

# THE FOREIGN SERVICE JOURNAL

PUBLISHED BY THE AMERICAN FOREIGN SERVICE ASSOCIATION

NOVEMBER 2019



EAST MEETS WEST:  
**1989 IN PERSPECTIVE**

REVISITING **TEHRAN**

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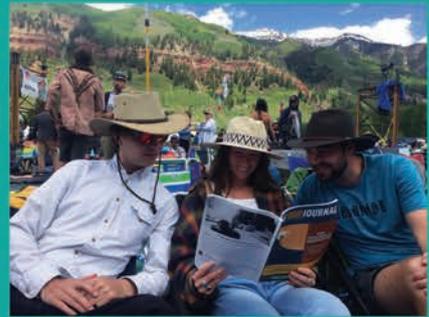
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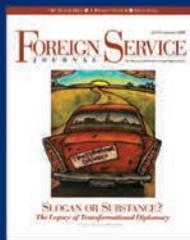
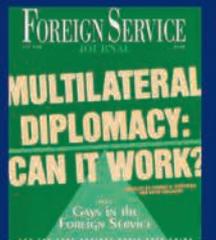
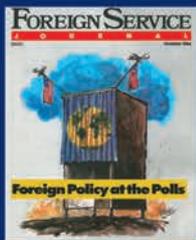
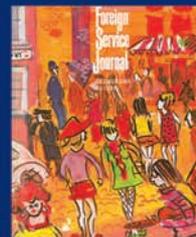
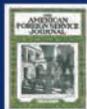
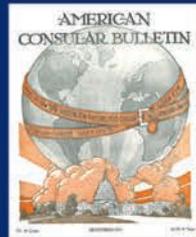
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# THE FOREIGN SERVICE JOURNAL

November 2019 Volume 96, No. 9

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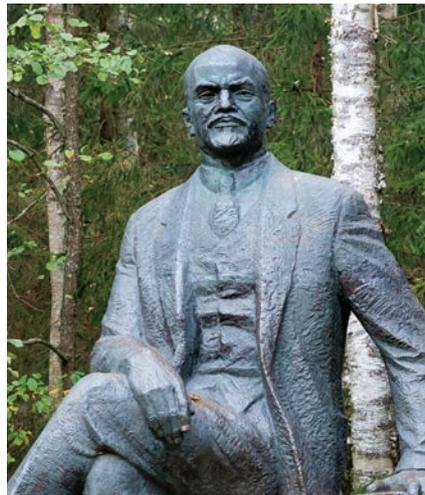
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**On the Cover**—West Berliners perched on top of the Berlin Wall at the Brandenburg Gate taunt the East German police, Nov. 10, 1989. Photo by then-junior FSO Mike Hammer from on top of the wall.

# We Defend the Foreign Service

BY ERIC RUBIN

There are many reasons to be a member of the American Foreign Service Association. AFSA advances the cause of diplomacy, lobbies the Congress for resources for foreign affairs and foreign assistance, and offers a wealth of benefits—from *The Foreign Service Journal* and the daily AFSA Media Digest to topical programming on a host of subjects.

AFSA has another important role, however, one that is especially important today. As the legal bargaining representative of all Foreign Service professionals in six U.S. government agencies, our job is to work to improve working conditions and policies on employment, promotion, discipline and retirement.

This role comes with an important imperative: We defend our members, and we defend the Foreign Service as a whole. When you join AFSA, we take on an obligation to defend you when you need us. Several hundred members a year turn to us for individual support, and our team of lawyers, labor management advisers and grievance counselors goes to bat for them.

AFSA also helps arrange outside expert support when needed. In recent months, we have had to ramp up our support to members in the wake of the political turbulence that has affected too many of our colleagues.

As we approach the 100th anniversary of the modern Foreign Service and of AFSA, it's worth looking back on our

history to derive lessons that can help us respond to the very challenging times that face us today.

In the difficult early days of the Cold War, Foreign Service officers who reported accurately on the likely collapse of Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist government in China and the probable victory of the communists were pilloried in the press and dragged through lengthy congressional hearings. Foreign Service Officers O. Edmund Clubb, John Paton Davies Jr., John S. Service and John Carter Vincent were forced out of the Foreign Service.

During the worst days of Senator Joseph McCarthy's rampage against alleged Soviet sympathizers in the U.S. government, AFSA did little to defend members of the Foreign Service who were unfairly accused of being "fellow travelers" or Soviet sympathizers and also did little to protest raids on U.S. Information Agency libraries overseas that sought to purge them of "disloyal" books.

Other members of the Foreign Service were driven out during the 1950s "Lavender Scare" purge of suspected gay employees, a campaign that the Secretary of State formally apologized for on behalf of the State Department in 2017.

During the tumultuous years of the Vietnam War, AFSA members transformed our association from a partner with management to an independent advocate for the U.S. Foreign Service and its employees. In 1973 when AFSA, long a professional association, became the official bargaining agent for the Foreign

Service, it gained the power to protect members of the Service against harassment and retaliation—not just as a matter of professional integrity, but also as a matter of employee rights.

This legacy is part of our history, and we need to remember it and draw lessons from it. Our message must be simple and clear: We have your back, and we will assist and defend you when you need help. Nothing we do is more important.

We also must maintain AFSA's impartiality and non-partisan, non-political orientation. We don't take sides in political or policy battles. We support the fundamental vision of a Foreign Service that is committed to the success of the policies established by our elected leaders.

There are, however, two sides to that coin: We expect our elected and appointed leaders to respect the career professionals of the Foreign Service and to recognize their commitment to serving the United States and to honoring their oath to the U.S. Constitution.

We also expect them to refrain from equating well-considered dissent for disloyalty. Constructive dissent must be confidential, never public; and dissenters must accept that at the end of the day our policy will be set by our elected leaders. To achieve good policy decisions, however, it is critical that our expert career professionals have a role in policy formation.

That is the vision of the Foreign Service Act of 1980, which puts the Foreign Service at the heart of our nation's foreign policy decision-making. That is the vision that inspires our work. ■



*Ambassador Eric Rubin is the president of the American Foreign Service Association.*

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# The Wall, Then and Now

BY SHAWN DORMAN

Change was in the air in Berlin and throughout Eastern Europe back in November 1989, but the sudden fall of the Berlin Wall—that symbol of the Iron Curtain and a figurative and literal barrier between East and West—was unexpected.

On the night of Nov. 9, East German police stood down and did not shoot as thousands of East Germans flooded over the wall and the gates essentially swung open. That night and that weekend marked the beginning of the end of the Cold War.

The Foreign Service was there on the ground—in East and West Germany, throughout Eastern Europe, in the Soviet Union and around the world—reporting back to Washington, managing relations with host countries, practicing diplomacy and trying to make sense of that momentous event, all as the landscape was shifting.



Shawn Dorman, shown here at the Berlin Wall in 1990, is the editor of *The Foreign Service Journal*.

For this commemorative edition of the *Journal*, we aimed for various angles on this history. We asked Ambassador Eric Rubin, AFSA's current president, to share the view from Washington, where in 1989 he was serving on the Soviet Desk at the State Department. In "A Time of Hope and Optimism," he explains how the fall of the Berlin Wall presaged a series of events that transformed the postwar world.

Ambassador (ret.) J.D. Bindenagel offers a broad perspective from East Berlin, and retired FSO Louie Sell then presents the 1989 view from Yugoslavia. A collection of excerpts from the FSJ Archive offers historical perspectives and background, including some lessons learned from former Secretary of State George Shultz.

In addition, as part of *The Foreign Service Journal's* mission to tell the story of the Foreign Service and diplomacy, we reached out to our members to ask,

"Where were you when the Berlin Wall came down? What was the impact on your post, your work, the local environment and the U.S. relationship with the host country?"

And what a response we got! Close to 50 firsthand accounts came in from people who were then serving in East Berlin, in West Berlin, throughout the region and around the world.

Future ambassador Mike Hammer (then a junior officer) happened to be on holiday in Berlin during that

historic weekend, when East and West came together to celebrate. Caught up in the excitement, he climbed on top of the wall with other revelers, which led to the cover photo capturing the view of the wall from the east, with police looking on.

Our compilation of reflections from that weekend begins with Mike's account. We are grateful to him, and to all the others who contributed personal stories that invite all of us to step back in time to 1989. Hopefully the compilation brings that moment to life, offering a glimpse of a more optimistic time, a time of great promise for freedom and democracy.

Now three decades on, amid today's crisis in governance and diplomacy, the American optimism and support for democracy (even our own) of those days seem almost quaint.

As we go to press—always sooner than ideal, especially during this time when something written in the morning is obsolete by afternoon—we were able to make space in *Talking Points* for an excerpt from Ambassador Marie "Masha" Yovanovitch's statement ahead of her Oct. 11 testimony on the Hill as part of the impeachment inquiry.

That remarkable statement is worth reading in full. It may be the best real-world illustration in years of why we need non-partisan career diplomats on the job around the world.

Thank you, Masha, and George Kent, Mike McKinley, Bill Taylor and others, for standing up for professional diplomacy and the U.S. Foreign Service.

We stand with you. ■



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## LETTERS

### Being There

I am not sure if it was intentional, but the pairing of Ambassador Anne Woods Patterson's excellent article, "We Have to Be There," with Ray Walser's historical look at our presence in Warsaw in September 1939 in the September issue was classic.

Closing the mission in Warsaw, Walser recounts, "was considered a last resort," with a vice consul telling the press he would stay "until 136 American citizens are able to leave Warsaw."

It is, indeed, a far cry from today's world where, as Amb. Patterson suggests, "staying safe" is often our highest priority. Surely there is a middle ground.

*Keith W. Mines*

*FSO*

*Washington, D.C.*

### Religion in the Workplace

I was distressed to read in Talking Points (September *Journal*) of the formation of a Christian affinity group: "GRACE works to prompt the ability of employees to manifest religious beliefs in general, and *Christianity specifically*, in the workplace" (my italics).

This is, to my mind, another instance of puncturing the already porous wall between church and state and will, I believe, lead to dividing, not uniting people.

What individuals choose to do outside the office is their business, but injecting parochial beliefs into the workplace is not. The result will, all too often, be a breakdown within the post of the believers and the non-believers, the Christians and the non-Christians, into separate cliques.

The rationale for supporting such groups is, I believe, misguided. The State

Department should not be supporting sectarian divisions in the workplace.

*Robert H. Stern*

*FSO, retired*

*Chantilly, Virginia*

### Remembering Leslie Gelb

On Sept. 1 *The New York Times* reported that Leslie Gelb had died two days earlier. Mr. Gelb was a premier example of how U.S. diplomacy can benefit from qualified non-career participants.

As assistant secretary of State for the Bureau of Politico-Military Affairs from 1977 to 1979, he presided over the golden

age of arms control (in which I took part as a minor player).

