia, in South Africa, and in Sri Lanka for example. There the “coolies” as they were called, were brought in because the indigenous population just wouldn't put up with the working conditions. They won't get up at the crack of dawn day after day to tap rubber trees in a prescribed, routinized way.

There were other Indians who were professionals and well educated — teachers, lawyers, doctors. They lived in towns. They played a political role, particularly as labor leaders. They had to be reckoned with. They were organized in a political party called the Malayan Indian Congress. It was allied with Chinese and Malay parties that held similar, moderate

Library of Congress

views. All three belonged to an Alliance led by a dominant Malay political group, the United Malay National Organization (UMNO). These Indians were among the most recent immigrants, as were some Ceylonese (now known as Sri Lankans). Most came from South India.

This was my first close experience with a multi-cultural society. I thought it was a very fascinating situation because you basically had four groups of people, with each having sub-groups—some of which I have already described. The fourth group, which I have not mentioned, was, of course, the whites. They were still an important element and remained so even after independence, particularly in commerce. Much later, this group sold its interests to members of the other groups.

We were quite concerned about the four ethnic groups being able to work together after independence. We were particularly concerned about the relationship between the politically dominant Malays and the Chinese, who were the economic powerhouse. The memories of the South Asian “Holocaust” following the separation of Pakistan from India were still fresh—even after ten years and even though few if any inhabitants of Malaya had witnessed the 1947 events in India. But there was such a calamitous loss of life and property then that it could not soon be forgotten and there was no assurance that it would not be repeated in Malaya. I remember vividly one of the persons who came to cover the transfer of power in August 1957, Keyes Beech of the Chicago Sun Times. He had been in India in 1947 and recounted in great detail the events of that time. He also expressed great fear about a repetition of the slaughter in Malaya. Fortunately, it did not happen, even though there was a serious confrontation between the two communities in the late 1960s. With that exception, Malaysia (as it came to be called) has had remarkable communal harmony—certainly far exceeding our anticipations.

Much of this cooperative atmosphere has been due to the skillful political management exhibited by Tunku Abdul Rahman and his government. They developed an alliance in which the Malays had (and still have) a predominant role but the Chinese have a sufficient

Library of Congress

voice to give them some sense of participation. The Chinese on the other hand have shown a willingness to share their wealth. This has led to comparative communal harmony and today's prosperous Malaysia.

The arrival of independence in 1957 did not bring any major revision of the government that ran the country in the preceding period. The composition of the government did not basically change after August 1957. In the previous period that government had gradually been given more and more responsibility as British authority was withdrawn. For example, the Malay states had been ruled by local sultans with the assistance of British advisors. Those advisors were withdrawn in the period leading up to independence. The British did retain control of the military and the police until August 1957. Indeed, even after that time, they maintained an active involvement in those functions. This arrangement was essential to the successful fight against the CTs. The British and Australians also maintained an airbase near Penang.

The Malays developed a fascinating arrangement for the selection of their titular ruler. It was a rotating system in which every five years the sultan of a different Malay state becomes the paramount ruler—by election of his fellow rulers. After five years, the incumbent steps down and another paramount ruler is elected head of state. It is a thoroughly unique form of government. There is also a deputy paramount ruler. But the rulers were essentially symbolic and ceremonial; the work of government was carried on in a parliamentary system borrowed from the English model, which was familiar to the Malay, Chinese, and Indian leaders. Many of them had studied in England and had observed that system in action. The real power rested in a prime minister elected by his fellow parliamentarians.

During my tour, the government was a conservative one—in the best sense. It was not a fundamentalist Islamic government. It believed in all of the things we liked including a foreign policy oriented towards the West, a conservative economic policy, more rights for the Chinese minority, communal harmony, and political democracy.

Library of Congress

As an economic officer, I covered a lot of subjects. In the 1950s, economic sections were beleaguered by mandatory reports on all sorts of commodities and activities. In the political section, I was assigned to follow the minor parties. That put me in touch with Malay leaders. Cross and Farnior were principally interested in the Chinese, whom they knew well and with whom they could communicate in Chinese since both came from missionary families. I did a lot of traveling, doing such things as observing by-elections.

It was a busy and rewarding two years. I look back on KL with great fondness; I have always been happy to return there for visits. It was an excellent experience, even with the difficult time I had at the end. That experience was an instructive one. I have already mentioned what a pleasant working environment Thomas K. Wright had built as CG and then, after the consulate general had been elevated to embassy status following the independence of Malaya, as charg#. We had a great staff including the USIS people who shared the rather rundown office building we used in downtown KL. We were all up on the third floor. To get there, we had to pass a Chinese betting parlor. The corridors were often crowded with scruffy types waiting to place their wagers. Our offices were very inadequate—although the full flavor of this slum really didn't hit me until I had seen some of the better establishments that we had elsewhere. But the post was very congenial despite our inadequate working quarters.

With the coming of independence, when the consulate general became an embassy, we moved to larger and more handsome quarters. These were also rented, but there was no Chinese gambling parlor downstairs at that place. Wright's tour ended soon after independence. He was followed by Homer M. Byington, Jr. on his first ambassadorial assignment. He was the typical old line Foreign Service officer and the son of an old line Foreign Service officer who for years had been the head of the Office of Personnel. He had never been east of Suez. He didn't like the informality that governed the relationship among the staff and the relationship it had with outsiders. I found Ambassador and Mrs. Byington very difficult to deal with. I should note that by the time they arrived I was the

Library of Congress

last of the officers who had served for any length of time under Wright when he was the CG. I guess I didn't know how to deal with Byington. I was used to the Wright informality which obviously was not the Foreign Service that Byington was accustomed to. I think the ambassador did not feel that I had treated him with proper respect. He objected to the way I dressed—he had insisted that all officers wear coat and tie; that was absurd in that climate.

When I was leaving, Byington let me know that he had been very close to requesting my reassignment several months earlier. He did vent his unhappiness in my efficiency report, which made me quite concerned about my future. My situation was illustrative of what happens when a stuffy EUR type is plunked down in newly independent nation in a non-European region. The fact that he had arrived having hurt himself on ship board, requiring that he present his credentials while on crutches, made him even more sensitive to real or imagined slights. Byington's standing, with me at least, was not helped by his being married to a dreadful woman—a “dragon lady” of the old school. Fortunately, I only served in KL for a couple of months after their arrival. I have been told when the Byingtons left in 1961, the whole post went on a 48-hour drinking binge. They went off to Naples, where Homer became the CG; I am sure that he was much more at home there and probably did a much better job than he could have in a non-European post. I am sorry that I was a witness to this misassignment, but it was good lesson for me in personnel management. I learned what a great difference there was between an old line Foreign Service officer like Byington and a Wristonee like Wright, as well as the difference between Europeanists and specialists in the developing world.

Fortunately, I think the efficiency report had little effect on my career. When a new Foreign Service salary schedule was instituted in 1956, I had been downgraded, but not as far as I might have been. I went from FSO-6 to FSO-7—although it could have been FSO-8, the lowest grade in the revised system. Some of my colleagues found themselves in a similar

Library of Congress

situation and we had a glorious “demotion” party in which we toasted one another with the worst liquor we could find in our storerooms.

Finally, I should say that my KL tour gave me an opportunity to witness the transfer of power from a European colonial power to a local authority. It was exciting to watch the Union Jack come down at midnight on August 31, 1957; to watch the Duke of Gloucester come from London to turn over the reins of power to the Malaysians. That was a rewarding experience because for me it symbolized the tide of history taking place—the retreat of a European power from its Asian colonial possessions. The turn-over was celebrated by major festivity. As I suggested, there was some apprehension that trouble might break out with the departure of the British. None did. So it was indeed a touching ceremony, both at midnight and early the next morning. The ceremony had to take place before the heat really took hold. I remember going out to the Selangor Golf Club (now the Royal Selangor Golf Club) that afternoon. It was a holiday of course, but things seemed to be carrying on much as always with the usual dearth of non-European members. I had to go to the manager's office to pay my bill. I happen to look in the corner of the office and noticed a small bundle lying there. It dawned on me as I stared at it that the bundle was the Union Jack which had been hauled down from its pole for the last time and now had been wrapped up and quite unceremoniously placed on the floor in the corner of the office.

I should make a point about the club. It had had a few Asian members for some time. There was, it seemed, a tacit understanding that these handful of members could play golf or tennis, but that they would be expected to avoid swimming in the club pool, which implicitly remained for whites only. But at some time during 1957, a young officer by the name of Ted Liu was assigned to USIS. He, like just about all members of the diplomatic community, could afford to join the club and he did. One day, while we were sitting around the pool, Ted Liu jumped into the water. That act integrated the pool at the club. After that, the pool was available to all members and had swimmers regardless of race. I don't think

Library of Congress

that Ted understood what he had done—he had just arrived and it was hot— but no one objected and the wall of segregation fell in one instant.

There was another club in KL which was much more renowned. That was the Selangor Club—known as the site of some of Somerset Maugham's more interesting short stories. That club always had a number of Asian members, probably dating back to the twenties or even earlier. It was for that reason—so the story went—that it was known as “the Dog” since “even a spotted dog could be admitted.” We are talking about a time when race was very important in social life in Malaya. Because of its more liberal admission policy, I used that club on occasion for meetings with my contacts. However, as a rule I used restaurants or my own home for such sessions.

Q: In 1958, you were assigned to Seoul, Korea. Was Seoul on your wish list?

SCHAFFER: No, it was not. At the head of my wish list in fact, was Kabul, Afghanistan. I was told however that I would find many of the same features in Seoul that I would have found in Kabul. They both were listening posts on the border of the Sino-Soviet bloc; they were both medium sized posts, etc. But I had never given Korea any thought at all, much less putting it on my wish list.

I went there as a political officer. The ambassador was Walter Dowling—a career diplomat who today would have been described very much as a cold warrior. He had not had any experience in Korea nor as far as I know anywhere in the Far East. But I thought he was an effective ambassador. He had a close relationship with the Korean government, led by Syngman Rhee. I don't think that it ever occurred to Dowling to question the then existing U.S. Korea policy. He was not particularly close to the embassy staff; in fact, I viewed him as very aloof, as did others.

Dowling was in Seoul for my first year. He was then replaced by Walter McConaughy who was a true Far East expert. He later became assistant secretary for the Far East after his

Library of Congress

tour in Seoul. He also had very strong views on the Cold War—molded in significant part by his difficult experiences with the Chinese communists.

My first DCM was Sam Gilstrap. He was the inside man in the embassy. He had little to do with policy development, but was responsible for the functioning of the mission. I am sure that Dowling and Gilstrap had worked out this arrangement quite consciously. Dowling was the policy man. Gilstrap was replaced at about the time Dowling left and went on to be deputy consul general in Hong Kong. He was succeeded by Marshall Green—that well known expert on the Far East not to mention “punster extraordinary.” I thought Marshall was a superb addition to the embassy. Needless to say, he was all over the lot, unlike Gilstrap. It was his first assignment as DCM. He came to Seoul accompanied by his wife, Lisa, who was very much Marshall's partner. Marshall was very vibrant, full of wit, and had an excellent sense of humor. He was especially good in his relationship with the military, which were very important for the embassy in Korea where there was then as now a large U.S. military presence. As far as punning was concerned, Marshall was already in bloom at the time. This was an additional bonus for me for I share his interest in that use of the English language.

I don't remember any of Marshall's outrageous puns from his Seoul days, but I do remember at a later time, when I was in New Delhi and Marshall visited the post. He liked to come there. One of his wife's relatives was an officer and, perhaps more important, it was widely believed that he hoped some day to become ambassador to India. I took him to watch the Indian Parliament in action. This was soon after the Sino-Indian border war of 1962. It happened that on that day Nehru was speaking about the war. We were listening to him in the diplomatic gallery. At one point, Marshall turned to me and said in a loud stage whisper, “there's a chink in Nehru's armor!” (I should note for the record that no racial slur was intended. People were less sensitive about the politically correct in 1962 than they are today in the late nineties.)

Library of Congress

Seoul in the late 1950s was entirely different from the city that came to be a flourishing capital in the 1970s and beyond. It still bore the scars of the Korean War, which had only ended five years earlier. It was a very poor city—very much a Third World city. It was known for the frequent sight of old men and others carrying large burdens on A-frames on their backs. Almost of all of the vehicles, except those belonging to diplomats and UN military officials, were jeeps whose bodies had been beaten out of oil drums. They were remarkable pieces of equipment and formed the core of the transportation system in Seoul. We felt very much apart from the local population. We were part of a PX economy. We lived in compounds. I lived in Compound 2 and played at the Yongsan military base on the outskirts of the city. There we had access to sports and other recreational facilities. During my tour, Compound 2 went through a major renovation phase. The old residences, inherited from a Japanese Bank which used them as homes for their employees during the Japanese occupation of Korea, gave way to modern, duplex garden-style apartments. So during the first year of my tour I was assigned to a wonderful old fashioned Japanese house with sliding doors and Korean style, heated floors. Then I moved to one of these American style apartments. My responsibilities in the political section were to follow some of the opposition parties. The head of the section was William Godfrey Jones. He left after my first year. My colleagues included Bill Watts and Tom Shoesmith, who were to become highly respected members of the Far East experts club. Jones was replaced by Donald Ranard, whom I had previously met during his assignment in Malaya. Don was to become well known for his strong views about Korea, but in 1959 he was having his first exposure to the country. At the time, he didn't know very much about how the Foreign Service operated—his only previous posting had been in Penang, where he had been the principal officer.

I must say that I was astonished in later years when I begin to hear about Ranard's unorthodox views about Korea and U.S. policies there. When he and I worked together for a year, he was very much inclined to accept the status quo. I did not detect any of the great antipathy that he apparently developed later against authoritarian Korean

Library of Congress

governments. He was one of the last people I would have thought would become the thorn in the side of our Korean policy. I don't believe that we had anything to do with his subsequent change of heart although we—Watts, Shoemith and I—tended, as younger officers often do, to have a dimmer view of the Rhee regime than did our seniors. We had more contact with the opposition than the senior officers and undoubtedly our views were influenced by those contacts. Also we got around the country more than did Ranard, Green, Gilstrap or the ambassadors.

I traveled around the country quite a bit. Some of my important travels were to observe National Assembly by-elections and the general elections for president and the National Assembly in the Spring 1960. The way these elections were conducted did not inspire in me any great confidence in Rhee's democratic credentials or that of his cohorts. The opposition party—the Democratic Party—was divided into two factions. We had excellent rapport with that party at our level. The coverage of and liaison with the opposition was pretty much left to the junior members of the embassy staff with perhaps the exception of Vice President Chang Myon (John M. Chang) who was known to the ambassador and the DCM. When the Democratic Party came to power, its members knew the more junior officers far better than they did the embassy's leadership. I don't think that the level of the embassy contact had any impact on the Democratic Party's ability to make its views known to the U.S. Government. The fact that we had warm relations enabled us to report accurately the positions of the party both to our embassy superiors and Washington.

I thought that in general the opposition leaders were talented and articulate as far as one could tell from translated pronouncements. I found them attractive and likeable. They suffered considerably for their political views. They recognized the political difficulties they faced, but very few desisted in their efforts. They always hoped that they would get a break as in fact they did in the spring of 1960. They were not bitter about the U.S.; far from it. They were friendly to the U.S. and did not condemn us for Washington's support of Rhee and his government.

Library of Congress

We did have a language problem. I did not speak Korean nor did Watts or Shoesmith. Only a couple of consular section officers - Thomas Mayfield and Wever Gim - knew Korean. We used our local staff as interpreters. They had their own political points of view which made me wonder at times how accurate their renditions of our thoughts were. I think it is very difficult to be an interpreter in any case—as contrasted to a translator. Interpretation requires a subtlety of thought that I think may not have been present on the few occasions when actually required. In the main, our interpreters got our ideas across and I think we were given the proper interpretation of the views of our Korean interlocutors. Shoesmith, at one point I think, managed to carry on a conversation with some Korean political leaders in Japanese. That of course was quite daring in light of the negative views that the Koreans had of their former occupiers. All Koreans above a certain age were fluent in Japanese and Tom knew it well enough.

I might note that this was my first experience with a dictatorship. I recognized that Syngman Rhee had been a great patriot. But by 1959-60, his government had pretty much run out of steam. I was taken aback by the way he and his colleagues dealt with the opposition. I was particularly offended by the way elections were manipulated for Rhee's benefit. There were some anti-government demonstrations during my two years in Seoul. Only the last ones in 1960 made a lasting impression on me; the others were not central to our analysis of the situation.

I can't say that there were major splits of views about the Korean political situation within the embassy. The ambassadors and the DCMs accepted the situation as they found it. I am sure they recognized Rhee's weaknesses but—as is so typical—they felt more strongly than did the more junior staff that the U.S. had important security stakes in Korea that would be best served by the Rhee government. Of course, I am sure they hoped for a more lenient Rhee regime, but in the final analysis in their view it was that government, lenient or arbitrary, that we needed to support for the sake of U.S. security interests.

Library of Congress

Much of our security interest focused on maintaining stability on the peninsula; i.e. deterring the North from another invasion of the South. But I must say that we did not really feel threatened on a day-to-day basis. The embassy did not have a siege mentality. We did not view the North as an imminent threat. I did go to the DMZ, not because my job required it, but because that was the thing to do. I found it a routine place; I don't remember being particularly concerned after a visit to the DMZ. I don't think our military was very much on edge; they did not feel an immediate threat either. I knew a lot of younger U.S. Army officers and became friendly with them, but these were social contacts. I had no liaison responsibility with the U.S. or Korean military.

There was not much discussion in those years about reunification. The tensions were minimal, as I have suggested, and the end of conflict was still too recent for there to be any meaningful discussion either about North-South rapprochement or the resumption of the war.

Corruption was an issue that was discussed within the embassy at considerable length. There were persons in the government who were said to be notoriously corrupt. I never myself delved into the issue, but I think it was pretty much taken for granted that the Rhee regime, then in its final stages, was laced with corruption. Madame Rhee and the wife of Yi Ki-pung, the speaker of the National Assembly, were mentioned particularly as being tied to illegal payoffs. There was a wonderful story about Korea's corruption that was making the rounds at the time. It was alleged that corruption was so extreme that a train coming from Pusan to Seoul bearing goods for the PX totally disappeared one night. Its cargo was said to have been shifted to the black market, which was quite extensive at the time. Whether the story was true or not, it was an interesting illustration of what people felt was possible in the Korea of the late 1950s and early 1960s.

Library of Congress

Corruption was a topic which was regularly raised with me by my Korean contacts. I don't think at this time any of the opposition was involved—they hadn't had the opportunity, This would come to them later.

Let me now talk a little about what happened in 1960. When it was announced that elections would be held in March there was considerable excitement. The by-elections that had taken place had not given much hope to those who wished to see the elections free and open. The embassy decided to give major coverage to the general election. We mobilized officers from all parts of the mission to go in teams into the countryside as observers. A team usually consisted of a political officer and an officer from another embassy section. The main contest was for vice president because of the death of the opposition candidate for president.

We could only hope that the elections would be held in a fair and open manner. When we went outside Seoul, it became clear that our hopes would not be realized; the elections would be rigged in a variety of ways. As the result of my experiences, I became an authority on how such rigging could be arranged. I have an interesting story about the elections which I like to tell. One of the officers who accompanied me on one of my trips was Walter Vance Hall who was then in the consular section. By the time we took this trip, I was pretty battle-hardened about election abuses. It didn't take us very long to find evidence of unfair practices—e.g. torn-down opposition posters, harassment of opposition election workers, closure of opposition campaign offices, etc. Whenever we arrived in a town, we never had any trouble finding the election headquarters of the governing party, but finding the offices of the opposition was sometimes a chore because the residents were not anxious to be seen telling an American embassy officer where these were. But in the course of our visit we would sooner or later find these offices.

In one town, we ran into the usual long list of complaints about unfair practices. Suddenly, we heard some shouting from a corner of the room in which we were meeting with local opposition leaders. When we looked, we saw that a man had cut his hand and was writing

Library of Congress

us a letter in his blood. He was protesting what was going on. Vance Hall turned absolutely white. Eventually, when the letter was finished, it was presented to us, still dripping blood. I saved it and I think it now rests in my storage of memorabilia. It was a very dramatic instance illustrating the depth of the feelings of the opposition about the suppression it suffered.

We had very little hope that the opposition would make a decent showing in the elections. After the elections, the embassy recognized that the contest had been unfair. We were, to say the least, uncomfortable with the process. I think this view prevailed at all levels of the embassy. Therefore we were not surprised when the students began demonstrations that eventually led to the downfall of the Rhee regime.

When the demonstrations began, I was in my office which was right in the center of town—in the building which now houses the USIS operations, near the Chosen Hotel and City Hall. One of our locals had predicted that the demonstrations would take place. So we weren't entirely surprised when the students came by. They carried a banner written in French which said that they were not communists but wanted democracy in Korea. I think it was written in French because had it had been in Korean or English, it would have violated some laws. They thought that by using French they might allow them to get away with expressing their sentiments. The use of French also made sense because a major reason for holding the demonstration was to call the attention of foreign missions to the students' views. They assumed that we as foreigners would understand French whereas it was unlikely that the security forces could!

The demonstration was held on a wide avenue—not the one on which the embassy is now located. The students marched by the embassy; they did not violate our space at all since they were trying to get their message across to us and other foreign missions. Later, when we heard that there might be some conflict between the students and the police, Shoemith, Watts and I went to join the crowd. We were with the students for most of the day and had a chance to observe first hand what was developing. We were tear-gassed

Library of Congress

and jostled. We tried periodically to phone reports in to the embassy. I remember being with a crowd in front of Yi Ki Pung's home. There was another crowd that was moving towards the Parliament building. We tried to follow each group and phone our observations to the embassy whenever we had the opportunity.

I also remember that at one crucial moment we were on the roof of a newspaper building which was on a main intersection of the avenue that led to the Blue House—the Presidential Palace (then called the Kyongmudae). We were able to observe the police suddenly appearing and firing with live ammunition on the crowd, which then scattered. When the atmosphere calmed down a little we walked a few blocks back to the embassy, actually stepping over dead bodies. It was a very brutal scene. It was clear to us that Syngman Rhee's days were numbered.

We reported what we had seen to our bosses in the embassy. They listened to us and then sent us away—without further ado. We had hoped that they might have asked us to stay to listen to and perhaps participate in the meeting that followed, but as I recall it, Don Ranard said that they had heard the report and that we might as well leave the room. What was crucial at that moment was that Ambassador McConaughy recognized what had happened; he made a statement that was broadcast over Armed Forces Network—the U.S. Army's radio system in Korea. In his statement, he referred to the legitimate rights of the Korean people; that was interpreted throughout Korea as a signal that the U.S. was withdrawing its very strong support for the Rhee regime. My colleagues and I were delighted with this declaration; in fact, I think we were surprised by its forcefulness. We thought it was a realistic way of approaching the political situation. McConaughy and Green recognized what had happened and decided that the time had come to “call a spade a spade.” I do not know whether McConaughy did this on his own or had Washington approval; those matters were far above my level.

Soon after these events, the Rhee government collapsed. I continued to work at my job in the embassy. I was not involved in the decision to grant a visa to Syngman Rhee, but

Library of Congress

I did think that Marshall Green, who apparently was the main decision maker on that issue, had recommended the right thing. I remember a conversation I had with one of our local employees who had spent a night in my apartment because it had not been possible for him to travel back and forth to his home during the curfew that the government had imposed. He was very proud of what his countrymen, particularly the students, had done. We were discussing the desire on the part of the opposition that the U.S. take more vigorous action to bring the Rhee regime to an end. I mentioned that I thought that a far better outcome had been reached because the Korean people had taken action by themselves. He agreed entirely that it was far better that the overthrow had been an action taken by the people without outside assistance or interference.

The opposition of course was delighted with the course of events. It didn't take over the reins of government right away; there was a makeshift interim arrangement for a few months. But the opposition saw itself as the beneficiaries of the students' revolution even though it had not really participated. One of the opposition members told me in English, "Now we come to power time!" In fact, they did not come to power until after my departure; I left at the end of June. The situation was still somewhat fluid at that time, but I think it was clear that the Democratic Party with its two factions would come to power at an early stage.

Being young and inexperienced, I left Korea with a conviction that the democratic forces in that country had won the day and that that country would now join the ranks of democratic nations. I had great hopes, as did many of my more experienced colleagues, that Korea had turned a page and that despite the weakness of Chang Myon—John Chang—who was likely to become the leader of the government, democracy had a chance to develop in Korea. I don't think any of us devoted time to an analysis of the transition from an autocratic to a democratic government; we were too caught up with the excitement of the day-to-day events to examine the process and come to any conclusions.

Library of Congress

Finally, I must say that Walter McConaughy, contrary to the many prejudices that he had, was able to rise to the occasion. He recognized that it was not possible for the U.S. to maintain its support for Syngman Rhee and took the crucial step that led to the downfall of that government.

Q: In 1960, you were assigned to language training. Was that your request?

SCHAFFER: In 1958, when I left Kuala Lumpur for home leave before going to Korea, I traveled across India and Pakistan—in every imaginable way—plane, train, bus. I traveled with a fellow who had been my room-mate in Malaya. We saw a lot of India in that period. That really stimulated my interest in South Asia as an area in which I might wish to specialize. I therefore requested that I be assigned to Hindustani language training. I had always been interested in the British empire; I became intrigued with what successor regimes might do. After the monochromatic experience of Korea. India seemed even more attractive. India and Pakistan were countries that appeared to me to be both interesting and professionally challenging.

At one point, Personnel sought to assign me to training in Tamil, the language spoken in Madras (Tamil Nadu) and Ceylon (Sri Lanka). I didn't think that was such a great idea; I wanted a language that had broader application. Moreover, I wanted to return to the U.S. for at least a year for personal reasons; had I taken Tamil I would have studied in Madras and then been assigned without any intervening extended period in the U.S.

I finally convinced Personnel that I should be assigned to Hindustani language training, which I began in the summer of 1960. I spent a year at FSI in a program that was not particularly good. The course material was not well developed. The “native language speakers” as the teachers were then called were not particularly disciplined. I was basically disappointed in the course although I worked quite hard and came out very well in the test given at the end of our nine months of training. There were four or five of us in the course. We all started together, but a few months later, those of us who were going to

Library of Congress

India were separated from the others to learn the Hindi script and the more Sanscritized form of the language which was being developed in India at the time. Those who were going to Pakistan learned spoken Urdu and its entirely different script.

We were all discouraged by the attitude of one of our fellow students who had already served in India. He made it very clear that Hindi was not particularly important in conducting official business in India. He told us that the only reason he had enrolled in the course was because he believed that one needed to have language training to “have his ticket punched” as a specialist in South Asian affairs. He was not correct, although there was some truth in his perception. One could carry on considerable business in India then, and can now, in English. Certainly contacts with most ministries and especially the Ministry of External Affairs were and are still always conducted in English. It is interesting to note that when I returned after my first assignment in India—almost three years— I got a better score on my language test. That seems natural enough. But it was considered remarkable by the FSI language school because so many of the language students found that they did not use Hindi enough to maintain their skills, much less improve them. I continued my language training in New Delhi; I had a tutor—a Hindu Pandit—and met with him almost daily during lunch hour. That was at government expense because in those days, when FSI had a little more money, it encouraged students to keep up their language education and could pick up the tab.

Q: Then, in 1961, you were assigned to New Delhi as an economiofficer.

SCHAFFER: Right. I went as an economic officer because in my naivete I thought that having been a political officer in Seoul after having done considerable political work in Kuala Lumpur it would be useful to broaden my skills and experiences. Fortunately, 1961 was before the Department instituted its rigid “cone” system; so I had no problem being assigned as an economic officer—not as far as I know. I might note that one interesting aspect of my career is the limited time I spent in Washington, particularly in my early years as an FSO [Foreign Service officer]. Of my first 11 years in the Service, only one was in

Library of Congress

Washington and that was in language training. So my naivete about the personnel system and Department bureaucracy more generally came easily.

I had been in Delhi briefly during my journey following my Seoul assignment. But I had no idea how huge the embassy was. It was an enormous mission which aside from the embassy proper had a very large AID staff. AID was established in 1961 as the successor to ICA, the Development Loan Agency and a number of other operations. I remember looking at the Delhi phone book in 1961 and noting that almost every page had the name of at least one American official on it. So we had a very, very large mission.

The embassy was lodged in that beautiful, but not very efficient building that Edward Durell Stone designed as an abstract from Mogul architectural forms. It was presided over by John Kenneth Galbraith who had arrived in April—three months before I got there. It should be noted that there was a considerable wild life supply in the “water court” in the center of the embassy and the renowned “duck ceremony”—when the ducks marched out of the pool every afternoon to their night resting place—was already in effect. Although not directly related to the “water court,” we even had a representative of the Fish and Wildlife Service on the embassy staff. His task was to find appropriate Indian wildlife to be sent back to the U.S. where they were domiciled in various state and federal parks and wildlife preserves.

Galbraith was our ambassador from April 1961 to July, 1963. He was followed by Chester Bowles, who so interested me that I have written his biography. My first DCM was Benson E.L. Timmons, III—known as Lane. He was a very hard-driving martinet who was always cracking the whip. He was minutely involved in both the management of the embassy and most of the substantive issues facing us. He became known by his initials “BELT” and was called by some “La Cinture” [French: belt] in French. After Galbraith and Timmons left, Joseph N. “Jerry” Greene came as DCM. Bowles and Greene were there for the balance of my tour. After I left to become India desk officer, Greene was succeeded by William

Library of Congress

Weathersby who had been director of USIS [United States Information Service] in New Delhi and later became our ambassador to the Sudan.

As I said, I was assigned to the embassy's economic section. I served in that job for about eighteen months. I didn't much like it. I didn't know much about economics and I wasn't learning much in the Delhi job. My principal responsibility was commodity reports—particularly on industries. It wasn't very exciting nor particularly sophisticated. I really didn't have the background in economics to turn out sophisticated reporting. The best economic reporting in the embassy did not usually emanate from the economic section, but from the AID staff. I had a fairly substantial official relationship with AID, and, on a personal level, I knew some of the staff quite well. Physically, the AID staff was quite removed from the Chancery, with the exception of the titular head of the Economic Section—the Minister—who was also the AID Mission Director. In my days, that was C. Tyler Wood. This physical separation was a barrier to an effective liaison with AID.

I got to know Wood well. He was a wonderful, good hearted man who was also a crafty bureaucrat. He was one of the few people in the embassy whom Ambassador Galbraith - in his sometimes insufferable arrogance - really respected. I think that may have stemmed in part because Wood enjoyed a strong relationship with important power sources in Washington and Galbraith was a man who knew where power rested and had a great respect for those who could effectively wield it.

I worked more closely with Ty Wood later following the outbreak of the Sino-Indian war when the U.S. undertook an effort to rush military supplies to the beleaguered Indians. I was included in a special organization that was established in the embassy under Wood to deal with that problem. At that time, I was theoretically still a member of the economic section, but by then, I had begun to make moves to leave it and transfer to the political section. This was in Galbraith's waning days as ambassador, the summer of 1963. My efforts to shift worked. I had support from my friends in the political section. An appropriate job at my grade level was coming vacant and I made the case that my Hindi language

Library of Congress

skills were probably better than those of anyone else who might be coming out of FSI. No bureaucrat in Washington said anything and fortunately for me the man who actually ran the economic section—counselor R. Burr Smith—liked me and agreed to the transfer if that was my wish. But there was a problem. Because of the personnel changes in the embassy, and particularly in the economic section, I was informed that the transfer could only take place if I were willing to postpone my home leave for about eight or 10 months. That was fine with me.

When I first started in the political section, I was assigned to the domestic affairs unit and given two major responsibilities: a) to cover developments at the state level within the Delhi consular district—the north Indian states of Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Punjab, and Kashmir and b) to deal with the opposition parties. (In those days of Congress Party domination of the Indian political scene, [the opposition was] a weak lot and could safely be entrusted to an officer who was just getting started in reporting Indian political developments.) My colleague in the unit was Craig Baxter. He had covered the areas that I was to follow and took on the responsibilities of the job on the domestic political side that had become vacant, namely covering the Congress Party and the operations of the national Parliament. I mentioned that I had the brief for political developments in north India. We also had in those days political officers assigned to the three constituent posts—Calcutta, Madras and Bombay; who similarly followed political developments in their consular districts.

The political reporting system changed during my tour. When I first began to work in the political section, I believe that the constituent posts sent their reports directly to Washington, with copies to the embassy. Later, the reports came to Delhi first where they were incorporated into messages from the embassy or retransmitted to Washington after the embassy had vetted them.

I might at this point just interject a comment about Mrs. Jacqueline Kennedy's visit, which took place while Galbraith was still ambassador. It was a very interesting operation.

Library of Congress

According to reports that I believe are correct, Ambassador Galbraith had been one of the principal promoters of the visit, which (inevitably in those days) included Pakistan as well. I believe he did this not only because he enjoyed these occasions - he loved being in the company of great people or their spouses. But I'm convinced that he also saw the visit—and his role in masterminding it—as evidence of his close ties to the Kennedy White House that would impress the Indians. Since he was seen to be choreographing the visit of the First Lady; he must have seemed to the Indians to be very close to Mrs. Kennedy and, hence, to the president. Much of this staging was designed to show the Indians that he was a person to be reckoned with because he had full and meaningful access to the Oval Office.