The bureau was then State's focal point in negotiating strategic nuclear arms treaties with the Soviet Union, in particular the Salt II Treaty.

Though never ratified by Congress, that treaty was observed for decades by the two superpowers, to our mutual benefit and

the world's.

Mr. Gelb was very young (about 40) for such a position, but he was knowledgeable and sharply "on point," and his youth translated into a dynamism and enthusiasm that galvanized the bureau.

He was also a pragmatist in the best Foreign Service tradition, who believed without ideological blinders in "what works...works." It was a joy and a privilege to serve under him.

Leslie Gelb had a long and productive life, so there should be no regrets now—only appreciation for that life and for his service to our country.

*Marc E. Nicholson*

*FSO, retired*

*Washington, D.C.* ■



## RESPONSES TO FSJ FOCUS ON PREVENTIVE DIPLOMACY

# CSO's Role in Preventing Violent Conflict

BY DR. DENISE NATALI, ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE BUREAU OF CONFLICT AND STABILIZATION OPERATIONS

**A**s assistant secretary of State for the Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations, I applaud *The Foreign Service Journal* for focusing on preventive diplomacy in its September edition. As the *Journal* rightly indicates, preventive diplomacy refers to “‘measures short of war’ to avert conflict altogether or prevent it from spiraling into outright warfare.”

More needs to be said, however, about preventive diplomacy efforts currently underway in the U.S. government, and particularly at the State Department by CSO.

Preventive diplomacy is embedded in CSO's mission, which is to anticipate, prevent and respond to conflict that undermines U.S. national interests. We do so in two complementary ways: by deploying staff to conflict zones and by harnessing data-driven analysis to inform and help execute U.S. policy on conflict prevention and stabilization.

CSO is focused on three central lines of effort: (1) monitoring political instability; (2) security sector stabilization; and, (3) countering violent extremism (CVE). CSO works closely with U.S. missions, all regional bureaus and many functional bureaus within the Department of State, as well as with the Department of Defense, USAID, other agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and partner governments.

Our preventive approach to conflict is grounded in the U.S. National Strategy for Counterterrorism, the Department

of State and USAID Joint Strategic Plan and the Department of State's Strategic Prevention Project, led by the Office of U.S. Foreign Assistance Resources in collaboration with CSO.

Our leading role in prevention was most recently underscored in the president's first report to Congress on the Elie Wiesel Genocide and Atrocities Prevention Act, which names CSO as the secretariat for the new White House-led Atrocity Early Warning Task Force.

In their article, “Getting Preventive Stabilization on the Map,” David C. Becker and Steve Lewis rightly emphasize the need to put metrics first, and to establish and test assessment criteria in a timely manner. This is exactly the approach that CSO takes when assessing political instability across the globe and designing, monitoring and evaluating programs.

Through our newly launched Instability Monitoring and Analysis Platform, CSO serves as the State Department's hub for data-driven analytics on preventing violent conflict and on stabilization. IMAP maps country conditions, analyzes conflict trends and dynamics, assesses risks and threats, and forecasts future zones of instability. This helps enable agile decision-making by senior policymakers by providing timely assessments based on the best sources available.

On officially launching IMAP at the department, Under Secretary for Political Affairs David Hale noted: “IMAP provides empirical analysis to help separate myth from reality, enhancing our ability



to detect, describe, diagnose and forecast conflict and crisis issues.”

CSO also uses its data-driven analytics to design, monitor and evaluate prevention and stabilization programs, so that we can better target foreign assistance. For example, we are identifying, mapping and analyzing non-state armed groups and militia influence across regions, and designing programs around these realities on the ground.

We also support the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former terrorist fighters, and work closely with national governments and USAID to develop innovative messaging campaigns to induce fighters to defect, and to prevent them from returning to the battlefield.

In the Lake Chad region, for example, CSO and other U.S. government actors are working with local partners to promote defections from Boko Haram and ISIS-West Africa. In January 2018, within a month of a CSO-supported town hall where an amnesty offer was extended, more than 50 individuals surrendered to security services; within two months, hundreds more signaled an interest in defecting, with many citing the town hall amnesty offer as their reason.

In addition, CSO aims to reduce the recruitment and radicalization of violent extremists in areas of critical U.S. national interest. Working closely with the Bureau

of Counterterrorism, interagency partners and NGOs, we identify vulnerable communities and violent extremism influencers.

In the Western Balkans in November 2018, for instance, CSO convened more than 175 CVE stakeholders to link local-level initiatives with national-level strategies and identify ways to deal with ethno-nationalism, online and prison radi-

calization and external malign influencers.

At the global level, we are conducting CVE baseline research in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kenya, Malaysia, Niger and the Philippines to establish empirical indicators on violent extremism and community resiliencies. Findings from these deep-dive analyses are used to develop metrics and program-impact assessments.

I could not agree more with the idea, as expressed in the September *FSJ*, that a fundamental job of diplomacy is to use engagement to stabilize and advance relations. This is at the core of CSO's work. We look forward to sharing more about our efforts to prevent violent conflict and promote stabilization with the *FSJ*'s readership in a future edition of the *Journal*.

## PD—A Powerful Tool of Preventive Diplomacy

BY BRUCE K. BYERS

In the September *Foreign Service Journal*'s "Focus on Preventive Diplomacy," Anne Woods Patterson described the myriad steps that our diplomats have taken to build institutional relations with people and officials of other countries.

Preventing conflict is one goal of diplomacy, and there are many ways to go about this. One of the best—public diplomacy—was not discussed in this issue of the *FSJ*. Perhaps today's State Department officials take public diplomacy as a given—they should not. Moreover, "PD" is really a misnomer for the countless activities led by our Foreign Service officers, who use communication tools beyond traditional diplomatic contacts and negotiations.

I spent my Foreign Service career in the U.S. Information Agency with seven overseas assignments. I spent my last few years in the State Department as its leaders struggled to understand what USIA's mission and efforts were about. With the demise of USIA in 1999, institutional consolidation was the goal; America had won the Cold War; there was no need for a

Cold War agency. How short-sighted that turned out to be.

USIA's accomplishments through directed efforts to change attitudes among foreign officials and significant cultural, academic, political and media leaders need to be recognized and understood for what they were: examples of highly effective preventive diplomacy.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt launched "public diplomacy" at the outset of World War II when he saw how little European scholars, journalists and cultural leaders understood America. He initiated a program that still exists today: inviting individuals and small groups of people from other countries to experience directly how our government works, and to travel to different parts of our country to meet Americans in many walks of life and learn about their professional work, personal lives and communities. This was and is the International Visitor Leadership Program.

After the war, American opinion molders and media leaders continued this work. President John F. Kennedy appointed legendary wartime journalist Edward

R. Murrow to lead the U.S. Information Agency in countering Soviet propaganda and disinformation campaigns in postwar Europe at the height of the Cold War.

Murrow and his organization directed resources and tasked USIA cultural and information affairs officers with taking every necessary step to reach out to important nongovernmental and official leaders and introduce them to the best that our country had to offer.

USIA invested major resources in targeted publications in various languages to inform audiences behind the Iron Curtain, and sponsored top-flight musical groups, artists, authors, historians, academics, and business and economic experts on trips abroad to participate in programs set up by information and cultural affairs officers under the U.S. Information Service and its many cultural and English language centers.

Many foreign leaders have learned about America through visits to USIS libraries when they were students. It was considered a privilege to have a library card. Each of the libraries contained thematic book collections, films and videos that reached specific target audiences, and were often venues for seminars featuring visiting U.S. scholars.

All of USIA's and, later, State's public diplomacy projects were keyed to specific country objectives established by ambassadors and public affairs officers and their

teams for diplomatic initiatives emanating from the White House. These were not mere feel-good, hand-shaking exercises.

Rooted in American values and actions, they were aimed at changing perceptions and attitudes among elites toward the United States. They were also aimed at larger audiences and at preventing disinformation and propaganda from third countries from curdling our relations with allies and newly independent nations.

Exchanges of American and foreign students and professors through Fulbright and other academic programs expanded the range of interaction between American diplomats and host-country individuals and organizations. Over decades the alumni of these programs developed worldwide organizations that still flourish today. Many Fulbright scholars returned home to become national leaders in their own countries.

Likewise, a large number of participants in the International Visitor Leadership Program later became heads of government, heads of state, foreign ministers and leaders in their societies. They carried with them their American experiences. They established lasting relations and have built strong networks of trust and knowledge with American counterparts that have advanced our national interests over many decades.

They became part of our preventive diplomacy and messengers in their societies of what our country, our values and our institutions mean to the world.

These are examples not merely of “public diplomacy” but of a much broader diplomacy that has stood the test of time. They deserve to be strengthened and expanded.

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*Retired FSO Bruce K. Byers joined the U.S. Information Agency in 1971. He served in South Asia, Europe and East Asia, retiring in 2000.*

## Give Prevention a Chance

BY ROBERT HOPPER

**W**e all owe *The Foreign Service Journal* a vote of thanks for the series of articles printed in the September issue on preventive diplomacy—a timely reminder of practices we need to reinvigorate.

Ironically, after the collapse of the USSR, the United States squandered the peace dividend. Of course we needed to maintain traditional military strength, but after the shock of 9/11, the U.S. government doubled down on military operations combined with covert intelligence collection and black operations.

To make matters worse, out of understandable security concerns we decided to limit the role of diplomats overseas. Ambassador Anne Patterson powerfully described the impact of these trends on the health of the international system.

Soon after the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, three of us at the Foreign Service Institute wrote an article, “An Ounce of Prevention,” that appeared in the November 2001 *Journal*. You can find it in the FSJ Archive.

Before 9/11 we were adding layers of leadership training at FSI for all cones. Inside the Political Training Division we were providing more courses on science, human rights, negotiations and working with intelligence and law enforcement agencies, while making greater use of case studies and simulations.

Together with the Special Studies Division and the Senior Seminar, we worked increasingly with CIA experts, academics, think-tanks and major corporations, in addition to the U.S. Institute of

Peace and U.S. Agency for International Development.

Our goal was to promote forward thinking and prevention, rather than just better crisis response. Not surprisingly, though they are still the central actors at the State Department, regional bureaus didn’t have much time for training.

Our successful multilateral response to Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait in 1990 gave hope that we could work with old and new allies and the United Nations to craft, implement and support peacekeeping where needed without Soviet vetoes. Even then, it was marginally easier to respond to “small conflicts” once some blood had been shed than to actually prevent them.

We were content to manage and partly fund peacekeeping missions. But given our post-Vietnam fears, we were wary of commitments exposing our regular forces. Then, after the 1993 “Black Hawk Down” tragedy in Somalia and a flawed peacekeeping plan that contributed to genocide in Rwanda the following year, we became even more risk averse.

The September *FSJ* well explains these developments and the total lack of consensus or confidence within the U.S. foreign policy establishment on the use of international peacekeeping and preventive diplomacy.

In the midst of these doubts, we were hit on Sept. 11, 2001, by passenger planes turned into terrorist bombs. At FSI we heard and watched one of the planes overfly Arlington as it targeted the Pentagon.

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Canada and Mexico. How did we respond? We increasingly began using our regular military, and we increasingly gave up on creative multilateral diplomacy.

Our new training courses in multi-functional prevention were strangled in their crib. I will never forget being called into our dean's office at FSI and told that most of our new preventive courses must be scrapped so we could double the number of "tradecraft" courses and focus more on security and counterterrorism.

I hope some of you will read the 2001 *FSJ* article co-written by Fred Hill, Dennis Murphy and myself, and ponder the proposals we offered. Maybe it is not too late to give prevention a chance.

There is one idea in that article I wish we could try now: Why not add an emerging crisis/conflict prevention cell within the Operations Center? A dedicated group would be mandated to review traffic 24/7 from all sources to identify signs of impending storms—be they political, economic or climatological.

This cell would have designated contact points in all bureaus and partner agencies with whom to share potential problems. The recipients would be required to report back on actions to be taken. An action loop would be created. With time and experience, officers and offices would be trained and rewarded for gaining prevention skills.

Perhaps it is not too late to experiment with such an approach. Maybe retired FSOs and other officers could be recalled to help build these prevention teams in addition to working on declassifying old documents. ■

*Robert Hopper is a retired FSO who served as director of political training at the Foreign Service Institute from 1997 through 2001. He is the co-author of "An Ounce of Prevention" (November 2001 FSJ).*

## For the Record

Excerpts from Opening Statement of Marie L. Yovanovitch to the House of Representatives Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, Committee on Foreign Affairs, and Committee on Oversight and Reform, Oct. 11, 2019

I have served this nation honorably for more than 30 years. I have proudly promoted and served American interests as the representative of the American people and six different presidents over the last three decades. Throughout that time, I—like my colleagues at the State Department—have always believed that we enjoyed a sacred trust with our government.

We make a difference every day on issues that matter to the American people—whether it is war and peace, trade and investment, or simply helping with a lost passport. We repeatedly uproot our lives, and we frequently put ourselves in harm’s way to serve this nation. And we do that willingly, because we believe in America and its special role in the world. We also believe that, in return, our government will have our backs and protect us if we come under attack from foreign interests.

That basic understanding no longer holds true. Today, we see the State Department attacked and hollowed out from within. State Department leadership, with Congress, needs to take action now to defend this great institution, and its thousands of loyal and effective employees. We need to rebuild diplomacy as the first resort to advance America’s interests and the front line of America’s defense. I fear that not doing so will harm our nation’s interest, perhaps irreparably.

That harm will come not just through the inevitable and continuing resignation

and loss of many of this nation’s most loyal and talented public servants. It also will come when those diplomats who soldier on and do their best to represent our nation face partners abroad who question whether the ambassador truly speaks for the President and can be counted upon as a reliable partner. The harm will come when private interests circumvent professional diplomats for their own gain, not the public good.

The harm will come when bad actors in countries beyond Ukraine see how easy it is to use fiction and innuendo to manipulate our system. In such circumstances, the only interests that will be served are those of our strategic adversaries, like Russia, that spread chaos and attack the institutions and norms that the U.S. helped create and which we have benefited from for the last 75 years.

I am proud of my work in Ukraine. The U.S. Embassy, under my leadership, represented and advanced the policies of the United States government as articulated, first by the Obama Administration and then by the Trump Administration. Our efforts were intended, and evidently succeeded, in thwarting corrupt interests in Ukraine, who fought back by selling baseless conspiracy theories to anyone who would listen. Sadly, someone was listening, and our nation is the worse off for that.

Thank you for your attention. I welcome your questions.

## House Launches Impeachment Inquiry

On Sept. 24, Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) announced that the House of Representatives is pursuing a formal impeachment inquiry into President Donald Trump.

“The president has admitted to asking the president of Ukraine to take actions which would benefit him politically,” Pelosi said. “The actions of the Trump presidency revealed dishonorable facts of betrayal of his oath of office and betrayal of our national security and betrayal of the integrity of our elections.”

On Sept. 26, in response to a whistleblower complaint from an unidentified intelligence official, the White House released a summary transcript of a July 25 phone call in which President Trump asked Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky to investigate Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden’s son, Hunter. *The Wall Street Journal* reported Sept. 30 that Secretary of State Mike Pompeo listened in on the call, which Pompeo later acknowledged.

The whistleblower also alleged that White House officials misused a highly classified database to store transcripts of phone calls between the president and world leaders that might be politically troubling to the president. NBC News reported Sept. 26 that former and current intelligence officers told them that such misuse, if true, should spark an investigation.

President Trump lashed out at the whistleblower and sources the whistleblower spoke with Sept. 26 at a private event in New York City. “I want to know who’s the person ... who gave the whistleblower the information? Because that’s close to a spy,” the president said. “You know what we used to do in the old days

when we were smart? Right? The spies and treason, we used to handle it a little differently than we do now.”

In the July 25 phone call with President Zelensky, President Trump criticized former U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine Marie Yovanovitch, calling her “bad news” and stating that “she’s going to go through some things.”

On Sept. 26, the American Academy of Diplomacy issued a press release in response: “The American Academy of Diplomacy calls on the administration to make clear that it will not act against career diplomat Ambassador Marie Yovanovitch for doing her duty and working to support long-established U.S. policies and values.”

AFSA also issued a Sept. 26 press release calling on all Americans “to honor and respect the non-partisan, non-political work of the dedicated public servants of the U.S. Foreign Service.”

“Our members pledge their lives to service to their country and its interests,” the AFSA release stated. “Any attack on their integrity and commitment to non-partisan service does a great disservice to them, to their families and to our country.”

On Sept. 27, more than 300 former U.S. national security and foreign policy officials signed a statement supporting the impeachment inquiry into President Trump and warning that his actions represent a “profound national security concern.”

“President Trump appears to have leveraged the authority and resources of the highest office in the land to invite additional foreign interference into our democratic processes,” the former officials wrote.

“That would constitute an unconscionable abuse of power. It also would represent an effort to subordinate America’s

national interests—and those of our closest allies and partners—to the President’s personal political interest.”

Ambassador Kurt Volker resigned as the U.S. special envoy for Ukraine on Sept. 27, shortly after three House committees announced that he was among several State Department officials who would be summoned for depositions in the investigation related to the impeachment hearings.

As we go to press in mid-October, House committees have conducted depositions with five current or retired State Department officials, as well as officials from the National Security Council and the Department of Defense. Yovanovitch, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State George Kent and U.S. Ambassador to the European Union Gordon Sondland appeared despite the objections of the White House and the State Department, after the House subpoenaed them.

## 50 Years Ago

### The Bridge Between Peoples

The problem of building bridges between cultures has recently occupied a great deal of attention, but practically all the attention has been devoted to the development of mutual understanding between the two pieces of dry land at either end of the bridge and very little to the shape of the bridge or to the necessity for finding patches of dry land in the morass under the bridge on which to construct intermediate supports.

The modern diplomat takes for granted the need to know at least enough of the other culture to avoid social faux pas and establish some kind of rapport. It is beyond the Western diplomat’s capacity to pull his colleague wholly to the Western shore, and any effort on his part to move the meeting ground back to the opposite shore will surely fail. He must resign himself to working most of the time in a twilight zone in the middle of the bridge, with few cultural guideposts to mark the way.

The search for a secure and stable meeting ground in some kind of halfway house is fraught with peril. The danger always exists that one will emerge from the dash across the bridge into one’s colleague’s culture only to discover that the colleague has run past in the other direction.

Anyone who has spent any time in Japan is familiar with the homely example of the American who bows low to greet a new Japanese acquaintance, to be rewarded only with a close look at the latter’s outstretched hand waiting to be shaken.

—Kingdon W. Swayne, a former Foreign Service officer who served from 1946 to 1966, excerpted from his article of the same title in *The Foreign Service Journal*, November 1969.



## Heroes of U.S. Diplomacy

In a new State Department initiative, Foreign Service Officer Elizabeth Slater, who survived the bombing of the U.S. embassy in Dar es Salaam in 1998, was honored Sept. 13 in the State Department auditorium as the first Hero of Diplomacy.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo introduced Ms. Slater, noting that she was seriously wounded in the bombing, which killed 11 people. Ms. Slater stayed on at post to maintain the embassy's communication systems and ensure that the post could communicate with Washington, D.C.

"In most lines of work the caliber of courage displayed by Lizzie Slater would be one in a million," Secretary Pompeo said. "But I must say here at the State Department, I have found it is representative of the fine men and women who show up day in and day out to carry out America's foreign policy.

"Coming from a military background, I'm accustomed to hearing my fellow soldiers referred to as heroes, and rightfully so. But at the State Department we're hesitant to lay claim to that term," the Secretary continued. "We have to get past that reticence and share these stories."

During the event, Ms. Slater discussed her experience in Tanzania with Director General of the Foreign Service Ambassador Carol Perez. "I accept this honor on behalf of all the heroes," Ms. Slater said. "There were many."

Under the Heroes of U.S. Diplomacy program, the State Department will recognize several heroes during the course of the next year.

Ms. Slater shared her story in the July/August 2018 *Foreign Service Journal* that featured firsthand remembrances from Foreign Service members who survived the 1998 East African bombings in Dar es Salaam and Nairobi.



Elizabeth Slater, left, recognized as a Hero of Diplomacy, chats with Director General of the Foreign Service Carol Perez in the State Department auditorium on Sept. 13.

## Contemporary Quote

“ Mr. President, you have here a great democracy. Keep it going on. ”

—President of Finland Sauli Niinisto, from the White House press briefing with President Donald Trump, Oct. 2.

## Stay-or-Go Discussion Continues

Some retired Foreign Service officers have made waves by discussing their reasons for resigning in recent columns in *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times* (see the October Talking Points).

In a Sept. 18 *New York Times* column titled “A Love Letter to the State Department,” Elizabeth Fitzsimmons, the deputy assistant secretary of State for Central Africa and public diplomacy, discusses the reasons she decided to stay on.

“I’ve had the privilege of serving as a Foreign Service officer for five presidents—some I voted for, some I didn’t,” she writes. “And my job is to serve each one to the best of my ability. It is our responsibility to provide our best counsel to those in power, even if—perhaps especially if—they do not immediately embrace our views. ...

“That is the role and the responsibility of career public servants in our demo-

cratic system. Career members of the Foreign Service are the joists supporting the institutions so that each successive administration—and the American people—can rely on their institutional knowledge, network of global relationships and subject matter expertise. Without the framework of a professional career Foreign Service, our nation is weaker and our global power reduced. If we all leave when it gets hard, who will be left to champion American diplomacy? ...