The visit went off very well. The important aspect, from our point of view, was that the preparation for the visit became first priority for all embassy staff. Other work just had to take second place for months. Officers were sent to various parts of the country. Some very remote indeed — to check out accommodations, scout sites that the First Lady might wish to see, and look for places appropriate for public relations purposes. I was not involved in this exploration of India; in fact, I was not a significant player in the embassy in any respect for most of Galbraith's tour. When Mrs. Kennedy came, I was still pretty much of a fledgling. But like everyone else in the embassy, I was drawn into the preparations. I was much impressed by the attention that was devoted to every detail by Galbraith. He even ran a rehearsal dinner designed to ensure that all would go smoothly at the official dinner, which was loaded with VIPs from Prime Minister Nehru on down. This visit was taken as seriously as a presidential visit. It was a very glamorous occasion.

When I was in Sri Lanka many years later, Mrs. Clinton visited Colombo. I must be the only U.S. government employee who was in the subcontinent for the visit of these First Ladies—Mrs. Kennedy (1962) and Mrs. Clinton (1995). The two visits could hardly have been more dissimilar. This reflected the different personalities of the two women and the roles they each played in their husbands' administrations. In addition, over the 30 plus years we Americans have changed our views of the appropriate role of a senior official's

Library of Congress

wife. Mrs. Clinton's visit was full of substance. She went to U.S. assistance projects; she talked substance to other women who like herself were active in public affairs. Mrs. Kennedy's program was altogether different. She was photographed dancing with maharajas and going up mountains to medieval palaces on the backs of richly adorned elephants.

It is important to note that during the Kennedy presidency, many Indians viewed the White House with great admiration. The Indians have a love of pomp and circumstance, for royalty. I think they saw in the Kennedys their image of a young, vigorous royal couple. I use the words "young and vigorous" quite advisedly because I do feel that part of the attraction the Kennedys had for Indians was their youthful beauty and exuberance. Indians compared this with the tired and aging leadership of Nehru and the other chieftains of the Congress Party.

The visit was obviously a public relations success. Mrs. Kennedy was photographed everywhere. But it was all fluff; there were no serious discussions. She sat with Nehru on the embassy stairs after dinner, but the visit had no lasting impact. It did show the U.S. in a very favorable light and I think one can say that Indian public opinion moved in our favor—and it was wonderfully good for Galbraith in terms of his standing both with the White House and the Indian leadership. Yet soon after Mrs. Kennedy's departure, Indian-U.S. relations sagged once again.

As I said, the opposition parties were not a substantial factor in Indian political life at that time. They had been badly defeated in the 1962 elections by the Congress Party, which garnered three quarters of the parliamentary seats and got approximately half the popular vote. I don't believe that any opposition party was able to meet the 10% threshold; i.e. a party had to win 10% of the seats in Parliament to be declared the official opposition party. In any event, the Congress Party occupied the center of the political stage—in both senses of the term—and the opposition parties were scattered in different parts of India and occupied the political fringes on both the left and the right. For example, the Communist

Library of Congress

Party in those days used to garner 10% of the popular vote—election after election—but fewer parliamentary seats. Its strength was confined to a few Indian states, most notably West Bengal and Kerala.

My bosses—the DCM and the political counselor—showed some interest in my work. Even Bowles, Galbraith's successor, was somewhat interested. But what really brought me for the first time to the attention both of the front office and the people in Washington who dealt with Indian matters was the trip I took in the late winter of 1963-64 to Kashmir. I had by then been in the political section for about eight months. Kashmir was included in the Delhi consular district and covering political developments there was part of my job.

My first official trip to Kashmir was very important because it was an ice-breaker in terms of the embassy's coverage of the politics of the disputed state. In December 1963, a relic—a hair of the Prophet—was stolen from a shrine near Srinagar, the capital of the state. Initially, the police were unable to come up with any clues that would lead to the perpetrators. Widespread rioting followed, carried out by people who thought that both the theft and the lack of police action had political motivations. The Kashmir government, like all Kashmir regimes in those days (and these), was deeply dependent on the central Indian government for support. Its collapse in the face of the demonstrations gave rise to a very serious political and security crisis in the state. The situation was given wide coverage by both the Indian and the international media. Some of the most insightful pieces were written by a Washington Star reporter, Richard Critchfield, who had somehow managed to find his way into Kashmir. It was a bad and dangerous predicament for the Indians. The Kashmir people used this theft as an opportunity to protest the way they had been treated politically over the years since the state acceded to India in 1947. It was a very undemocratic state of affairs. The state government was very heavy handed and corrupt. The government was run by a political party, the National Conference, which was aligned with the Congress Party. Ambassador Chester Bowles felt that it was important

Library of Congress

for someone from the embassy to visit Kashmir and observe the scene on the spot. A new government had been installed but our reports indicated continuing tension.

Up to that time, no embassy officer had ever proceeded on what was an avowedly political visit to Kashmir, primarily because of the opposition of the central government. It was feared that since many Kashmiris were opposed to Indian rule, an embassy observer might come away with the “wrong” perception of the situation, particularly if he met with dissident political figures. We also regarded Kashmir as a disputed area. This too kept our approach very careful and low key. Embassy staff had visited on holidays and some of the political officers had taken the opportunity to observe. Some may have even talked to some Kashmiri politicians, but we had never sent an officer on an official visit to discuss politics as we did in all other Indian states. The central government had some reservations about Bowles's idea, but it finally concurred. His position was that it was better for the Indians themselves if the embassy and Washington had first hand analysis, particularly by an embassy officer who spoke the language, than to have to rely on tendentious accounts in the press.

To tell the truth, I was quite nervous about being the embassy's first official visitor to Kashmir. This was by far the most sensitive political assignment that I had ever undertaken. Ambassador Bowles personally counseled me before I left. He didn't provide any detailed guidance; he left that to what he considered my good sense. But he did warn me to be careful. The trip was very long. It was February, and air travelers had to worry whether they would ever reach their destination because of the weather. On the way, I had a very interesting conversation with a prominent carpet manufacturer and merchant, Ghulam Ahmed. He proved later to be very helpful to me in putting me in touch with politically useful people. I helped him by purchasing a large number of carpets.

During my visit, I was able to talk to everyone of importance in Kashmir political life. I assumed that the central government had sent advance notice of my arrival. The embassy had not because we just hadn't had the time. When I arrived at my hotel, I immediately

Library of Congress

began to call for appointments. Much to my pleasure, every one was willing to see me, both those in the government and those who opposed it. I was able to get around quite freely in Srinagar. I had heard from Richard Critchfield, the Washington Star reporter to whom I referred earlier, as well as from Ghulam Ahmed, the merchant I had met on my journey to Kashmir, about a student activist named Farooq Kathwari. Farooq, who turned out to be Ghulam Ahmed's grandson, had been very helpful to Critchfield, taking him around Srinagar and introducing him to many political dissidents. Critchfield had suggested that Farooq might be similarly useful to me. So I got in contact with him and he was indeed very helpful. He guided me through the university and put in me in touch with other student activists who had participated in the demonstrations that had forced the state prime minister to resign a few months earlier. So I was very grateful to Kathwari. I later learned that because he had helped me, he got in trouble with the authorities. He belonged to a very politically active family—his father had been a member of the “Azad” Kashmir government which ruled the areas of the state held by Pakistan — and because of his activities on my behalf he was expelled from Indian-held Kashmir and had to go to Pakistan. He stayed there only briefly and then managed to make his way—with some help from me—to the United States. After that, I lost contact with him.

But more than twenty years later, when I was ambassador to Bangladesh , I learned that the former student had become a very successful business man. Kathwari was by then the CEO of the Ethan Allen furniture company, one of the largest manufacturers and retailers of furniture in the United States. In one of the negotiations that Ethan Allen had with the Department of State on the sale of furniture for use in embassies and overseas residences, Kathwari met John Condayan, then I believe a deputy assistant secretary of state for administrative affairs. During the course of the negotiations, Kathwari asked what ever happened to Howard Schaffer, whom he had known in Kashmir before his emigration to the United States. That led to our renewing our acquaintance, in 1985 or 1986.

I am convinced that had I not entered Kathwari's life and developed a mutual beneficial relationship, he would have remained in Kashmir, probably in the family's business, living

Library of Congress

a respectable life rather than attaining the multimillionaire, big businessman status he now enjoys in this country. It is a good example of the right thing happening for the wrong reason. We are now working together in the Kashmir Study Group that he has organized, and we see one another frequently both personally and professionally.

There was no question that while I was in Kashmir I was under close surveillance by the Indian intelligence services. I didn't allow that to bother me. Indeed, during one of my visits to Kashmir the bearers (servants) at the hotel would point out the security officers assigned to watch me. As far as I know, the government never took any action against any of my interlocutors other than Kathwari. I talked to anyone worth talking to—at least, those who were not in jail or otherwise detained. For example, I did not get to talk to Sheikh Abdullah, the famous “Lion of Kashmir” who had been deposed in 1953 and remained in jail in India proper. Both in Srinagar and, soon afterwards, in Jammu—where the government moves in winter time—I saw everyone I wanted to see without difficulties. That included the recently installed prime minister of the state, G. M. Sadiq, who represented the left wing of the ruling National Conference Party and had become New Delhi's man in Kashmir. The state's home minister, D.P. Dhar, who later became very important in the national government in the 1970s, facilitated my trip by car from Srinagar to Jammu—all plane service having been suspended because of bad weather. I remember writing my report in longhand in the railway retirement room in the station in Pathankot—the first town in the Punjab after leaving Kashmir which was then the northernmost point of the Indian Railways. When I got to New Delhi, I found out that Phillips Talbot, the assistant secretary for Near East and South Asian affairs, was in town. I made my report orally to him and to Ambassador Bowles. As I mentioned earlier, it was that report, which I had typed out in final version in my embassy office, that brought me to the (favorable) attention of the Washington authorities. It also raised my standing with Bowles.

I came away from my first and subsequent visits with a good deal of sympathy for the Kashmiris. The Muslim majority in the Valley of Kashmir feel a great sense of alienation from India. Most of them do not consider themselves Indians and refer to themselves

Library of Congress

as Kashmiris—not Indians. They feel they have been badly treated both politically and economically. In their view, they have not benefited from their connection with India. When they go south to look for work, they feel discriminated against—both as Kashmiris and as Muslims. Within Kashmir itself, even though they hold the reins of political power, many of the civil service positions are (or were before their flight from the state in the early 1990s) occupied by the minority Hindu community. Some of the Kashmiris are attracted towards Pakistan. The Indians were viewed as the power behind an authoritarian, corrupt regime that remained in power only because it did Delhi's bidding.

Despite the persistent Indian claim about pouring many resources into Kashmir, there was a widespread sentiment—which persists to this day—that much of the money was going into the deep pockets of Delhi's favorites, leaving precious little to the masses who needed the assistance. Major land reform had been implemented in the late 1940s and early 1950s, carried out by Sheik Abdullah's government before it was forced out with the connivance of the Nehru government in 1953. Therefore by the 1960s, land distribution was much more equitable than was the case elsewhere in India. That was very important in Kashmir because it is essentially an agricultural area. Kashmiris are a small society. The Valley itself, which is the key to the Kashmir problem, is only 80 by 25 miles in size. The Valley profits not only from agriculture, but also from tourism, handicrafts and forest products. Despite the complaints, there were merchants in papier maché, carpets and the owners of house boats who were doing well. Nonetheless, these businessmen felt they were discriminated against by India. No efforts were made to build up a manufacturing base in Kashmir aside from traditional handicraft industries. The government viewed Kashmir as the end of the line, geographically, where it did not make economic sense to invest in production facilities. Furthermore, the transportation system between Kashmir and India was very primitive in the early 1960s. There were no rail lines from India proper either to Jammu in the south or the Valley in the north.

These geographic barriers almost forced the Kashmiris to develop their own culture—the Kashmiriyat. It was different from India and Pakistan. I concluded in my report that the

Library of Congress

Kashmiris, if given a choice between independence or integration with either Pakistan or India, would support independence if there were strong enough leadership which could articulate the people's desires. Many mentioned to me that they could foresee themselves as the "Switzerland of Asia" with friendly ties with both India and Pakistan. The international community, they said, would be quite prepared to spend large amounts of money for the development of such an independent state so relieved would it be to have been rid finally of the Kashmir problem.

I visited Kashmir officially several times after that first trip. I made it a point to go there twice a year. I retained the Kashmir portfolio even when I changed jobs in 1964 and became responsible for covering the national political scene focusing on the Congress Party. I never felt very optimistic about a solution being found for the Kashmir problem.

I served in India this first time during a major change in India-Pakistan relations. In 1965, the second India-Pakistan war broke out. This of course had a great impact on the Kashmir issue. The Pakistanis had triggered the war in order to win control of the Valley. If initially, I had entertained some dim hope for a resolution of the Kashmir problem - and surely had never been very optimistic— after 1965 I saw no hope whatever. The Indian attitude was just too uncompromising. It had been manifested vividly in the U.S.- and British-sponsored negotiations between Pakistan and India following the Sino-Indian war, which took place in 1962 before I was given responsibility for following Kashmiri developments. The 1965 war made it clear, as the Indians stated, that Pakistan could not be allowed to win at the negotiation table what it could not win on the battlefield.

Punjab was another issue that I dealt with. It was interesting even in the early 1960s though the more dangerous aspect of the problem the Indian government confronted there did not arise until later, in the 1980s. In the mid-1960s there was a dissident group of Sikhs led by Tara Singh who wanted a separate state for themselves "within" India. They called their scheme "the Punjabi Suba" and periodically agitated for it by fasting and demonstrating. Many leaders and the more excitable of their followers were jailed from

Library of Congress

time to time. They were dealt with severely by the Indian authorities, who usually managed to keep them under control. Tara Singh, the longtime leader of the Akali Dal, the party that spearheaded the Punjabi Suba movement, was discredited when he broke his fast; he had promised to fast until a separate state was established or he died. He was succeeded by Fateh Singh. Fateh Singh was a very heavy set man. He too promised to fast and went even beyond that; pledging to immolate himself if India did not agree to the Punjabi Suba demand. This led me to follow Marshall Green in the punning department; I told London Times correspondent Neville Maxwell, "If Fateh Singh does that, the fat will be in the fire." He quoted that in his account, fortunately without attribution.

It must be noted that the loyalty of the Sikhs to India in the India-Pakistan war of 1965, despite blandishments from the Pakistanis, led the Indian government, then headed by Mrs. Gandhi, to agree in early 1966 to the creation of the Punjabi Suba they sought. This created a state within India in which the Sikhs were the majority—excluding to a large measure the areas occupied by the Hindu majority in the earlier undivided Indian Punjab state who spoke Hindi. This Hindu group took over the remainder of the undivided state's territory in a new state called Haryana. By the time I left India in 1967, the Punjab was not an issue any longer; the establishment of a new state had "resolved" the tensions. It was only much later that the problem arose again when a demand was raised for an independent Sikh state, separate from India.

So that issue had been resolved—apparently—in 1966 by a reorganization of states in north-west India. Everyone seemed to be satisfied with these new arrangements. I left thinking that the solution to the Punjab issue had been found. The Hindus in the new Sikh-dominated Punjab might have been somewhat unhappy, but they had their own state—the newly formed Haryana where leadership was in the hands of Hindu agricultural castes—and domination of the Delhi municipal scene (in large measure by Hindus from Pakistan) as well. So I believed that that problem had been solved—very much unlike the Kashmir issue.

Library of Congress

As I mentioned, my original assignment in addition to Kashmir was to cover the opposition and Delhi consular district politics. I had those duties for approximately one year. With the departure of my colleague in the domestic reporting unit of the political section, I took over responsibility for Parliament and the Congress Party—in other words, an overview of the national scene.

The opposition parties always welcomed me. They were interested in talking to American officials. We did not have any dealings with the Communist Party—a policy decision that had been made before my arrival that was just about engraved in stone in those Cold War years. To my knowledge, no one challenged that policy and it remained in effect throughout my tour and probably far beyond. We did see everyone else. I was the principal point of contact with these opposition parties, but I knew that CIA [Central Intelligence Agency] had its own sources within many of these groups, particularly those on the left of the political spectrum.

As I have mentioned, the opposition parties had been badly defeated in the 1962 elections—for the third straight time. But the Sino-Indian war, which broke out about six months after the elections—in late 1962—was a jarring event to Nehru's government. He lost a good deal of personal prestige; one of his closest confidants, Krishna Menon, who was the defense minister, was forced out of power. That did not bring many tears to our government which regarded Menon as the “enfant terrible” of India (a status he valued and advertised). These events gave new hope to the opposition. Their hopes were bolstered by victories in some important by-elections in which principal opposition leaders, defeated in the general election of 1962, beat the Congress nominees. So when I arrived in my job, I found the opposition parties much more vigorous and much more hopeful of the future than one might have expected from parties that had so few Parliamentary seats. None of these opposition parties had held power in any state since the victory of the Communist Party in Kerala in 1957. That government did not last very long. Forced out of office with

Library of Congress

Nehru's connivance, it was superseded by a non-communist regime supported by the national government.

It was different following the Congress Party because some of my superiors had contacts there and I shared the liaison with them. Congress was ruling the roost throughout the country when I came to New Delhi. The opposition was scattered around and what ever influence it might have had was exercised through the contacts of opposition parties and individual member of these parties with like-minded people in the Congress Party.

I am fairly sure that the embassy was surprised by the outbreak of the Sino-Indian border war in October 1962. I really don't know for certain because I did not have access to the more sensitive reporting. I was not very much involved in the embassy's work on this issue. As I mentioned, I became much more familiar with it when I was later assigned to the special unit which had been established to handle the military and security assistance which we provided after the beginning of the war.

It was clear, however that tension was building. Nehru had said, in a much quoted interview, that he was ordering the Army to throw the Chinese out of the disputed area. This area was south of the McMahon line, which the Indians maintained was the boundary between India and China. The Chinese did not recognize this British-drawn demarcation.

As I mentioned, after the war started, I was assigned to work for Economic Minister/AID Director C. Tyler Wood on a special task force handling military assistance. Essentially, we were to stay in touch with Indian authorities and with our military on security issues and later on Indian needs for assistance in expanding their military production facilities. We had had no security relationship with India before this time. We were not an arms supplier to India; we had no MAAG [Military Assistance Advisory Group]. A very few Indian military officers came to the U.S. for training, but that was minimal. In part, our position stemmed from the fact that we were allies of Pakistan.

Library of Congress

My unit worked very closely with the Defense Attach#s office and then with a special group that was sent from Washington—the Office of the Defense Representative. I applauded the strengthening of our relationship with India and had no problem with the United States becoming involved with India's security. I thought it was the only thing we could do and I believe that all embassy personnel who were knowledgeable about the issue supported the new policy. There was some disagreement among both Indians and Americans about the extent to which our security relationship should go. As for responsibility for the Sino-Indian War, there was a universal belief among official Americans that the Chinese were the culprits. In this view, it was China that had invaded Indian territory. Whatever the Indians might have done to provoke this was brushed aside. Some people wondered to what extent the Indians would be willing to play a more helpful role in Southeast Asia, where Vietnam was beginning to loom large for American policymakers. In fact, the Indians confined their anti-Chinese and anti-Communist views to their Himalayan border with the Chinese. They did not see it in their interest to join in any kind of U.S.-led arrangement to contain communism in Southeast Asia.

One interesting result of the war was the changed attitude of the Indians toward the United States and its representatives in India. The Indians were grateful for our assistance, although I think that over time they became uncomfortable with the reliance on the United States that the new relationship entailed. But initially, they were extremely grateful and pleased that we didn't exert pressure on them to join a vigorous alliance with the United States. One factor which helped to abate the initial enthusiasm was our insistence that India engage Pakistan in a dialogue about Kashmir. A lot of Indians saw that as our taking advantage of their country when it was in dire straits and forcing them into something that they had rejected for many years; i.e. the surrender of Kashmir to Pakistan.

One other consequence of the war was the large increase in U.S. government officials in India. People in American uniforms were no longer an exception; there were lots of them. We arranged for special American military flights to carry weapons to areas threatened by

Library of Congress

the Chinese. I think we all experienced a much friendlier attitude on the part of the Indians toward Americans.

The Wood task force was designed to work with Indians to sort out what it was that the Indians needed. We civilians focused mostly on delivery of ordnance plants to give India a greater capacity to build its own weapons. I was selected because I indicated an interest; I thought that the work of the task force would be interesting, which in fact it was. This work lasted 3-4 months. I worked full time on it for that period. I thought its work was very useful and successful.

I think we did the only thing we could have done; we supplied weapons and military capacity. That was the right policy. I think we did expect more in return than the Indians were willing or could have delivered; they could or would not become one of our allies on global issues—or even on Asian issues. They had another foreign policy agenda; they did disappoint Bowles in their refusal to play a helpful role in Southeast Asia. I shared in that disappointment, although I don't think that I was surprised; in fact I don't think I spent much time thinking about the potential quid-pro-quo for our military assistance.

I don't remember Vietnam becoming a problem on a personal level. I was berated much less on the issue than I had expected during the 1961-67 period. By the time I left India, we were heavily involved in Vietnam—and had been for at least two years. Yet there were very few recriminations from my Indian contacts and friends. I did not normally raise the issue with them; discussion about Vietnam was held at more senior levels. No systematic effort was made to persuade Indian politicians of the virtues of our Southeast Asia policies. So I did not feel compelled to raise Vietnam and the Indian politicians rarely raised it with me—perhaps out of politeness, perhaps because of their insularity. Vietnam did not loom very large on their scope.

I was not at all surprised when the Kennedy administration tried to use its leverage after the Sino-Indian war to bring about a better India-Pakistan relationship—specifically, to try

Library of Congress

to bring about a resolution of dispute over Kashmir. We did try; we did sponsor bilateral discussion between the two countries—I think there were five sessions into 1963. But nothing came of this dialogue, which did not come as a surprise to me.

After six years in India, I came to like Indians on a personal level; that was especially true for some of the people with whom I have continuing contacts. There was, I think, a general difference of views about Indians between officers like me who dealt with political figures, and those who dealt essentially with the Ministry of External Affairs. We who dealt with political figures found the Indians we were in contact with much more congenial than did our colleagues who had to deal primarily with the Mandarins of the MEA. They were not then, by and large, a very congenial group; nor are they today. I built up good relationships with the politicians, most of whom were older than I. I tried to get the junior officers, when they rotated into the political section, to make and maintain contacts with the younger politicians. I thought that system would be useful in carrying out our objectives and would also be enjoyable both for our junior officers as well as for their Indian contacts.

I covered the national political scene for about three years (1964-67). I was meeting on a regular basis—breakfast, morning tea, afternoon tea, dinner—with about 100 members of parliament. These included some very important figures. They would call me sometimes and sometimes I would initiate the contact. It was a wonderful series of relationships. There were some who would come to chat with me on a regular basis—particularly on a Friday evening. I was basically interested in finding out what was going on and reporting it to my bosses and Washington.

I was well regarded by Bowles and Joseph N. “Jerry” Greene, the DCM, for the contacts I had made and maintained. By the end of my tour, I had a vast knowledge of and insight into the Indian political scene. People used to tell me that for someone of my rank, I had achieved great influence in the embassy's front office. I had no way to judge the merits of those comments, but I think my views were carefully considered by my bosses. I think it is fair to say that I probably had more influence in the embassy than my rank (FSO-4) and

Library of Congress

title (second secretary) would have suggested. It was useful to have an ambassador like Bowles who was more concerned with the capabilities of officers than their rank and titles.

No discussion about Bowles is complete without some reference to the people who worked for him. As I mentioned in my book about him (*Chester Bowles: New Dealer in the Cold War*, Harvard University Press, 1993), the staff was quite remarkable. Basically there were two elements. They initially eyed each other with some suspicion, but soon came to work very well. Bowles had his own group—as he always had had in prior positions. These were people primarily recruited from outside the government but it included one Foreign Service officer—Brandon Grove—who achieved considerable success in his career. Other people in the inner circle included Richard Celeste—a future governor and now himself ambassador to India, and Doug Bennet—later AID administrator and NPR chief. There were others who had been part of Bowles's entourage in earlier incarnations. Bowles had a great knack for recruiting people. Many of his immediate staff had been prominent in their chosen professions, but nevertheless left their jobs to join Bowles. The best example is John P. Lewis, who had been a member of the Council of Economic Advisors. At Bowles's urging, he agreed to come to Delhi as chief of the AID Mission.

The only common denominator among the people in the inner circle was their intelligence. Otherwise they were a disparate lot. But they all believed in the importance of India and of Indo-U.S. relations, and were enthusiastic about the opportunity the embassy had to play a meaningful role. In their view, the embassy had to be a major player in fashioning U.S. policy towards India in accordance with Bowles's concepts, as well as in influencing the Indians to follow policies along the same lines. Without that commitment, no one in the embassy, neither this “Chet Set” (as I nicknamed them) or anybody else, had any hope of winning Bowles's confidence.

In my book, I included a long passage on Svetlana Stalin's 1967 defection; I should say that I was not aware of her presence in the embassy and in fact did not find out about her defection until she was well on her way out of India. Her presence in the embassy

Library of Congress

was held very closely. She arrived one evening and was gone in less than eight hours. Word did not spread, in part helped by the fact that the embassy was closed, it being after working hours when she arrived. She had taken advantage of a reception which was being held in the Soviet embassy right down the street from us to slip over to our chancery. during the night she left on a plane to Rome. I did piece it all together later for my book, using reports and interviews of those who had been involved.

My book also discusses Indian domestic politics at some length and I will not repeat the comments I made there. But I should note that those politics changed markedly during my six-year tour. Those six years encompassed the Sino-Indian war, which had a profound effect on Indian politics, by significantly weakening Nehru's position; Nehru's death—May, 1964; the 19-month government of Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri and his death after the India-Pakistan war of 1965; Mrs. Indira Gandhi's assumption of power; and the serious defeats suffered by the Congress Party in the general election of 1967, when it for the first time lost power in many of the states. All this provided much room for analysis of the changing nature of Indian politics which was carefully read in Washington. I was asked to extend my tour in Delhi so that I could cover the 1967 election—which helps explain why I had such a long tour in India.

During my last two years in India, as I have mentioned, I was assigned responsibility for coverage of the Congress Party and the national political scene. I was able to maintain a very close relationship with Indian politicians which was possible for a second secretary of the U.S. embassy to do in those days. It was quite remarkable how available the politicians were and, in some cases, how interested they seemed in developing a warm, trusting relationship with a member of the political section of the American embassy. Some of these politicians were pro-Western and welcomed contact with the embassy for policy and ideological reasons. Some saw such contacts as a way to bolster their own egos—it meant something to them because they saw themselves—and I assume that they made sure that others saw them— as major and continuing contacts with American diplomats. Some undoubtedly viewed such contacts as profitable—not in monetary terms, but as a source

Library of Congress

of little favors - visas, getting embassy officers to bring back small items for them from the States after home leave, etc. (Few western goods were available in India in those days.) Some may have viewed the contact as a potential basis for obtaining grants to visit the U.S. Others just found it interesting to talk politics with a well informed outsider. Of course, some of them also recognized that I could be a valuable source of information about Indian politics for “them.” So there were many different motives, but I want to stress that the key element making this kind of close and extensive relations possible was the remarkable openness of Indian politics in the mid-1960s and later. So there was an interest in foreign representatives; for different reasons, as I've mentioned, and politicians saw such contacts as useful, important and in often enjoyable. They were quite prepared to see me and even to invite me to some of their functions—although most of the invitations to social events came from me.

In some respects, these contacts were heady stuff for a second secretary; in other ways they were not. My predecessors had enjoyed this access, so that I was not pioneering anything new—except on the Kashmir issue. I was simply assuming a portfolio ably handled by my immediate predecessors, Craig Baxter and Albert “Pete” Lakeland. But these contacts, which I developed and maintained assiduously, gave me an importance in the embassy hierarchy that was unusual for someone of my rank—at least that was what I was told. So my work gave a cachet, and at the same time, access to the front office, which was very interested in my analyses of the political situation as drawn from my conversations with various Parliamentarians. I would be used by some of the embassy senior officers to make contacts with these MPs, sometimes to set up a meeting and at other times to convey messages back and forth. So I think my work did raise me above the level that second secretaries usually reach.

I loved my tour in India. With the exception of my subsequent ambassadorship, it was the best job I had ever had—including the tour as chief of the political section in Delhi which I had ten years later. Looking back now that I have retired, I can say that I enjoyed my assignment to the political section from 1963 to 1967 more than any other

Library of Congress

non-ambassadorial jobs I had in my career. It was an exciting time to be in India. I felt that I was given important tasks. I knew that I was considered an important cog in the embassy machinery—after having caught the ambassador's eye. I took the job with great seriousness, worked very long hours very cheerfully, and enjoyed what I was doing immensely.

I was constantly on the move. My days would often start with breakfast with an important politician, followed by teas in morning and afternoon—rarely did we have business lunches since parliament did not take a mid-day break. And then dinner with one or more of my contacts. I figured that I was regularly seeing about 100 members of the Parliament—roughly 12-15% of the members. It was unusual experience for a young officer and as I said, I enjoyed every minute of it.

I developed bonds with a number of the politicians which hold even today after more than thirty years. When I go back to India, I manage to talk to a number of these old friends. These bonds allowed me to get “inside” stories about important events. Even before I inherited the national portfolio, I had contacts which allowed me to monitor Nehru's health in the period after his stroke—January 1964—leading up to his death in May 1964. One of my fondest memories is about a high level meeting which I was asked to attend. The ambassador turned to the station chief and asked for an updated report on Nehru's health. The station chief said, “You better ask Howie. His information is better than anyone else's!”

In light of my subsequent career, I should talk at this juncture about our relationships with our embassy in Karachi, Pakistan. The relationship between the two embassies was very poor at the highest level. Each embassy took the side of its host government. It was one of the most egregious cases of clientitis that I ever encountered in my years in the service. Indeed, it was possible with very little imagination for us in New Delhi to write a telegram that would mimic a message that might be sent about a current development in India-Pakistan relations by our colleagues at the embassy in Karachi. In addition to these divergent views on substance, embassy-to-embassy relationship was not helped by

Library of Congress

the greatly divergent personalities of the two ambassadors—Bowles and Ambassador to Pakistan Walter P. McConaughy during one period and then Bowles and Eugene Locke afterwards. Bowles and McConaughy had known each other in Washington; Bowles thought that McConaughy's foreign policy views were outdated. To Bowles's mind, they resembled the hard Cold War ideas propagated in the 1950s by Secretary John Foster Dulles. Gene Locke, who succeeded McConaughy in 1966, was a political appointee, a wealthy Texan who was a personal friend of President Johnson. His appointment as ambassador to Pakistan turned out to be a way station for Locke; he moved on in 1967 to be deputy to Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker in Saigon.

I recall vividly the stop-over in New Delhi which Ambassador and Mrs. Locke made on their way to East Pakistan. They came to the residence, dressed to the nines in their most expensive clothing, probably straight out of Neiman-Marcus. Bowles, for his part, was wearing his usual loose bush shirt. Mrs. Bowles, as I recall, was dressed in a particularly sloppy sari and sandals—if she had any footwear on at all. The contrast in dress symbolized for me and others the different planes on which the two ambassadors and their spouses operated; their styles were of course also reflected in their embassy's operations and the different ways official Americans related to Indians and Pakistanis in those days.

At my level we had good relations with our counterparts in Karachi. We tried to institute reciprocal visits. In light of my portfolio, I didn't get very much involved in the Karachi-Delhi relationships because I was assigned to cover Indian domestic politics. On one occasion, in 1964, following my visit to Kashmir, I stopped at Karachi on my way back to the United States on home leave to brief the embassy there on my findings in Srinagar and Jammu. I stayed with Don Gelber, with whom I had studied Hindustani at the FSI and with whom I had developed a good personal relationship.

The higher embassy officers, although having good personal relationships with their counterparts in the other embassy, tended to reflect the views of their host government

Library of Congress

—perhaps not as much as the ambassadors did. By that I mean that they favored U.S. policies that would better Washington's relations with their host governments and paid rather little attention to the impact these policies would have on American ties with the other country.

Bowles was a great believer in meetings that brought together senior U.S. representatives in the region. He had his own ideas about who should be invited to these sessions. He tried as he did in many other ways to break out of bureaucratic rigidities which he felt tied his hands for no valid reason. For example, he invited representative from our embassies in Southeast Asia as well as from the South Asian missions. The meetings were quite useful, but I think for the development of a consistent U.S. policy, it would have been better had there been more exchanges between senior level embassies staffs from Karachi and New Delhi. To the best of my recollection, Bowles never went to Pakistan during this second tour as ambassador. (He had gone there during his 1951-53 ambassadorship.) He should have. He had very decided and negative views on the importance of Pakistan and the value of a close relationship between the U.S. and Pakistan. He might have reexamined these more critically if he had been exposed to Pakistani views.

Of course, all this came to a climax with the India-Pakistan war, which was a disaster for our relations with both countries and led to a prolonged period during which we placed South Asia much lower on our foreign policy agenda than we had before.

Working for Bowles was a rare experience. I think his style had an impact on me. I took his emphasis on informality very much to heart. There was also a marked interest on Bowles' part in encouraging junior staff to learn what the embassy was doing on important matters about which lower-ranking officers at most other embassies are often kept unaware. For example, he had them invited to attend larger meetings where major policy issues were discussed and argued over. In Bowles' days, Embassy New Delhi was a very open operation and I tried to emulate its approach when I reached senior positions. I think such

Library of Congress

an open atmosphere is helpful to both an embassy's leadership and the junior staff. This approach was operational outside office hours as well. Bowles extended the contact with the junior staff to social occasions, inviting many of them to the Residence for dinners and receptions. This gave them an opportunity to expand their social contacts beyond what might have been expected under a "normal" ambassador. It thus gave them a better understanding of India and of Indo-U.S. relations.

Bowles was a great believer in getting to know India. It was a very important feature of his leadership. He believed that it was extremely important for embassy staff to get out of New Delhi and into the countryside. That goal was clear during both of Bowles' tours. He pushed this policy so far that on official trips outside of Delhi, the U.S. government would pay for the travel of the officer's wife. He firmly fought against R&R (rest and recuperation) leave, arguing that if a staff member felt the need to get away from his post, he could do so without leaving India. He tried to facilitate that. As a result, in the six years I was in Delhi, I never left the sub-continent except for home leave in 1964 and participation at a seminar in Hong Kong in 1966 (when I also visited a number of countries in Southeast Asia). I spent all of my vacations in India or in neighboring countries such as Sri Lanka and Nepal.

I think Bowles, for all of his emphasis on India, was remiss in not learning more about the country. He had a vision of India and would quite easily overlook those aspects of life which did not fit his predetermined outlook both about current conditions and future prospects. In my book, I mention that in all of the years Bowles was in India, he never visited places such as Benares, which were the epitome of conservative Indian Hindu society and culture. He didn't want to know about that aspect of Indian life; it was distasteful to him. He would visit factories, dams—the signs of modernization. It was a remarkable performance which led many to believe that he was a font of knowledge about India—having spent so much time there and having given so much time and thought to

Library of Congress

the country. But Bowles's knowledge was selective; there were whole areas of Indian life about which he knew little or nothing.

Bowles was not interested in a dialogue with people like myself who might have brought him information which did not fit his preordained views. He felt uncomfortable when people would bring up ideas about India which did not match his. He really didn't want to hear them; so the staff learned quickly that it was not a good idea to initiate a conversation which might have led to some differing views.

My India tour was my first experience in a highly structured society—the caste system. I learned about it and accepted the situation as it was. I obviously had some regrets that things were as they were and always hoped that this societal rigidities might slowly evolve into a more modern society—a better break for the lower castes. But my focus during these six years was on the job I had to do—analysis of the Indian political scene as it affected U.S. interests. I met people from different caste groups of course. It would have been impossible for me to have done my job properly without doing so, though the participation of lower caste groups in Indian politics was much less significant than it later became. I would discuss the Indian societal system with my contacts at times. I always knew what caste my interlocutor belonged to because that was important in enabling me to do my job right. But I didn't spend much time worrying about the defects and problems of Indian society. It is also true that if you live in India for any period of time, you come to terms with its societal structure and after a while you stop even noticing it—seems strange, but it is true.

After a while, you don't really see the poverty of the country; it just becomes part of the scenery. There was only one exception, at least for me, and that was Calcutta. It didn't make any difference how often I visited that city; it always seemed dreadful. There were some who were not upset by the Calcutta scene; that was particularly true for people who lived there. I always felt that Calcutta was a terrible place to visit, but not bad to live in—the direct opposite of the old saying about New York City. Bengali society is a wonderful,

Library of Congress

exciting society once you come to know it and are accepted by it. Calcutta is a very active city—culturally, politically, economically. It offers a broad and exciting range of intellectual life; it is filled with interesting, flamboyant, warm-hearted people. But outsiders have an entirely different reaction. They never really become acquainted with the attractive features of Calcutta and are greatly turned off by what they do see in their brief times there. But, as I said, with the exception of Calcutta, I had no significant negative reaction to what I saw and experienced in India.

There was a very good relationship between the embassy's political section and the political officers at the consulates general. I was considered responsible for that liaison and for the coordination of reports which the CGs used to send directly to Washington (with a copy to us). I made a special effort to stay in touch with my colleagues in the CGs; we would have meetings in Delhi supplemented by visits by me to the three posts. Also, the Congress Party—and sometimes other parties as well—would have meetings in different parts of India. I would attend those meetings accompanied by the political officer who covered the area where the meetings were taking place. These meetings and joint efforts helped develop a warm relationships among the political officers in India that was very useful in many ways.

I would from time to time ask these officers to assess certain issues which were important to the national scene. I also asked them to maintain contact with parliamentarians from their consular districts. I would get suggestions from our political officers about which MP's were worth my meeting with in New Delhi. This enabled us to maintain contacts with these key parliamentarians both in New Delhi and in their home districts.

One of our consuls general—Albert Franklin in Madras—was a rather strange guy. He didn't much like this arrangement because he felt that his autonomy was being challenged, but he lived with it. Information flowed very freely among us; we were constantly communicating with each other. We did not use telephones very much in those days. Connections were usually bad, and it took a major effort to make a long distance

Library of Congress

call. But I had very good feed-back from the consulates general and I was confident they felt the same way about the embassy.

Let me turn now to the 1965 Indo-Pakistan war. A few days before hostilities broke out, it was relatively clear that a chain of events had been set in motion and that there was little chance of avoiding a collision. But before that, I was surprised that tension had risen so high. The first episode took place on August 5 when Pakistani infiltrators entered the Indian-held portions of Kashmir. Some date the war itself from September 1, when the Pakistan Army moved across the boundary which separates Pakistan proper from the Indian-held portion of Kashmir. Some say it began on September 6, when the Indian Army invaded West Pakistan.

But I think it is fair to say that had someone asked me in July whether war would break out between the two countries, I would probably have replied in the negative. By mid-August, it had become increasingly clear that relations were going downhill in a hurry and that there would be a major confrontation.

When hostilities broke out, I was put in charge of organizing teams which were sent to the border areas to alert Americans living there about the situation and to encourage them to evacuate southward. We were prepared to house them temporarily in New Delhi while the conflict was taking place in Kashmir and the Punjab. We had had a warden system—that is, a system which used one American to keep track of several of his compatriots in a pyramid structure, but it had grown rather rusty. Bowles was not interested in activating the system lest we be accused of expecting war; he in fact forbade us to update the wardens' list. So we did not in mid-1965 have as good a list as we should have had. Thus we were painfully aware that we did not have a good enough handle on where American citizens were living in India. Nevertheless, we sent these teams out and that was a memorable experience.

Library of Congress

I arrived at the border town of Amritsar the day after the Indians crossed into West Pakistan. I must have been one of the last foreigners to get through. Soon after I arrived, there was a Pakistani air raid. I went further north along the border, urging Americans to evacuate. I had sent embassy officers to other areas to do the same. The area I covered was only a few minutes from Pakistan by air. I got to one town which was the home to a number of missionaries . It turned out that they had been in China a few years earlier and had been forced to leave when the Communists took over. They told me that they appreciated my efforts to insure their safety, but they had been booted out of China already and were not prepared to leave their flock behind a second time. Since they were obviously quite prepared to ignore their peril, I wished them good luck and moved on. I think in fact missionaries were the major part of the American community along the border. There were also some people who had American citizenship which they had acquired by birth in the United States or residence there, but they were ethnic Indians and were essentially part of the Indian community, not foreigners. The border areas were essentially not economically developed, at least not by large-scale industry, and therefore did not attract the kind of investments which would have brought many more Americans to the area.

Like everyone else, I remember where I was when Kennedy was assassinated. Since it was in the middle of the night in India, I was home asleep. My servants, who heard the news, chose not to wake me up. So I learned of that tragic event from the front pages of the Indian newspapers. It was a terrible shock—to me and all Americans. It was a terrible loss to the Indians because Kennedy, as I mentioned earlier, had become an almost heroic figure in India. There were many Indian hovels which had a picture of Kennedy hanging from their earth walls.

When the news of JFK's death permeated throughout India, there was an enormous outpouring of grief. We had extensive lines of people waiting to sign the condolence book. The attendance at the memorial service was remarkable. People came to me almost in

Library of Congress

tears; the death really gripped the soul of India. Bowles happened to be in the U.S. when Kennedy was assassinated. He returned almost immediately and I believe he attended the memorial service which took place three days later—on a Monday. I remember the embassy staff working all week-end long sending out invitations. Of course, the tragedy was accentuated by the absence of information about the perpetrator(s); we knew almost nothing about what was going on in Dallas—these were the days before CNN. The news that Jack Ruby had murdered Oswald came as a bolt out of the blue. At one point, while working on the invitation, some of us just burst into hysterical laughter over nothing—we were so tense and so distraught that we lost our composure. The memorial service was quite remarkable. It followed a special session of the Indian Parliament called to commemorate JFK and to mourn his death. Nehru spoke quite eloquently. The memorial service was held in front of the chancery, on a large stone plinth, where seats were set up.

The event had an interesting consequence. The Communist Party of India was at that time badly divided following strong disagreement about India's position toward Communist China in the wake of the Sino-Indian war. The pro-Moscow wing of the Party decided to attend the memorial service. It was, after all, a period of U.S.-Soviet detente. The other, more radical wing chose not to attend. The question of attendance at JFK's memorial service became one of the factors that led to the break up of the party a few months later.

The Indian reaction to JFK's assassination was quite different from that for example that was manifested after the Martin Luther King murder. The Indians, in general, accepted that the president had been killed by a single deranged man; they did not believe in the "plot" theories. I think they probably compared the JFK assassination to Gandhi's. After King, we had riots in the U.S. Then the Indians began to worry about the conditions in the U.S.; they had the same reaction when Bobby Kennedy was assassinated. They wondered about the stability of our country as well as its culture.

I think that the 1961-67 period was important in India. It witnessed both the high-water mark for U.S. involvement in South Asia as well as a quite sudden cooling off of our

Library of Congress

interest to the point that our major concern in India became economic development and famine relief. By the time I left, the possibility of India playing a useful political role in the sub-continent which might have assisted the U.S. in achieving its global goals was relegated to the dustbin.

Let me make a couple of additional points. The first, which I stress in my book, was that Bowles was a remarkable man in making his staff feel that it was part of a great enterprise—that they were engaged in something really important in India. The importance of this management style really came home to me when I returned to India ten years later to find that instead of being very much caught up in what was going on and feeling they were engaged in history-making, the current staff viewed New Delhi as just another assignment. That was surely not the case for most of us who served under Chester Bowles.

There is a story which I want on the record, which I did not include in my book because it seemed so frivolous. It is an interesting tale because it illustrates clearly Bowles' approach and management style. One day, he held one of his periodic large meetings attended by many embassy staffers. He was to be in the chair—that was somewhat unusual because most often these sessions were led by other staff members. The topic for this meeting was “New Look in South Asia”—a typical Bowlesian theme. After his presentation, Bowles opened the meeting to questions and comments. After many issues were discussed, the session ended. As I was leaving the room, one of my colleagues—I think it was Nick Veliotes—turned to me and said, “Same old new look!” It was typical Bowles; he had a certain, unchanging vision of India and how it could be helped and improved, which he tried very much to promote with his staff (and everyone else). Nothing could shake it. He did make us feel that India was important, but I don't believe that his vision became the guiding light for many of the staff. Very few of us shared his idea of how tremendously important Indo-U.S. relations were.

I might mention another meeting that also illustrates Bowles' leadership style. The ambassador was from time to time upset with some of his political officers. He was

Library of Congress

unhappy with the reporting that was being sent to Washington—largely because it was quite negative. Things were not going very well and we reported what we observed as accurately as possible. But Bowles was nonetheless unhappy. He sometimes used the line that one can regard a glass as half-empty or half-full. To encourage us to change our negative ways, he proclaimed at a staff meeting that he had not brought us to India to write history but to make it. He wanted his embassy to be actively involved—and not just be detached observers reporting on developments (particularly when they did not fit his vision of how India should progress). Again, Nick had a comment, “Yes, the ambassador has said that he brought us out here not to write history, but to make it. But he left out one word. What he should have said was, ‘I have not brought you out here to write history but to make it up.’”

Q: In 1967, you returned to Washington to become the desk officer for India. First, tell us a little about the NEA Bureau at the time.

SCHAFFER: There was a deputy assistant secretary—William Handley—in charge of South Asia who reported to Lucius “Luke” Battle—the assistant secretary. Handley had been a USIA officer. Below Bill were two country directors - L. Douglas Heck who was responsible for India, Nepal and Ceylon—NEA/INC—and James W. Spain who was responsible for Pakistan and Afghanistan. I don't remember including an assignment to the India desk in my list of desired onward assignments. I must admit that I was not sufficiently aware at this stage of the workings of the personnel system. To my regret, I had spent 10 out of my first 11 years in the Foreign Service overseas—the one year in Washington being language training. When I returned from India, I was somewhat disappointed by the NEA assignment; I thought it was pretty far down the bureaucratic chain for an FSO-3. I had been promoted during my last year in New Delhi. I recognized that I had to spend a tour in Washington; in fact at that stage I had no interest in serving anywhere else. I wanted to stay in Washington both for professional and personal reasons.

Library of Congress

Of course, I had culture shock when I began to work in the Department. This was driven primarily by the marked change of my position in the bureaucracy. In New Delhi, I had access to the front office and felt that I was an important cog in the machine—I had a unique position. In the NEA Bureau, I was the junior political officer of the two assigned to NEA/INC; I was the low man on the totem pole. My colleague was Carleton Coon—later our ambassador to Nepal.

I performed a variety of political work—contact with other parts of U.S. government on our programs in India, some political analysis, drafting messages for the signature of senior officers, and perhaps most important, the care and feeding of Chester Bowles who was our ambassador for my two year tour on the desk. That was a difficult assignment because Bowles had a predilection for writing long messages about India, always singing the same tune—i.e. the importance of India to the United States. His messages were generally ignored in Washington. So our challenge was to keep the “Old Man” happy in light of Washington's attitude his own continual exhortations to do more for India—a policy which did not find favor with the Johnson administration.

India's less consequential position in Washington goes back to 1965, when the India-Pakistan war was taking place. The Washington bureaucracy dealing with India- as well as those who were only marginally involved but in positions of influence — became disillusioned with India. They concluded that neither Pakistan or India could be of real help to us in meeting our global objectives. India was too consumed with its struggle with Pakistan to play a global role, especially in our drive to contain communism in South East Asia. Bowles would not accept this view and eventually was almost the sole petitioner for India. He became somewhat of a “nag;” his messages became increasingly tiresome, repeating over and over and over again the same themes. It was up to us to brush him off— in a nice way. Let me illustrate. Bowles would send a fifteen-page message to the secretary of state—Dean Rusk. Some one in the secretary's office would highlight a few sentences; we assumed that Rusk read them. In the meantime, we on the desk

Library of Congress

would prepare a warm response—to Chet from Dean. Invariably, the message expressed appreciation to Bowles for the fine job he was doing. It might also have touched on other matter But it never responded to the substance of Bowles' message. In other words, it was a warm, dignified brush-off. This was sad since we all knew that Bowles spent a lot of time preparing these lengthy messages. But he seemed to be reasonably satisfied with the pleasantries he was getting back from Washington. We never tried to suggest to the DCM or the political counselor that these messages were not well received; we knew that Bowles would continue to send them in.

I think Bowles was realistic enough to know that he was not affecting the policy-making process—at least not in the way that he wished. The big mystery was why he stayed in India. The answer, I think, was that his options were not that promising. So he stayed on, ineffectually, suffering increasingly from the ravages of Parkinson's, receiving anodyne answers to his messages. But he never wavered in his position. It was a sad ending to an exciting career.

I certainly sympathized with the Washington view that India was not the most important country on earth. I did not think that India could play the role that Bowles continued to envision for it. I think that is was very evident, judging from the way India behaved under Mrs. Gandhi's leadership, that India would not be helpful to us in Vietnam nor in our general interest in stemming the spread of communism in Asia—with the exception of the Himalayas, where India was interested in receiving whatever assistance we could provide to thwart the Chinese.

To the best of my knowledge, Bowles did not use the phone—partly because the connections in those days were something less than satisfactory. Making a phone call from India was akin to an heroic act. That was a blessing for us. Furthermore, and most importantly, Bowles was suffering from Parkinson's disease by this time. It was my responsibility as the officer in charge of taking care of Bowles to make certain that every month he got a supply of “L-DOPA”—an experimental drug being tested at the

Library of Congress

time for the control of Parkinson's. This was somewhat difficult and Bowles became increasingly nervous as the time grew near when he needed to replenish his supply but no shipment had yet arrived. It seemed to me, in retrospect, that I spent a lot of time on the phone to the supplier of "L-DOPA" in New York to ascertain that timely delivery would be made to New Delhi as required. I don't think Bowles was ever left without, but he was understandably troubled as his supplies dwindled each month. The drug had a temporary positive effect, but eventually proved to be of little use in controlling the disease.

Bowles would return to the U.S. from time to time on consultations. When he was in Washington he would make the rounds seeing friends and other high ranking officials. Those were sad moments because it was becoming increasingly difficult for Bowles to get around—Parkinson's had effected his motor capabilities. It was so sad to see this wonderful old man moving ever so slowly with what he called his "snow shoe" shuffle through the long halls of the Rayburn building and other edifices. He still had access to everyone he wanted to see. He never lost such access, even to those who may have disagreed with him. Bowles was able to see anyone he wanted to, including President Johnson.

My tour on the desk was during a period of relatively calm relations between India and Pakistan. We had no intra-bureau tensions stemming from issues on the sub-continent. The situation in Pakistan changed as demonstrators took to the streets both in East and West Pakistan against President Ayub Khan. In 1969, Ayub was forced from power and was replaced by General Agha Mohammed Yahya Khan. In India the focus was primarily on domestic political infighting with Mrs. Gandhi successfully battling her opponents in the Congress Party. In light of the situation on the sub-continent, we severely downgraded our relations with both India and Pakistan.

Despite the low place of India and Pakistan on the U.S. foreign policy agenda, Luke Battle gave us more time than most NEA assistant secretaries had previously devoted to South Asia. This was due to the fact that in the summer of 1968, a meeting was held in

Library of Congress

New Delhi between India and the U.S. at relatively senior levels. Our delegation was led by Under Secretary Nicholas Katzenbach; Luke was part of the delegation. That meant that Battle had to prepare himself and learn much more about India than he might have otherwise done. So I think we got enough senior attention. I think that the deputy and office directors—Heck, Spain, and Handley—had good access to the front office; so that if we ever needed the assistant secretary, it was easy enough to get the problem before him.

One of my last tasks on the desk was to prepare Kenneth Keating for his ambassadorship to India. I found him to be rather vain. I think he would have preferred to go to Israel, where he eventually was assigned after India. He considered himself God's gift to women. I and others felt that Keating believed that his masculine charms would be very useful to him in dealing with Prime Minister Gandhi. In fact, those charms did not prove useful at all. Keating had a very difficult and distant relationship with the Indian prime minister; there was no way that he could charm the sari off her. He had a very well developed self-esteem and self-importance. I did not escort him on his calls in Washington as he prepared himself for New Delhi. In his preparation for his assignment, he was assisted primarily by the officer who had replaced Carleton Coon—Grant Mouser. That particular personnel shift was somewhat of a disappointment to me as I had hoped to move up into Coon's position.

In the same vein, in light of my imminent departure from the desk, I participated only a little in the preparations for President Nixon's trip to India in the summer of 1969. I probably worked on some papers, but I certainly was not deeply immersed in that activity. As I recall, that trip was scheduled on rather short notice. Nixon decided to stop in India and Pakistan after the moon-landing-splashdown in the Pacific.

I did participate quite fully in a trip taken by Indian Foreign Minister Dinesh Singh, who visited the United States in May 1969. The whole trip came about in an interesting way. During an encounter a few months earlier, Secretary Rogers had mentioned to Dinesh Singh that he hoped that whenever it was convenient the minister would come to the United States. Singh took that as a firm invitation. We discovered that Rogers was

Library of Congress

perfectly happy to receive Dinesh Singh, but that there were no funds available to pay for such a trip. I did manage to squeeze out a USIA leader grant for the foreign minister. I was very proud of that achievement. But then we got word that the minister's wife was planning to join her husband on his trip to the U.S. That raised a further question about what we could do for her. I figured that having dipped into the USIA's account once, it was worthwhile to try to do so again.

I said that I understood that Mrs. Dinesh Singh was an important personage in her own right. She had indeed shown great concern for development of vocational training for disadvantaged young women in the Lucknow area in the Singhs' home state. In fact, I had no idea what Mrs. Dinesh Singh had done, what her interests were or anything much about her. We did know that she was a woman of some importance in India, but I did not know what professional or charitable interests, if any, she might have had. But I sent a message to New Delhi saying that it was my recollection that Mrs. Dinesh Singh was an important person and that I had some recollection of her showing considerable interest in vocational training. Just as I hoped, a message came back from the embassy stating that indeed my recollection was accurate. That was adequate justification for USIA to issue another grant so that both Mr. and Mrs. Dinesh Singh were able to come to the U.S. on leader grants.

But there's more to the story. A couple of months later, in connection with Nixon's visit, CIA prepared biographic information on all the leaders and their spouses whom the president was likely to encounter in India. I read the material, which included a sketch of Mrs. Dinesh Singh. Sure enough, she was described as "a personage in her own right who for many years had taken an interest in vocational training for disadvantaged young women in the Lucknow area." That may still be part of her biographic profile; I think she will forever be known for her alleged work in vocational training. So are myths made!! And so do desk officers function!

Library of Congress

My first experience with the Washington bureaucracy was of course quite instructive. The most important lesson I learned was that the Department's strongest asset was its knowledge of foreign areas. It was important that State officials have recent experience in the area in which they worked in Washington—as I had had. It enabled me and others to battle other agencies more successfully. Many agencies were involved in India, starting of course with AID, in those days. The fact that I had such a long tour in India and knew many of the personalities quite well was an important asset for me as it would be for any desk officer who had transferred directly from a country to its Washington desk.

I was terribly frustrated by the Washington bureaucracy. I was totally unfamiliar with the Washington tribal customs. Eventually, I got the hang of it. Even after as large an embassy as ours in New Delhi, the vastness of the Washington scene is culture shock. I had had no idea about the number of people who had to pass on everything I wrote. I was particularly bothered by the clearance process—a system which invariably strikes officers new to Washington as extremely frustrating and is a distraction to anyone working in the bureaucracy.

I was told that once there was a contest called “The Clearance of the Month.” The prize went to that drafting officer who could get his cable out with the most clearances. One month, it was won by an officer who drafted a message on food aid for India and included in the clearance section the acronym for the State Department cafeteria. He then got one of the ladies who served the food to initial next to the acronym. That added to his score!!!

Our assistance program for India was still considerable in the late 1960s—particularly food aid. Although the worst part of the 1965 and 1966 famine and the relief efforts that it prompted were in the past, assistance was a major element in U.S.-India relations. With the downgrading in Washington of political relations between the two countries as a result of India's unwillingness to play an international role helpful to us, our economic interest in India came to dominate the overall relationship from the U.S. viewpoint. Economic assistance was our principal tool in our efforts to convince the Indians to reform their

Library of Congress

socialistic policies and liberalize their economy. I had no problem with this thrust, although I did come around to believing that the whole AID program in India was misconceived. Instead of improving relations between the two countries, the assistance we provided became an unhealthy element. The Indians are a proud people; they thought they knew what they were doing—they could have been wrong, but not in their own minds. They did not feel that they needed the constant advice that we were dishing out—certainly not to the extent that some of our active AID zealots (and Bowles) believed warranted.

The donor-recipient relationship is always difficult; In the Indian case, given their views of themselves and their role in the world, it was bound to cause some friction. For example, in retrospect, I question whether John Lewis' presence in India as AID director was entirely desirable. John was very much involved; he believed that he could open useful dialogues with the Indians. He may have managed to do that to some extent, but it fostered an unhealthy relationship. I also came to the conclusion that the aid program in India was far too large given the returns that we were receiving. The size of the program stimulated misplaced hopes on our side and a feeling of dependency on India's part. Neither aspect was helpful in developing a sound relationship between the two countries. But my views, as a desk officer, were of little consequence; I usually did not get involved in the issue of assistance levels.

I did get involved when Mrs. Gandhi would sound off on U.S. policy anywhere on the globe, as she did most famously about Southeast Asia after the 1966 devaluation of the rupee had put her on the defensive about American influence on her government. We tried to explain away her negative comments or took other defensive measures because we wanted to continue a large assistance program to India. I thought that this was not a very healthy policy on our part. But I did find myself, as the desk officer, defending India against attacks from one part of the bureaucracy or another. That was my job: I tried to explain why India did not take as helpful a role as we wanted in both its domestic economic policy and on foreign affairs issues.

Library of Congress

We always had some struggles with AID. They had a huge bureaucracy. I think they danced to their own drummer, resisting any efforts by the Department to influence the nature and direction of their programs. We had jurisdictional problems and other bureaucratic problems which often made for a difficult relationship. They wanted to throw their weight around.

In retrospect, my tour as India desk officer took place during a fairly quiet time in U.S.-India relations—despite the Nixon and Dinesh Singh visits. Nothing very important either in the political or economic sphere transpired during those two years.

Q: In 1979, you were given a one year academic assignment tPrinceton. How did that come about?

SCHAFFER: It suddenly dropped from the sky much to my amazement. I hadn't given senior training much consideration; I had not asked for it on my wish list. One day, some one in Personnel called me to tell me that I had been selected for senior training and that it had been decided that I would not go the National War College—where most of those selected went—but rather to the Woodrow Wilson School at Princeton.

It didn't take me long to agree. I was not particularly enamored of my work on the desk; two years had been plenty of time. The idea of getting out of Washington appealed to me as did the thought that for the first time—and probably last in my career—I would have the opportunity of operating in the academic world. In any case, I was told that I didn't have much choice - the Foreign Service was different from what it is today. I regarded the Wilson assignment as an opportunity to get out of the day-to-day maelstrom leaving me time to contemplate with greater objectivity matters far from the daily grind. I also saw the opportunity to learn about areas of the world with which I was not too familiar; I wanted to expand my horizons; I hoped to take courses which had nothing to do with my profession.

Library of Congress

In fact, my year at Woodrow Wilson was a very good one. I took courses in developmental economics and some aspects of foreign policy; I audited courses on Rembrandt and his times and on modern art. I think I had a fine year at Princeton; I certainly enjoyed it. I concluded that such senior training was very much worth while. I enjoyed meeting students, some of whom I persuaded to take the Foreign Service entrance examination.

I should note that 1969-70 was a very exciting year at Princeton and other universities. It climaxed with the U.S. incursion into Cambodia. This resulted in a strike at the university in the late spring of 1970. It was an interesting experience for a Foreign Service officer to find himself in the midst of strong anti-government dissent on foreign policy. Fortunately, I did not find myself in a position where I was obliged to defend our foreign policy. I certainly did not seek out that role, particularly since I strongly disagreed with the Nixon administration's approach to Southeast Asia. No one in Washington asked me to give speeches and I didn't volunteer. The students who knew me by the spring of 1970 were aware that my views were much more akin to theirs than to Washington's. I was never attacked either because of the administration's position or because I was a Foreign Service officer.

I thought that many of the Woodrow Wilson faculty were quite impressive. I thought that the school itself was a remarkable institution.

Q: In 1970, you were assigned to the Office of Personnel in the Department. Was that your wish?

SCHAFFER: It was. I wanted to be assigned to Personnel, but the fact is that I was not assigned to the Bureau of Personnel. I was actually assigned to be the personnel officer for the Bureau of Near East and South Asian Affairs. Since the personnel process in 1970 was not centralized, each bureau had personnel officers who were responsible for assigning officers and staff to their geographic area and to bureau positions in the Department. This job was considered a very good one, and had been held by some impressive officers. My immediate predecessor had been Richard Murphy, who went

Library of Congress

on to become a career ambassador. It was a job that I really wanted because I wished to broaden my horizons beyond political work. I was given to understand that the job would enable me to see how the Department really worked. Furthermore, I noted that my predecessors had all gone on to good assignments. So I also saw the personnel job as a stepping stone.

In the NEA Bureau, I worked for Executive Director Leaman Ray Hunt—who was later assassinated in Rome when he headed our Sinai contingent. He was a wonderful person to work for because he had a good sense of how the Department operated and where the power to move the system rested. I probably learned more from Ray Hunt than I did from any ambassador, DCM or anyone else I ever worked for. Hunt was an operator supreme. He seemed to be just a good old country boy; in fact, he was one of the more sophisticated operators I ever observed. He was especially effective with officials who held power. For me the time spent working for Ray was a valuable tutorial. I had never heard of Ray Hunt before; he was a recent appointee to the executive director's position. But we got along very well; I did a lot of things for him, such as drafting of memoranda and messages on all sorts of administrative subjects. I think he recognized that I could write well.

After I had been in the Bureau for a few months, a major change took place in the Department's personnel process. Many of the responsibilities were shifted from the regional bureaus to central Personnel. The regional bureaus were allowed to keep their personnel officers, but they had much reduced authority.

Then a year and a half or so later there was a further change. The regional bureaus' personnel officers were assigned to the central Personnel, which was reorganized to reflect the State Department structure—i.e. by bureaus. So after about two years there, I moved out of NEA, where my powers had been considerably reduced by the first reorganization, to the Bureau of Personnel (PER) where I became responsible for assignments to NEA and to some functional bureaus.

Library of Congress

I might just briefly describe the personnel assignment process itself. This remained essentially unchanged by the reorganizations, which had more to do with the decision-making power than with procedure. Assignments were formally made by a panel chaired by a deputy director of PER and comprising personnel counselors—officers responsible for the career development of employees and assignment branch officers such as myself. Each assignment officer had to present his or her proposals for onward assignments to the panel, which had the authority to approve (or disapprove) them. Occasionally, there would be a battle over a particularly well qualified officer with a number of bureaus seeking his or her services. Before I made a proposal for an assignment to one of the bureaus I was responsible for, NEA or one of the functional bureaus (most of whose assignments involved positions in Washington), I would lobby the other panel members to support my position. There was plenty of log-rolling involved. It was a real political process.

I soon found that interest in assignments is widely shared. Aside from those directly responsible within the personnel system, and the officers coming up for transfer themselves, senior embassy officers, bureau officers such as country directors and even desk officers, and, in the assignment of administrative types, post management officers in a regional bureau's executive office, all try to get into the act and believe they have a right to do so. To some extent, it was necessary to get all of these people on board before I could move ahead with a proposal to the panel. This wasn't easy, and a good deal of diplomatic maneuvering was necessary if an assignment officer was to do his job properly.

I think the most important thing was to get ahead of everyone else in coming up with logical proposals that effectively matched an officer's talents and interests with the needs of the post and the job at it. This called for familiarity with officers and positions. It was also important for the assignment officer to have the confidence of all of the others involved. Sometimes it was necessary for me to take a tough line, especially with country directors and senior embassy personnel who insisted that every job under their jurisdiction be filled by absolutely top-flight people. This was, of course, impossible. I found that

Library of Congress

I had to persuade recalcitrant senior officers to take some so-called “turkeys” for less consequential jobs. By letting the panel know that I was prepared to accept less than super officers for such positions, I was better positioned to get the excellent people I wanted for the jobs that really counted. It was this recognition by capable assignment officers of the real needs of the Foreign Service that enabled the process to move. I must note that I am speaking of an era before the “open assignment” process was mandated. That made the maneuvering I was involved in much easier. The way we operated would not be possible now. These were also the days when a post had considerable say about who was to be assigned to it. That made it even more crucial that NEA and its posts have complete confidence in me as someone who was looking after their interests in an intelligent and imaginative way.

Ordinarily, I would be invited by Ray Hunt to participate in a meeting with each ambassador or principal officer as they came through Washington. I would be the only non-NEA person in the room. The other participants were the NEA administrative staffers, budget and fiscal officer, the post management officers, and a representative of the country office. When I left, Ray Hunt's successor changed the system; he established a personnel officer position in his own shop and the process then became quite different. I found myself in an unusual and sensitive position. Ray Hunt was at first somewhat dubious about my new role in PER and about the reorganization in general, but I think that eventually he saw that the new system could work well for NEA if someone the bureau could trust acted as “his man” in Personnel. He regarded me in that light. We kept in very close touch all the time. In PER, I worked for Arch Blood, then the chief of the assignment branch. He trusted me to look after PER's interests. So I was the man in the middle, trusted by both sides—which did not trust each other. With the assistance of my deputies—first Joe Twinam and later Bob Paganelli (both of whom left me to become ambassadors at small Gulf embassies)—we really ran much of the NEA assignment process on our own initiative with little interference from either NEA or PER.

Library of Congress

The first step in the process was a determination of a post's needs. We dealt extensively with the country directors—or sometimes desk officers—to give us background information necessary to make the best selection possible. We had access to people who were up for assignment; so the second step was to become familiar with them. My philosophy was that if one comes up with good ideas before anyone else, the battle was almost always won. Initiative paid off.

Many assignments required a series of moves in a daisy chain fashion. I might have to shift one person from one post to another to accommodate the needs of a post or another officer. I believe that as I learned more about the process I was able to get all interested parties—NEA, PER and the Foreign Service employee affected—to accept my recommendations.

I should also mention that we felt very strongly about finding suitable assignments for officers and staff who were part of the NEA “family” for whom at the moment no suitable assignment could be found in NEA. That objective involved a good deal of “horse trading” with my colleagues who were handling other bureaus and offices. We did our best to accommodate those who for one reason or another wanted to leave the area in which they had been working, and that required flexibility and ingenuity at times.

I was working on personnel when GLOP (the global assignment process) was mandated by Secretary Kissinger. This approach was intended to provide officers with out-of-area experiences—the Secretary apparently believing that officers were too in-grown and needed broader knowledge. Allegedly, the genesis was a visit by Secretary Kissinger to Mexico City. During a meeting with the embassy staff, he asked what the officers thought of our Southeast Asia policy. The response was that people assigned to Mexico didn't think much about policies outside their country or region; it was not their business. The secretary was reported to have been greatly upset and set in motion the GLOP process. The cynics said that in fact, this new process was intended to remove officers from their area of expertise and thereby reduce any possible negative reaction to the Secretary's

Library of Congress

substantive policies. I think it was essentially a failure because it was used by senior officials in such a way that it insured the retention of its “stars” by each bureau and made available for world-wide assignments those officers that were somewhat more limited in their capabilities.