“This is truly the toughest job you will ever love, and one you can’t do anywhere else. To my fellow Americans of all political stripes, please know that no matter what you read in the press, there are thousands of honorable patriots still hard at work at the State Department and that we will serve this president and his successor, and that president’s successor, with dedication and excellence, just as we have done for generations.”

## UPU Deal Reached

**G**ood news for overseas diplomats: The United States reached a deal Sept. 25 to remain within the Universal Postal Union. As a result, mail should keep flowing to diplomatic pouch addresses.

Diplomats had worried that a U.S. walkout from the pact would lead to substantial difficulties in getting overseas mail to American embassies and consulates around the world.

The Trump administration had threatened to pull out of the union unless the import fees structure was changed in favor of the United States. The compromise means that high-volume importers of mail such as the United States will pay reduced fees to the UPU, Reuters reported.

### Site of the Month: [coldwarconversations.com](http://coldwarconversations.com)

**W**hat was it like to fly a U-2 reconnaissance plane at the height of the Cuban Missile Crisis, or to witness the fall of the Berlin Wall as an East German soldier? After Sputnik, why did the U.S. military consider nuking the moon?

In “The Cold War Conversations Podcast,” host and producer Ian Sanders brings on researchers and veterans from both sides of the Iron Curtain to discuss fascinating highlights of the Cold War.

Listen as they share their personal experiences and findings, including up-close-and-personal views from the front lines of great power competition, and engage in wide-ranging policy debates.

Special guests have included U-2 Squadron Commander Colonel Wil-

## U.S. Diplomats: Avoid Rush to Failure in Afghanistan

**I**n a letter published by the Atlantic Council on Sept. 3, veteran U.S. diplomats argue against a premature withdrawal of U.S. forces from Afghanistan and for a more inclusive peace process.

“We believe that U.S. security and values, including support for women, require that a full troop withdrawal come only after a real peace,” the diplomats, including Ambassadors James Dobbins, Ronald Neumann, John Negroponte and Ryan Crocker, declare.



liam “Greg” Gregory; Vince Houghton, curator of the International Spy Museum; and Professor Sergei Khrushchev, son of Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev.

Airing 80 episodes across three seasons to date, the show runs the gamut of iconic scenes of confrontation and subterfuge, including in the German Democratic Republic, at Fulda Gap and at Checkpoint Charlie.

A day earlier, on Sept. 2, Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad had announced that after nearly a year of talks with the Taliban—talks in which the government of Afghanistan was not represented—the United States and the Afghan insurgent group had reached an agreement in principle on a process of partial U.S. withdrawal from the country.

Within days, however, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo declined to sign the deal, and President Trump, after saying Taliban negotiators would join him at Camp David to sign the deal, later told reporters at the White House that with respect to the peace talks, “as far as

I’m concerned, they are dead.”

In their statement, the diplomats note that there are several reasons lasting peace in Afghanistan is elusive, including the fact that “the Taliban have made no clear statements about the conditions they would accept for a peaceful settlement with their fellow Afghans, nor do they have a track record of working with other political forces.”

As a long-standing precondition to peace talks, the Taliban have insisted

on negotiating directly with the United States, instead of recognizing the government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan as a party to be included.

Pointing to the potential consequences of failed talks or the collapse of the Afghan government, the letter asserts: “There is an outcome far worse than the status quo, namely a return to the total civil war that consumed Afghanistan as badly as the war with the Russians.”

## ON THE CAMPAIGN TRAIL

**W**e saw it at the G-7, the leaders of some of the greatest powers and economies of the world, sitting to talk about one of the greatest challenges in the world, climate change, and there was literally an empty chair where American leadership could have been. The problem is, this is a moment when American leadership is needed more than ever, whether it's in Hong Kong, where those protesters for democracy need to know that they have a friend in the United States, or anywhere around the world where, increasingly, we see dictators throwing their weight around. The world needs America, but it can't be just any America.

—Pete Buttigieg, mayor of South Bend, Indiana, and presidential candidate, from the Democratic Party debate, Sept. 12.

Meanwhile, on Sept. 28 Afghans went to the polls in a presidential election that had been twice postponed. The peace talks have featured prominently in the campaign.

“Now, the management of the peace process, its planning and implementation is the sole duty of the government of Afghanistan,” President Ashraf Ghani told a campaign rally, with a nod to Trump’s declaration that the Taliban talks were dead. “I will implement that.”

As we go to press, with ballot counting ongoing, the two major candidates—incumbent Ghani and chief executive Abdullah Abdullah—are both claiming victory. Following the election five years ago, competing claims by the same two men led to months of turmoil.

### Bolton Out as National Security Adviser, O’Brien In

**P**resident Trump announced by Tweet on Sept. 10 that he had fired National Security Adviser John Bolton, despite Mr. Bolton’s claim that he had offered his resignation the night before. On Sept. 18, Mr. Trump announced that he had hired

Robert C. O’Brien, who had been working as the State Department’s top hostage negotiator, as national security adviser.

Mr. O’Brien previously served as co-chairman of the State Department’s Public-Private Partnership for Justice Reform in Afghanistan under both Secretaries Condoleezza Rice and Hillary Clinton. Earlier in his career, he served as senior legal officer for a U.N. Security Council commission that examined claims against Iraq arising from the Persian Gulf War.

### State Department Offered Millions for Iranian Tanker

**T**he State Department offered several million dollars to the captain of an Iranian oil tanker in August to get him to sail the ship to a country that would impound it on behalf of Washington, the *Financial Times* reported Sept. 4; the State Department later confirmed the claims.

Brian Hook, serving as Secretary Pompeo’s special representative for Iran, sent emails to about a dozen captains in recent months “in an effort to scare

mariners into understanding that helping Iran evade sanctions comes at a heavy price,” the *FT* reported.

### Limited U.S. Presence at U.N. Climate Summit

**T**he United States submitted no proposals at the United Nations Climate Action Summit on Sept. 23, but President Trump—along with Vice President Pence and Secretary of State Pompeo—momentarily listened to speeches by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and German Chancellor Angela Merkel. More than 60 world leaders spoke at the summit.

President Trump and Vice President Pence were at the U.N. to speak at the Global Call to Protect Religious Freedom event.

In June 2017 President Trump vowed to pull out of the Paris Agreement, a 2016 climate pact between most of the world’s countries. Under the terms of the agreement, the earliest the United States could withdraw is Nov. 4, 2020.

Meanwhile, Secretary Pompeo, answering questions at the end of a lecture he gave at Kansas State University on Sept. 6, claimed that “this State Department—indeed, this administration—has relied on science far more than the previous administration, and I would argue more than any administration in history.” ■

*This edition of Talking Points was compiled by Cameron Woodworth, Dmitry Filipoff, Shawn Dorman and Susan Maitra.*

# Preventing Domestic Violence Is Our Shared Responsibility, at Home and Abroad

BY LESLIE BASSETT

**W**e like to believe that our community is immune to domestic violence, but 15 years in embassy leadership positions taught me that we are more vulnerable than we may realize.

For many of my former colleagues, the August murder of Foreign Commercial Service Officer Lola Gulomova, by her FSO husband Jason Rieff (who then committed suicide), was both a terrible shock and a powerful awakening.

The couple's marriage had reportedly been under strain through several tours abroad until its brutal end in Washington, D.C. Many knew and respected them both. No one saw it coming, and many wondered if something could have been done to prevent this dreadful, shocking outcome.

I have had my own moments of profound shock, especially while serving overseas. The dependent spouse who psychologically abused my friend and colleague, who said nothing about it. The employee and spouse who mutually fought each other physically and loudly. The rarely seen wife who told the health unit she was afraid of her spouse, then changed her position, then was impossible for us to

reach for a scary time as her husband went so far as to disconnect the phones.

Domestic violence is a challenge we need to recognize and try to preempt by early engagement on behalf of troubled families. The necessary tools include education and awareness, engagement and trust, and support and protection. This effort must include everyone in the community.

## Definitions and Guidelines

What is domestic violence?

3 FAM 1811 defines it thus: "Domestic violence is any act or threat of imminent violence against a victim (other than a child) that results or threatens to result in physical or mental injury to the victim that is committed by a: (1) Spouse or former spouse of the victim; (2) Person with whom the victim shares a child in common; (3) Person who is co-habiting with or has co-habited with the victim; (4) Person residing in the household; or (5) Any person who has a relationship with the victim and has access to the victim's household."

A supplementary Foreign Affairs Manual section (3 FAM 1815) addresses child abuse.

For employees under chief of mission authority abroad, 3 FAM 1810 (amplified by the recent cable, 19 State 77404) requires that concerns regarding possible domestic violence be brought to the attention of what is now referred to as the Family Advocacy Team. That committee, established at every post and convened

as needed, is led by the deputy chief of mission (DCM) or equivalent, and includes the regional security officer (RSO) and the regional medical officer (RMO) and psychiatrist (RMOP).

In practice, I found that the management counselor's participation was imperative. The community liaison office coordinator (the CLO) was often involved in providing information and serving as the link to affected family members, if appropriate (this is one reason the DCM should always hold regular meetings with the CLO, by the way).

If the employee belonged to another agency, that agency head might be brought in as well. Different agencies bring different resources to the table. Law enforcement and military agencies, for instance, have guidance regarding official weapons carried by their personnel that must be considered in line with post weapons policy.

## A Careful Process

When I was alerted as head of the Family Advocacy Team to a concern about a family's welfare, the information was often vague but heartfelt, lacking specific proof of abuse or violence. I would meet immediately with the RSO and regional medical officer (who usually brought in the regional psychiatrist for essential insight and counseling contacts) to discuss the best means of confirming the well-being of family members and validating what had been shared.

There was no rush to judgment, but



*Leslie Bassett retired in 2017 from the Senior Foreign Service. She is a former U.S. ambassador to Paraguay. Ambassador Bassett also served as deputy chief of mission in Seoul, Manila, Mexico City and Gaborone.*

## Proactive wellness strategies that carry families across post transitions could help make sure problems that festered at a previous post don't recur at the next assignment.

there was an urgency to be supportive and to protect the community. The security and medical officers were required to inform Washington through their channels in very restricted messaging, and a parallel committee was convened there.

The advocacy team at post looked into concerns quickly and thoroughly, reaching out discreetly to the parties concerned to confirm their welfare and whether abuse or violence had taken place. In 99 percent of the cases we handled, families were troubled but not yet in abusive or violent situations.

Our goal was to support them as long as it could be done safely by requiring counseling, offering support, looking at temporary residential separation when possible, and providing information on the family's options while they came to their own decisions safely.