A great number of exceptions were made to the policy; I managed to get one for myself. I had been slated to move to Islamabad as political counselor. Since I had served in NEA for many years, GLOP would have barred my assignment to Pakistan—or any South Asian country. I should have been assigned outside of NEA. As a matter of fact, it was very difficult for anyone, particularly at mid-career or senior levels, to obtain concurrence from a bureau which did not know the individual. As I said, I did manage to get an exception because I was part of a “tandem” couple—i.e. married to another Foreign Service officer. But I was not the only exception; a lot were made, thus undermining whatever objective the Secretary initially had in mind.

I have been asked whether the system within which I worked was useful for the Service and its FSOs. I would hardly characterize it as a “system.” It was rife with special arrangements. Assignments depended greatly on the initiative of officers like myself, but a great deal of power continued to reside in the hands of senior officials in the bureaus. An assistant secretary who wanted to block an assignment or get it changed would be successful in the great majority of cases, even if what he was trying to do broke all the rules. When they focused on a particular case, nothing could ordinarily be done to prevent senior officials' getting their way, however disruptive their demands might be to the overall process.

Moreover, I think the Department and the Foreign Service were ill served by a system which I would characterize as a “first past the post” arrangement. That is to say, a number of candidates would be proposed for a vacancy; one would be chosen and the others had to seek other possibilities. There was no systematic effort made to weigh on a global basis where an officer might serve usefully and what such an assignment might do for his or her

Library of Congress

career development. Only sporadically would some one like myself or my deputies say, “Look, here are a dozen officers whose tours will be completed shortly. Here are a dozen up-coming vacancies. Let's sort all of this out to see what the best mix might be.” That was not done—it never has been done. I think were the system to focus on such process it would greatly improve the performance of the institution and certainly the development of FSOs.

The issue of minority and women assignments was quite alive in the Department at the time. I found it interesting to watch (and participate) as the views of the Department and NEA evolved during my tour as a personnel officer. As an illustration of that, I recall the case of the Consulate General in Calcutta. Joe Sisco was the assistant secretary for NEA at the time. Joe decided to place in good overseas positions those who had served him well and faithfully when he was the assistant secretary for [the Bureau of] International Organizations, which had very few overseas positions—maybe Geneva and Vienna, but not many. I think Joe would agree that he did find good positions for his old staff; he probably would be quite proud of it, in fact. In 1971, one of the assignments he tried to arrange was that of a woman for a political officer position in Calcutta. The consul general was very much opposed to the proposed assignment. He made it very clear that he did not think a woman could be an effective political officer in Calcutta, where many of the more important politicians were bachelors. We pointed out to him that we had a very effective female political officer in the embassy in New Delhi as well as at the consulate general in Bombay. But the consul general said, in writing no less, that he could not accept a woman political officer. His views were accepted by the Department.

A couple of years later, after that consul general had been reassigned elsewhere the same woman officer came up again for assignment. It was proposed that she be assigned as deputy principal officer in Calcutta. There were absolutely no objections from anyone in Washington or the field to the proposal. No one, by 1973, dared to fight an assignment on grounds of gender. There had been a dramatic shift in sentiment and practice in the Department during the first part of the 1970s, although women were not yet being

Library of Congress

assigned to most Middle East posts in “outside jobs”—that is jobs that required contact with local people.

Incredibly, in retrospect, there was also a kind of unwritten rule that Jewish officers would not be assigned to an Arab Middle East country or to Israel, although that latter prohibition began to break down while I was working on personnel matters. The first breach in the Israeli post assignment practices came by accident. I was in the process of assigning an officer to our embassy in Tel Aviv. After the panel had approved the assignment, I had an opportunity to chat with this officer. Much to my surprise, he told me he was Jewish. I later told the country director who was as surprised as I had been. The assignment went through without trouble; it never created any controversy. That may have been the first crack; by now of course the policy has been radically changed and there is a Jewish ambassador in Israel. The Arab country barrier was not broken during my personnel assignments. In closing this chapter, I should mention “lessons learned.” For the first time in my career, I really learned where power rested in the Department of State. I had an opportunity to see the organization as a whole—as one can if working in PER and if one is alert. I saw the way ambassadors and DCMs were named; I watched the clash of interest with great fascination. It was an education that I only could have received in very few other offices. It was that that made those four years so valuable.

In general, I felt that PER was vastly overstaffed and that people in the regional bureaus spent much too much time on personnel matters—whether it was technically their responsibility or not. This was particularly true for assignments. As I suggested earlier, the “system” was no system; I think a more disciplined process would have served the Foreign Service better.

Finally, just a brief personal note. During these four years, I got married to another Foreign Service officer. When it was time for us to go overseas again, the question of a tandem assignment arose—that is, an assignment of both of us to positions at the same post. We were one of the first couples in the Foreign Service to face this challenge. I take my hat

Library of Congress

off to Bill Macomber, the deputy under secretary for administration. It was he who pushed through the idea of tandem assignments; he made it possible for my wife to continue her career in the Foreign Service.

Getting such assignments was a very difficult process. I was greatly assisted by the fact that I was working in PER; I had advance knowledge of what jobs were opening. I was assigned as political counselor at our embassy in Islamabad. My wife was an economic cone officer and there was no immediate opening at the embassy for someone of her rank. However, I was able to discover that an appropriate position would be coming up the following year, and we were able to work out a tacit agreement with PER that she would be moved into it when the incumbent was transferred. In the meantime, she would take Leave Without Pay. That worked out very well despite the initial misgivings of Ambassador Henry Byroade, then serving in his sixth ambassadorship. Byroade, a onetime general who preferred good-looking women to smart ones, had great doubts about the feasibility of tandem assignments. He remarked to Ray Hunt that the Schaffers would spend all of their time chatting with each other at the water cooler. The story ended happily. Byroade was pleased with the work of both of us and became a warm friend and supporter. One other dividend was that my wife used her time on leave to produce our second son.

I found considerable resistance to the idea of tandem assignments among my colleagues on the assignment panels. It was led by unmarried women officers, interestingly enough. They probably felt that they had sacrificed a family life for the opportunity to become members of the Foreign Service. So they were not at all enthusiastic about supporting a concept which would allow someone to have both a family life and a professional career. On the other hand, NEA was not at all resistant to this new policy. Ray Hunt thought it was a great idea and gave it strong support, partly of course because of our relationship. Arch Blood was the chief of the Assignment Branch after having been removed unceremoniously from Dacca by Nixon and Kissinger. He too was very supportive of tandem assignments.

Library of Congress

Q: We are now in 1974 when you were assigned to Pakistan as the political counselor. Was that assignment part of a long range career development pattern to make you a South Asia expert?

SCHAFFER: This was very much a resumption of my earlier career, when I was doing political analysis and reporting on South Asia. I very anxious to have this assignment because it fitted in very nicely with my career objectives as an area specialist. I was very keen to have some experience in Pakistan. I had served six years in India and I thought it was appropriate to seek another assignment in the area—especially Pakistan. So I actively sought the political counselor position. I need to mention again at this point the GLOP program. For a while, I thought that it would derail my Pakistan assignment. In fact, although Ambassador Byroade and NEA had already agreed, my assignment was put in suspense while the GLOP process was being implemented. I was quite outraged; I felt that I had worked in the personnel process for about four years which as far as I was concerned certainly was an “out of area” assignment. I had an opportunity to return to my chosen field—political work in South Asia. Initially I was told that my work as the NEA personnel officer was in fact part of my South Asia experience and therefore could not be considered as having met the GLOP criteria. Hence I could not go to Pakistan.

I finally managed to have the erroneous PER decision overruled, as many others did as well. As I said earlier, my assignment to Pakistan was part of a tandem assignment process. These were difficult for PER to work out and so a case could be made that it should go through. But on the other hand PER was not anxious to be perceived as favoring one of its own staff. Finally, we went to AFSA (the American Foreign Service Association) and got it to support our case; it recommended that an exception be made in the Schaffer case because of the joint assignment possibility which in AFSA's strong view should have priority over the GLOP requirements. Finally, PER agreed and my wife and I went to Islamabad. We were pioneers in the tandem assignment process. We had

Library of Congress

shown flexibility by agreeing that my wife would take one year of leave without pay so that we could serve at the same post.

As I said, the ambassador at the time was Henry Byroade. He had been a military officer when Secretary George Marshall brought into the Department. Pakistan was his sixth ambassadorship - and his last after a very distinguished career. The DCM was Hobart Luppi, with whom I had worked in the economic section in New Delhi.

It was not unusual in those days for officers to be rotated between Pakistan and India—although it was not usual enough in my opinion. When I was working in the personnel assignment process, I made an effort to get officers to serve in both countries. I thought it was important for our representatives to have a balanced view of these two rivals.

The Pakistan government preferred that our officers serve first in Pakistan—and preferably only in Pakistan. They wanted our personnel imbued with the Pakistani view of the world. We made a bad mistake when we acceded to their wishes because officers—particularly political officers—can be much more effective if they have been exposed to both countries.

I did find a degree of localitis in Islamabad; i.e. some accepted the Pakistani version without much challenge, although I think it was far less than had existed in the 1960s when the localitis in both Pakistan and India was very pronounced, starting with the ambassadors. The Pakistanis had no problem dealing with an officer who had served as many years as I had in India. In my contacts with the Pakistanis, in fact, I think my experience proved advantageous in that they looked on me as a person who could give them assessments of Indian affairs based on some first-hand experience.

There were two other Foreign Service officers in the political section in addition to a couple of Agency people. That compared to the staff in New Delhi of probably seven Foreign Service political officers. Part of the discrepancy was historic; part of it stemmed from the relative quiescence in Pakistani domestic politics, particularly if compared to events in India. There was only so much that had to be covered and furthermore, regardless of its

Library of Congress

pretensions, Pakistan was not a major player on the world-wide stage in those days. There were far fewer foreign embassies in Islamabad than there were in New Delhi. The Indians tried to play a major role on the international scene; the Pakistanis did not and therefore our dialogue—and that of other leading nations—with them was relatively limited. So I was quite satisfied with our staffing.

Indeed one of the problems in Islamabad was that the number of Pakistani leaders and politicians who could be contacted was quite limited. In fact, it took careful coordination among the embassy sections to insure that officers were not stumbling over each other—i.e. trying to contact the same people.

Islamabad was an artificial capital; it has changed immeasurably since those days. In the mid-1970s it had an almost antiseptic atmosphere which made it quite different from any other South Asian city. It seemed like a suburb planted in lovely scenery—the foothills of Margala range. Life was so comfortable, entirely untypical of South Asia, that one felt a need to get out of town if one was to do a proper job. The problem was compounded by the seductive nature of life. It was a wonderful place for people like us with young children. There was plenty of household help available. It was certainly healthier than other Pakistani and Indian cities. You could travel easily to Murree—a nearby hill station—where in winter one could roll around in the snow. The housing was new and quite satisfactory. So living in Islamabad was very, very comfortable.

However, Islamabad's very nature had a deleterious effect on our work. It was essentially a government town. One met very few people in either Islamabad or its twin city Rawalpindi, who were not connected with the government—either civilian or military. Business people who might have matters to transact with the government typically flew in in the morning and flew back out in the afternoon. There was no substantial business community in the capital. There were no retired people as there are now. People who lived in Islamabad never saw themselves as real residents; they would tell you that they

Library of Congress

came from one of the provinces and were in Islamabad only because they worked for the government.

Nevertheless, in the case of Pakistan, having an artificial capital was an advantage. The government had resided in Karachi—a city overwhelmed by population pressures, primarily from Muslim refugees from India. Karachi was also a business and industrial center. On the partition of India in 1947, Karachi found itself the capital of the new country of Pakistan. It was not a good situation for a new government—an overcrowded city with very limited facilities. So the government decided to build a new capital. As I said, that had drawbacks but it certainly was an improvement over Karachi. I think it probably had a positive effect on the operations of the government—fewer distractions and temptations.

As political counselor, I had many activities. We tried to follow the domestic political scene which was increasingly dominated by the Pakistan People's Party, led by Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. We also followed Pakistan foreign policy, although, as I mentioned earlier, it was not a very aggressive one. We were, needless to say, greatly interested in U.S.-Pakistan relations; Ambassador Byroade had gone to Pakistan with the avowed aim of restoring the military supply relationship which had been essentially suspended, for the second time, during the 1971 war with India. What was left of that supply relationship was highly restricted. Byroade was able after a year's hard work to get some change in U.S. policy; that had a positive impact on U.S.-Pakistan relations, but the heyday of the alliance was never reached again. We were still in an alliance relationship—technically speaking; the Pakistanis were still members of CENTO [Central Asia Treaty Organization] and we had bilateral security agreements with them which were still in force. But in fact the alliance had become a hollow matter. The Pakistanis resented the fact that we had not come to their assistance in 1971. They would reluctantly acknowledge that we had tilted towards them, but they were understandably wary of us since we had been unable to prevent the break-up of united Pakistan after the Bangladesh war of 1971.

Library of Congress

So Pakistan under Bhutto sought to enlarge its relationships with other countries, seeking support for its anti-India policy. It was not yet eligible to join the Non-Alignment Movement because of its continuing membership in the Western alliance system, but it did pursue such countries as North Korea and others decidedly anti-Western in political orientation. Pakistan also accelerated its efforts to cultivate Islamic countries, for both political and, increasingly, for economic reasons, following the hike in oil prices and the enrichment of the Persian Gulf states. The latter contributed large sums to Pakistan for economic and humanitarian support.

We lived with the U.S. policy. None of us in the embassy were interested in restoring the old relationship. Byroade only wanted to liberalize the military supply process, but even he had to recognize that there was no reason—even if it had been possible—to go back to a relationship which did not meet the needs of the mid-1970s. We did have high on our agenda a better relationship between India and Pakistan; we urged both sides to carry out the provisions of the Simla Agreement signed in 1972. We accepted that agreement as the fundamental basis for the relationship between the two countries; we therefore, without taking the issue to public forums, quietly, but forcefully, encouraged both New Delhi and Islamabad to abide by the agreement. We relied on Simla because if the Pakistanis and the Indian could develop an acceptable relationship based on that agreement that was far better than any alternative that we or any member of the international community could devise—particularly in light of the failures of previous mediations.

We kept in very close contact with our counterparts in New Delhi. I never felt that there was any strong clientitis such as had prevailed unfortunately in earlier days. From time to time, I would go to Delhi; members of our embassy in Delhi, including the political counselor, Paul Kreisberg, would come to Islamabad. We invariably exchanged views through various means. I think both embassies recognized that the 1971 war had immutably changed the political situation in South Asia. India had become the preeminent country and would remain so. But we did not believe that the change in the power

Library of Congress

relationship should mean that we would tilt towards India or that we would recognize India as the security manager in the area. We continued to value the relationship we had with Pakistan and made that clear both in Islamabad and Delhi.

One of the first things that happened soon after my arrival was Henry Kissinger's visit in October, 1974. He was on a three-nation trip in South Asia, focusing primarily on India where he sought to repair the damage to U.S.-India relations caused by the India-Pakistan war of 1971. That visit was a major event in Islamabad as well, and the first two months of my tour were spent preparing it.

While I was in Islamabad, there was gradual implementation of the Indo-Pak normalization program as stipulated in the Simla Agreement. So I was able to witness the re-establishment of normal diplomatic relations, more open transit between the two countries, an increase in cultural exchanges. Neither the embassy in New Delhi nor ourselves had any illusions that a bright new era had dawned which would see close and warm relations between the two countries; we were satisfied to support the slow evolving process of improving relations while they kept the Kashmir issue on the back burner. We recognized that the future of Kashmir would not be settled soon, but we also understood that it was possible to set the issue aside—which the Indians and Pakistanis did with our encouragement.

I would describe the Pakistan-India relationship in this period as generally calm. It was disturbed briefly by the agreement that the Indians worked out with the Kashmiri leader, Sheikh Mohd. Abdullah, who had returned to power with the understanding that he would accept the permanence of Kashmir's accession to India. That of course brought a sharp denunciation of Abdullah from the Pakistanis—as they would have denounced any leader who agreed to India's claims. But generally speaking, the years 1974-77 were quiet ones in India-Pakistan relations.

Library of Congress

By the end of my tour, I had pretty much reached the conclusion that India-Pakistan relations are the legacy of the Hindu-Muslim conflict for power in South Asia. They are also the aftermath of the terrible events that accompanied the partition of India in 1947, which created animosities and distrust that have marred relations ever since. Any hope that time might heal the wounds—or at least most of them—after the generation that witnessed the unspeakable brutalities of 1947 had passed away, had proved illusory. The hatreds spawned in 1947 just seem to carry on—on both sides of the border—generation after generation, as can be easily seen by reading any newspaper in either Pakistan or India. The situation has been politically exacerbated by the Kashmir issue, which leaves the two countries with a major unresolved problem—the cause already of two conflicts. This issue keeps the pot boiling between the two countries, even today with the Kashmir insurrection that began in 1989-90. With the pot boiling it is very difficult to set aside the historical injustices claimed by both sides.

Kashmir is essentially important because the two countries consider it so. It touches the core of their conceptions of nationhood. The Indians believe that to surrender Kashmir—either to Pakistan or to some kind of independence—would diminish the secular basis of the Indian nation. If an Indian state, particularly one with a Muslim majority, is allowed to secede from India then the whole validity of the Indian nation is called into question according to Indian politicians and leaders. The secular basis on which India was founded—i.e. one multi-cultural and multi-ethnic nation—in 1947 could be challenged; Pakistan was founded on the thesis of two nations—each with a clear religious majority—Hindus and Muslims.

In addition to the legal claims and conceptual reasons for keeping Kashmir in its present form, there is a widespread belief among the Indians that were Kashmir to secede, widespread communal disturbances similar to those that occurred in 1947-1948 would break out throughout India. The more the Indians believe in this outcome, the more likely it is to happen. There are many who predict that a Kashmir separation from India would

Library of Congress

lead to another mass slaughter of Muslims followed by a major emigration of the surviving victims to Pakistan.

The Pakistanis believe that they were defrauded when the Maharajah of Kashmir joined India in 1947. They felt that his action was illegal and that Kashmir should have been allowed—and still should be allowed today—to hold a referendum to decide its future, as called for by UN resolutions of 1948 and 1949. As I said, Pakistani policy is based on a two-nation concept; that translates into a belief that Kashmir, with its large Muslim majority, would opt to join Pakistan. In fact, Pakistanis feel that their nation is not complete without Kashmir. The “k” in the name “Pakistan” stands for Kashmir—a daily reminder for the Pakistanis that the business of partition remains unfinished.

So the status of Kashmir represents a fundamental clash between theories of nationhood, exacerbated by fifty years of bitterness stimulated by violence which stemmed from that clash. So it's a very difficult issue to resolve. In my view, a formal settlement of the dispute is not likely to come in the foreseeable future. India can not simply give up Kashmir; any government which would give the slightest hint of moving in that direction would be thrown out of power immediately. Similarly, the Pakistan government recognizes that public opinion in its country makes it impossible for it to give up on its insistence on self-determination. The best that can be hoped for is a return to the situation that existed during my tour in Pakistan when the status and future of Kashmir were not subject of any major discussions, but rather was in “deep freeze”—as arranged by Bhutto and Mrs. Gandhi at Simla.

As I mentioned earlier, I had an opportunity while serving in India to become very familiar with the Kashmir issue, at least as seen by New Delhi. I don't believe that my views were very much swayed by what I learned in Islamabad. I learned more details of what the Pakistanis were up to in the part of Kashmir which they held. There were some changes, as I have noted, with the return to power of Sheikh Abdullah. But as I have also said, Kashmir was not a burning issue during my tour in Islamabad.

Library of Congress

Before I arrived, the Pakistanis had been quite disturbed by the Indian nuclear test (May 1974)—their first—even after the Indians categorized it as being for peaceful purposes. The Pakistanis sought to obtain guarantees from the international community, but at the same time stepped up their own nuclear program, which became a source of considerable concern to the U.S. It was alleged that the Pakistanis actually had been working on a nuclear weapons program before May 1974. We were seeking to dissuade them from pursuing that path. The Pakistanis maintained that their program was for peaceful uses. We did not believe that assertion and managed to persuade the French not to proceed with plans to provide a reprocessing plant to Pakistan which would have produced the fissionable material required for a weapons program.

The nuclear problem became a major issue in U.S.-Pakistan relations. The Indian explosion of 1974 raised great concern in Washington and led to a strengthening of U.S. non-proliferation policy. We were concerned that Pakistan would follow suit and become the second power in South Asia that had a nuclear capability. We did our utmost to try to persuade the Pakistanis not to follow that route.

I think our non-proliferation strategy succeeded for a very long time—in the sense that from 1974 to earlier this month (May 1998)—over 25 years—no nation other than the five declared nuclear powers had exploded a device. A number of countries in fact abandoned their plans—e.g. South Africa and Brazil. So I think that the non-proliferation policy had a positive impact for a good many years, although we now know that both Pakistan and India had never really stopped their programs despite our protestations. In the absence of our strong pressure, the two countries might have developed nuclear weapons long before now. They also might have declared themselves, as India has just done, nuclear powers eligible for the same rights and privileges that Russia, China, Great Britain, France and ourselves now enjoy.

I want to stress that non-proliferation was a very important issue for us in the mid-and late-1970s and particularly after the Indian explosion of 1974, which prompted Congress to

Library of Congress

take the lead in enacting non-proliferation legislation. That legislation impacted severely on our relations with Pakistan and remains today a bone of contention not only in our foreign policy but within the U.S. itself.

The nuclear program is seen in Pakistan largely as a security matter, although undoubtedly there is are elements of prestige domestic politics as well. There were and are pressures, particularly acute at this moment, on the Pakistan government to pursue the nuclear development program because it is seen by important segments of the Pakistan public as important to the country's standing in the world. This is exemplified by the concept of the "Islamic Bomb." But I think security against a threat from India is by far the most important "raison d'#tre" for the nuclear program. The Pakistanis have seen that the availability of nuclear weapons, even if only a few, will more than offset any advantage India has in conventional weapons. In this view, nuclear weapons can be a valuable deterrent. Pakistan's security policy has always been Indo-centric. It has been designed to provide Pakistan with the security it believes it needs against a hostile threat from a more powerful neighbor. In 1971, the Pakistanis experienced the dismantling of their country by Indian forces. That is a part of history that they will not soon forget. The loss of East Pakistan was a real psychological blow to West Pakistan, particularly since it came unexpectedly—i.e. the people had not been told of the precarious military situation that had developed in the East. So most Pakistanis learned suddenly that all was lost in the East and that the proud Pakistan army in the East had surrendered. That was a real blow they believed themselves to be a martial race, superior in fighting skills to the Indians. As they would say, "One Pakistani can handle 10 Indians." The Indians were seen as "soft," non- martial—with the exception of a few groups. Even after the 1965 war, this myth survived and in Pakistan's self-image the Pakistani soldier was far superior to an Indian one. So 1971 came as a real shock to Pakistan.

There were some, and I think an increasing number during the period of my service in Islamabad, who thought that despite the great loss of prestige in 1971, Pakistan was better

Library of Congress

off without Bangladesh. A smaller Pakistan could be stronger without having to devote any of its resources to backward and politically difficult East Bengal.

Among some serious Pakistanis, there was concern that the Indians were bent on destroying all of Pakistan; they felt that India was not reconciled to the existence of a free and independent Pakistan and that sooner or later, India would try to absorb Pakistan or more likely to overwhelm it and make it into a client state, as Bangladesh had been in its early years after independence. In their view, another possibility was that India would break Pakistan up into several smaller states—Punjab, Sindh, Baluchistan, the North West Frontier Province, which it could manipulate from New Delhi.

The nuclear issue became closely tied to the question of whether to supply Pakistan with modern military jet aircraft. The Pakistan Air Force wanted to procure some A-7 planes. We were reluctant to agree to supply these planes while Pakistan continued its nuclear program. When Kissinger visited Pakistan in 1976—while I was on home leave—he made it quite clear that we would not provide the A-7s until the Pakistanis ceased work on their nuclear program. I don't think that his visit changed the situation at all; the Pakistanis went right ahead with their nuclear development program—that was their number one priority.

This 1976 visit was entirely different from the one Kissinger made in 1974 when there was a love fest between Bhutto and the secretary, with each feeding the other's large ego in public. Bhutto reveled in such praise; he always felt that his talents were too great to be limited just to Pakistan. He enjoyed any occasion when he might be seen as a global statesman, associating with such renown global strategists as Dr. Kissinger. Bhutto had a great knack of dealing effectively with American leaders and he cultivated many of them. So there was a good personal relationship between Dr. Kissinger and the Pakistan prime minister.

Bhutto dominated the political scene in Pakistan. In the embassy, he was Byroade's contact; that is the ambassador was essentially the only one who dealt with Bhutto.

Library of Congress

While Kissinger was in office, personal relations were good. I think Kissinger would have liked to have done more for Pakistan, but he had to recognize that, despite his earlier position immediately after the India-Pakistan war, non-proliferation had to be a principal objective of U.S. foreign policy and that Pakistan was very likely to be a proliferating state. He had to do what he could to try to persuade the Pakistanis to stop their program.

On the other hand, we did resume our military supply program in 1975; that is we provided military hardware—mainly spare parts for equipment delivered years earlier—that the Pakistanis paid for from their own resources. We did not provide training to any significant extent. I think we did the right thing in both restarting a supply program and denying jet aircraft. It was a balanced policy in light of India's significant military purchases from the Soviet Union and elsewhere. Despite their program, the Indians complained about our resumption of military supplies; no one was surprised when they did so.

The Pakistanis used to ask me about my views of Indian intentions. I took the view, based on my six years in India, that I did not believe that the mainstream of Indian political thought favored the demise of Pakistan. There were those Pakistanis who believed that I was much too optimistic. They thought they knew the Indians better than I - having lived among and along side them for many years - and tended to disregard my views. However, the main Pakistan point of view was that India was determined to become the dominant power in South Asia—the 1971 war being just the first step in that direction. So India posed a threat to Pakistan's security because such Indian dominance would force Pakistan to take positions favorable to India, even at the expense of Pakistan's own goals.

At the time I was in Pakistan, Bangladesh had been an independent country for several years. The relationship between the two countries was not good until the summer of 1975. I had been in Islamabad for about a year when the government of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman—the man credited for Bangladesh's independence in 1971—was overthrown and Mujibur himself was assassinated. A succession of governments followed, all of which took a more benign view of Pakistan and the Islamic connection between the two

Library of Congress

country I witnessed during my second and third years in Islamabad a great improvement in the relations between the two countries. It was not an issue that was very high on our agenda. I did discuss with Pakistani officials their views on outstanding issues that needed to be resolved—notably the division of assets and liabilities of the former united Pakistan and the repatriation to Pakistan of the Urdu-speaking minority in Bangladesh—the Biharis. They had migrated to Bangladesh from India and had been supporters of Pakistan during the 1971 civil war in East Pakistan. After independence, a good number of Biharis wished to emigrate to Pakistan. The U.S. government became interested in their plight for humanitarian reasons. So we did discuss this problem with the Pakistanis from time to time.

Let me talk a little about the Pakistani domestic scene. As I said, that landscape was dominated by Bhutto, who had become Prime Minister in 1973 after he changed the governmental structure. (He had earlier been President.) Increasingly, Bhutto became the sole decision-maker in the government. In 1974, during my first year in Islamabad, Bhutto moved to the right; he abandoned many of the socialist and populist crusades which had brought him to power and which had guided his government during its first few years in office. He moved right because first, he felt that those earlier policies had not been effective in terms of economic growth and development; secondly, he had personal problems with a number of leaders of the Left and thirdly, I think there was some speculation that Bhutto was returning to his normal role as a feudal leader who depended on close associates who held similar elite backgrounds.

Bhutto had a wide base of support which he gradually frittered away over the years. Initially he had the support of the intellectual community, among youths, among the urban lower class, among farmers; all of that eroded during his time in office. I met the man on several occasions, but only in passing. As I said, Bhutto was the Ambassador's contact; so I only saw him at social functions. Even then, Bhutto would not mingle with the guests,

Library of Congress

but held “court” in a side room where selected guests were brought to him. Under those circumstances, a political counselor could only watch the Prime Minister from afar.

I did meet his daughter on a number of occasions. During most of my tour, she was out of the country completing her studies. But I did have a special connection with her. My wife's oldest brother had been at Harvard with her. They developed a friendship and that gave us a special link to her. We didn't really develop any impressions because we didn't see her often enough; she seemed like an intelligent and capable young woman, but I would find it hard to say much more.

After three years in Pakistan, I got into trouble with Bhutto. In 1977, Bhutto decided to proceed with national elections. It was widely expected that he and his party—the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) —would win these without difficulty. The opposition had been largely split; the bureaucracy was subservient to Bhutto, doing whatever was necessary to make sure that things went well. Arnold Raphel, who was my deputy, famously remarked after visiting various parts of the country, “The 1977 election in Pakistan is going to be the non-event of the year.” It didn't turn out that way. The opposition came to life; the various factions managed to get together, although in a rather unwieldy fashion. It called itself the Pakistan National Alliance and contested in a united campaign against the PPP for many Parliamentary seats.

The election became a horse race; the PPP did in fact win it, but its victory was tainted by many accusations of fraud and unfairness. In some of the constituencies, where we knew the opposition to be very strong, we had been told that opposition candidates did not feel secure enough to campaign, i.e. no rallies, public appearances, posters, etc. As a result of these tactics and outright rigging of the vote count, places like Lahore went PPP by wide margins despite the strongly anti-PPP sentiment all observers knew was prevalent there. I felt at the time, as did my colleagues in the embassy, that Bhutto would probably have won had there been fair and free elections—although by a smaller majority than the official returns indicated.

Library of Congress

The news of Bhutto's reelection produced a strongly negative reaction in many quarters in Pakistan. There were demonstrations around the country. Disturbances broke out, particularly in the cities. Over the ensuing weeks these increased in intensity despite efforts to find a political compromise between Bhutto and the opposition that would have kept the prime minister in power while giving a greater number of seats to the opposition. The demonstrations began as outcries about the election process, then became an anti-government movement. The demand was that the government resign because it had been elected illegally.

So Bhutto faced an unanticipated situation, which was new to him. In looking back, I think his natural inclination—as it would be for many leaders in South Asia—was to accuse outsiders of undermining him and thereby causing him almost to lose the election. As is almost customary in the subcontinent, the power which is most likely to be fingered in such instances is the U.S., which is accused of being the “hidden hand” pulling the power strings. I assume that Bhutto knew that this allegation was certainly not true, but it was—and is—a credible accusation; South Asia gives the U.S. far more credit for influence than it deserves. In addition, there was a residual anti-American feeling among some Pakistanis stemming from the 1965 and 1971 wars and their aftermath. We let them down.

So Bhutto targeted the U.S.; specifically he focused on me as political counselor and Jon Gibney who was the political officer at our consulate general in Lahore. Bhutto knew that I had been meeting with opposition leaders, as had Gibney. He called these activities to Byroade's attention. The ambassador did not order me to stop, but he did suggest that I be cautious. I should note that all of this happened in the last days of Ambassador Byroade—he left about a month after the election. Peter Constable became charg#—he had replaced Hobart Luppi as DCM.

The famous incident that involved Robert Moore and myself has been called “the party is over” event. As political counselor, I was in close touch with our post in Karachi—headed by Consul General Robert Moore—as well as our establishments in Lahore and Peshawar

Library of Congress

as the domestic situation in Pakistan appeared to be getting critical. One day, I received a call from Moore who wanted me to know that there were reports floating around Karachi that Bhutto had been seized by some Pakistani military officers during a social occasion and that he was under arrest. I thanked Moore for the information and agreed to stay in touch should either of us hear more about the rumor.

Some hours later, Moore called again to report that he had been informed by a more reliable source that the rumor he passed on a few hours earlier was erroneous. In doing so, Moore used what he considered veiled language—as he should not have. He told me, “the party is over,” meaning to say by this that if the story had had any validity, it no longer did so. Undoubtedly, our conversation was monitored by Pakistani intelligence services—we were quite aware that the intelligence services tapped our phones—home and office.

A few days later, Bhutto gave a stirring speech to Parliament accusing foreigners of interfering in Pakistan domestic affairs. He proceeded to quote from a telephone intercept and gave the Moore phrase a new twist. The remark “the party is over” according to Bhutto was a gloating statement made by a foreigner about the impending downfall of his government. But he quickly added that “the party was not over” and that he and his government would continue to rule despite foreign interference. He deliberately took Moore's statement out of context and chose to put a spin on the conversation which made it into an entirely different dialogue from that which had taken place. He used these words to prove his point about foreign interference; it undoubtedly helped his case.

After Bhutto's speech, it became conventional wisdom that I had uttered the famous phrase. I am still remembered in Pakistan for that phrase. It is amazing that twenty years later, people still raise that incident with me. I have become a footnote in Pakistan history despite that fact that I had not uttered the phrase in the first place and that Bhutto took it entirely out of context and gave it a spin totally unrelated to the subject of my conversation with Moore. Neither of us had the possible fall of the Bhutto government in mind.

Library of Congress

After that speech, I became persona non grata in Pakistan although I was not expelled. As I have mentioned before, Islamabad was essentially a government town. In those circumstances, either by choice or direction, people did not want to have anything to do with me. I was shunned. While the furor was still going on, I suddenly received word from the Department that it wished to reassign me directly to New Delhi as political counselor there. Paul Kreisberg was about to leave and I was wanted as his replacement. I accepted that assignment. I think the India assignment came up in part as a result of Bhutto's injudicious comments. I was told later by people involved in my transfer that that was one of the considerations. The other consideration was that in addition to the Department needing someone who knew something about India, people in Washington knew I was on very good terms with a number of key officials in the new Indian government, including the prime minister. All those factors, I think, made me an obvious choice.

I have talked about the incident with the then foreign secretary, but I have never had a good explanation of Bhutto's actions. The foreign secretary maintained that Bhutto was seriously concerned about the American role in Pakistan. I don't believe that. I think that Bhutto, being a political opportunist, was looking for a cause ~~which~~ which he could use for his own purposes. He used the phrase as a way to dramatize for the Pakistani public his own role as the watchdog of Pakistan and thereby to try to improve his standing with his own people at a time when it was at a very low point—a situation primarily of his own making. Picking on the American political counselor was a safe and possibly advantageous avenue to pursue.

On the nuclear issue, we believed that the Pakistanis were seeking an explosive capability. They denied it; they maintained that their nuclear program was entirely for peaceful purposes. They needed the electric power and therefore had to find a way to harness nuclear energy. They planned to develop a quite extensive network of nuclear power stations. We viewed the Pakistani justification with considerable skepticism. We suspected that their research was directed to a more martial purpose. The issue loomed

Library of Congress

very large in our relationship and soon after I left, overwhelmed it; we were obliged to enforce the legislation prohibiting continuation of our assistance programs. That suspension lasted only briefly because the relationship between the U.S. and Pakistan improved immeasurably after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. But that all happened after I had left.

While I was there we spent a good deal of time seeking to persuade the Pakistanis to give up their nuclear program. This was a major item on Secretary Kissinger's agenda when he visited in the summer of 1976. India had exploded a nuclear device in 1974; Kissinger had at first reacted only mildly to that test, but Congressional and public opinion finally forced the Ford administration to put non-proliferation high on its policy agenda. Kissinger was then obliged to raise the issue quite forcefully with the Pakistanis. I was not in Pakistan during Kissinger's visit; I was on leave.

The U.S. government finally convinced the French to cease their collaboration with Pakistan on the construction of a reprocessing plant in Pakistan. That upset the government and people of Pakistan—understandably so. But we felt it important to move Paris in that direction. I think that the U.S. government was correct in its concerns; we played as correctly as could be expected. We did everything we could while I was in Islamabad; at the time we had important bargaining chips—the most important was Pakistani interest in acquiring sophisticated A-7 military aircraft from us. Kissinger sought to use that Pakistani interest in his discussions on non-proliferation. I am not sure that even with these chips we might have succeeded; my guess is that despite the strictures imposed by our legislation, the Pakistanis would have persisted in their program. They considered it a matter of vital national security in light of what had already happened in India.

Then, as now, the Pakistanis viewed the development of a nuclear weapon as a deterrent against an India armed with nuclear weapons. They could not be sure that in the wake of its successful 1974 explosion, India might not use their superiority to move sooner or later

Library of Congress

to the development of an actual bomb. So the Pakistanis felt that they needed to develop an off-set weapon. It has been argued—and I think effectively—that Pakistan's interest in going nuclear" preceded India's 1974 explosion. Bhutto was certainly on record in the early 1970s about the importance of Pakistan becoming a nuclear armed nation. There are some who think that the Pakistanis saw—and continue to see— their nuclear bomb development as an equalizer in their rivalry with India, which of course is much larger and has many more resources. A Pakistani nuclear bomb would off-set the conventional military advantage that the Indians have.

I should make a comment about our relationship with other foreign embassies. We had contacts with other embassies, but we generally felt that our own information was better than that available to those missions. We took events and trends in both Pakistani domestic politics and foreign relations more seriously than did the other embassies. As a matter of fact, I can not now recall any really worthwhile conversations that I might have had with my diplomatic colleagues during my tour in Islamabad. I thought that Europeans really didn't pay much attention to Pakistan particularly after the secession of Bangladesh. If they had much interest, it was in the commercial area. The British interest, which was greater than that of other European countries, had come to focus on consular relations due to the large scale movement of Pakistanis to the United Kingdom.

Let me now turn briefly to a quick description of the staffing of our embassy in New Delhi. The ambassador was Robert Goheen who had just arrived after serving as president of Princeton University. He was born in India—the son of missionary parents. This was his first diplomatic assignment. He was one of several academic people Jimmy Carter appointed. Another well-known academic was KingmaBrewster, the former president of Yale, who became our ambassador to the Court of St. James's. Goheen was the ambassador for my whole tour. I had never met him before, even though I had spent a year in Princeton at the Woodrow Wilson School—part of my mid-career education

Library of Congress

when he headed the university. But not surprisingly, I learned a lot about Goheen while at Princeton.

My first DCM was Arch Blood. I knew him well because of his famous stand on the Pakistani military crack-down while he was the consul general in Dhaka (then spelled Dacca), East Pakistan. Arch opposed U.S. policy and said so in a famous cable. Retribution was swiftly meted out by President Nixon and National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger. I had worked closely with Arch while both of us were in Personnel—his assignment having come soon after the Dhaka episode. He was my DCM throughout my tour.

The rest of the staff was about the same size it had been ten years earlier, when I served my first tour in New Delhi. It may have been a bit smaller, but only marginally so. In the ten-year intervening period, there had been two major changes. The first was that the enormous assistance mission had disappeared. We had ceased our economic assistance after the third India-Pakistan war. There was still a small caretaker cadre to follow the implementation of projects begun before the termination of assistance and to manage the allocation of local currencies.

It was quite clear that assistance would be resumed under the new Carter administration. Mrs. Gandhi had been voted out of office and been replaced by Morarji Desai. The Carter administration was very pleased with the course of events. Desai had been known as a human rights defender; he restored democratic practices after Mrs. Gandhi's "State of Emergency." These factors were given great weight by the Carter administration. I think that Mrs. Gandhi's departure - along with policies which were anathema to us - pulled the rug out from those who had advocated a termination of assistance. After these events, there was no reason why the U.S. should not have an assistance program in one of the largest countries of the Third World.

Library of Congress

The second change was a psychological one. I discussed at some length while reviewing my first tour in Delhi the sense of historical importance that my colleagues and I experienced. That feeling had much to do with the leadership and enthusiasm provided by Ambassadors Galbraith and Bowles. They made us—Bowles particularly—feel that we were serving in an important enterprise and that in terms of broad U.S. interests, India was one the most significant nations. We felt part of an historical change in the U.S.-India relationship. Bowles made a serious and successful effort to gather a very talented staff.

That feeling of participation in something important had disappeared when I started my second tour in Delhi. For almost all personnel, Delhi was just another post—an assignment of a specific duration before proceeding to another post. The feeling of being part of something special had completely dissipated. The view that India was a very important country to U.S. interests had lost its edge. Goheen, obviously interested in India in light of his experience there as a youth, did not inspire the same sense of excitement and concern that Bowles had done. I thought that the morale of the staff was not low, but didn't have the spirit that prevailed in the Galbraith and Bowles eras. There was no sense of excitement.

I was probably more interested in India than most of my colleagues. I liked the country and I had visited much of India. Nevertheless, I felt some sense of disappointment with the embassy atmosphere existing in 1977, even though I was serving in my second tour in a position of greater responsibility than I had during the first one. I was also in general disappointed to some extent with Indian attitudes. I don't think I felt comfortable in this atmosphere and certainly I remembered the Galbraith and Bowles periods as being much more exciting and rewarding. I thought that I had learned something about India in the 1960s. By the mid-1970s, fewer important issues were dealt with in government-to-government channels. There was no sense any longer that what happened in India was very important to the U.S. There were people who scoffed at Bowles for his stress on India's importance. Yet most of the embassy officers in the 1960s recognized that they

Library of Congress

were witnessing, even taking part in some very important developments. We may have been wrong, but we were convinced that the fate of India was very important to the U.S.

The political reporting, in my recollection, consisted in part of reports which would include contributions from our three constituent posts. These reports tended to be “think-pieces” longer-range points of view. We also sought to have occasional—at least annual—meetings with the political officers from constituent posts. These meetings would often go beyond issues of Indian domestic policies; we used to invite political officers from embassies in adjoining countries—particularly Pakistan. Embassy officers traveled around to the constituent posts and would occasionally draft joint reports with consulate officers to be sent to the embassy.

This was still the era when constituent posts could submit their political reports directly to the Department, with a copy to the embassy. If we had any comments, we would supplement the constituent post's report with an analysis of our own, usually after consultation with the consul general. This process was supported by the embassy because the alternative would have been to send all reports to the embassy and have it forward them. That would have been very cumbersome and time consuming. I always considered the relationship between my section and the political officers in the consulate generals excellent. We did have some differences of views, which we discussed in a collegial manner; I don't recall any occasion when our views and those of a CG were so far apart that we felt “something had to be done.”

The Desai government was a great improvement in many respects over the Gandhi regime both in its international and domestic policies. However, I and others felt that this new government was never in the same category with the regimes of the 1960s led by Nehru, Shastri and Mrs. Gandhi.

My other concern related to the embassy's staffing. By 1977, as I have suggested before, there were a good number of officers who were not committed to India, but viewed the

Library of Congress

assignment as just another posting. They were not as interested in India or their tasks as their predecessors had been in the 1960s. Also, I thought that the embassy staffing was less specialized and talented than I remembered it in the 1960s. That naturally had some impact on my attitude towards the embassy in 1977. I think it might be interesting to compare my views of the situation with those of some of my colleagues. However, I recognize that a second tour in a country will always recall the “good old times.” The second tour is somewhat of an anti-climax, particularly in my case since I had served in the embassy headed by Chester Bowles. You can't go home again. This disappointment was not overcome by the fact that I was in a much more senior position in my second tour, although as I discussed earlier, in my first tour I had a very interesting and important portfolio. Second tours in the same city tend to disappoint.

You have asked me what my Pakistani experience did for my analysis of India. It was important in that in the eyes of my colleagues and some Indians I came to be regarded as a Pakistan expert. But I have to note that the Pakistan situation which I knew so well changed soon after my arrival in Delhi. It was only about seven weeks after my transfer that Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was overthrown by General Mohammad Zia ul-Haq. After that, there was a prolonged period of martial law.

My wife, who had been a first secretary in the embassy's economic section—the number two position—was unable to accompany me to Delhi when I transferred. She was told that the needs of the post would have to take priority. The chief of the section was on leave so that my wife had to remain to submit the required economic reports. Therefore, this led me to make frequent trips to Islamabad from Delhi until mid-July (about 2 months) when Tezi was released and I was able to drive the whole family to Delhi. Eventually, she was assigned as science attach#.

I was in Islamabad for the famous—or infamous—4th of July party of 1977. That came only hours before the overthrow of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto by General Zia. My wife and I may

Library of Congress

be the only people in the Foreign Service who simultaneously were included in both the Indian and Pakistani diplomatic lists—one as principal and the other as spouse.

I don't think that my tour in Pakistan changed my views of India. It may have given me a better appreciation of the general South Asia scene, but I don't believe that my general observations on Indian policies were very different after my Pakistan tour. I do believe that the Pakistan experience gave me a better understanding of India-Pakistan relations. I have always thought that it was important for each embassy to be staffed by officers who had had experience in the other one sometime in their career. It is particularly true for political officers and the DCMs. When I served in PER, I did try to arrange for such assignments in the early 1970s. I was successful to some extent. There are in fact now a number of officers who have served in both India and Pakistan; efforts continue - although fitfully - to provide that dual experience to our officers. I was able to pursue this objective later as well when I served in NEA—especially after I became deputy assistant secretary. Then I tried very hard to encourage the system and the officers to accept the concept of assignments to both Pakistan and India.

I think that by the late 1970s, there was a cadre of South Asia experts, although it was rather thin. The main problem was that senior positions - from DCM to section chiefs - were often given to officers with very little experience in the area. Under such circumstances, it is very difficult to build a sturdy cadre of experts in South Asia—even if it is one of several specialties that an officer might have. Our officers are no fools; they see who is assigned to Delhi and Islamabad as DCM or political counselor or as chief of the economic section. They notice that, too often, the assignment is given to someone with European or East Asian or Middle East experience. That discouraged officers from undertaking expertise in the area since as they saw it they would not necessarily be assigned to leadership jobs following many years in the “vineyard.”

Language capability is an important factor in this. It always seemed to me that a young officer who speaks Japanese can look forward to a satisfactory career specializing in at

Library of Congress

least East Asia and probably Japan. If he is any good, eventually he can aspire to be the DCM or the political or economic counselor or the consul general in one of the other Japanese cities, if he maintains his language skills. Unfortunately, in South Asia, we have a different situation. Language skills are not nearly as important as they are in Japan. On the other hand, South Asia has five embassies to Japan's one.

There is another issue that I have found interesting. There was a time during my PER tour when experienced Japan experts were given preferential treatment in assignments outside Japan. That policy was viewed as bringing Japanese experience to bear on the activities of some of our larger embassies—London, Paris and even New Delhi. My only experiences in seeking assignments for South Asian specialists outside the area were generally unsuccessful. I looked for countries with large Indian or Pakistani populations; it then was made clear to me that the last thing those embassies wanted was someone who had long experience in India or Pakistan. People were afraid that such an officer would identify himself or herself with the South Asian minority populations at the expense of his or her interest in the broader view that an embassy should take.

My Indian contacts seemed not to be adversely affected by my Pakistan assignment. Indeed, I was welcomed back very warmly. Several of my previous contacts had of course moved along during the ten years since my last tour in Delhi. Many had been promoted to very important positions—e.g. members of Parliament became Cabinet ministers. In no way did I ever sense on the part of anybody—members of Parliament, Cabinet and sub-Cabinet officers, journalists, academics—that my tour in Pakistan created any barrier between my interlocutors and myself. In fact, I believe the reverse was actually the case.

The Pakistanis would be more suspicious if an officer had served in Delhi. I think that was certainly true in my case, even though it had been many years since I had served in India before I reached Islamabad. I should also say that while in Pakistan and while the India desk officer, I visited India on many occasions, so that I was able to maintain contacts with Indian officials.

Library of Congress

Let me turn to the political situation in Delhi when I arrived in 1977. I would characterize it as very disappointing because the Janata Party—the former opposition coalition which won the Parliamentary elections in 1977—was never able to get its act together properly. One of the problems was that it consisted of a variety of different parties that had coalesced around their shared opposition to Mrs. Gandhi and the state of emergency she declared in 1975. The party included right-wing Hindu components and radical socialists. It was very difficult for such a government to pull all of these disparate views together to support any meaningful program.

I think the political situation in India had gone through a transformation in the intervening ten years since my last tour. The Congress Party, severely weakened in the 1967 elections - just at the end of my first tour - had regained a strong position in the early 1970s under Mrs. Gandhi's leadership and did again regain dominance a few years later after the steam had run out of the Janata coalition. I should note that Janata in 1977 included what is now the ruling party in India—the Bharatiya Janata Party, which had earlier been called the Jana Sangh. In 1977, it was part of the Janata coalition and campaigned as part of the coalition.

One would think that the emergence of a real multi-party system would make political analysis more interesting than it was in 1967 when the Congress Party was the dominant force in India. But in fact, I don't think that happened because the political situation under Congress Party dominance, and particularly after the death of Nehru, was fluid; it had several factions which had to be carefully followed. The fact that one party was so dominant did not mean that it was a monolithic institution.

The new situation in 1977 was analytically interesting, but not more challenging than that which existed in the mid-1960s. The embassy's political section followed events with the same care that it exhibited in the mid-1960s, even though by mid-1970s, it was smaller than it had been. I think it is fair to say that in the mid-1960s the Political Section staff was bloated; therefore it was not surprising that it was reduced in size. Even then, I can't say

Library of Congress

that in 1977 it was a lean or taut unit, but we had fewer officers dealing with the domestic political situation than was true ten years earlier.

During the 10 years I was away from India I think there was a growing disillusion that stemmed from the inability of the country to stage the economic break-through that many planners and economic commentators had believed possible. There was an upsurge of hope when a democratic government took power in 1977, but that proved to be short-lived. Basic problems had not been solved as the Indians had hoped in the 1950s and early 1960s. As far as domestic politics were concerned, there was considerable disarray. Mrs. Gandhi played her cards carefully in the hopes of returning to power. Originally that ambition seemed far fetched, but as time went on, her chances appeared to improve. Prime Minister Desai was viewed as a great disappointment. I certainly felt that way because I had been an Desai admirer. I thought that he was a strong man who, if given the opportunity to become prime minister, could give India the stronger lead that it needed. But by the time Desai became prime minister, he was 81 years old—born in 1896. By that time, he just didn't have the forcefulness that he exhibited earlier in his life. He became very inflexible, which was a major drawback for someone who had to manage a coalition that included representation from the extreme right and the extreme left. Desai had built a good reputation as chief minister of Bombay and finance minister in the central government but did not live up to his billing when he became prime minister. He just could not provide the leadership that the country needed in the mid-1970s.

On the international scene, under Desai and Foreign Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee (now the prime minister) India made an effort to implement a “good neighbor” policy toward other South Asia countries. The government put considerable emphasis on improving relations with Pakistan. India tends to be a bully in its relations with the smaller countries in the region. The Janata Party, in the short time it was in office, made a serious effort to focus on ways that would help improve relations in the area. These efforts were received well by all South Asian capitals, including Islamabad. We of course gave these efforts our warmest support and encouragement, even though the idea did not emanate from

Library of Congress

us. India did do its utmost to become the “regional influential” that we had hoped. By opening closer relations with its neighbors, India, in the 1977-79 period, was viewed by its neighbors, except Pakistan, as a friend and not as an antagonist. They therefore lent greater support to India in international forums.

We indeed were surprised by this good neighbor policy and the inclusion of Pakistan in it, as were many other observers. Desai, when in opposition, had publicly scoured Pakistan; he was considered by many Pakistanis to be a strong Hindu communalist; they did not expect that Desai would give much positive attention to India-Pakistan relations. Furthermore, the Indian foreign minister had been a leader in the Hindu communal party and was seen—and properly so—as a communalist who had never expressed any views in which Pakistan could find the slightest bit of comfort. His appointment as foreign minister was viewed with considerable dismay in Islamabad.

So it was very surprising when the new government began the “good neighbor” policy. We were surprised as were the other countries in the area and, I am sure, many Indians. It was probably the only important contribution that the Desai government made to Indian foreign policy. Unfortunately, when Mrs. Gandhi returned to power in 1980, she overturned this positive policy.

I must say that I never got a very good explanation for the position taken by Desai. I suspect that every government wants to go down in history remembered for some bold initiative which would distinguish it from others. But why this government of all governments chose to go in this new direction has never been satisfactorily explained to me. But in fact, it was so preoccupied with its domestic concern, that it was never able to play as a significant role in that area as it had in mind.

I might add parenthetically that I had known Atal Behari Vajpayee very well from my first tour in Delhi. Then he was a leader of the Jana Sangh party and I used to see him regularly. As political counselor, I was able to carry on a dialogue with other members

Library of Congress

of Parliament who had become Cabinet officers; these were old friends who had been promoted. I just picked up where we had left the relationship ten years earlier. Other embassy staff members would see these Cabinet officers as part of their duties; I would see them to have political discussions. Unfortunately, due to protocol considerations, I was not able to do so with the foreign minister—only an ambassador may see a foreign minister in the Indian scheme of things and in most other places as well. We would chat sometimes at large parties, but it was not possible for me to see Vajpayee officially.

There were some positive results from the Indian foreign policy initiatives. There was a considerable warming of India-Pakistan relations. Tensions were very much reduced and at times, the relations were actually amiable. As I recall, one of the more gratifying aspects of this new situation was that it became much easier for Indians and Pakistanis to visit each other. We were very much encouraged by these developments, as I said. They fitted well into the long-standing American policy of supporting efforts to improve India-Pakistan relations. The U.S. has been less concerned, except for certain occasions, about India's relations with other neighbors. It should be noted that the change in U.S. administrations, with Jimmy Carter becoming president, certainly had an impact on our Indian policy. The Carter administration viewed India in a more favorable manner than had previous administrations. There were several reasons for this which in some respects meshed with the advent of the Janata Party and the temporary downfall of Mrs. Indira Gandhi. Washington was very interested in what National Security Advisor Brzezinski called “regional influentials.” Under this concept, the U.S. focused its attention on leading countries in various regions of the world. In South Asia, that meant, to the Carter administration, India—not India and Pakistan, but solely India. This new policy was spelled out vigorously and vividly a few months after my arrival in Delhi. In January 1978, Jimmy Carter came to India. He avoided going to Pakistan. Instead he flew directly from Iran to India, passing right over Pakistan. Pakistan in addition to being governed at the time by a military dictatorship, didn't qualify as a “regional influential.”

Library of Congress

The Carter administration's position was very important because until then all important American visitors—such as Eisenhower and Nixon—included both countries. I was quite pleased with this new approach. I agreed that India was the most important country in the region—certainly more important for the United States than Pakistan, especially when the latter was governed by the authoritative regime of General Zia ul-Haq. Moreover, the Carter administration embraced a global agenda which for the first time paid considerable attention to the subject of human rights as a significant foreign policy issue. In India, it found a government that had just come to power having won an election over a briefly authoritarian regime headed by Mrs. Gandhi. So it was a wonderful nexus of the objectives of the two countries. Even before the leaders met in New Delhi, the President and the Prime Minister started a frequent correspondence. The visit in a way was a demonstration of this new connection as well as a gesture indicating how high India rated on our agenda—at the expense of Pakistan.

Carter's visit was unusual. It had been delayed by some domestic political problems in Washington. He arrived in fact on January 1, 1978. We had the rather dubious pleasure of having not one, but two White House advance teams—the first one having paved the way for the postponed visit. The major issue between the U.S. and India at the time concerned the delivery of fuel to Tarapur, a nuclear reactor. It was the Indian tail wagging the American dog. On the first day during a break, Carter was huddled with Brzezinski and Cyrus Vance, then the Secretary of State. They were unaware that a microphone near them was open and transmitting their comments. I was in the room and heard Carter say something about sending a cold, hard note to the Indians about the fuel problem. The story subsequently got world headlines.

Aside from that, there was considerable rapport between the president and his team and the Indians. Carter came with a very large group; we got the usual static about the treatment of White House staff. This was my first experience with presidential visits. I thought it was a sight to be seen. The visit featured a major Carter speech which in part

Library of Congress

addressed the major issues. Before his departure, Carter signed what became known as the “Delhi Declaration” which lauded Indian democracy and underlined the importance of such a political structure. The Declaration was drafted to emphasize the special relationship between Washington and Delhi.

We were very busy in the period before Carter's arrival. I had my full share of those preparations - drafting briefing papers, etc. I also vividly remember being called on because I spoke Hindi and could find my way around. I was rushed to look over a nearby village which might become a venue for a presidential visit. The village was included in Carter's itinerary at the last minute—after Desai had persuaded him following his arrival in New Delhi that in order to understand India one had to get out of the major cities and observe village life. So I raced to this village, which was spruced up a little making it as presentable as possible for the president of the United States in the short time available.

I have another vivid memory of that trip. As I said, President and Mrs. Carter arrived on January 1. We had worked very hard throughout the holidays trying to prepare for the visit. Briefing books had been drafted including a schedule with appropriate comments about each event. These were sent to Teheran in time to be aboard Air Force 1 as it flew from Iran to India. I decided that I had worked hard enough in the preceding weeks and I went to bed early on the eve of the Carter arrival. Around 10:45, I got a call from DCM Arch Blood who was the control officer for the visit. He said that we had a real problem; the embassy had just received a message saying that the Presidential party wanted a description of the route that the President would be taking from the airport to the Presidential Palace where he would be staying. It turned out what they really needed was some kind of poop-sheet which would enable the staffers to answer any presidential question about where he was going and what he might see on the way. Blood said that I knew the area well; he asked that I come to the embassy right away and do something about the White House request. So I got dressed and went to the embassy. It must have been about 11:30 when I got there. I sat down with my typewriter, outlining a scenario for the motorcade trip from the airport. I have to say that my knowledge of all

Library of Congress

the neighborhoods that the motorcade would pass through was rather sketchy. So I made much of it up. As I was typing, I suddenly heard firecrackers and bells announcing the arrival of the New Year. I finally finished my message and gave it to Blood who sent it to Teheran.

A few days later, Arch called me into his office and said that he really had to compliment me. He had been told by members of the presidential party that of all the papers they had been given to read, my travelogue on the trip from the airport to the Palace was by far the best.

The visit was interesting and successful. One usually characterizes all presidential visits with those adjectives, but I do believe that the Delhi visit really merited that description. I have described the microphone incident, which was really the only flaw in the visit. We had some exciting incidents. One of the more disreputable Cabinet ministers somehow manage to slip by the guards and entered the president's bedroom in the Palace. So he had an unscheduled meeting with Carter.

In those days, posts like Delhi were much more isolated than they are today—primarily because of the great improvement in recent years in communications and information dissemination. For us to have access to telephones—set up by the White House Communication Agency—which actually worked so that we could talk to Washington and if we wished, family and friends — was great boon. And when Air Force One arrived, we felt that we were no longer isolated, but really at the heart of U.S. foreign policy. That made the visit exciting and gratifying even though as in all presidential visits there was considerable silliness.

Let me now turn to the political issues I dealt with while I was in Delhi. The Kashmir issue was pretty dormant. While I was still in Pakistan, an agreement had been reached between the government of India and the leadership of the Kashmiri group—Sheikh Abdullah— which had represented the views of the political majority in Kashmir during

Library of Congress

the entire post-independence period. While Abdullah was alive, Kashmir was not on the government's agenda, either as a domestic issue or as a bone of contention between Pakistan and India.

I did visit Kashmir and found the state in the late 1970s far different from what it had been ten years earlier. By my second Indian tour, Kashmir had a government which had been popularly chosen, led by someone who had the confidence of the majority of the Valley people.

The other important difference was that those Kashmiris who had wished for an early settlement of the dispute either through Kashmir's independence or by accession to Pakistan had pretty much given up hope as the result of the 1965 and 1971 India-Pakistan wars. They became more reconciled to having a permanent connection with India. At the same time, under both Bhutto and Zia, the Pakistanis decided to put Kashmir on the back-burner, as provided for in the India-Pakistan agreement of 1972.

I always hoped, especially in the aftermath of the 1965 war, that the issue of Kashmir could be quietly set aside. I did not anticipate any permanent settlement which could be agreed to by both sides. That would have involved signing a piece of paper which would inevitably have been opposed by many in India and Pakistan. So the best we could have hoped for was quiet. For that it was important that the Indians manage Kashmir in a reasonable fashion. The need for a “kinder and gentler” state government was important because for so long Kashmir had been in the hands of instruments of New Delhi who had little popular support and governed the state in a corrupt and arbitrary way. So Kashmir was not a subject of particular attention in the late 1970s. It did not rate very high on the embassy's agenda during the two years I served a political counselor.

I mentioned earlier our difficulties with nuclear fuel for an Indian power plant. In 1974, India staged its first nuclear explosion—for “peaceful purposes.” In those days many serious people thought that nuclear explosions could be used for civilian projects—we

Library of Congress

know better now. But in our view, the distinction that the Indians were trying to make was not acceptable; we saw all nuclear explosions as having proliferation dangers. The important part of this story was that the Indian explosion triggered a renewed interest in efforts to bring about an international non-proliferation regime. The Ford administration, when Kissinger was the secretary of State, was obliged to take note of Congressional and American public concern about the Indian action and adjust its policies in light of this concern.

As I have mentioned, the issue of nuclear fuel arose because the United States had a contractual obligation to provide the fuel—low grade enriched uranium—to twin nuclear power plants in Tarapur, whose construction the U.S. had financed through its assistance programs in 1963. Under this agreement, India was obliged to buy its nuclear fuel from the U.S. which in turn was obliged to sell it to India. In the late 1970s following the Indian test, Congress passed legislation which required, after an 18-month grace period, that all nuclear fuel and technology deliveries cease to any country which was not a signatory to the 1968 Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). If a country had not signed the NPT, it could still acquire American fuel if it allowed international inspection of all of its nuclear facilities. This policy for India became very complicated. The Indians took the position that we were obliged to honor an international agreement to provide the fuel. We said we were sorry, but the U.S. legislation would not allow us to do so. Efforts were made to convince the Indians to make enough concessions to allow the U.S. to resume its deliveries. We managed to get waivers through Congress, but the Indians did not move far enough to satisfy the requirements of the legislation and our deliveries eventually ceased. This dispute became a very sore point in U.S.-India relations.

I was certainly berated by my Indian contacts. Senior officials, like Joe Nye and Tom Pickering, came to Delhi to try to work out some kind of mutually agreeable arrangement. The Indians also sent delegations to Washington, but no agreement was ever reached. Finally, after my departure for the India country director position in the Department, a deal was struck—the French became India's supplier of nuclear fuel. My view was two-fold.

Library of Congress

I found it highly regrettable that this issue arose at a time when U.S.-India relationship had greatly improved and further collaboration seemed quite possible, especially as the U.S. was wedded to the doctrine of regional influentials. I was especially concerned that so much of the relationship—even at the presidential level—was devoted to this disagreement about nuclear fuel deliveries. The tail of Tarapur was indeed wagging the dog of U.S.-Indian ties. Secondly, I had to confess—to myself if not to my Indian contacts—that the Indians had a strong case. How could the U.S. retroactively apply domestic legislation which barred the delivery of fuels contracted for ten years earlier. It was of course a lost cause for the U.S.; we could not do anything about deterring the Indians from their path. Congress would not allow a waiver to exempt India from the legislation. I think the whole episode was regrettable, particularly since the administration did not make a major effort to revise the draft legislation. For example, the administration did not make a very strong case to exempt some of our activities under a grandfather clause which would have excluded from the legislation the signed obligation to provide fuel to Tarapur. We should not have been in a position to violate an international agreement. I don't know why a greater effort was not made; it may have been an oversight or a concern that Congress would be hard-nosed about exemptions. But I was not in Washington at the time the issue emerged, so I can't comment on what might have happened or not happened. I was in New Delhi when the legislation was enacted and it was only later that I found myself in the Department dealing with such difficulty with the consequences of our position.

I should comment on Sino-Indian relations because there was an important development during my second tour in Delhi. As I mentioned, Atal Behari Vajpayee was the foreign minister. He sought an improvement in Sino-Indian relations, which had been pretty much in deep freeze following the 1962 war. That freeze was made icier by the Chinese attitude during the India-Pakistan wars in 1965 and 1971. The PRC took Pakistan's side on both occasions and made some threatening noises. Fortunately, Beijing did not take any military actions against India, which would have been a great danger to the Indians. Vajpayee visited the PRC—I think that it was the first visit by a high-ranking

Library of Congress

Indian government official since 1962. The visit proved disastrous because just at the time Vajpayee landed, the Chinese launched an invasion of Vietnam. There was obviously no attention paid in Beijing to the fact that the Indian foreign minister was a guest at the time. Naturally for the Indians, this Chinese action raised the specter of the actions the PRC had taken against India in 1962. It also displayed, quite clearly, PRC indifference to Indian attitudes. Once the invasion started, the Indian foreign minister departed in haste before he could have any meaningful talks.

While I was in New Delhi, the United States established formal diplomatic ties with the PRC. Kissinger had famously visited the PRC in 1971, followed by Nixon in 1972. But it was not until 1978 that we opened an embassy in Beijing. We did have some lower level representation, but no ambassador and no formal diplomatic relationship until then. I visited Beijing when I was political counselor in Pakistan and met with George Bush, who was then head of our office there. Our decision to establish formal diplomatic ties came as a surprise to the Indians # a most unwelcome surprise. They did not relish an improvement in U.S.-Chinese relations. They still viewed both China and Pakistan as the principal challengers to Indian hegemony. They viewed the establishment of U.S.-PRC relations as a step which made the world more dangerous for them # part of what they called the Washington-Beijing-Islamabad axis. The Indians were very serious about this analysis.

I think we erred in not advising the Indians about our move in advance. It came much sooner than expected in Delhi. We had informed them of the possibility in a very low key way, which probably led the Indians to believe that nothing was imminent. So the rapidity with which we established diplomatic relations caused anguish in Delhi. I think they felt they were misled. They berated us when we opened an embassy in Beijing, but I don't think the issue was paramount nor did it have any lasting influence. After all, there had been a period of several years during which, as I said, we did have representation in Beijing and the PRC had a comparable presence in Washington. There was I think much more Indian anguish in 1971 after the Kissinger visit to China particularly since he had

Library of Congress

taken off from Pakistan for the PRC—after stopping in Delhi a few days earlier without saying anything about his plans.

I stayed in Delhi long enough to witness the replacement of Prime Minister Desai, who was succeeded by a former deputy PM in the Janata government, Charan Singh. In fact, I was planning to transfer in early July, 1979 to take up my new assignment as country director for India, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. When the Indian government began to show signs of serious internal dissension, I was asked by the Department and the Ambassador to remain in Delhi until the crisis was resolved. The last message I sent to the Department reported that the president of India had asked Charan Singh to form a new government. So Desai and I left at about the same time, just as we arrived at about the same time. I should note that earlier departures of mine had also coincided with the fall of governments in Korea and Pakistan.