If the situation didn't improve or escalated, the advocacy team would consult and make recommendations to the chief of mission, up to and including curtailment if the necessary support wasn't available at post or if the family was not cooperating. Washington was a close collaborator in these rare cases.

These situations are complex and not usually resolved after a single meeting or conversation. In the cases I am familiar with, we monitored that all concerned attended counseling sessions (including using remote counseling options through teleconferencing tools), that they respected separate housing arrangements if those had been requested, and that they were civil and respectful in their encounters as witnessed by members of

the Family Advocacy Team or reported by the community.

Several cases were mitigated by counseling; others resulted in marital separations and eventual divorce. Most lasted for months at a minimum. More important, most ended with everyone safe.

### Overseas Stressors

Why are we so vulnerable to situations of domestic tension or violence, especially overseas? The high-stakes work of our agencies and the 24/7 on-call culture of our profession are challenges faced by all of our posts, in the United States and abroad. Overseas, factor in culture shock, isolation, language barriers, traffic problems and security concerns that can all elevate family stressors.

We are proud to serve, and therefore sometimes underestimate the challenges faced both by our employees and by their family members. In some cases community members are reluctant to ask for help; in other cases, they don't know how to find it.

Add to this the rising number of colleagues who have served in unaccompanied or dangerous posts. This service potentially adds layers of stress and consequences to the employee, including the fact that the reunited family has to re-learn successful patterns of communication and commitment.

Overworked CLOs are often the first to hear a concern of a family experiencing difficulties, but their growing range of responsibilities and the added complications of hiring freezes and other challenges strain their ability to monitor the

community. No one likes gossip, but a good CLO knows the difference between chatty and chilling, and they have been our best early-warning system.

I received expressions of concern from other colleagues, from family members and even from locally employed staff. While most did not rise to the level of domestic violence, they were all legitimate observations that helped us reach out and engage with families struggling to find their footing in our community.

For those posted in the United States, there are more resources and they are more readily available. But sometimes there is less visibility to colleagues in the workplace, who don't feel the same sense of responsibility that we feel to one another overseas.

Lola Gulomova's murder reminds us that the stakes are high wherever we are, and that we have the same sense of caring and loss wherever we are stationed.

There are many resources available to FS families in the United States and overseas, as 19 State 77404 spells out.

Our goal should be preventing domestic violence by supporting family wellness. Proactive wellness strategies that carry families across post transitions could help make sure problems that festered at a previous post don't recur at the next assignment. Since family advocacy cases are primarily managed at post, a troubled family that leaves post without resolution starts fresh at a new assignment where leadership may be blind to previous concerns.

Victim support should also remain a priority if and when a family leaves post. Divorcing spouses may need copies of memos or files, and access can be surprisingly difficult to negotiate. Some feel that the Victim's Resource Advocacy Program, which is the action office for victim support, could be more proactive.

## Available Resources

**State Department Bureau of Medical Services (MED).** MED staff overseas provide medical and behavioral health support, make referrals to other professionals and authorize medical evacuations when necessary.

**Victim's Resource Advocacy Program (VRAP).** The mission of VRAP is to empower those who have been victimized as a result of crimes that Diplomatic Security is investigating. Resources are specifically tailored to meet the needs of the victim and may include counseling, assistance attaining reimbursements for medical payments and lost property, accompaniment to judicial proceedings and relocation support. A representative of this office also sits on the State Department's Family Advocacy Committee. Contact VRAP at (571) 345-9832 or [vrp@state.gov](mailto:vrp@state.gov).

**The Employee Assistance Program (EAP).** Managed by the Bureau of Medical Services, ECS/EAP offers up to six free confidential counseling sessions with professional clinical social workers to Department of State employees and eligible family members on a wide range of issues including, but not limited to relationship/marital concerns, crisis intervention, parenting, stress, grief, sleep, medical illness, financial concerns, bullying, life transitions, depression, anxiety and other emotional concerns. For free and confidential short-term counseling, contact (703) 812-2257 or [EDECS@state.gov](mailto:EDECS@state.gov).

**Employee Consultation Services (ECS).** ECS offers a wide variety of support groups that meet on a monthly basis. More information can be found at the MED/ECS Sharepoint site.

**Family Liaison Office (FLO).** FLO has several publications related to domestic violence and domestic abuse. FLO's Crisis Management Team can also provide information, resources and support. Contact FLO at [FLOAskSupportServices@state.gov](mailto:FLOAskSupportServices@state.gov).

**Domestic Emergency Line for State Department.** For any domestic emergency, call (202) 647-9111 or (202) 647-0099.

**The National Domestic Violence Hotline.** For those in the United States, advocates from this hotline can provide local direct service resources (safe shelters, transportation, case work assistance) and crisis intervention. Interpreter services are available in 170 languages. They also partner with the Abused Deaf Women's Advocacy Center to provide a videophone option. Hotline: 1 (800) 799-SAFE (7233); [www.TheHotline.org](http://www.TheHotline.org).

**Pathways to Safety International** (formerly Americans Overseas Domestic Violence Crisis Center). Pathways to Safety International provides 24/7/365 worldwide support via technology to abused Americans overseas. They can be reached via an international toll-free crisis line, 1 (833) SAFE-833. <https://pathwaystosafety.org/our-mission>.

—Source: 19 State 77404

Research on reports of domestic violence within our community would give us better tools to educate, anticipate and hopefully prevent future challenges. It is hard to find statistics on domestic violence from State or the other foreign affairs agencies, much less analyze the data for possible lessons and prescriptions.

In addition, increased effort to raise awareness, promote resources and offer support in this area for locally employed staff members is called for.

## How Can We Do Better?

In the meantime, there are steps we can all take as individuals to help preempt domestic violence.

*Education is an essential first step.* 19 State 77404 explains the State Department's policies on domestic violence, lists valuable resources and encourages employee awareness. Take the next step and organize training for your office or post. In 2016 Embassy Asuncion's RSO, Rich Ojeda, organized mandatory presentations on domestic violence involving local police, prosecutors and social workers for our entire embassy staff and interested family members. These were eye-opening presentations for all of us.

Make awareness a priority for your community.

*Be an engaged member of your office team or mission community.* Introduce yourself, connect new arrivals to the CLO and listen when you ask people how they are. This is not an invitation to pry into people's family lives but an opportunity to be aware, available and approachable to someone looking for a friend.

*Know that sharing a concern isn't destroying a colleague's career.* Early warning and intervention can help keep a family intact or minimize risk while they decide on their future. The Family Advocacy Team can engage to help prevent

Speaking Out is the *Journal's* opinion forum, a place for lively discussion of issues affecting the U.S. Foreign Service and American diplomacy. The views expressed are those of the author; their publication here does not imply endorsement by the American Foreign Service Association. Responses are welcome; send to [journal@afsa.org](mailto:journal@afsa.org).

problems as families work through the difficult times that most experience at some point.

But be clear that domestic violence is a crime, and a situation that escalates can certainly have career consequences. In cases with no instances of domestic violence, our focus was on supporting a family and helping them succeed in charting their course safely.

*Whether you're abroad or at home, know what resources are available for you or others.* The Family Liaison Office is a good first stop. The Employee Consultation Service offers counseling and support for employees and family members, as well: call (703) 812-2257 or email [MEDECS@state.gov](mailto:MEDECS@state.gov). AFSA will support employee victims of domestic abuse or offer information to employees who feel wrongly accused of abuse.

## The Difference You Make

When I look back over the 15 to 20 cases our teams handled while I was DCM at four very different, geographically separated posts, I am proud that we did our best to support the welfare of families going through difficult times. At the same time, I am sadly confident that there were others we didn't see who might have needed help.

We can and must all pay attention to our entire community and offer support to everyone in need. ■



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# A TIME OF HOPE AND

**I** joined the Soviet Desk in February 1989 after a year as a watch officer in the State Department Operations Center. I quickly realized that I was joining a dream team. It was the largest single-country office

in the department by far, divided into three divisions: bilateral affairs, multilateral affairs and economic affairs. I was assigned to “bilat,” as we called it. I was thrilled: I had studied Russian

**The stunning fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989 heralded a series of events that transformed the postwar world. Here is a view from Washington.**

BY ERIC RUBIN

in high school in 1977 and continued through college. I knew I wanted to go to the Soviet Union as soon as possible, but for my first tour, I was sent to Honduras where I had the opportunity to learn Spanish.

My portfolio on the Soviet Desk was fantastic: I handled all our visa applications for American diplomats going to

the USSR, which was a bureaucratic slog and a constant test of patience. But I also got the title of “internal politics and nationalities affairs officer.” At the time, that meant monitoring reporting on political developments in Moscow and in the 11 other republics we considered part of the Soviet Union (we treated the Baltic states separately and oversaw developments there from the Eastern Europe office).

Little did I or anyone else realize what this portfolio would entail just a few years down the road.



*Ambassador Eric Rubin is the president of AFSA. A career Foreign Service officer for 34 years, he holds the rank of Career Minister and most recently served as U.S. ambassador to Bulgaria.*



BERLIN WALL PHOTO BY JAMES TALALAY

# OPTIMISM

## Calm Before the Storm

It's hard to re-create the feeling of 1989 three decades later, but I can say with certainty that in February of that year no one had a sense of what was coming. Some analysts were aware of the magnitude of the ethnic and nationalist challenges facing the USSR as it entered its eighth decade; but the notion that it could all fall apart so suddenly was certainly not on our minds. When President George H.W. Bush took office in early 1989, his transition team seized on the mantra "status quo plus" as an approach for dealing with the USSR. This was shorthand for continuing President Ronald Reagan's hybrid approach of outreach to Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev and his government coupled with continuing sanctions and pressure on arms control, Soviet Jews, Afghanistan and other key issues of contention.

We had been through several moments that brought Americans and Soviets together in ways that opened the door to the cooperation that followed. The 1988 earthquake in Armenia led to a significant American assistance effort that was largely wel-

comed by Soviet officials, and gratefully received by the suffering population of Armenia. Follow-on efforts to assist Soviet Ukraine and Belarus in the wake of the Chernobyl tragedy (after several years in which foreign assistance had been resolutely blocked) made a big difference, as well.

In November 1989, when the Berlin Wall came down, the effect on U.S.-Soviet relations was mostly positive. Secretary of State James Baker and Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze seized on the momentous changes to accelerate negotiations on a long list of thorny, accumulated U.S.-Soviet disagreements. The most important aspect of the Soviet reaction to the fall of the Berlin Wall, in my view, was the very clear decision of Gorbachev not to use force to preserve the Soviet empire. The cost would have been catastrophic, and he understood that.