On a different subject, I should note that we had a good numbers of CODELs [congressional delegations]. They were not particularly a burden, at least not on the political section, although there were some Congressmen who were quite demanding. Despite that, from my point of view, these visits were quite manageable, which was a plus because I must say that they were not particularly useful. I found that many visitors - congressmen and senators included - had a very limited interest in India. They had very little to say to us or to the Indians. They wasted a lot of time on trivial pursuits—e.g. shopping. My impression was that a visit to India was a status symbol for a congressman. On the other hand, Indian parliamentarians whom we put in contact with a U.S. member of Congress had a different impression. An Indian parliamentarian does not have an office; at best he or she might have a personal assistant. He or she was certainly not the beneficiary of the aura of power which American Members of Congress enjoy. The Indian Parliamentarian had a much more humble position, even though he was much more affluent than the average Indian. So sometimes it was rather awkward bringing the politicians of the two countries together. I will not forget the visit of a Congressman from Long Island—Lester Wolff, the chairman of a subcommittee that was concerned with

Library of Congress

South Asian issues. He was especially difficult. He arrived in Delhi at the head of a rather large CODEL. He was very unhappy with the kind of treatment provided by the embassy—he didn't like the hotel we had arranged for him, among many other things. He claimed that he was awakened early every morning by the sound of pile drivers which were working on the construction of an annex to the hotel. At some stage, he came to the embassy with his large group—obviously determined to make life as difficult as possible for the embassy. Ambassador Goheen is a thorough gentleman—a mild mannered man who was highly regarded by the whole staff for his character if not for his leadership. He began the embassy's presentation to the CODEL, as is customary. He said in these remarks that he regretted having so few CODELs; he wished that more members of Congress would visit India. Chairman Wolff replied by declaring sourly that the poor treatment that he and his colleagues had received would explain why so few congressmen had come to India. At that point, I must admit that I felt real anger; I think my face really reddened. I was tempted to get up and throttle Wolff. I found his comments entirely unwarranted and certainly not a subject for discussion in a large meeting. Fortunately, Goheen accepted Wolff's outburst with good grace and apologized for any inconvenience that Wolff or other members of the delegation might have encountered. As I said, I don't think the CODELs were particularly helpful, in either providing members with a better appreciation of India or the parliamentarians a better understanding of U.S. policies, as seen by Congress, or of governmental processes.

I traveled around India frequently. I did address some audiences—the text was never cleared with anybody. In the Q & A time, I had to field some hostile questions, even during a period of relative good will between Washington and Delhi. The Vietnam war was over; so that removed an important problem from the agenda. So there were no particular points of friction, except on the issue of nuclear fuel supply. The Desai government sought what it called “genuine non- alignment,” which from our point of view distanced India from the Soviet Union. In fact, it practiced “genuine non-alignment” in its relations with the two super-powers. Their version of non-alignment was certainly more balanced than the so-

Library of Congress

called non-alignment Mrs. Gandhi had practiced in the past and would practice again in the future.

We had a military supply relationship, which expanded Indian choice for weapons beyond the Soviet Union. But in the two years we are now discussing, there were no critical developments in the Cold War which would have required an Indian decision as to which bloc it would support. As a general rule, throughout the Cold War, whenever U.S.-Soviet animosities intensified, it led to some weakening of U.S.-Indian relations because in almost all cases, India tended to support the USSR position. When detente came along, it would generally be accompanied by better U.S.-India relations.

During those two years I had contacts with diplomats from various countries, including Soviets and Chinese. In the wake of the Nixon visit to China, we were allowed to develop a relationship with the PRC [People's Republic of China] embassy. At first, the contacts were exceedingly formal and stiff. You would visit the PRC embassy and be escorted to the office of the person you had come to see. There you would be served tea, but the conversation would be stilted and very guarded. The only satisfaction an American diplomat got was that he or she was doing something which only a few years earlier would have been inconceivable. It was particularly interesting because the PRC embassy was located just across the street from the U.S. embassy. What was once forbidden, if nearby, territory, became less mysterious and sinister.

Over an extended period, the atmosphere became much more conducive to normal contacts. I don't remember how often I met with PRC diplomats; it was not frequent, and never particularly useful, but it was an interesting break from the past.

We had some relationships with the Soviets, but that had been a practice of long-standing. While I served in Delhi, Afghanistan went through the "Great Saur Revolution"—in April 1978—which brought a communist regime to power. The Indians were less concerned with developments in Afghanistan than we would have liked them to be. They

Library of Congress

viewed events in Kabul as an internal Afghan matter and they looked at the situation to an important extent through the prism of their relationship with Pakistan. We have to remember that after the revolution, a civil war broke out in Afghanistan leading eventually to the Soviet invasion. As I recall, the Indian position was to favor the Afghan government in power because they believed that a leftist government would be less inclined to favor Pakistan—certainly less than the Islamic forces that were then trying to oust the communists. But the issue was not very significant in U.S.-India relations—and did not become so until the Soviets made their move in December 1979. By that time I had left India.

We were in touch with other diplomats as well, particularly the British and the French. This was a relationship of long standing and we continued it during my stewardship as political counselor. We would exchange views periodically, at various levels, from the ambassador down.

As an embassy, we paid less attention to the various ramifications of Indian foreign policy than had been the case during my previous tour. Then Bowles was determined to use his embassy staff as a means to feed his much broader interest in international relations. He made sure that among the staff, there were experts on the PRC, the Soviet Union, etc. By the time I returned, those experts had left and were not replaced—as part of a general reduction in staffing that the Department had to undertake in response to budgetary cut-backs.

I look back on my second tour in India as, at least partially, a lost opportunity for the U.S. and for India. I believe that much could have been done to cement the relationship between the two countries had it not been for the nuclear fuel issue. Also, it was somewhat frustrating to deal with an Indian government which just could not get its act together. The Desai government's program was never properly spelled out, let alone carried out. In fact, the failure of the Janata government was such that it set the stage for the return to power by Mrs. Gandhi, which took place a few months after my departure from Delhi. Mrs.

Library of Congress

Gandhi, during her second tour as prime minister, did seek to establish better relations with the U.S.—at least on the surface. She visited the U.S. in 1982. With her in power, one could not expect any fundamental improvement in U.S.-India ties, however. She carried too much anti-American baggage from her first term as PM and even earlier.

On the other hand, Mrs. Gandhi was much more interested than was Janata in India's role on the world stage. What she did or tried to do was often damaging to U.S. interests. She supported the policy of establishing closer relations with non-aligned countries governed by leftist elements—including Cuba. India was still a factor in the UN, although perhaps not as active as it had been in the past. There used to be at least annual visits from a high level U.S. government official just prior to the convening of the General Assembly to discuss issue of mutual interests that might arise during the session. India was still a player with whom the world had to reckon.

Q: In 1979, you were assigned to the Department as the country director for India, Nepal, and Sri Lanka [NEA/INS]. Talk a little bit, if you would, about the bureau structure.

SCHAFFER: In 1979, the South Asia countries were under the jurisdiction of the assistant secretary for Near East and South Asian Affairs. There were two separate offices which dealt with South Asia—mine and the one dealing with Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh (PAB). My office was also responsible for the Maldives and Bhutan as well as the three countries you mentioned.

The country directors of both offices reported to a deputy assistant secretary—at the time she was one of three. The deputy assistant secretary for South Asia had unusual scope and authority because typically, except during dire crises, the assistant secretary was preoccupied with Middle East issues. And almost always, there was very little interest shown by the Department's leadership in South Asian issues. A little later I will describe a different situation, which was to take place about six months after my arrival in the country directorate. But when I first arrived in the summer of 1979 there had not been much

Library of Congress

interest since the Bangladesh war eight years earlier. Moreover, a succession of NEA assistant secretaries were primarily experienced and interested in Near Eastern affairs. Nicholas Veliotis, who was about to become the assistant secretary when I arrived, was an exception because he at least had served as a political officer in New Delhi in the 1960s, under Chester Bowles. But Nick's primary interest was in the Near East and most of his assignments as a senior officer had been to our embassies there.

I don't think that our relationships and policy objectives in South Asia were damaged by this lack of senior attention. Later, under protest, the Department established a new South Asia Bureau. That arrangement, fostered by Congressman Stephen Solarz (D-New York), was imposed on the administration by Congress. A succession of senior Department officials objected to this new scheme as unnecessary, but it was finally forced down the Department's throat by Solarz and the Congress. I was generally quite satisfied with the organizational arrangements as I found them in 1979. At times, I was frustrated, but most of the time, I was a happy soldier for several reasons. In the first place, whoever was the deputy assistant secretary responsible for South Asia (to whom I reported) had become recognized over time in other parts of the Department and elsewhere in the U.S. Government and outside as the officer who was effectively in charge of South Asia policy. Ordinarily, the deputy could enlist the assistance of the NEA assistant secretary when necessary. I must say that there were times when the assistant secretary was unavailable because he was focusing on the Middle East. There was also some awkwardness in this arrangement because the assistant secretary would at times display his lack of detailed knowledge of policies and developments in South Asia. Nevertheless, I thought that the situation was quite manageable; it had the big advantage—as subsequent events would demonstrate—that in a crisis or whenever necessary, the assistant secretary could get the attention of the secretary or the deputy or one of the under secretaries. He had access to those levels because of his work on Middle East issues. Thus an assistant secretary could, at the end of a meeting on an Arab-Israel issue for example, take a few minutes to brief whomever he had been meeting with on a South Asia issue that needed to be resolved.

Library of Congress

Following the establishment of a separate bureau in the early 1990s, the assistant secretary in charge of that bureau did not have the same access to senior levels as had the NEA assistant secretaries. So the South Asia assistant secretary found herself with a serious handicap when dealing with the leadership of the Department. We could see that coming; several of my colleagues and I held discussions with congressmen and their staffs in which we pointed out the danger of separating South Asia from NEA. Solarz, however, had his own political agenda and rejected our arguments. I think he knew how the Department worked, but he was anxious to demonstrate to the Indian-American community that he was able and willing to elevate U.S. relations with India to a higher level than the American bureaucracy was prepared to do. The Indian-American community was a strong financial supporter of Solarz; it didn't have many votes in the New York district which Solarz represented, but Indian-Americans throughout the country were quite generous in their campaign contributions to him.

The crisis that we faced during the time I was country director and later deputy assistant secretary was one that gave us plenty of opportunity to be in contact with the Department's leadership. I'm referring to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the subsequent resistance by the Mujaheddin. In effect, when that crisis arose, one of the senior officers took over as an assistant secretary—or country officer—for Afghanistan. First, this “seventh floor” principal was David Newsom, the under secretary for political affairs, who was succeeded by Larry Eagleburger in 1981 and then Mike Armacost in 1984. Each of these officers took the Afghanistan issue under his own wing. This was a very important and positive development, although there was some awkwardness in this arrangement because the deputy assistant secretary and the PAB country director found themselves sometimes by-passing their own assistant secretary. Fortunately, the assistant secretaries generally accepted the situation, but it was nevertheless awkward at times. The staff tried to keep its boss informed of developments, but there was no question about who was running U.S. policy toward Afghanistan; it was the under secretary for political affairs. As I said, I don't believe that the lack of “seventh floor” interest in India-Pakistan relations

Library of Congress

made much difference. It was not a major impediment. I did find that, when rank-conscious people served as ambassador to India or as ambassador to Pakistan, the assistant secretary would make time on his schedule to see them—with the deputy assistant secretary joining the meeting. Neither ambassador would ordinarily see me; I was only a country director. I don't remember any American ambassador to India ever coming to my office; I did routinely meet with the U.S. ambassadors to other countries in my portfolio.

When I reported to NEA, the assistant secretary was Nicholas Veliotis. He was succeeded by Richard Murphy in 1983. The deputy to whom I reported was Jane Coon. Jane had been a country director in charge of PAB. She also had had a very brief tour as country director for India, Nepal and Sri Lanka.

I must at this stage mention the willingness of the Department to be flexible—and its ingenuity, at times, in dealing with personnel matters. I was initially advised, by Jack Miklos—then the deputy assistant secretary in NEA responsible for South Asia—that I would be assigned as country director for Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh. This must have happened around January; it came as a surprise to me because my assignment to Delhi was supposed to be for three years. My wife, who was science attach#, was expecting to move into the economic section as first secretary at the beginning of our third year in Delhi. So we viewed the transfer with mixed emotions.

Immediately after the Miklos phone call, Jane Coon called my wife and offered her the number two position in the India-Nepal-Sri Lanka directorate (NEA/INS). My wife readily agreed; she was pleased by the offer. A few weeks later the Department changed its mind. Robert Peck, a very competent officer with considerable experience in Afghanistan, was the chief of the political section in our embassy in Cyprus. He received some death threats and it was clear that he needed to be transferred. He was obviously well qualified to be the PAB director, but he had had no experience in any of the INS countries. I, on the other hand, having served in both Pakistan and India, was considered well qualified to head

Library of Congress

either of the two South Asia directorates. So I was shifted to the India-Sri Lanka-Nepal directorate while Peck took the job to which I was originally assigned.

That raised the question of my wife's assignment. The Department, for good and sufficient reasons, will not allow one spouse to work for his or her mate. Fortunately, the system showed considerable flexibility. The officer who was the number two in PAB offered to switch to INS. This allowed my wife to take his position in PAB. So everybody was happy. The bureau was happy with the arrangement, as were the Schaffers and the transferred officer. The Department had shown both flexibility and ingenuity.

I have mentioned the management of the Afghanistan problem. Afghanistan did not fall in my portfolio; I was kept busy dealing with Indian reaction to the Soviet invasion. We tried to develop policies and activities which might induce the Indians to take a more negative view of the invasion than they were prepared to do. The invasion took place around the time when there was a change in government in New Delhi following a general election that had brought the Congress Party and Mrs. Gandhi back in power. When the invasion took place, Mrs. Gandhi had not yet been installed. Her initial reaction was to take a very relaxed attitude—to say the least—toward the Soviet invasion. In fact, the Indian ambassador to the UN made a statement in New York which essentially was a copy of the Soviet line. We had learned through intelligence sources a few hours in advance what the ambassador would say. In the Department, we were appalled at the Indian position.

When Mrs. Gandhi took office, India did modify its position, but by then the damage had been done—at least to U.S.-Indian relations. The new position was more reasonable than India's original stand, but was not one that we welcomed. In light of this situation, we mounted a major effort, as did other countries, to get India to move to a more acceptable line.

Our effort was highlighted by the visit in January, 1980, of Clark Clifford, the former defense secretary—to New Delhi as the personal representative of the president. I

Library of Congress

accompanied Mr. Clifford on that trip because Jane Coon—the deputy assistant secretary for whom I worked—went on another delegation led by Dr. Brzezinski , the national security advisor, and Deputy Secretary Warren Christopher. This delegation went to Pakistan and Jane went with them, leaving Clark Clifford in my hands. The trips took place about the same time. Originally, it had been planned that Clifford would visit India and Christopher would visit Pakistan. Dr. Brzezinski decided to join the Christopher delegation—I think that decision was reached very close to departure time. Clifford was somewhat upset, as he told me on the way to the airport, because he felt that his trip to India was being somewhat upstaged by the Brzezinski-led delegation. I think Clifford had good reason to feel as he did.

The purpose of our trip was two-fold. First, we wanted to acquaint Mrs. Gandhi with the Carter administration—she having left office in the very early part of that administration. There had not been time then for an establishment of personal relations between her administration and ours. So the first goal was for a senior personage to visit New Delhi and brief Mrs. Gandhi on U.S. foreign policy. Clifford tried to convince her that the Carter administration was interested in better U.S.-Indian relations.

The second purpose was to try to move the Indians toward a better position on Afghanistan. We tried to pass information that would highlight the facts on the ground—the Soviet iniquity—which we considered to be a definite threat to South Asian security. Clifford was effective—to a point; Mrs. Gandhi was obviously very impressed by him. He was a very effective spokesman for U.S. positions even though he was not part of the administration and had undertaken the trip to India as a trouble-shooter. Unfortunately, Clifford knew very little about South Asia. When he first agreed to take on the assignment—at the president's request—he began his familiarization program. I would go to his very impressive office near the White House to brief him. I also briefed him on the plane taking us to New Delhi. So by the time, he got to New Delhi, he had absorbed considerable knowledge of India and its positions. But if the conversation digressed into areas outside

Library of Congress

his main preoccupations, he was not sufficiently knowledgeable to be able to participate effectively.

Clifford was a very impressive looking man. I think Mrs. Gandhi was positively impressed by this tall, distinguished personal representative of the president of the United States. As I recall, she was very much on her best behavior during the visit. She did not complain about the disparity between the U.S. delegations to Pakistan and India. In that respect, I think she reflected the attitude of her people who also did not raise any questions about the U.S. delegations. Clifford was a man of stature and had the title of "Special Envoy."

By late January, it became obvious to the Indians that Pakistan had become the focus of U.S. foreign policy in the area. We placed the development of an Afghan resistance movement high on our agenda. That movement had its bases in Pakistan.

In 1981, Mrs. Gandhi and President Reagan, who had recently succeeded Carter, met at an international conference in Cancun, Mexico. Harry Barnes, then ambassador-designate to India, worked very hard behind the scenes to have the two meet one-on-one. I have no doubt that the Indians viewed the meeting positively, but I am not sure that some of my colleagues did so. Indian leaders liked to meet with American leaders; it made them feel that they had a place at the head table. In addition, Reagan had just been inaugurated, making the Indian prime minister one of the first world leaders he met. The issue was essentially how Reagan might be convinced to meet Gandhi privately when there would be other leaders at the conference who might be higher on his list. But eventually, the president approved such a meeting.

The meeting was an extremely amicable one. I don't recall any NEA bureau official participating; it was, after all, not a meeting that had anything to do with South Asia. The subjects for the international meeting were global—I believe it was devoted to economic issues. So there was no one in Cancun who was knowledgeable of South Asia issues and problems. But I believe that the meeting went well, in a sense that the two got along

Library of Congress

very easily. I don't remember that any issues of substance were discussed, much less agreed upon. It was primarily a "get to know" meeting. This kind of meeting was President Reagan's forte. Mrs. Gandhi was taken by Reagan, and this set the stage for Mrs. Gandhi's subsequent visit to the U.S. in the summer of 1982 after I had been promoted to deputy assistant secretary.

I might now take a few minutes to describe our policy in the late 1970s and early 1980s toward the countries in my portfolio. We were interested in a number of objectives: a) winning support from India, Nepal and Sri Lanka for our position on Afghanistan; b) finding a resolution of the Tarapur nuclear supply issue. As I've said, in 1963 an agreement was reached to build the Tarapur power plant through the U.S. assistance program and the U.S. pledged to provide low grade uranium to power the plant for its lifetime, estimated at 30 years. Dealing with the issue involved several parts of the Department. During the Carter administration, the president himself became involved—he quite often became involved in policy details, especially on nuclear matters, where he had considerable background. I will say that the collaboration among Department bureaus was excellent. It was led by Tom Pickering, then the assistant secretary for [the Bureau of] Oceans, Environment and Scientific Affairs (OES). He would hold frequent meetings in his office, in which I participated as the NEA representative. I was always impressed by Tom's performance; he was not only effective, but was willing to deal on a collegial basis with officers outside his bureau. He was able to develop a team spirit among a collection of people with disparate points of view coming from different offices.

Unfortunately, in the final analysis we were not able to make much progress in resolving that Tarapur issue. We had to recognize that the core issue, as it was in Pakistan, was the question of adherence to a non-proliferation regime, but the immediate issue had little to do with that basic goal. The immediate issue was much narrower; the Indians, with considerable justification, complained that we in fact had insisted that subsequent domestic legislation overrode our international legal obligations undertaken many years earlier. As I said, the original agreement called for us to provide nuclear fuel as long as the

Library of Congress

plant was operational. We did at the same time agree that we would be the sole provider of the low enriched uranium because of non-proliferation concerns. The legislation prohibited the export of nuclear fuel to any country that was unwilling either to sign the NPT as a non-nuclear-weapons state or to put all of its nuclear facilities under international safeguards. It had no grandfather clause. That left the administration with little choice, except through the use of waivers for the brief period the legislation permitted them. But the opposition in Congress to such a series of waivers for India was so great that the administration felt it would have been a hopeless quest.

Without getting into many details, let me say that Tarapur was a constant problem while I was country director and later deputy assistant secretary. It required us to be in constant touch with Congress—principals and staffs—to try to modify attitudes on the Hill, so that some arrangement might be made for Tarapur. Finally a solution was reached, after I became deputy assistant secretary, when we reached agreement with the French to take on our role as supplier. That plan was devised by our Legal Advisor's Office just prior to Mrs. Gandhi's visit to Washington in July 1982.

After I left Delhi, Tarapur became a very hot issue, more so than when I was serving at the embassy. I have already talked about Tarapur so I needn't repeat myself here. At the same time as we dealt with Tarapur, we had to face the Gandhi government's reaction to our South Asia policy following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. The Indians were most concerned about our decision to re-establish our security relationship with Pakistan. This had been attempted earlier by President Carter but never carried out in any significant way because his administration was unwilling or unable to provide Pakistan with the assistance the Pakistanis believed was necessary for them to reenter the U.S. camp. After Reagan became president, the Indians were extremely upset by his decision to go much farther in seeking to improve our relations with Pakistan. They tended to consider our military assistance as more dangerous to them and more reprehensible than the Soviet invasion, which had provoked the up-grading of our relations with Pakistan. So during the early part of the Reagan administration our relations with India ran into some rough water. They

Library of Congress

needed a considerable amount of care. The Indians were particularly incensed by our approval of the F-16s—high performance military airplanes, Harpoon surface to surface missiles for use by the Pak Navy, and modern heavy tanks. These items were viewed by the Indians as weapons that could potentially be used against them. They thought this far more likely than their being used in Afghanistan or to protect Pakistan from a Soviet attack. And they were right.

But in a broader sense, the U.S. involvement with Pakistan reflected a defeat for the Indians in what has always been their primary foreign policy objective, to prevent major powers from involving themselves in South Asia for any reason—except those beneficial to India. The fact was that they were quite prepared to live with the Soviet invasion—even worse, they equated the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan with our involvement with Pakistan and the Mujaheddin.

This attitude obviously did not sit well in Washington. Our unhappiness was increased by India's shrill reaction to the particular military items that we supplied. I believe that the Indians over-reacted and went much too far in their protests. I remarked to my colleagues at the time that the Indians seemed prepared to denounce any military or economic assistance to Pakistan. If we had provided some planes of first World War vintage, they would have shouted from the roof tops.

My great regret was that the Indians were unable to accept the inevitability of U.S. policies. Implementing legislation had been passed allowing us to provide Pakistan with military items. There was nothing that New Delhi could do about this. Mrs. Gandhi should have recognized that her shrill anti-American attitude served no purpose. I think that her comments were aimed at a number of constituencies. Her position was generally popular in India, particularly in the northern part of the country where concern about Pakistan always runs high. It was certainly popular in the pundit community—the political pundits of New Delhi, who then and most other times were suspicious of U.S. intentions and actions.

Library of Congress

India's general line on Afghanistan, which seemed to be so pro-Soviet, damaged its ties with a lot of non-aligned countries, especially the Islamic nations. In the United States, reaction toward Indian positions was largely negative, though there was a limited constituency to which the Indians appealed. It was led by such people as Congressman Stephen Solarz; it was more or less genuinely concerned about the U.S. re-establishing close relations with Pakistan—particularly a Pakistan led by the authoritarian, Islamic-oriented President Zia ul-Haq.

Interestingly enough, in later 1981 and early 1982, the Indians appeared to have decided that they would have to adjust to the new situation in the area. They recognized by then that all of their objections had little impact on Washington; their Congressional friends had failed to decrease or stop military assistance to Pakistan. They also found value in better relations with the United States and in making their version of non-alignment less obviously pro-Soviet than their position on Afghanistan had made it seem. So the Indians, I think, came to the conclusion that their best tactic would be to “agree to disagree.” That better attitude set the stage for Mrs. Gandhi's visit in July 1982. The whole question of India/Pakistan was viewed by those working on South Asia in the State Department and elsewhere in the U.S. government through the prism of the Cold War. I don't think we had any other choice. Our relations with Pakistan during this period were largely shaped by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Had the Soviets not moved into Afghanistan, we would not have revived the alliance with Pakistan. It would have remained a country of very limited significance to us.

Similarly, although efforts were made by Ambassador Harry Barnes, with my and others' full support, to develop a better relationship with India by separating out the Afghanistan issue and other Cold War-related matters, the Cold War perception that India tilted mostly towards the Soviet Union in any confrontation between the two super-powers very much colored our views and strongly influenced our dealings with the Indians. This perception and our responses made good sense during the time we are discussing.

Library of Congress

I don't think that my basic views of India-Pakistan relations changed when I was promoted to deputy assistant secretary. I pride myself as having been one of the more objective people in the U.S. government in dealing with this subject. I think I am considered by knowledgeable Indian and Pakistani diplomats and academics to be objective. I attribute that to the fact that I had considerable exposure to both countries.

Nepal was of very little consequence during my years as country director. Our principal interest was in economic development. Later on, while I served as deputy assistant secretary, Nepal showed up on the White House and "Seventh Floor" radar screens because it was decided that the King of Nepal would be invited to the United States. Then we had to deal with the King's agenda: e.g. provision of military supplies. But by and large, the U.S.-Nepal relationship was an easy one. We had a large economic assistance program in Nepal. Nepal-India and Nepal-PRC relations in this period were fairly relaxed; no major issues were outstanding and we had an effective ambassador in Kathmandu. So the country director for India, Nepal and Sri Lanka devoted almost all of his time to India. Nepal issues were generally handled by the desk officer.

During the five years when I served first as country director and later as deputy assistant secretary, we had five major visits - state, official or official-working - by South Asian heads of state or governments. These were made by Prime Minister Gandhi of India, President Zia Ul-Haq of Pakistan, General H.M. Ershad of Bangladesh, King Birendra of Nepal, and President J.R. Jayewardene of Sri Lanka in that order. Such visits are very important in policymaking. They attract the attention of senior officials in Washington and policy actions get taken. Drafts of the welcoming speech, toasts etc. have to be written; talking points have to be prepared for all the senior officials, including the president. Many of these involve decisions on policy toward the visitor's country. So visits are extremely important and useful, but also potentially extremely difficult. Some issues are actually resolved—or at least discussed.

Library of Congress

These visits require a great deal of preparation. There is an enormous amount of paper work, starting with a scope paper that lays out the background of the visit and what we want it to accomplish. In addition, there are briefing papers, suggestions of whom might be invited to the various events and, preparation of the first drafts of a welcoming speech and the toast the president will give at the White House banquet. Throughout there is close cooperation with the senior NSC staffer charged with backstopping the White House dimensions of the visit. Then there is a speech by the secretary of State, usually given at a lunch that he hosts for the visitor. So there was a multitude of papers, always followed up by the Secretariat to make sure that we had met our submission deadlines.

The first step, after White House approval of the visit, was a session between the regional bureau and the Secretariat to decide on a work program. We would involve the assistant secretary when needed, but he also made it eminently clear to me that I would have to do the heavy lifting. Of course, we had to involve the Protocol staff as well as the embassies from the visitor's country. Interestingly enough, once this preparatory work had been completed and the visitor was actually in the U.S., our work was largely finished. And when the Washington portion of the visit was completed, Protocol took over and shepherded the visitor through the U.S. I benefited from this process; I thoroughly enjoyed the fruits of my labor because I was able to go on these tours of the U.S. as a kind of hanger-on. I was usually accompanied by another Bureau officer. We had little to do except enjoy ourselves in first class hotels where the visiting party would stay. It was great fun; I came to see some of the most interesting parts of the U.S. in relative luxury. For example, President Jayewardene, whose trip I had arranged in extraordinary detail with his foreign minister and then himself, had been interested since his childhood in visiting "Red Indians," as he called Native Americans. His wife had always been curious about Niagara Falls. So we took a trip to a reservation in New Mexico and then crisscrossed back to Niagara Falls. All of these visits gave me VIP treatment which I would never have enjoyed otherwise. It also allowed me to engage in some useful, informal discussions with

Library of Congress

the members of the head of government's official party, to get to know the ambassadors better, and to become generally well recognized by the leadership of the visitor's country.

The New Mexico visit was an interesting one. I thought that Jayewardene's program had been worked out down to the last detail. But to our complete surprise, the St George tribal chief, the host for the visit to the reservation, called for Jayewardene's support for the tribe's autonomy—a quest that the tribe apparently had been pursuing for some time. Fortunately, Jayewardene did not take the bait; he was a far too good a politician to fall into that trap. But the event was both amusing and disconcerting; we had no way of predicting it.

We had excellent relationships with Sri Lanka during my tour as country director. Indeed, they were better than they had ever been. In 1977, while I was still in India, J.R. Jayewardene became prime minister. (When the constitution was changed soon afterwards to an executive system, he became president). He did two things that made his government extremely attractive to us. For one, he restored some of the democratic rights which had been seriously cut back by his predecessor, Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike. Even more importantly, he replaced her failed socialist, autarkic economic policies with free market oriented policies and a welcoming atmosphere for foreign investment. We were so enthusiastic about this new government that we substantially increased our assistance program to Sri Lanka. It was an effective program, viewed by many as a model for development. We were happy with the program, which included assistance to a major power-irrigation project called Mahaweli. We don't undertake projects like that anymore. This was a massive project whose aim was to restore to the central part of the island the irrigation network which had existed there in medieval times but which had been destroyed in internecine wars. The destruction of that network changed the face of that part of the country.

These various interests shown by the West encouraged Sri Lanka to take a more positive view of American foreign policy without abandoning its historical allegiance to non-

Library of Congress

alignment. In 1979, in a conference of non-aligned states, a resolution was passed which stated that socialism and communism were more applicable to the problems of developing countries than was a free market; therefore the non-aligned and the communist bloc were natural allies. The fight over that issue was continued in a non-aligned meeting in Havana, just as I was leaving for Washington. That session marked the end of Jayewardene's chairmanship of the non-aligned movement; he was succeeded by Fidel Castro.

The Tamil issue in Sri Lanka became a serious problem during my last year as deputy assistant secretary. It was as major an issue as one could expect from a minor country—minor from the point of view of U.S. interests. There were serious riots in Sri Lanka in July, 1983, leading to the deaths of thousands of Tamils in areas dominated by the Sinhalese majority. Many saved their lives by fleeing to Tamil-majority areas in the north and east. Our attitude, to the best of my recollection, was two-fold: a) we urged a political settlement, but b) our basic policy was to support the Indians in their mediation efforts between the two ethnic groups. We decided that we would not provide the Sri Lankan government with any military assistance. At the same time, we allowed the Israelis to establish an Interests Section in our embassy in Colombo. Through that presence, the Israelis provided technical assistance to the Sri Lankan military.

When President Jayewardene visited the U.S. in June, 1984, we tried to encourage him to find some kind of political settlement with the Tamils. We made it clear, as we did before and subsequently, that we would not provide the kind of military assistance program he desired.

I had met Jayewardene earlier. The ambassador, Howard Wriggins, invited me to meet the prime minister while I was on a familiarization trip to Nepal and Sri Lanka from New Delhi before my return to Washington. Among other matters, we discussed a crisis that had arisen between India and Sri Lanka. I was impressed by him and I think the meeting went quite well. We met at the prime minister's residence. Later, he made a stop-over in the U.S. after he had visited Havana for the Non-Aligned Summit. He was traveling in a rather

Library of Congress

circuitous way: from Cuba to Mexico to Japan, stopping in Los Angeles for about 48 hours. I went out there as the representative of the U.S. government, and planned and ran his visit from the American side. This gave me an opportunity to become further acquainted with him. Jayewardene desired to have stronger relations with the U.S. We felt it important that given that bent, a senior official be sent from Washington to be with him in LA.

While in LA, Jayewardene saw largely his own countrymen. Surprisingly enough, there is a town named Lancaster in southern California with a considerable Sri Lankan population including quite a few doctors. They all came to LA to meet Jayewardene—in the Century Plaza Hotel where he was staying. I was always fascinated by the fact, that as I traveled around the U.S. with Asian leaders, I found so many South Asians in various little pockets in the U.S. They showed up whenever the leader of their native country would visit, and participated in the functions that were held in his or her honor.

I should mention one aspect of the summit meeting process, that is that even ambassadors from small countries can be very influential if they become skilled in the ways of Washington. A good example is the visit of the king of Nepal in December 1983. I had quickly learned that Nepalese Ambassador Bikh Thapa was very effective envoy. He had been Nepalese minister of finance before his assignment to Washington. He made it his business to become acquainted, to the best of his abilities, with the movers and shakers of the Washington policy world. Ambassador Thapa viewed Washington to some degree as a larger version of Kathmandu, the capital of his country. In Nepal, in those days, power was centered on the royal palace. Although Thapa was fully aware of the power of Congress and of the federal bureaucracy, he decided against this background of his own country to focus his efforts on the White House. He saw the White House as the American equivalent of his king's court. Somehow he befriended Helene Von Damm, who was a key figure in the Reagan entourage. Through her he subsequently become acquainted with William Clark, the national security advisor.

Library of Congress

It soon became evident to me and everyone else that Ambassador Thapa's principal goal was to arrange an invitation from the Reagan administration to his monarch for a royal visit to this country. He enlisted my support for his quest. I told him, in 1982, that my agenda for upcoming visits by South Asian leaders had Mrs. Gandhi coming to Washington first, followed by President Zia. We wanted to strengthen relations with India and Pakistan, and those two large countries would be given priority over smaller ones like Nepal. (Moreover, in the political/security environment of the time, India and Pakistan were very much linked. If we invited Mrs. Gandhi, we had to invite General Zia. Indeed, so imperative was this arrangement that our announcement of Mrs. Gandhi's visit included word that Zia would follow, even though his trip was scheduled a full five months later.) I went on to assure Thapa that once the visit of the Indian and Pakistani leaders had been approved, but only then, I would try to enlist support for a visit by the King of Nepal.

I followed through on this pledge but soon found that I wasn't making much progress. But I knew that Thapa had important contacts and I encouraged him to go to work on them. We would meet and I would give him what amounted to talking points for his meetings with Von Damm, Clark, and the other influential people he knew in the White House. The NEA Bureau, at my urging, sent the king's name forward to the "Seventh Floor"—there wasn't much competition from other parts of NEA at the time. We did not have much hope, especially given the limited number of state visits that the White House was prepared to host. Our suggestion did not seem to be cutting much ice in the State hierarchy.

But Ambassador Thapa was not to be deterred, and he continued his backstage efforts. One morning, following a meeting with National Security Adviser Clark, he called me and announced with great jubilation that he had been told that the State Department would be instructed later that day to prepare for the king's visit. I called the Executive Secretariat and asked that they be on the look-out for such White House instructions. The staff of the Executive Secretariat thought this was ludicrous; there had been no call from the White House and had I lost my marbles? But a few hours later, someone in the Secretariat

Library of Congress

called and said that the White House had given instructions to proceed with preparations. Someone would be coming down to my office shortly to get things started.

It was most amazing to me and others how the Nepalese ambassador had been able to get a state visit by a very minor potentate scheduled when there was virtually no one in the bureaucracy who was initially in favor of such a trip except a deputy assistant secretary. But Thapa's view of Washington as a larger Kathmandu with a White House equivalent of a royal court proved correct, at least in this case - the case which for him really mattered.

I should say about these three years I spent in NEA as country director for India, Nepal, and Sri Lanka that because of the deputy assistant secretary's pre-occupation with Afghanistan and Pakistan as it related to Afghanistan, I had pretty much of a free hand - much freer than would have been the case in more normal circumstances. I had to take on many Indian issues which would in a normal situation be given to the DAS to resolve. I think the impact of this organizational shift was probably neutral. As far as I and others could see, it certainly was not detrimental to our relations with India. I was able to handle them with the DAS's complete confidence. I was greatly assisted by the fact that I had only recently worked in India and was regarded as a member in good standing of the "India Club"—the professionals.

Jane Coon, the deputy assistant secretary for South Asia, was very important in the development of our policies toward Afghanistan. She worked very closely with David Newsom, who, as under secretary for political affairs, became the leader of the group that worried about Afghanistan. By the time I took over as DAS, the situation had settled down diplomatically, but the Mujaheddin were very much on our radar, harassing the Soviet troops. We provided them military assistance until, some years later, the Soviet were obliged to withdraw from Afghanistan. So I did not have to spend as much time on Afghanistan as my immediate predecessor had; I had time for other issues. Afghanistan, while very important to our South Asian policies, was no longer the crisis that it had been when Jane was the DAS because the main lines of our policy had been developed and

Library of Congress

approved by the president. The security relationship with Pakistan had been reinvigorated. We had agreed to provide military assistance to the Afghans via Pakistan, although the size and nature of the program remained a subject for further determination over the next years. The outline for our policy had been decided upon and therefore I was able to pay more attention to the rest of South Asia. I was not altogether satisfied that sufficient information came to us from other agencies working on Afghanistan and related activities. I certainly would have liked to have had fuller information about some of the details of our activities, but that lack was not a major barrier.

Except for Afghanistan, it was a period of relative calm in South Asia. Ordinarily, tensions in the region are primarily caused by problems in India-Pakistan relations and there were no serious flare-ups on that front in those years. Sri Lanka occupied some of my time as we sought to deal with the Tamil problem. Trouble was simmering although no sustained fighting had broken out yet as it did in 1983. I don't recall any major issues with which I had to wrestle, beyond Afghanistan and non-proliferation. We did not have a particularly warm relationship with Mrs. Gandhi's government, but the tensions were not sufficiently high to block her visit to the U.S. in 1982. She didn't accuse us of seeking to overthrow her # allegations of CIA activities and other U.S. actions that had made relations difficult at other times. Indeed, her 1982 visit reflected her interest in better ties, which we reciprocated.

When I became deputy assistant secretary, I entered the world of Congressional testimony for the first time. The rule was that no one below a deputy assistant secretary could testify. Over time, the tradition was established that a deputy assistant secretary would represent NEA on matters related to South Asia. I was scared to death at my first appearance. I took a cab to Capitol Hill; the cab had a slight accident—ran into something. That was the last thing I needed; I was nervous enough without that accident.

One interesting aspect of testifying was that each year, as the assistance legislation was being considered by Congress, there would be testimony before the House subcommittee on South Asian and Pacific affairs—a sub-committee of the House foreign

Library of Congress

affairs committee. Stephen Solarz, a Brooklyn Democrat, was sub-committee chairman. Because he had jurisdiction over both South and East Asia, administration testimony would be led by representatives of NEA and EAP. Invariably, EAP was represented by its assistant secretary. NEA, on the other hand, was represented by the deputy assistant secretary responsible for South Asian matters. Solarz even then was campaigning for the establishment of a separate bureau for South Asia. He would make a big point of the disparity in rank between the administration witnesses. He would elaborately welcome the assistant secretary for EAP, thanking him for taking time from his busy schedule to come to testify. Then he would note, in his sneering way—which he could easily assume—that NEA was represented by a deputy assistant secretary. He would add that it was indeed unfortunate that Mr. Veliotis (later Mr. Murphy) was not able to come to meet with the committee. Just to make me feel better, he would note that I was only a deputy assistant secretary, but that was all the sub-committee could get and he would live with this unfortunate situation. His statements reeked with sarcasm.

Eventually, I learned to live with this and was able to develop a strong relationship with Solarz. I have high regard for him. He obviously took his responsibilities very seriously. He did his homework. On his foreign trips he made every effort to make use of his time by meeting with a broad cross-section of the society he was visiting. Over the years, he came to know as much about South Asia as any State Department official. That made him, in a way, a very welcomed interlocutor, but a potentially dangerous one. You could not weave fiction into your responses; he knew what the facts and score were. At the same time, you could expect intelligent questions from him—if he was in the right mood—because he was interested in policy and knew a great deal about the South Asia scene and what we were trying to do there. However, it was always difficult to testify before him because you never knew what mood he might be in and what he might raise. There were times when he would be a serious inquirer, making very useful suggestions about policies—how to make them more effective. But moments later, he would change and make fun of witnesses and in general behave like a spoiled child. The change could be sudden. One

Library of Congress

moment Solarz might be the serious observer of the area, the next a sarcastic interlocutor trying to make the government witness' life miserable and himself look superior. So it was always a question which Solarz might show up; he was inconsistent and, as I said, might shift moods right in the middle of testimony, then shift back again.

Solarz dominated the sub-committee. The ranking Republican was Jim Leach of Iowa, a mild mannered man and onetime Foreign Service officer whose questions I always welcomed. He did not have the same background in the area that Solarz had, but I found Leach to be very concerned in the best sense of that word. Unlike Solarz, he was never interested in playing to the gallery. With rare exceptions, the other members of the sub-committee never attended, at least to hear my testimony. If they came, it was only very briefly. When they did ask questions, their lack of knowledge of the area was quite evident, sometimes embarrassingly so.

The Senate was much less important in my congressional life. Its sub-committee structure was different from the House's. Sub-committees were not as important. The geographical portfolios were different. The Senate sub-committee that dealt with South Asia also covered the Near East, rather than East Asia and the Pacific. I can only recall one appearance before a Senate committee to discuss non-proliferation during my time as deputy assistant secretary. I was in a supporting role at that session.

I was generally quite satisfied with the cooperation I received from other agencies—with the exception I mentioned earlier. I thought that on the nuclear issue there was considerable team-work. There was one interesting change in 1981. During the Carter administration, all important messages dealing with Tarapur were sent to the White House and signed out by the president. He dealt with this issue on a personal basis. In light of my inexperience, I thought that this was standard operating procedure and that a change in administration would not mean a change in that procedure. I was wrong; to my knowledge Reagan never involved himself in Tarapur and probably had only a vague awareness of the issue (and that from briefing papers prepared for his encounters with Mrs. Gandhi).

Library of Congress

I worked for two different assistant secretaries. Both saw their jobs essentially to deal with the Middle East. Nicholas (Nick) Veliotis, with whom I had worked very closely while both of us were stationed in Delhi, was the more direct and the more excitable. Both he and his successor, Richard (Dick) Murphy had excellent relations with the secretary of state—first Alexander Haig and then George Shultz. Murphy was much more subtle; it was much easier to discuss a problem with Veliotis because he would tell you in plain English what his views were. Murphy was more elliptical. Both were very effective assistant secretaries not only in dealing with issues with which they were familiar but also in giving me appropriate guidance when I asked for it on South Asian matters. I recall that Murphy made one effort to appear before Solarz. That was not a very auspicious meeting. Murphy was just not able to discuss issues at the level of detail that Solarz wanted (and had with me and other DAS's). As I recall, the dialogue soon changed from South Asia to Near East matters. These were not in Solarz's portfolio but as a prominent Jewish congressman with an overwhelming Jewish constituency they were politically important to him.

The change from Veliotis to Murphy had very little impact on me or my staff. I had excellent personal relations with both; I consider myself a close friend of both—especially Nick Veliotis. They both showed confidence in me and I valued that highly. Veliotis moved me up to deputy assistant secretary. I appreciated that very much, of course.

I might just elaborate briefly on the circumstances surrounding this promotion. In this period, NEA had a senior deputy assistant secretary—for the first part of my tour, that was Peter Constable. Peter left for Zaire as ambassador; he was succeeded by David Schneider who had been the deputy for South Asia. This opened a vacancy for me. Interestingly, Veliotis was not allowed to put me formally into the job until he had agreed to accept a political appointee for the front office. This he did by choosing Thomas Nassif, who had been deputy protocol chief, to be DAS for North Africa and congressional relations. This was a new position that Veliotis set up for the purpose. He was clever to have done so. He was also smart to have succeeded in choosing Nassif rather than

Library of Congress

having a pol he didn't know thrust down his throat, as was happening elsewhere in the Department.

Q: Then in 1984, you were appointed as U.S. ambassador to Bangladesh. How did that come about?

SCHAFFER: NEA deputy assistant secretaries were ordinarily appointed as ambassadors in South Asia. In 1984, a vacancy arose in Bangladesh. I decided to let my interest in that job be known—as is done by most Foreign Service officers in such circumstances. I told Murphy about this interest; I think I was a logical candidate in light of my experience and background in the area. I obtained the Department's backing; there was no other candidate whom the White House pushed. In Bangladesh we have had a succession of Foreign Service officers. I think there was one ambassador in Dhaka who was not an FSO, but he had considerable AID experience. It is obviously not the kind of post which attracts your typical political ambassador. There may be someone in academia or in the private sector who might have a particular interest in that post some time in the future, but the record to date would suggest otherwise.

So I had no problem obtaining White House approval nor were the confirmation hearings difficult at all. My hearing was attended by only one Senator—Rudy Boschwitz. He was chairman of the sub-committee of the SFRC that dealt with the region. But his sub-committee actually never played much of a role in shaping policy, unlike its opposite number in the House. Boschwitz himself knew little about South Asia.

The confirmation hearing was held not only for me, but also for a colleague, Paul Boeker, who had been proposed for the position of ambassador to Jordan. Boschwitz decided, for whatever purpose, to feature me as “his” kind of candidate—someone with long experience in the area. I think he used me as a foil against Paul. Boeker had worked in the White House on the NSC staff as the NEA specialist, but had never actually served in the Near East. So I sailed through and eventually Boeker was also confirmed, but only after

Library of Congress

considerable difficulty. Boschwitz also used the occasion to vent his displeasure with the administration's Near East policies, which Boeker had helped formulate when he had been in the White House. He had no particular complaint about South Asia policy, insofar as he was aware of it.

I attended the ambassador's course, but only sporadically. I would have liked to have come to more of the sessions, but in the summer of 1984 I had to deal with what turned out to be a false crisis in South Asia. There was concern on the part of the NSC staff that a war was brewing between Pakistan and India. The Department was instructed to do something about it. In retrospect, we can see that those fears were considerably overstated, especially by NSC staffer Sharin Tahir-Kheli. (The episode came to be known in the State Department as "Sharin's War.") Nonetheless, there was considerable work to be done, particularly since I had allowed the two country directors who worked for me, one dealing with India, the other with Pakistan, to leave in the late spring to take on their new DCM assignments overseas. So I became pretty much desk-bound in the summer of 1984. I was simply not able to walk off the job and attend the ambassador's course on a regular basis. I did sit in on some of the course sessions and took part in some of the trips. I regret that I did not give enough time to take the full course; I wish I could have. I am sure that it would have been very useful. I would also have found it useful to be able to attend language courses as many ambassadors did on a part-time or even full-time basis as they prepared for their assignments.

I had some concept about the organization of the embassy from my previous experience. I had visited it on a number of occasions—twice as deputy assistant secretary. The latest of these visits had taken place in early 1984 when a chiefs of mission conference was held in Dhaka. I stayed on after the conference for further consultations. So I had a pretty good idea of what awaited me. Yet ironically, of all of the countries in South Asia, Bangladesh was the one with which I was the least familiar. I had never served there, nor had I been associated with Bangladesh policy before I took over as DAS. I must confess that I did

Library of Congress

not follow developments in that country as closely as I did events in most of the other countries in the area.

In general, I was quite satisfied with the embassy organization that I inherited from my very capable personal friend, Jane Coon. I also had no problems with the policies that were in effect, many of them recommended by her. I thought the embassy was functioning well. It enjoyed good relations with the government and with important elements of Bangladeshi society. It also had very good working relationships with other U.S. Government agencies that worked in the country. My initial intention therefore was pretty largely to leave the embassy as I found it. As I became more familiar with the operations, I did make some changes. But initially, I was inclined to follow Jane's approach.

We had no problems integrating non-State personnel into the embassy. I think we worked together quite nicely. I tried to improve coordination with the AID mission. That mission was a large organization and I thought it was very important for the embassy staff to have greater contact with its chief and its key officers. I made it my business to become involved in what they were doing, though not to the point of becoming a hands-on manager. I know that the AID people welcomed my interest and relished getting me out into the Bangladesh countryside to look at their projects. I tried to keep Jane's DCM, but he was intent on moving on so I brought in my own man. I saw the DCM as the "inside" man responsible for the day-to-day management of the embassy. I instructed him to focus on that role. I took the role of the "outside" man as well as the over-all leader. I found my staff to be quite good. There had been a considerable turn-over which was unfortunate, but that was beyond my control. The tours in Bangladesh were generally short, making a high turn-over almost inevitable. The AID mission was different in this respect. It had many officers who welcomed their assignments to Bangladesh to a much greater degree than did the embassy staff. The assistance program was one of the largest that AID ran anywhere. Many AID officers, recognizing the advantage that a Dhaka assignment had for their

Library of Congress

careers, would ask for extensions of their tours. There were some embassy officers who did so too, but that happened much less often.

We had no problem with malfeasance or illegal activities in either the consular or administrative sections. That never became a problem, although I have to say, that in those days there was probably less attention paid by ambassadors to such matters. They did not neglect the potential problems, but were not as deeply involved as they might be today. I think there was less stress, as a general rule, on such things as visa fraud, etc.

I saw my own role as being responsible for the conduct of the embassy, for making contact with senior figures in the political, and economic and military areas. On its domestic side, the political area included both pro-government and opposition leaders. I traveled a lot both to familiarize myself with the country and to meet leaders who lived outside the capital. The latter task was not a large one because although Bangladesh has a large population—it was at the time the eighth most populous country in the world—it is a small country in area and political leaders tend to come to Dhaka at one time or another, if they do not actually reside there.

I would give speeches and interviews whenever I traveled and in Dhaka as well. I did a considerable amount of that. I must say that I was not really sought after that much—even though the American ambassador was viewed as “first among equals.” He or she was always considered an important figure, especially in light of the sizeable assistance program we had in Bangladesh. These days we could not afford a similar program. At one point during my tenure, the annual amount of assistance—including food—passed the \$2 billion mark. I thought it was most important to have close and continuing relations with the mission director and his senior staff. I chaired weekly country team meetings, as well as periodic reviews of economic policies attended by the DCM, senior AID officers and the economic counselor. AID was located right across from the Chancery on the other side of a public square.

Library of Congress

I did approve the annual assistance program, although I must confess that I had relatively little input. The AID mission was carrying out a well established program and I kept myself fully aware of what they were doing, to their pleasure. Much of my travel was designed to visit projects. I was satisfied that the program was effective and that the relationship with the Bangladesh government was close and going quite well. I would have to say that I had no great interest in pushing certain projects, except perhaps for rural electrification where I did weigh in strongly, but it was almost unnecessary since I and the mission saw entirely eye-to-eye on the problem and the solution. It welcomed my strong support. Overall, I would say that my relationship with the mission was very positive. I don't want anyone to conclude from my remarks that I should have participated more in the management of the assistance program. If I had found projects I didn't like, I would have registered my dissent.

We had a USIS operation. It was quite small, but a key element in our mission. It was housed outside the chancery. We had representation from CIA. We had a potential problem because the station chief had contact with people that I would see. This practice was a hold-over from the past. I had no objection to this, provided I was given a full briefing of what the CIA Station was doing with these contacts. I became quite satisfied that both Station Chiefs—we had a turn over during my tour—were leveling with me. So that issue never became a problem.

The station's preoccupation was its operations against Iron Curtain countries. They were not particularly interested —properly so—in what was happening in Bangladesh. In my opinion, CIA operations in Bangladesh would have been absurd given the propensity of Bangladeshis to discuss all issues incessantly. It would have been very foolish indeed for us to pay for information that was readily available in the street for nothing.

We had a military attach#. He was of little consequence in meeting our goals. The contacts with senior influential military officers during a period of two years of martial law when the military had a key political role - were carried out by me and to some extent by the political

Library of Congress

counselor and the DCM. Therefore, the military attach# was limited to more technical issues, like arranging training programs, ship visits, etc.

We did not have a military assistance program. That possibility was raised from time to time by the Bangladeshis—particularly when President Ershad visited the U.S. in 1983 at the time I was DAS. There were several reasons why we did not want to initiate such a program. Among the most important was the strong possibility that it would be misunderstood by the Indians. That might have led to a deterioration of U.S.-India relations as well as Bangladesh-India relations. India would not have felt threatened, but it would have viewed such a program in the context of its long-standing policy that significant military or political relations between its neighbors and countries outside South Asia should be discouraged. That still remains New Delhi's position.

Our overall policy was primarily designed to support the economic development of this desperately poor country. That is why we had such a large - and, in my view, effective - assistance program. That is also why I spent a good deal of my time worrying about the economic future of Bangladesh. I must admit that I had very little hope that Bangladesh would significantly improve its economic situation. Now, I have more hope that it can do so. I thought then that the best we could hope for was for the country merely to keep its head above water—both literally and figuratively. No one at the time would have imagined a mini-boom stimulated by the discovery of natural gas. That has given a major boost to Bangladesh's economic prospects. In my time, there were some expectations that natural gas fields might be found and exploited. But natural gas was not at that point a factor that could be counted on to help Bangladesh's economic development—or that influenced our thinking about it.

During my tour I was pleased with the Bangladesh government's economic policy. It had moved away from the economic policy of past regimes and was stressing that the public sector—which included large enterprises that had been nationalized when the country broke away from Pakistan —would have to shrink and the private sector grow. We were

Library of Congress

concerned about corruption in the public sector and reminded the government of the risks involved in not stopping it. But corruption in Bangladesh is almost endemic. It is even worse now than when I was ambassador.

We were, of course, proponents of a market economy. That was my constant theme. We never discussed the issue of free trade, since it had little bearing on Bangladesh's economy.

The most important economic development for Bangladesh during my time there was the rapid development of a ready-made garment industry that became a major exporter. This development helped Bangladesh's economic prospects immeasurably. Bangladesh was able to take advantage of the Multi-Fiber Agreement (MFA). This enabled it to obtain export quotas. Had such a quota system not been available the industry would probably not have started. It would surely not have attained the scope that it soon did.

I spent far more time than I had ever expected to do on negotiations with the Bangladeshis on their garment exports to the United States. Negotiators from USTR, Commerce, and State would come to Dhaka and we would advise these Washington teams about Bangladeshi positions. The negotiators were there to deal with the problem that as its garment industry expanded Bangladesh often reached its quota for a particular garment item, men's shirts, for example, long before the year for which the quota had been calculated had ended. We encouraged the Bangladeshis to diversify their output in order to avoid this problem. With my strong support, our negotiators tended to be fairly generous in their treatment of Bangladesh exports. They generally took the position that Bangladesh was a very poor country that deserved special consideration.

I had had no previously experience in dealings with trade matters and they had not figured significantly in my briefings in Washington before I first went to post. Nor was my DCM or my economic counselor versed in the issue. Under those circumstances, I found it useful to turn to my wife for assistance. Just before we went to Dhaka she had been director

Library of Congress

of the Department's Office of International Trade, so the garments issue was right up her alley. When she accompanied me to Dhaka she was obliged to take leave without pay under the regulations as they were then interpreted by Personnel. Her considerable expertise was a great help not only to me but also to the Bangladeshis. They too were for the first time becoming involved in significant trade issues and had very little knowledge about how to deal with them. My wife handled the internal embassy bureaucracies of her own involvement very well. As far as I was aware, the economic counselor had no problem with her intervention.

One of our major efforts in Bangladesh was to assist the government and NGOs [non-governmental organizations] in pressing forward on their family planning and population control program. These programs were highly important and highly visible in Bangladesh. The country had a succession of governments with different agendas before, during and after I left. But they all strongly supported family planning. President Ershad gave the program his personal attention. He would travel around to various public health facilities to inspect them and call public attention to them. I would occasionally travel with him. I heard very few political objections from the Islamic parties. I had expected more. The programs, which we assisted with major funding and the assignment of experts in the field, were probably the most successful of any undertaken in the region. They have had a serious, positive impact in stemming population growth. It was effective for three reasons: a) the whole-hearted support of the Bangladeshi government; b) the very important contribution that foreign organizations made—most notably AID; c) the willingness of the Bangladeshis to undertake a variety of imaginative approaches to contraception and its delivery to the people.

On the political side, I favored a return to a constitutional and democratic regime. When I reached Dhaka the country had been under martial law for a couple of years following a bloodless military coup. In international affairs, we did not seek any kind of alliance or political understanding with Bangladesh. We wanted it to remain independent and to pursue its own foreign policy. We accepted its non-aligned preference. Of course, we

Library of Congress

tried to win Bangladesh's support for our positions at the United Nations and in other international bodies. We did not want Bangladesh to follow the Indian model of that day, which was to lean toward Moscow while remaining officially non-aligned. In general, we got the support we thought possible given Bangladesh's circumstances and were satisfied with the bilateral relationship.

The Indians would have preferred that Bangladesh follow New Delhi's pro-Moscow lead. But it would be overstating the case to say that the Indians applied major pressure on Bangladesh to persuade Ershad's government to do so. The Indians recognized that a military regime in Dhaka was unlikely to hew to the Moscow line. They were prepared to live with that.

To my surprise, by the time I got to Dhaka the Pakistanis had developed quite a warm relationship with Bangladesh. In part, this was due to the common concern in both countries about India's strength and perceived aspirations in the region. Early in my tour, an important soccer match took place in a stadium close to the embassy. The match was for the South Asian cup; the finalists were Pakistan and India. I heard wild cheers emanating from the stadium. When I asked what was going on, I was told that the spectators were all cheering because Pakistan was winning. Later that evening, I met a senior officer of the Army. I told him that I had not expected a Bangladeshi crowd to cheer for Pakistan. He said that he had lost dozens of family members during the fighting in 1971 - the war of independence - all killed by the Pakistan army. But, he went on, he had been in the stadium that afternoon and found himself cheering for Pakistan, too. I think those comments tell you a lot about India's position in South Asia.

We aimed at raising the standard of living through economic development and population control, we supported the return of a constitutionally-elected, democratic regime, and accepted Bangladesh's pursuit of a genuinely independent and non-aligned foreign policy. These had been for some years the major goals of U.S. policy in Bangladesh. As deputy assistant secretary, I had had a hand in developing this policy. Accordingly,

Library of Congress

Washington gave me considerable latitude in its implementation. The NEA Bureau and other policymaking offices were confident that as an experienced senior officer thoroughly familiar with existing policy, I could be fully trusted to carry it out. I was quite content with that situation. I developed a close working relationship with the desk officer (once one finally took over the job on a regular basis) and together we handled matters, keeping in touch quite frequently. I was often able, with his assistance, to develop my own instructions. No one objected to this. Many of the senior officers in the NEA bureau saw it as a load off their shoulders. My actions allowed them to devote more time to problems they considered more important that confronted them in other South Asian countries.

We had a very unusual communication arrangement at the time which strengthened this approach to policymaking for Bangladesh. A number of telephone lines had been set up for a summit conference of heads of Islamic states a few months before I got to the country. When the conference was over, the embassy purchased one of the lines. That helped out communications with Washington immeasurably since the regular phone lines were unreliable. However, while this system enabled us to talk to Washington, Washington could not initiate a conversation with us.

I found that one-way street a great boon. I could get in touch with Washington by phone to put across my ideas or to find out what was going on. At the same time, I was spared unwanted hassling by the Department. The line was not secure, but much of what I needed to convey was unclassified anyway. When I wanted to deal with more sensitive matters the desk officer and I would use double-talk, which I hope would make our discussions meaningless to any surreptitious monitors. Because of the time difference, I would often catch the desk officer at his home just before he set out for the Department. He was my primary confederate in my policy dealings. The country director was happy with this arrangement. He was a busy man. He once told me that he spent 60% of his time on Pakistan and 40% on Afghanistan. The rest, he added, he spent on Bangladesh.

Library of Congress

Aside from the United States, many foreign governments were interested in the economic development of Bangladesh. Indeed, I soon concluded that any country that had any serious concern about economic development and humanitarian relief in the Third World had some kind of mission in Dhaka. Additionally, there were a large number of foreign non-governmental organizations with large and active programs. They included some big, important American ones such as the Ford Foundation and the Asia Foundation. They had good programs and we kept in close contact with them. This was especially true of our relations with the Asia Foundation because it received most of its funding from the U.S. Government.

There were no serious problems of coordination among the aid donors, U.S. and foreign, government and non-government. We had a good collaborative effort. This was greatly assisted by the working of the Aid-to-Bangladesh Consortium headed by the World Bank representative. The ambassadors of the consortium countries would meet regularly together. Aid directors and their staffs met one another more frequently. It was an excellent arrangement for all concerned, including, most importantly, the Bangladeshis. When I arrived, the domestic political situation was static. General H. M. Ershad, who held the title of “chief martial law administrator” and as such ran the government, was interested in attaining legitimacy for his regime. He wished to return to constitutional government, no doubt with himself still in charge. Other martial law regimes in Pakistan and Bangladesh had gone down this road before and it was clear to all concerned that this was what the general had in mind.

There were two main opposition parties: the Bangladesh National Party and the Awami League. Both were led by strong-willed women who were close relatives of powerful, deceased male leaders. Begum (Mrs.) Khaleda Zia, the BNP leader, was the widow of General Ziaur Rahman, who had led the country from the mid-1970s until his assassination in 1981. Sheikh Hasina Wajid, head of the Awami League, was the orphaned daughter of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the founder of Bangladesh who had been

Library of Congress

killed in a similar coup in 1975. Neither of the opposition parties wished to take part in an election or to do anything that might provide legitimacy to the Ershad regime or to his efforts to return to constitutional government—under his rule. Ershad sought to push by giving greater scope to political activities in Bangladesh. At one point, when it seemed that these new freedoms were threatening to get out of hand, he cut back on the parameters of acceptable political activity.

Our interest was in fostering constitutional government. We urged all of the political parties to participate in the process. One of my achievements as ambassador was to establish a more trusting and closer relationship between the embassy and the government and the embassy and the opposition parties, both of which looked at us with some suspicion because they thought we were in Ershad's camp. In addition, the leader of the Awami League believed that the U.S. government was particularly opposed to her party. Indeed, some times in her darker moments, Sheikh Hasina felt that the assassination of her father in 1975 was in part due to our involvement.

These concerns were aroused, for example, when similar rumors circulated about a CIA role in the assassination of Indira Gandhi, which occurred soon after I arrived. I was able, through a very carefully scripted effort, to develop personal relationships with both Begum Zia and Sheikh Hasina and the senior members of their parties. This helped me to persuade them that the U.S. government, while carrying on appropriate diplomatic contacts with the Ershad government, nevertheless was not taking a position favoring his party over others. The U.S. was prepared to deal with both of the opposition parties these women led, and would do so easily with them as government parties should they come to power.

I think Ershad probably found my initiatives toward the opposition somewhat troubling, but he did not make an issue of it. In any event, he was fully aware of what we were doing. I made no effort to conceal my movements—such efforts would have failed in any case and would have given rise to even greater suspicion—it would have been dead wrong had I

Library of Congress

been so stupid as to try. I was very pleased when at the end of my three years in Dhaka, Sheikh Hasina had a luncheon in my honor to which she invited all of the leadership of her party. I have seen her subsequently, both when she was prime minister and when she was in opposition. So our relationship has lasted for many years.

One of the things I did, in the course of my efforts to support a return to constitutional processes, was to seek to persuade the Awami League to participate in parliamentary elections which Ershad had called in 1986. I proceeded with this very quietly—against the advice of my political counselor, who thought that I was taking too active a role. I never cleared my intentions with the Department of State; so it had no knowledge of what I was doing. But I felt that, given the trust the Awami League had in me and my knowledge of the political situation in Bangladesh, I could quietly lobby for its participation in the elections. The Awami League did participate in the elections, although the Bangladesh Nationalist Party did not. I was told later by Robert Peck, my successor as deputy assistant secretary, that the Department suspected that I was up to something, but decided it would be best to let me handle the matter in the way I wanted.

The nature of the government changed very little when martial law was lifted and elections held. There were two elections in fact, one after another. First came the Parliamentary elections which were closely followed by the presidential elections. In the latter case, neither of the two opposition parties participated. But the elections were a visible indicator that constitutional government was being restored. General Ershad became Mr. Ershad, resigning his military commission, since the constitution barred military officers from becoming president. However, there was no question even after the elections as to where power lay—it remained in the hands of President Ershad and the power structure he had established earlier.

The military continued to play an important role. Ershad was a master at manipulating the army, the dominant armed service branch. He made certain that those whom he regarded as possible threats would be assigned to positions—preferably far away—where they

Library of Congress

could not threaten his rule. He tended to woo his close—and useful—military supporters. He appointed as his successor as chief of staff a rather weak figure who would not stand in his way or try to lead the military as he had. With this unimpressive, lightly regarded officer in position, Ershad could be confident that the military would continue to look to him. In any case, the military was very supportive of Ershad's constitutional regime. There may have been a few officers who dissented - the embassy picked up some rumors to that effect - but Ershad was strong enough and clever enough to deal with them. This dissent never reached the point where we in the embassy seriously considered the possibility of the Ershad regime being overthrown by military officers. I saw Ershad quite frequently. I tried not to see him too frequently; I did not want to create the impression that we were “in his pocket” nor did I want to leave the impression that we were dictating to him. So I would see the president about once a month or every six weeks. What I tried to do was to measure my contacts with him—quite deliberately. I had no trouble having access to him. I would see him periodically in social occasions, but those were never conducive to discussing issues. They were rather stilted. I did succeed once in doing something that was quite novel for Bangladesh. I invited the president to my residence for dinner and he came. This was quite contrary to his policy, but I was very anxious to spend some time with Ershad while General Vernon (“Dick”) Walters was visiting. Walters was then the U.S. permanent representative at the United Nations. After much wrangling we worked out with the government some arrangement which allowed the president to come to my house without any breach of protocol.

That meeting went very well indeed. Though I had some concern about how it would come out, I shouldn't have because Walters is a great raconteur with an astonishing ability to entertain; he took over and the conversation flowed easily and happily. It was a great evening.

Ershad did attend national days, but he did not go to ambassadors' residences for any reason. I thought that he was a very shrewd man, though not a very good popular politician. This was not for lack of trying. He was reserved and if not altogether humorless

Library of Congress

certainly not a barrel of laughs. He had a good idea of where matters stood and I think he was very successful in moving in the directions—political and economic—which we supported. He moved slowly and judiciously on economic development—at about the speed that the country could absorb. He was not mean spirited; nevertheless the opposition distrusted him. But he allowed the opposition to make its points, unlike many other Third World countries. He remains active in politics as an opposition leader. I'm quite surprised that he was able to adjust to that new and unfamiliar role. He had had little experience in the give and take of parliamentary debate and other aspects of his opposition party responsibilities.

Politics were alive and well in Bangladesh in my time there. They were regarded very much like a sport. People enjoyed talking about politics incessantly; politics were very much in the life blood of the Bengalis. We can see the same phenomenon in West Bengal in India. The Bengalis there, a majority of them Hindus, have the same zest for politics as their fellow Bengalis do in Muslim-majority Bangladesh. This Bengali fascination with politics is one of the reasons we were able to maintain and even extend our political contacts beyond the majority party.