But as Shevardnadze writes in his memoirs, it was also a civilizational decision. Gorbachev, together with Shevardnadze, historian and politician Aleksandr Yakovlev and other key advisers, truly believed that the Cold War was a crazy state of existence for



U.S. Secretary of State George Shultz with General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union Mikhail Gorbachev in the Kremlin, meeting to finalize the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, Oct. 23, 1987. Behind Gorbachev is Paul Nitze, special adviser to the president and secretary of State on arms control from 1984 to 1989.

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## The most important aspect of the Soviet reaction to the fall of the Berlin Wall, in my view, was the very clear decision of Gorbachev not to use force to preserve the Soviet empire.

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the international community. They wanted to end it, and move on to something more normal, more stable and more predictable.

### Predicting the End

The next few years were a blur. Starting out with a Gorbachev (and Moscow)-centric approach to U.S.-Soviet relations, we gradually came to recognize the significance of Boris Yeltsin and the Russian Republic's bid for sovereignty. We also belatedly came to understand that several of the non-Russian republics—Ukraine and Georgia chief among them—were moving rapidly to a point of no return on remaining part of the Soviet Union. And then there were the Baltic states: Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia. Watching their people stand up and insist on their dignity and their return to the democratic family of nations was probably the most inspiring thing I have ever witnessed. The human chains, the mass public sing-alongs and, ultimately, the outright rebellion of these three small countries brought me closer to the spirit of our own revolution.

It is a cliché that no one predicted the breakup of the USSR and the end of the Cold War. I can confirm that the cliché is not true. During those consequential years, I had the privilege of working with Paul Goble, an intelligence community analyst who joined State in the late 1980s to oversee our outreach to the Baltic states, a region in which he was a true expert. I remember being astonished by a conversation we had in late 1989. Paul was unequivocal: “Moscow is weakening, Yeltsin’s Russia is rising.

The Balts won’t stay one moment longer than they have to. This is their chance. They will leave, they will reestablish their independence, and the Soviet Union cannot possibly survive their departure. Two years, maximum.”

Paul nailed it. It was just about two years, and what a two years they were. We moved fairly quickly from trying to shore up Gorbachev and his proposed union treaty to reaching out to Yeltsin and the other leaders of the republics. Washington was reluctant to accept the inevitability of the Soviet breakup, an ambivalence captured by President Bush’s notorious “Chicken Kiev” speech of Aug. 1, 1991, in which he warned Ukrainians against “suicidal nationalism”—just three weeks before their declaration of independence and four months before the independence referendum in which 92 percent of Ukrainians voted to withdraw from the USSR.

In my job, I worked to establish ties with the leaderships of the non-Russian republics as they moved toward possible independence. Some of them, like Leonid Kravchuk of Ukraine and Nursultan Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan, later led their countries to independence. Others, such as the nationalist leaders of Azerbaijan, Georgia and Uzbekistan, were later swept away by the resurgence of Soviet-era leaders. It was exciting to establish direct ties with the republic capitals after decades of having to route all communications through Moscow.

### The Phone Rings

On Aug. 21, 1991, the telephone rang in our bedroom in Bethesda, Maryland. It was 2 a.m. Telephone calls at that hour



APPHOTO

Russian President Boris Yeltsin, foreground left, addresses the crowd from the top of a tank in front of the Russian government building, also known as White House, in Moscow on Aug. 19, 1991. At Yeltsin's left is his bodyguard, Alexander Korzhakov; above Korzhakov is a second bodyguard, Viktor Zolotov.

are rarely good news. The voice on the other end of the phone was that of Larry Napper, the new director of the Office of Soviet Union Affairs, EUR/SOV. I had just finished a two-year assignment there, and was a few weeks into my new job as regional and security affairs officer in what was then the Office of Eastern European and Yugoslav Affairs, EUR/EEY.

"Can you come to the office right away? I have spoken to your director, and he is fine with your coming back to the Soviet Desk for a few days. We are very short-staffed, and we need your help to make sense of what is happening," Larry said.

"What is happening that would lead you to call me at 2 a.m.?" I replied.

"Oh, you don't know, I guess," said Larry. "There has been a coup against Gorbachev, and he is being held prisoner at his dacha in Crimea. A KGB-military junta has taken over. We have to send a memo to the president from the Secretary in a few hours. How soon can you be here?"

I threw on some clothes and drove down to the department. I did not warrant a parking space in the basement, so had to figure out what to do with my car. I put it in the all-night garage in Columbia Plaza. That proved to be a wise choice, because I did not get to retrieve it for another 12 or 13 hours. A team was

already assembled when I arrived at my former office, including analysts from the Bureau of Intelligence and Research and several former colleagues from the desk. Larry spoke quickly: we had two hours to assess the situation and complete a draft "Sec-Pres"—a memo from Secretary Baker to President Bush. Larry asked me to be the main drafter. After an initial set of consultations with the team, I began to draft the memo.

Our principal conclusions were that the coup was likely to fail because the coup plotters did not have popular support, did not have support within the Soviet bureaucracy and, at the end of the day, were fundamentally a bunch of drunken mediocrities. I noted how poorly they had presented themselves at their hastily organized news conference earlier in the day in Moscow, and that Soviet Vice President Gennady Yanaev's hands did not stop shaking during the televised event. He had been named acting president of the USSR, but certainly did not look the part. Our advice was to sit tight, refrain from recognizing the coup, and try to contact Gorbachev and express public support for him. We also recommended asking our embassy to find Russian Republic President Boris Yeltsin and open a channel to him from the White House.

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## I have never seen a piece of paper move as fast as that memo did. We got it cleared and sent it to Secretary Baker within 90 minutes.

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In my 34-year career, I have never seen a piece of paper move as fast as that memo did. We got it cleared and sent it to Secretary Baker within 90 minutes. A courier drove it to his home, got his signature and then drove it to the White House. (We didn't use email in those days.)

We stayed in the office until mid-afternoon the next day, monitoring news reports and speaking to U.S. Embassy Moscow as the first reporting cables came in. It took three days for the coup to fail, but when it was over and Gorbachev returned to Moscow with his wife, Raisa, it was clear that nothing was going to be the same. Boris Yeltsin had taken full advantage of Gorbachev's absence and perceived weakness, establishing himself as the up-and-coming new leader.

I went back to my new job a few days later and spent the next two years working on the breakup of Yugoslavia, the tragic war in Bosnia, the breakup of Czechoslovakia and the establishment of our first security relationships with former Warsaw Pact enemies.

### The USSR Is Gone

Washington's reluctance to accept the loss of the USSR was understandable. Since U.S. recognition of the Soviet regime in 1933, through the years of World War II and, most importantly, during the 44 years of the Cold War, the U.S.-Soviet relationship was the cornerstone of our foreign policy. It was the central foundation on which the postwar world was built. It defined our defense posture and our aspirations for a more peaceful world. Starting in the 1960s, the United States and our NATO allies determined to try to achieve peaceful coexistence with the Soviet Union. This went by many names, from the period of the first arms control agreements in the 1960s through Kissinger's *détente* in the 1970s, and then the rapid de-escalation of confrontation once Gorbachev came to power.

There was a fundamental problem with key assumptions during this period. While it was clearly right to pursue arms control and reduce the risk of nuclear conflict, and while the expansion

of people-to-people ties and exchange programs can only be described as positive, the fundamental assumptions we operated on during those years were wrong. One was that the Soviet Union was immutable: its existence was an unchangeable reality that we had to accept and come to terms with. Only a few "captive nations" organizations and hard-core Cold Warriors rejected this consensus.

The second was that most Soviet citizens accepted the USSR and their place in it despite horrific living standards and ongoing repression. How wrong this assumption was quickly became apparent as soon as the opportunity to leave or transform the USSR presented itself. The vast majority of the country headed for the exits—seemingly without regret at the time, although that assumption proved not quite correct in coming years.

The legitimacy of the Soviet Union rested on several shaky pillars. One was the fact that from the beginning, it was the product of a conspiracy by a minority to seize power from the majority. Not just in Russia, where the main goal was to overcome the peasant majority, but in the non-Russian republics, as well, where Soviet power focused on denying national aspirations and continuing tsarist colonial policies. The sheer brutality of the Soviet experience left very little room for legitimacy when things got shaky in the late 1980s. Nearly everyone had a grandparent or great uncle or aunt who had been shot or sent to a labor camp. Few were untouched by the horrific nature of the Soviet regime, and memories were long.

In Washington, however, there remained great reluctance to give up the stability and predictability of the U.S.-Soviet Cold War rivalry. When it finally did collapse, it was replaced by a brief period of euphoria and triumphalism that also caused problems further down the road. This was the period of Francis Fukuyama's "The End of History," of President George H. W. Bush's "New World Order" and of the triumph of democracy and the Western way of life.

Looking back, it seems hard to imagine that we expected all the republics of the former USSR to immediately become full-fledged liberal democracies, but we really did. Our recognition of the new states of the former USSR was preconditioned on a set of commitments, in writing, to free elections, freedom of speech and the full panoply of liberal freedoms.

### Great Expectations

That's not how it turned out in much of the former Soviet space. And the United States under several administrations quickly came to accept that some of the former Soviet republics were not going to be democratic anytime soon, and that our



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interests in those countries—e.g., air bases for the Afghan war, balancing Russian domination—made it necessary to accept the reimposition of dictatorship, in some cases far more dictatorial than Gorbachev's Soviet Union had been. We ended up accepting a double standard in which the European former republics of the USSR were expected to adhere to basic principles of democracy and human rights, while the Central Asian republics were not.

Our approach was by no means a complete failure, however, and in fact it can be argued that, overall, it was a success. Today, not only is there true democracy in the three Baltic states, but also something pretty close to it in Ukraine (the second most populous former republic after Russia), Georgia and maybe Moldova and Armenia. That's seven out of 15—not great, but far from a washout. Ukraine's struggle to define its own identity and to move toward being a true member of the democratic European family of nations continues to inspire, all the more so after the tragic events of 2014 and the continuing Russian occupation of Crimea and the eastern Donbass.

When I look back on those exciting years in which I was privileged to be both a witness and a minor player, what I remember most is the optimism. The belief that a page in history had been turned, and that the world was truly moving in "our" direction—that is, toward Western-oriented liberal democracy, with everything that came with it, from free elections to free media, from freedom of religion to national self-determination—was widespread.

Vladimir Lenin's commanding gesture over a sea of people was the basis for the cover design (inset) for *The Foreign Service Journal's* special December 2011 issue, "When the USSR Fell: The Foreign Service on the Front Lines."

Were we naïve to be so hopeful? On balance, I would say yes. But we were naïve in a good way: we really believed that freedom and peaceful coexistence were not only possible, but inevitable. And America in those years was still a dominant force and determining factor in nearly every crisis and every development across the globe. Things are more complicated now, and some of our hopes and aspirations clearly have crashed on the rocks of harder realities. U.S.-Russian relations, in particular, are a painful subject for those of us who have devoted so many years to seeing them develop in a positive way.

What I take from those heady days when everything seemed possible is the reminder that nothing is forever, that change can happen in a positive way, and that we have to keep working toward the goals we have set and believe in.

And I truly believe we are better off than we were in the 1980s, when the world seemed poised on the brink of nuclear conflict, and when the peoples of the Soviet bloc were trapped in what was truly a prison house of nations. We should recognize the progress that we have helped to make, and rededicate ourselves to the hard work that lies ahead in making our earlier dreams and aspirations come true. ■

# A GIFT OF PEACE

**The popular quest for freedom and self-determination brought down the Berlin Wall, ending an era.**

BY JAMES D. BINDENAGEL



When the Berlin Wall fell on Nov. 9, 1989, the world sighed with relief that this historic event happened peacefully. We were all elated. German and European unity was a gift of peace to the trans-Atlantic partnership—the United States, Canada and Europe—that had constituted a vast zone of peace, prosperity and democracy for most of the last 70 years.



*James D. Bindenagel, a retired FSO and former ambassador, was deputy chief of mission (U.S. Minister) at the U.S. embassy to the German Democratic Republic in 1989 and 1990. He served subsequently as director of the Office of Central European Affairs at the State Department, as DCM and chargé in Bonn from 1994 to 1997, as a senior fellow at the German Marshall Fund of the United States from 1997 to 1998, and as a U.S. ambassador and special envoy for Holocaust issues from 1999 to 2002. From 2002 to 2003, he served as a special negotiator for conflict diamonds. Following retirement from the Foreign Service in 2003, he served as vice president of the Chicago Council on Global Affairs (2003-2005) and as the vice president for community, government and international affairs at DePaul University in Chicago (2005-2013). Since 2014 he has been Henry Kissinger Professor and director of the Center for International Security and Governance at the University of Bonn.*

Today the 1989-1990 revolutions in Europe seem like such a historical given that it is hard to imagine the truth: In 1989 few envisioned that developments in the socialist world would soon accelerate so dramatically. Early that year East German head of state Erich Honecker had predicted the Berlin Wall would last for 100 years. Western politicians may have given speeches about the yearning for freedom in Central and Eastern Europe. But they, too, had no real idea of how strong that yearning among people long conditioned to suppress their hope for freedom would prove to be.

There were three critical moments in the momentous transformation that took place during that year. First was the “Miracle of Leipzig,” on Oct. 9, when Germans in the German Democratic Republic found the courage to demonstrate their demand for freedom to travel. Second was the fall of the Berlin Wall one month later, on Nov. 9, when that courage was joined with self-determination as East Berliners took to the streets and challenged the border guards at the Bornholmer Strasse checkpoint. And, finally, just a year later, East Germany’s freely elected parliament voted, on Oct. 3, 1990, to join the two Germanys together.

At the time, I was serving as the deputy chief of mission of the U.S. embassy in the GDR, in East Berlin. Here is my eyewitness report of those earthshaking events.

### **Prelude: The Miracle of Freedom**

It all began slowly in the summer of 1989, after the May 7 municipal election results were contested by East Berliners such as civil rights activist Thomas Krueger. Change was in the air. On June 4 the Chinese government massacred democracy demonstrators in Tiananmen Square in Beijing. Shortly afterward, the Honecker government received Chinese Premier Li Peng, known as the “Butcher of Beijing” for his role in that massacre, in an act of solidarity with the Chinese crackdown against “counter-revolutionaries.”

In August, Honecker, general secretary of the ruling Socialist Unity Party (SED), was ill; so his second-in-command, Egon Krenz, traveled to China. Krenz’s subsequent comment on the Chinese action—“Etwas getan worden, um die Ordnung wiederherzustellen” (Something had to be done to uphold order)—became known as the China Solution. East Germans understood. The fear generated by the Honecker government

fed a flood of East Germans from the GDR that had picked up during the year, young people from my Pankower Catholic Church among them.

West German Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher and Interior Minister Rudolf Seiters intervened with the Honecker government to allow East Germans in Prague to immigrate to West Germany by way of the West German embassy. By the end of September, trains carrying fleeing East Germans crossed from Prague through Dresden and on to West Germany. Though still standing, the Berlin Wall was being circumvented.

The Honecker government then imposed a visa requirement for travel to Hungary and Czechoslovakia. As a result, on Oct. 4, 1989, some 18 East Germans sought asylum in the

U.S. embassy in East Berlin. Only with the assistance of Wolfgang Vogel—a famous East German spy-swapping lawyer and Erich Honecker’s personal attorney—could we at the embassy obtain passes for them to West Berlin before the GDR’s 40th anniversary

celebrations began three days later.

USSR President Mikhail Gorbachev’s visit to East Berlin as guest of honor at the Oct. 7 celebrations was fraught. The choice between Gorbachev’s perestroika and glasnost and Honecker’s expected repression of demonstrators was stark. In a public encounter during the visit, Gorbachev was quoted as saying: “Life punishes those who come too late.” It was widely understood as a warning to Honecker.

After Gorbachev departed East Berlin, the crackdown began. I was at the Gethsemane Church that evening, a church where protesters met to demand freedom for friends arrested for demonstrating. Demonstrations for “freedom and the right to travel” had become a regular and growing feature of life in East Berlin and other cities. As the evening wore on, the police moved in, hauling off thousands of demonstrators to holding areas for subsequent arrest.

In Leipzig, on Oct. 9, the regular Monday night vigil at the Nikolaikirche was the focus of attention. Pastor Christian Fuehrer saw his church half-filled with Stasi agents as the tension grew over the continued crackdown. Three SED members had met that afternoon with Gewandhaus Orchestra Maestro Kurt Masur, who was highly regarded by the people and the government, to deal with the increased police presence and the expected violence. The fear was palpable. Masur saw the events

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**It all began slowly in the summer of 1989, after the May 7 municipal election results were contested by East Berliners.**

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Pieces of the Berlin Wall that are now part of the U.S. Diplomacy Center's permanent collection.

AFSA/DIMTRY FILIPOFF

as revolutionary, and in an October 2010 interview with *Der Spiegel* recalled what he had thought that afternoon: “When 17- and 18-year-olds said goodbye to their parents that day, it was like they were heading off to war. But everyone had had enough. All of them—all 70,000 of them—were able to overcome their fears.”

As it happened, the Leipzig SED officials, the police chief and Kurt Masur made the decision to call for “keine Gewalt” (no violence). It was a choice between crackdown and perestroika, between Honecker and Gorbachev. The 70,000 demonstrators, seen only from the video of one camera smuggled in under the Honecker media ban, marched that night without violence. The brave souls of Leipzig repeated their act of courage on Oct. 16, and two days later Egon Krenz led the SED Politburo decision to remove Erich Honecker as the SED general secretary and GDR head of state.

### The Berlin Wall for 100 Years

On Nov. 9, 1989, there was no sign of revolution. Sure, change was coming—but slowly, we thought. After all, the Solidarity movement in Poland began in the early 1980s. I spent the afternoon at an Aspen Institute reception hosted by David Anderson for his new deputy director, Hildegard Boucsein, with leaders from East and West Berlin, absorbed in our day-to-day business. In the early evening, I attended a reception along with the mayors and many political leaders of East and West Berlin, Allied military commanders and East German lawyer Wolfgang Vogel. Not one of us had any inkling of the events that were about to turn the world upside down.

As the event was ending, Wolfgang Vogel asked me for a ride. I was happy to oblige and hoped to discuss changes to the GDR travel law, the target of the countrywide demonstrations for freedom. On the way, he told me that the Politburo planned to reform the travel law and that the communist leadership had met that day to adopt new rules to satisfy East Germans’ demand for more freedom of travel. I dropped Vogel off at his golden-colored Mercedes near West Berlin’s shopping boulevard, Ku’Damm. Happy about my scoop on the Politburo deliberations, I headed to the embassy. Vogel’s comments would surely make for an exciting report back to the State Department in Washington.

I arrived at the embassy at 7:30 p.m. and went directly to our political section, where I found an animated team of diplomats. At a televised press conference, government spokesman Guenter Schabowski had just announced the Politburo decision to lift travel restrictions, leaving everyone at the embassy stunned. East Germans could now get visitor visas from their local “People’s Police” station, and the East German government would open

**That the night of Nov. 9 remained peaceful was not only due to the Harald Jaegers and Tom Brokaws. In faraway Moscow, the president of the Soviet Union had also made courageous decisions.**

a new processing center for emigration cases. When an Italian journalist asked the spokesman when the new rules would go into effect, Schabowski fumbled with his papers, unsure—and then mumbled: “Unverzueglich” (immediately). With that, my Vogel scoop evaporated.

At this point, excitement filled the embassy. None of us had the official text of the statement or knew how East Germans planned to implement the new rules. Although Schabowski’s declaration was astounding, it was open to widely varying interpretations. Still dazed by the announcement, we anticipated the rebroadcast an hour later.

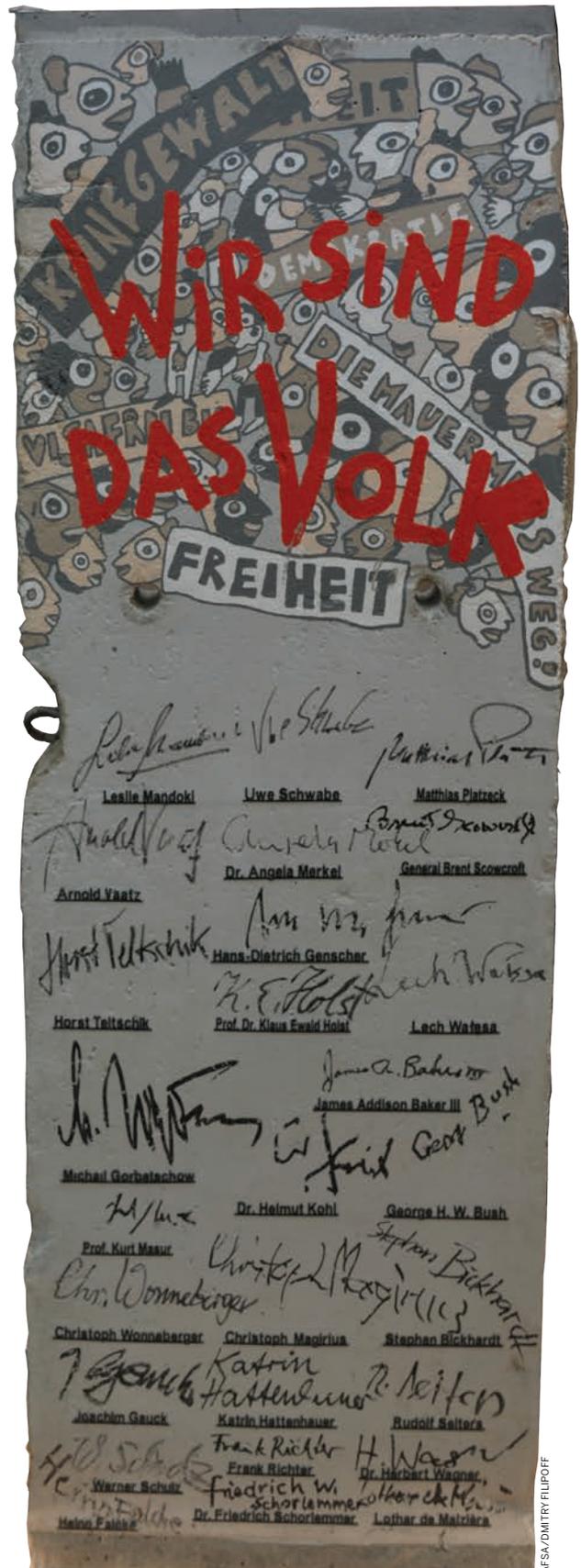
At 8 p.m., Political Counselor Jon Greenwald and I watched as West Germany’s news program “Tagesschau” led with the story. By then, political officer Imre Lipping had picked up the official statement and returned to the embassy to report to Washington. Heather Troutman, another political officer, wrote an on-the-ground report that the guards at Checkpoint Charlie were telling East Germans to get visas. Greenwald cabled the text of Schabowski’s announcement to Washington: East Germans had won the freedom to travel and emigrate.