The Soviet Union was represented in Bangladesh, although the Ershad government was quite cool to it. In fact, Bangladesh in those days focused on relations with the U.S., Pakistan and the PRC. It quite rightly saw the Soviet Union as a close supporter of India. But it maintained a relationship with the USSR and even received economic assistance from Moscow. I got to know the Soviet ambassador. At first, the Soviet pretty much ignored me. We had a strictly formal relationship. But with the change in regime in the Soviet Union—the accession of Gorbachev—the foreign ministry in Moscow apparently sent out instructions which limited restrictions which had been put on Soviet diplomats. After that, the ambassador and I had a much closer relationship, as did our subordinate officers.

Library of Congress

I would periodically see my PRC colleague. I never learned very much from him. We never had any problems that would have been resolved through the cooperation of either the USSR or the PRC. My closest contact in the foreign diplomatic community was probably the Pakistan High Commissioner—there were two during my three years. I maintained good contacts with the Indian High Commissioner—there were also two during my tour. I had in the eyes of the Pakistan and Indian high commissioners a special position as an American South Asian expert who had served for many years in their countries. It was only natural therefore for them to have good relations with me, and vice-versa. But the contacts with the Indians were not particularly rewarding - professionally speaking. In part this was due, as I suggested earlier, to Indian suspicions about our motives and actions in Bangladesh. They felt that somehow we were seeking to undercut their position. I had a much easier and more productive relationship with my Pakistani colleagues.

The 1986 elections caused great problems. They were seriously marred by fraud. This gave rise to a very interesting situation on election day. As election returns began to come in from the districts to Election Commission headquarters, early indications were that the opposition was doing very well. Then, all of a sudden, the Commission announced that counting would be suspended. For 24 hours matters were at a standstill. When counting resumed, the tide turned in favor of the ruling party. Sheikh Hasina, the leader of the Awami League, the opposition party which had participated in the elections partly as a result of my urging and negotiations, angrily made public her party's displeasure about the process and the results.

Subsequently, there were a number of by-elections. Some of these were prompted by the election of candidates to more than one seat. That meant that they had to give up one of their seats, prompting by-elections to fill them. Those elections were won hands-down by the government party — even in those districts that had handily elected a member of the opposition in the general elections. Under those circumstances, the opposition understandably was furious. Sheikh Hasina expressed her dissatisfaction to me personally

Library of Congress

and asked me to do something about it. There was not much I could do to get the election results changed. I urged her to make the best of it and to participate in Parliament. After my departure, the Awami League decided to withdraw from Parliament. We did make our views known to the government— at least informally— lest it might think that we did not object to their fraudulent electoral activities.

I think the political situation today is transformed because Bangladesh has two major parties contending for people's votes. On the other hand, there is not yet the concept of a loyal opposition. Elections are free and fair but nevertheless the losing party almost automatically questions the process and the outcome. It questions the authority of the elected government; then quickly demands that the government step down and new election held under impartial auspices. Neither the Awami League nor the BNP, when out of power, has been content to play a loyal opposition role in Parliament and to await the end of the five-year parliamentary term. Yet even so, one should not overlook the great improvement in the political process in the last 13 years. At least there is now what has come to be called “illiberal democracy.” When I was there, the prevailing mode was authoritarian.

But even in 1986, I had hopes that the process would move toward a more democratic form. I saw some glimmer of hope. I didn't think General Ershad could stay in power indefinitely. There was considerable unrest among the Bangladeshi. The opposition parties, despite government harassment, had managed to marshal substantial loyal followings, giving me hope that Ershad's downfall was just a matter of time. I expected that it would be brought about by disturbances in the street. That eventually happened, although later than I had predicted.

One of Ershad's strong points was that he was a survivor; he knew how to manipulate the political system. He was blessed in having as his major opposition two women neither of whom was as adept as he was in the manipulation of the system. The women were personally at odds; it was very difficult for them to agree on how to oppose the General.

Library of Congress

When they did reach a consensus, in 1990, they forced the government to step down—it was no longer supported by the military, much to Ershad's disappointment.

Bangladesh is known throughout the world as the home of some of the most devastating cyclones on earth. I was witness to one, which turned out to be a relatively minor storm—it killed only 15,000 people. Bangladesh in 1970 lost 300,000 or more people—some estimates go as high as a million. Interestingly, because the cyclone I witnessed occurred at a time when very little else was happening in the U.S.—it was Memorial Day weekend—it received unusually extensive coverage in the American press. AID was instructed to assist in any way possible—and a large amount of assistance flowed from the U.S. to Bangladesh. I consider that a positive example of what is now known as the CNN effect—real time coverage of earth-shaking events which have impact on TV viewers who then pressure their governments to remedy or alleviate the situation.

I visited the ravaged areas. There is no question that the devastation and loss of human life must have some impact on an observer. But after having spent so many years in South Asia, it took a great deal to horrify me. After seeing poverty, destitution and the consequences of natural disasters for so long, you expect them to be part of the rhythm of life in that area. One is of course shaken by the situation, but one recognizes that all of these maladies are part of South Asia life. For us South Asian specialists, the horrors of poverty and natural disasters are not as striking as they would be to someone who has spent his career in Western Europe, for example.

My three years as ambassador were personally very rewarding and enjoyable. The Bangladeshis are a very engaging people. We used to say that they were among the few people in the world of the mid-1980s who both liked and respected Americans. I felt that the U.S. government had a very important role in Bangladesh. The AID mission and I developed a good dialogue with the government. I think we were able to have a major influence on the government, both through advice and as a result of our assistance. We

Library of Congress

were able to convince the government to adopt sound economic policies which would lead to a rise in Bangladesh's standard of living.

I am aware that Bangladesh is viewed, among donors, as one of the poorer countries in the world - an "international basket case" as Henry Kissinger allegedly said. (In fact, it was someone else, Under Secretary of State U. Alexis Johnson, who used that phrase in Kissinger's presence.) I tried to change that image somewhat, in part to encourage staff to apply for vacancies arising at my embassy. For example, we used the STATE magazine, which featured Dhaka as its "Post of the Month" at our urging. Photographs were taken suggesting that the post was not as terrible as the popular conception had it. The most telling commentary on Bangladesh was articulated by my Egyptian colleague. At his farewell party hosted by the diplomatic community, he said that there were two things that could be said of an assignment to Bangladesh. You cry twice — once when you are assigned and again when you are ready to leave. And that was so true.

My tour was rewarding in part because I learned a lot. On the management side, I was impressed by the importance of having a successful predecessor. In such situations, you just follow the practices that he or she established until new circumstances call for change. Ambassadors should not wade into embassies and turn them upside down, either because their style is different from their predecessor or because they want to leave their own mark.

On the substantive side, it is important in any country to do everything possible to develop relations with the opposition. It could eventually become the government party, even in Bangladesh which was in my time run by General Ershad and the military. In fact, both Sheikh Hasina and Begum Khaleda Zia later became Prime Ministers.

I believe that it is vital that an ambassador become fully involved in the activities of an AID mission, USIS and the Peace Corps, if there is one in-country. We did not have a Peace Corps in Bangladesh at the time I was there, but a program was started later. I would add that it is also very important to establish a close relationship with the CIA contingent.

Library of Congress

I believe that traveling throughout the country was a very important task, even in a country such as Bangladesh where roads and accommodations were rather primitive, particularly outside of major cities. Travel in Bangladesh was often overwhelmed by the attention that local authorities gave to security.

The final lesson I learned was that it was most important to maintain as close relations as you can with Washington. That includes periodic consultations there. In my case, I had the support of the Department, which had known me and I had participated in the U.S.' basic policy formulation for Bangladesh.

Q: In 1987, you were assigned to be a diplomat-in-residence. Where did you spend the year?

SCHAFFER: I went to the Institute for the Study of Diplomacy—a part of the School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University. Ambassador David Newsom, the director, had encouraged me to join the Institute. He felt that Georgetown was deficient, as indeed it was, in its expertise on South Asia. He wanted me to organize a course or two on the area. That fitted well with my desires because at the time I was interested in writing a book on U.S.-South Asian relations.

That book was never written because I decided that I would not have enough time if I were to organize the courses as I envisaged them. That took much more time than I had anticipated, both in organizing the syllabi and in actually teaching the courses, which I did in the Spring of 1988.

It was a wonderful year. I really enjoyed the academic atmosphere. I enjoyed interacting with the students. The experience led me to think about an academic life after retirement. There is a relationship between the academic world and that of the practitioners in the Foreign Service, although I readily admit that the symbiosis will vary from case to case. I felt that in NEA — specifically the South Asian part — the academic-government

Library of Congress

relationship was a very close one. The bureaucrats/diplomats knew the academics very well. There was a great deal of interaction. On some occasions, academics were invited to briefing sessions hosted by the Department. Some came to work in the Department on short assignments. The briefing sessions were often oriented to the needs of new ambassadors. I felt that there was a considerable sense of confidence in the relationship. The academics had spent a lot of time in the area, where they met Foreign Service officers. That relationship was carried on when the officers returned to Washington for domestic assignments.

I always found these contacts quite useful. Some of course were more useful than others; some academics had good minds for policy development; others were much more the traditional university type who were not very good at policy analysis, let alone policy making. But by and large I had a very favorable impression of the academics with whom I worked. They knew their fields very well; I learned a lot from them.

Q: In 1988, you were assigned as deputy assistant secretary foSouth Asia in NEA. Who was the assistant secretary?

SCHAFFER: The assistant secretary was Richard Murphy. He knew me well from my first tour as a deputy assistant secretary; he was also the assistant secretary then. I should note that by that time Murphy had given up all pretense that he was giving direction to our South Asia policies and activities. First of all, he was completely preoccupied with Middle East issues, Iran and even North Africa—as had been his predecessors. Secondly, as happened before, the under secretary for political affairs—Mike Armacost in this case—had stepped in to what amounted to bureaucratic vacuum. He took over the Afghanistan portfolio. By extension, that got him involved in much of South Asia.

After my stint in the academic world I decided that I wanted to return to NEA as a deputy assistant secretary. My plan was to hold the job for a few years, after which I would retire. I could not return overseas because my wife had to pick up her career, which she

Library of Congress

interrupted for three years while I was serving as ambassador to Bangladesh. In any case, I was not particularly keen on another ambassadorship because that would have again forced her to leave her career track. If I had been given serious consideration for the ambassadorship to India, we might have reached a different conclusion. That was the only exception that we were willing to make; in any case, it was a very long-shot.

I knew my staff quite well. I inherited the Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan country director. I also inherited a Foreign Service officer who acted as special advisor on Afghanistan. I found that the staff was not as good in its relationship with other units nor as effective as the one which I managed earlier. This was due in part to the personalities and capabilities of some of my staff. In addition, in the 1988-89 period, we in NEA found ourselves in a very difficult situation when policy development was done essentially by State Department levels above the assistant secretary.

Before my return to the DAS job, the secretary had agreed to establish in the Office of the under secretary for political affairs a separate working group on Afghanistan—working on reconstruction, economic assistance, and refugees. But in fact that task force became more generally involved in Afghanistan policy. So it became somewhat of a rival; papers were written and had to be cleared with them and vice-versa. In essence, this working group was working for the under secretary for political affairs and for all intents and purposes he became the country director for Afghanistan.

Let me start with Afghanistan, which had been so high on the U.S. agenda. By the time I reported for duty in May 1988, the Geneva Accords had been signed. Included in those Accords was a time table for Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan. The principal responsibility of the United States was to monitor the progress of the implementation of the Accords. One of our roles as one of the guarantors of the Accords was to continue to supply military end use and training items to the Mujaheddin. We continued to urge the “Freedom Fighters” to get their act together, overcoming their divisions. The contacts with the Mujaheddin were largely in the hands of the CIA working with and through the

Library of Congress

Pakistan government. We were generally aware of what the CIA was doing. From time to time, we were briefed, but those discussions never touched the specific operations being conducted. Those were out-of-bounds to us.

Even in 1988, we were greatly concerned about future Mujaheddin activities. We made an effort, as I said, to bring the competing factions together to establish a broad-based group. We were not successful in those efforts. I was also concerned by our decision to continue to arm the Mujaheddin, but since the Soviets continued to arm their allies, we had to respond in kind. I would have preferred a moratorium on both sides on arms deliveries. When the Soviets changed their policy, I thought that we should have reciprocated by declaring a moratorium. The Mujaheddin were already heavily armed; we really didn't have to provide more. I should note that many of the arms were reserved not for fighting the Soviets, but to be used by one faction on another after Soviet withdrawal.

We had also expected—and this an almost universal belief in the U.S. government—that following the Soviet withdrawal, which was completed in the Spring, 1989, the government then in power in Kabul would fall. That did not happen; that government held on for several more years—to our surprise and discomfort.

The impact of the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan and the subsequent liberation movement on neighboring countries was not as evident in the late 1980s as it became later. Obviously, there was a mass movement of refugees out of the fighting areas. There also were the problems generated by gangs who dealt surreptitiously in arms and drugs. That became known as the “Kalashnikov” culture. In Pakistan, one found large caches of arms provided by friends of the Mujaheddin from abroad. These arms became available on the Pakistani black market—for a price. That trade certainly increased the spread of violence, which is still manifested today. Let me mention another issue of interest. This is the decision to close our embassy in Kabul as the Soviets withdrew. There was considerable concern, which I shared fully, that our personnel might be in considerable danger once the Soviets left. It would have been virtually impossible for us to bring our

Library of Congress

people out if there was chaos in Kabul caused by the various factions fighting to gain control of the capital and the government, as we expected. I urged that the small American contingent - whose relations with the Afghan authorities were limited to administrative and consular matters - be withdrawn, at least temporarily, until the security situation could be stabilized. This issue was raised in the final days of the Reagan administration with Secretary Shultz, who was about to leave office. All of the officials concerned with this issue assembled in Mr. Shultz' office to consider it. I fought hard for withdrawal; I was not given support by Dick Murphy, my boss as assistant secretary for NEA, nor by Mike Armacost, the under secretary. I thought that both took an anti-withdrawal position because they thought—rightly—that the secretary was against it. Shultz' position was that there were few places in the world that had the importance of Afghanistan. In his view, that made it vital for Foreign Service officers to witness and report the process of the Soviet exit. My reaction was that were others who could be witnesses; the safety of our people must be a consideration. Shultz listened to the discussion, as he always did, but ruled that our embassy would remain open.

Soon after that meeting, James Baker became secretary in the new Bush administration. He was presented with the same issue, which by this time had become more complicated in view of events in Lebanon. I gather that Baker felt that the last thing he wanted to happen in the initial days of his stewardship was to have massacres in both Beirut and Kabul. So he changed the Department's position and our embassy in Kabul was closed — much to my satisfaction.

The situation in the rest of South Asia was not too different from when I had left in 1984. There was one major event which occurred early in my tour. That was the death of our ambassador, Arnie Raphel, and the president of Pakistan, Zia ul-Haq in a plane crash whose cause has never been satisfactorily explained. Arnie was a good friend and we mourned his passing. The death of the Zia brought radical changes to the Pakistani political scene. A few months after the crash, Benazir Bhutto was elected prime minister.

Library of Congress

The election was generally free and fair. That changed the South Asia political map significantly.

We had hopes, following Bhutto's victory, that she and Rajiv Gandhi, the Indian prime minister, could overcome the ancient tensions and mistrust between their two nations. They were after all representatives of a new generation that had not suffered when Pakistan and India were separated. We thought that the two would be able to bring some positive changes to India-Pakistan relations. For a while, it seemed that our hopes might be realized. The two leaders had an amiable meeting; they made the right noises. All of that indicated progress. We have always supported every effort made by either or both countries to improve relationships. We were prepared to be helpful in this process, if the two countries indicated that they would welcome our assistance.

Ms. Bhutto did come to Washington early in her prime ministership, in June, 1989, while I was deputy assistant secretary. It was a triumphant tour for her. The trip was very carefully choreographed by a number of people including a couple of Americans—Peter Galbraith, the son of Ambassador John Kenneth Galbraith and at the time a staffer for the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and Mark Siegel, a public relations adviser and prominent Democrat. Benazir had hired them for that purpose, thereby effectively bypassing her Washington embassy. I worked closely with the embassy on a day-to-day basis and with the two Americans as well. Benazir never did hold my alleged role in the overthrow of her father against me and I remained a 1977 footnote in Pakistan history. With her government, as with all others, I was able to function easily and was recognized as a friend of Pakistan and an authority on South Asian affairs.

Ms. Bhutto had been invited to the United States by Harvard University, which wished to grant her an honorary degree. She had graduated with a B.A. from Harvard and had maintained her connections with the university. Ironically enough, one of her biggest fans was former U.S. Ambassador to India John Kenneth Galbraith. I say “ironically” because when in India, Galbraith had not been known as a friend or supporter of Pakistan. But

Library of Congress

when Bhutto was doing her undergraduate work, Galbraith took her under his wing; later he became one of the strongest foreign supporters of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Benazir's father, who was tried for murder in 1978 and hanged in 1979. Peter Galbraith was a classmate of Benazir and had maintained contact with her after graduation. Both he and Siegel strongly supported her and I think that Siegel worked as a lobbyist for Ms. Bhutto on an essentially gratis basis when she was isolated in the opposition wilderness.

These two Americans worked to broaden her trip beyond the Harvard event by pressing for an invitation for her to meet the President and have an official visit to the United States. I supported their suggestion and was very happy that it all worked out. It was not entirely a surprise that the president wanted to meet her because she was a very interesting and attractive individual, a U.S.-educated woman who had brought democracy back to Pakistan after a long period of martial law and authoritative rule. She seemed to be Western in her outlook and sympathies. We looked favorably on an official visit because we believed that we could work with Bhutto and her government, particularly in our efforts to discourage Pakistan from its pursuit of a nuclear weapon capability. That was high on our agenda of U.S.-Pakistan relations at the time.

Galbraith and Siegel developed a program which included the Washington visit and a major speech at the Harvard commencement, where she received an honorary degree. They made sure that she got to see many influential people. She gave a speech to a joint session of the Congress. All of her speeches and comments focused on the development of democratic practices in Pakistan. Her speeches had a major impact; they were very successful. She got very good press, in part because of Galbraith's and Siegel's efforts, but also because she was such an attractive personality. She was a tremendous asset for Pakistan. Our hopes for her stewardship were dashed later, but at that time, she was seen both as someone who could play a very productive role in Pakistan and as a pro-American leader who could help strengthen U.S.-Pakistan ties.

Library of Congress

Let me add a little to this discussion of Afghanistan and Pakistan. After the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, there was a change in the U.S.-Pakistan relationship. This was inevitable. We had for many years struggled against the Soviets and considered Pakistan “a front-line” state in that struggle. We had supplied large amounts of economic and military assistance. We had provided Pakistan with sophisticated aircraft and other military hardware. Some of this was rather controversial because it seemed—and in fact, was—acquired by Pakistan to be used not against the Soviets but against its traditional enemy India. Congress was prepared to approve sales of heavy tanks, naval vessels, and surface-to-surface missiles to assure that Pakistan would continue to support the Mujaheddin even while it recognized that most of this equipment had no conceivable use in the mountains along the Pak-Afghan border. With the Soviet withdrawal, this picture changed markedly. Questions were raised about the continuation of military assistance—at least at recent levels. By that time, Pakistan had become the third largest recipient of U.S. — following Israel and Egypt.

I felt that a good case could be made that with Pakistan's restoration of democracy, a continuing major assistance program was justified. I was not the only one making this argument and it sold well in Congress—particularly among the skeptics who had questioned the desirability of assistance while Zia was in power. Stephen Solarz (D-New York) was probably the leading skeptic but at the same time he was a great admirer of Ms. Bhutto. Had Zia continued in office, I doubt that we could have continued a large military assistance program after the Soviet withdrawal. Solarz, for example, became a strong supporter for continued large military assistance to Pakistan. He would never have been so had Zia remained in power. I viewed our assistance programs as a sign of support for Benazir Bhutto and the new democratic system—which for all its weaknesses and faults was a great improvement over the authoritarian rule Zia had practiced. Secondly, I recognized that the Pakistanis had run severe risks from the Soviet Union in assisting the Mujaheddin; their participation on our side should not be forgotten. I thought that we had developed a good relationship with Pakistan, with each side contributing to the common

Library of Congress

effort. Even with the Soviet withdrawal, which changed the military scene in the area dramatically, I thought we should not abandon our old ally.

And then there was the nuclear problem, which had been a hot subject of discussion between the U.S. and Pakistan. I thought that a military assistance program might give us greater influence with the government and the military and might lead it to desist in their nuclear efforts if we maintained a close relationship, exemplified by a significant military assistance program. The Indians by that time were quite prepared to live with the large military assistance program that we had restored.

I must say that after Soviet withdrawal I would have preferred a larger economic assistance program and a smaller military assistance one. During Bhutto's visit, we tried to impress on her the importance that we attached to Pakistan's nuclear efforts. It was my understanding that while being briefed by the CIA, she was informed about activities in the nuclear field which came as news to her—even though she was the Prime Minister.

Political power in Pakistan was shared by Ms. Bhutto, the army and the civilian bureaucracy, including the President who was himself a very skilled bureaucrat. He managed to play on all sides of the political equation, thereby enabling him to keep considerable authority for his office.

It is often alleged that we deliberately turned a blind eye to Pakistan's nuclear program while Afghanistan was occupied by the Soviets. According to this argument, it was only when the Soviets withdrew from Afghanistan that we were willing to face the facts of Pakistan's nuclear activities. In 1986, Congress passed the Pressler amendment which stipulated that economic and military assistance could be extended to Pakistan only if the President certified on an annual basis that it did not possess a nuclear explosive device and that continued assistance would deter it from acquiring one. During the mid- and later-1980s, the President did so certify.

Library of Congress

The Indians were convinced that the Pakistanis were in the process of developing a nuclear capability—if they had not already acquired it. They were quite free in telling us what dangers this development was to the stability of the area. Of course, they were working on acquiring that capability for themselves. By 1989, both countries had the capability to manufacture nuclear devices.

I believe that an honest effort was made to investigate the Pakistan situation each year, as required by law. One of the reports prepared in connection with Pressler amendment requirements was written when I was a DAS. There was a long agonizing debate within the U.S. government with some, particularly in CIA, arguing that the President could no longer certify Pakistan under the Pressler amendment. There was considerable evidence that Pakistan was making progress on the road to nuclear capability, but the judgment was that it not yet crossed the line drawn by Pressler. The debate ended by the President certifying to that effect; however in his statement, I think it was made quite clear to Pakistan that unless it ceased and desisted, that might be the last certification. I thought that a good case for certification could be made and therefore I supported the President's action. It was the last certification; by 1990, we had found that the Pakistanis were crossing the line and therefore we terminated all assistance.

As a general conclusion, I think that military assistance was a very important tool of U.S. foreign policy, particularly in light of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. The provision of arms to Pakistan and to the Mujaheddin was crucial. I take a different view on military assistance to Pakistan in the late 1950s and early 1960s. It was useful and very important that we provided military assistance to India at the time we did, but I must say that the provision of military end use items did not lead to any substantial, long-term change either in the Indian attitude towards the U.S. nor to U.S.-India relations. Other Indian needs overshadowed our assistance program and no effort on our part could overcome the Indian aspirations in the area and their suspicions of the U.S. and its motives. I am very pleased that we have consistently declined to provide any kind of military assistance

Library of Congress

beyond minor military equipment and some training to the smaller countries of the region, despite their pleas. We did provide considerable economic assistance, particularly to Bangladesh, and all the smaller countries had some kind of program. I do not believe that a military assistance programs to these smaller countries would have brought stability to South Asia, whereas economic assistance tended to do so.

In my one year as DAS, relationships between India and Pakistan were relatively quiescent. That is one of the reasons why I had some hope that the relationship would improve. The other reason I discussed earlier; namely that Benazir Bhutto and Rajiv Gandhi represented a new generation of leaders who might be able to bridge the gap between India and Pakistan that had divided their parents' generation.

I should add that the relationship at that time was not distracted and worsened by what happened soon after I left Washington. I refer here to the insurgency in Kashmir which introduced a new and very troubling element into India-Pakistan relations. It continues to this day. In the years I dealt with India and Pakistan beginning with my assignment to Islamabad in 1974, the Kashmir issue was very subdued. The Pakistanis were content with that state of affairs. But the insurgency—largely home grown—changed all of that. The Pakistanis saw a renewed opportunity to cause trouble, and felt it was their duty to assist the Kashmiri insurgents. The Kashmir issue remains unresolved today and therefore remains the core issue in India-Pakistan relations.

Let me briefly review the situations in other countries in the area: Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka. India, under Rajiv Gandhi, was making use of its long-term large, scale military build up to project its power first in Sri Lanka under a 1987 agreement, which provided for an Indian peace-keeping force, then in the Maldives. The situation in Sri Lanka in the 1988-89 period was very bad. The Indians, who originally had been sent to disarm the rebellious Tamil guerrillas, thereby hopefully bringing about peace on the island, stationed their forces in the Tamil part of Sri Lanka, the north and northeast. But over time, the Indian goals were changed because the Tamil “Tigers” refused to be disarmed, thereby

Library of Congress

forcing the Indians to fight against them. That represented a major change in Indian policy. So during my year as DAS, we had the ironic situation of Indian troops fighting against the Tamils in an inconclusive war. Meantime, the Sri Lankan government, having left the pacification of the Tamils to the Indians, was engaged in a struggle against Sinhalese rebels who were trying to overthrow the government because of social, political and economic dissatisfactions.

We were primarily observers of the Sri Lanka situation. We had decided that almost from the beginning of the insurgencies. We believed that the involvement of any outside power should be left to the Indians. We declined, despite repeated requests, to supply the Sri Lanka military with any military equipment. We were of course supportive of any efforts made to reestablish peace on the island—reconciliation between the Tamils and the Sinhalese. I supported that policy whole-heartedly. I was convinced that it would be a major mistake if we got involved in Sri Lanka. It was quite clear that the Indians were deeply involved; there was no reason why we should be as well.

We also closely monitored India's relations with Nepal. New Delhi had proposed trade and transit agreements more favorable to India than to Nepal. When the Nepalese demurred the Indians mounted what in fact was an embargo. Here also we urged the two parties to settle their differences and agree to some new agreements. Much to Nepal's dismay, we did not try to pressure the Indians to come to an agreement. Our policy in general was not to object to what seemed to many - including me - Indian efforts to create hegemony over the smaller countries of the region. In 1987, we had supported Indian efforts to serve as peace-keepers in Sri Lanka. Therefore, in accordance with this approach we did not try to pressure India on its Nepal policy.

I don't recall that our policy toward the whole South Asia region was ever spelled out in any piece of paper. In any case, in practice, I don't think we had any carefully considered strategy for the whole region. We tended to react to initiatives of others. We were concerned primarily with non-proliferation—a global issue that focused on Pakistan and

Library of Congress

India at the time. We were concerned by events in Afghanistan, both before and after Soviet withdrawal. We were mildly interested in what the Indians were doing in their relations with the smaller neighbor. But I can not remember any single policy—carefully considered and implemented—that covered the whole region. In fact, we never really had such a policy while I worked in NEA. There were some unsuccessful efforts made to develop one, but essentially we dealt with the sub-continent one country at the time. We did urge that Pakistan and India work toward better relations and did the same with Nepal and India.

American investment in the area was minimal, especially since the Indian government did not create an appropriate climate for it until 1991. So economic issues in the late 1980s were few and far between.

The deputy assistant secretary job gave me a good exposure to the Congressional world. I testified often on Afghanistan, India and Pakistan as well as on Sri Lanka. I developed a good relationship with some congressmen and staffs, especially Congressman Solarz. When I appeared before his sub-committee for the last time, he very graciously spoke about our relationship and the positive effect I had in bringing information and analysis to his committee. He expressed his great satisfaction with our collaborative approach. I was quite moved by this.

I had pretty much a free hand in determining what my testimony would be. Only on one occasion did the Department's Office of Legislative Relations (H) seriously intervene. It was very reluctant to allow anybody in the Department to discuss anything with Solarz and, to my chagrin and over my opposition, stonewalled his efforts to hold a hearing. Finally and reluctantly, H gave in and we resumed our normal relationship.

My 1988-89 experience as DAS was not as satisfying as my first tour (1982-84) had been. The changing range of issues, the narrowed bureaucratic responsibilities, and the lowered quality of my staff all contributed to this. Additionally, that famous Foreign Service

Library of Congress

dictum, “You can't come home again,” also applied. My case was a most unusual situation; I don't think many of my colleagues had a second tour in the same job. There was some opposition to my return, not personal ones, but related to the fact that I had been an ambassador who was returning to a position that I had held before being appointed ambassador.

In 1989, Dick Murphy was replaced by John Kelly. I had not known Kelly before. He took a long time being confirmed because he had been in Lebanon at the time of the Ollie North arms-for-hostages negotiations. He would come to the office occasionally, but did not try to exercise any authority because the Department was aware of the sensitivity of the Senate to officials acting as if they had already been confirmed. Ultimately, he was confirmed.

Soon afterwards, on April 20, 1989, he called me and the other deputy assistant secretaries to his office—one by one—to tell us that we should find other assignments. He said that this was not an indication of dissatisfaction with our work. It was simply that he wanted his own team. This came as a considerable blow to me because I had never been fired from a job before. He did not give me or any of the others any reasons for his action - there could not have been any valid reasons insofar as our competence was concerned - other than that he wanted to bring in his own team. In fact, I think he had shown considerable confidence in me during the interregnum, as he had in the other deputy assistant secretaries. Indeed, he did make very clear, both in words and in the way he dealt with us, that he thought well of us. This concept of “having his own team” was, I was told, part of John's *modus operandi*.

I remember the date well because it was the 100th anniversary of the birthday of Adolf Hitler. We agreed that I would stay on until the completion of the Bhutto visit; so I left the bureau in July, 1989, to serve in the Center for the Study of Foreign Affairs at the Foreign Service Institute. I took this opportunity to start my book on Chester Bowles, which was not completed until a few years later, when it was published by the Harvard University Press.

Library of Congress

Q: So in 1989 you moved to the Center for Diplomatic studies. Whwas the director?

SCHAFFER: The Director was Michael Vlahos. Who headed the Center was somewhat immaterial because officers assigned to it had pretty much of a free hand in determining what subjects they wished to study and how they would go about it. Vlahos was basically an academic and didn't have much of a feel for bureaucracy. He didn't have staff meetings, but left us free to pursue our individual interests. So it turned out that the 1989-90 period was a very useful one, although I suffered to some extent from the shock of moving form a job that was filled with action and responsibility to a climate of academic contemplation. It was a decompression chamber and I had some difficulty adjusting.

I thought that the concept of the Center was not particularly relevant to the Foreign Service. It was useful for me but I think I could probably have found the same if not a better and more supportive academic atmosphere at some other institution. I think that most of us at the Center were involved in work that had little relevance to the Department of State. Policy making should be the focus of any such institution in the Department. Yet its connection with the mainstream of State's concerns were at best highly tenuous. It did not have any established role. It became to some extent a refuge for people like myself; they could be "put out of pasture" there. I started a very good book at the Center, which I completed after I retired. But I was not particularly saddened when I learned that for budgetary reasons, the Center had been closed down. It was the right decision.

The Center did work up simulation exercises and that was the single most useful contribution it made to the Department. I think these exercises were valuable; they were organized by Frederic Hill, who remained at the Foreign Service Institute following the dissolution of the Center. He should be thanked for his contributions. I support the simulation process; it is an interesting analytical tool and I use it the Institute for the Study of Diplomacy. It is an excellent academic technique.

Library of Congress

Q: By 1990, your year at the Center was completed. You then served briefly on the Kuwait Task Force. How did that come about?

SCHAFFER: That was essentially a temporary assignment, which I felt obliged to take on. At that point, there were no policy-making positions available. The Kuwait Task Force focused primarily on disseminating information it received from the Operations Center; it had no policy-making function. At the end of each “watch” it put out a report summarizing events, but it was in no way a player in the foreign policy development process.

I retired after that assignment. In looking back at my career, I think it was a wonderful experience and I am delighted I chose it. As with all careers, it had its ups and downs. Looking back at it, I'd make a number of points for the benefit of young officers coming into the Service. First, I believe that a political officer should not devote his or her career to one geographical area, as I did. They should make certain to gain experience in two or more areas. I made a major mistake in concentrating solely on South Asia following my initial tours at posts in the Far East. My only significant “out-of-area” assignment was in Personnel, and even that was associated with the region. My choice of career patterns restricted my upward mobility; I think it might have been more rapid had I had at least some experience in another geographical area. That would have allowed me to move elsewhere at times when the right job was not available in my original area of specialization.

Secondly, experience in other areas might have helped me to place South Asia in a broader context. I loved the work; I have memories of fascinating jobs, some of which coincided with major events in the area and its relationships with the U.S. However, I think both the Service and I would have been better off if I had been assigned to another geographical area, even if only for one or two tours.

Today, I tell my students at the Georgetown School of Foreign Service that the U.S. Foreign Service is an important organization that can provide them with considerable job

Library of Congress

satisfaction. But, I hasten to add, the Foreign Service is not everybody's cup of tea. I tell them that I need to know them well before I can reach any conclusions about how they will do as Foreign Service officers.

Of course, there have been major changes in the Department and the Foreign Service in the last 10 years. When I joined the Service, and for many years afterwards, junior FSOs saw the Service as a longtime, even lifetime, professional commitment. Nowadays, students view the Foreign Service as something to try. If it works, fine; if not, they will move on and do something else in the international field or elsewhere. They believe that in most instances, they will benefit from the Foreign Service experience, but they are rarely wedded to the Service as a lifetime pursuit before entering it. This view gives me some concern about the future of the Foreign Service and other overseas activities of government. But my greater concern is that the top-notch students, who in the past would select the Foreign Service as their career choice, are now far more likely to opt for a career in international business or NGOs.

End of interview