As the cable arrived in Washington, I called the White House Situation Room and State Department Operations Center to discuss the report and alert them to the latest developments. I then called Harry Gilmore, the American minister in West Berlin.

“Harry,” I said, “it looks like you’re going to have a lot of visitors soon. We’re just not sure yet what that rush of visitors will look like.”

### A Rush of Visitors

We assumed that, at best, East Germans would start crossing into West Berlin the next day. In those first moments, the wall remained impassable. After all, these were Germans; they were known for following the rules. Schabowski had announced the visa rules, and we believed there would be an orderly process.



## The question running through my mind was whether the Soviet Army would stay in its barracks. There were 380,000 Soviet soldiers in East Germany.

East Germans, however, were following West German television coverage, as well. And, as it turned out, they decided to hold their government to its word immediately.

I headed home around 10 p.m. to watch events unfold on West German television. On my way to Pankow, I was surprised by the unusual amount of traffic. The “Trabi,” with its two-cycle engine and a body made of plasticized pressed-wood, spewing gas and oil smoke, was always in short supply. Perhaps one of the most striking symbols of East Germany’s economy, those iconic cars now filled the streets despite the late hour—and they were headed to the Bornholmer Strasse checkpoint. Near the checkpoint, drivers were abandoning them left and right.

Ahead of me, the blazing lights of a West German television crew led by *Der Spiegel* reporter Georg Mascolo illuminated the checkpoint. The TV crew, safely ensconced in the West, was preparing for a live broadcast. Despite the bright lights, all I could make out was a steadily growing number of demonstrators gathering at the checkpoint. From the tumult, I could faintly hear yells of “Tor auf!” (Open the gate!) Anxious East Germans had started confronting the East German border guards. Inside the crossing, armed border police waited for instructions.

Amid a massive movement of people, fed by live TV, the revolution that had started so slowly was rapidly spinning out of control. The question running through my mind was whether the Soviet Army would stay in its barracks. There were 380,000 Soviet soldiers in East Germany. In diplomatic

circles, we expected that the Soviet Union, the military superpower, would not give up East Germany without a fight. Our role was to worry—the constant *modus operandi* of a diplomat. But this time, our concern didn’t last long.

When I arrived home around 10:15 p.m., I turned on the TV, called the State Department with the latest developments, and called Ambassador Richard Barkley and then Harry Gilmore again: “Remember I told you that you’d be seeing lots of visitors?” I said. “Well, that might be tonight.”

Just minutes later, I witnessed on live television as a wave of East Berliners broke through the checkpoint at Bornholmer Strasse, where I had been just minutes earlier. My wife, Jean, joined me, and we watched a stream of people crossing the bridge while TV cameras transmitted their pictures around the world. Lights came on in the neighborhood. I was elated. East Germans had made their point clear. After 40 years of Cold War, East Berliners were determined to have freedom.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF J.D. BINDENAGEL



The Bindenagel family at the Berlin Wall on Nov. 10, 1989.

### The Other Side of the Story

In a 2009 *Der Spiegel* interview on the 20th anniversary of the Berlin Wall’s fall, Lieutenant Colonel Harald Jaeger gave his account of what had happened at the border crossing in the crucial moments before he made his fateful decision to grant passage. As Col. Jaeger explained, he had “spoken repeatedly to all officers in charge that evening, on the street, but also in his office. They demanded: ‘Harald, you’ve got to do something!’ I said: ‘What am I supposed to do? Should I let the GDR citizens leave? Or should I give the order to open fire?’ I wanted to hear what they thought. They stood together in my office, and I wanted them to tell me what I should do. ‘It’s up to you, you’re the boss,’ they said.” He acted.

I learned the other part of the Jaeger story a few months after that historic night. Some of the first people who had shown their GDR identification cards to the border guards to get across to the West had had a GDR exit visa stamped on the cardholder’s photo, which in effect invalidated the ID card. Jaeger “expelled” those

first people crossing the checkpoints, thus ridding East Germany of dissidents. Evicting them was a fitting and expedient solution: The guards had tried to save East Germany from its discontented citizens by throwing the rascals out of the country. The rest of the story played out on live television.

Tom Brokaw broadcast to America and the world. German television reported to West and East Germans alike. East Germans saw the open Berlin Wall and hundreds of their fellow citizens fleeing west. They could not see the new rules, but Tom Brokaw and his fellow journalists created facts on the ground. Worried about the GDR and not trusting their government to give them visas, East Germans decided on the spur of the moment to go on their own to the checkpoints.

The newly announced visa requirement gave them the window, and they tested it. They poured into West Berlin thinking the opening would not last, that this was their only chance to taste freedom. Some expected to return home. Others hopped into their Trabis and drove many miles to get to Berlin in time to cross and not miss the only chance in their life they would have to visit West Berlin.

### The End of the Old Order

The fall of the Berlin Wall is for the East Germans what the storming of the Bastille 200 years ago was for the French: the end of the old order and the end of an era. The East German people mustered the courage to storm the wall that had imprisoned them for decades, thus discovering the secret of freedom. They took their future into their own hands. Four months later, on March 18, 1990, they elected a democratic government, headed by Prime Minister Lothar de Maiziere, who led the parliamentary decision for accession to the West German constitution and, therefore, German unity on Oct. 3.

On that November night, however, it was not only the people of the GDR who embraced freedom with courage. That the night of Nov. 9 remained peaceful was not only due to the Harald Jaegers and Tom Brokaws. In faraway Moscow, the president of the Soviet Union had also made courageous decisions. Mikhail Gorbachev's decision not to send his soldiers to restore Soviet control over East Germany was the critical step that made the revolution peaceful; that, followed by the East German decision not to carry out the shoot-to-kill order to defend the border, led to peaceful German reunification and European unity.

We must not forget the lessons learned from the Peaceful Revolution of 1989. Indeed, they seem more relevant today than ever before. ■



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# 1989: SEEN FROM

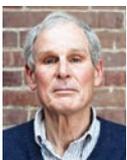
**Though the Berlin Wall's collapse left hardly a ripple on the surface of Yugoslavia's day-to-day turmoil, it decisively affected the underlying course of events in the country.**

BY LOUIS D. SELL

**L**ike the rest of the world, Yugoslavia watched the events of 1989 in neighboring Eastern Europe with fascination and astonishment. But by the time the Berlin Wall fell in November, Yugoslavia's squabbling republics had traveled so far along the path toward dissolution that it left hardly a surface ripple on the spiraling downward course of domestic events that were to culminate 18 months later in bloody conflict. In review-

ing personal meeting notes for this article from my 1987-1991 stint as political counselor in Belgrade, I found hardly any reference to the fall of the Wall.

Yet symbolizing as it did the rupture of the external Soviet empire and the collapse of communism as a ruling ideology, the crumbling of the Wall could not help but have a momentous impact on the underlying course of events in the country. By 1989 Josip Broz Tito had been dead for nine years, and the independent and relatively liberal version of communism he created in Yugoslavia was entering terminal decline. But while all across



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*Slobodan Milosevic and the Destruction of Yugoslavia* (Duke University Press, 2002). Mr. Sell is now an adjunct professor at the University of Maine at Farmington and lives on a farm in Whitefield, Maine.



# YUGO SLAVIA

BERLIN WALL PHOTO BY JAMES TALAY

Eastern Europe people were shucking off Soviet-style Marxism-Leninism, what emerged from the wreckage of the Yugoslav experiment was nationalism.

Some among the Belgrade foreign policy establishment worried that events in Eastern Europe would deprive Yugoslavia of its distinctive, balancing role in Cold War politics. That concern turned out to be well founded, as the United States and Europe, preoccupied with developments elsewhere, failed to engage effectively as the country descended into war.

## The Center Gives Way

Early in 1989, riding a wave of what we might now call nationalist populism, Serbian strongman Slobodan Milosevic had illegally and violently crushed the autonomy of the Albanian-majority province of Kosovo, which the rest of Yugoslavia took as a foretaste of what they might expect should Milosevic succeed in taking control of the country as a whole. In June I had watched Milosevic, in Kosovo for the 600th anniversary of the defeat of the medieval Serbian empire by the Ottoman Turks, tell a million visiting Serbs that violent conflict could be ahead, a prospect the crowd greeted with a roar of approval.

In November, as the rest of the world was transfixed by the images of young Germans climbing triumphantly atop the

crumbling Berlin Wall, Yugoslavia was preoccupied by Milosevic's efforts—ultimately unsuccessful—to stage the kind of populist uprising in liberal Slovenia that he had successfully employed in three other Yugoslav federal entities, which had put him on the verge of capturing the collective federal presidency that controlled the country's military and police.

As Moscow's power visibly crumbled, the fear that Soviet tanks might one day clank down the streets of Yugoslavia, as they had in Budapest in 1956 and Prague in 1968, vanished. And with it went a powerful, if usually unspoken, force for unity among Yugoslavia's fractious ethnic groups. In my first overseas Foreign Service post, Zagreb (1974-1976) resentment simmered just below the surface at Tito's heavy-handed suppression of a 1972 national upheaval known as the Croatian Spring. But even friends who made no secret of their hope to one day see an independent Croatia conceded their gratitude for Tito's successful defiance of Soviet dictator Josef Stalin in 1948, the defining moment in the creation of Yugoslavia's independent brand of communism.

The decline of Soviet power also weakened the resolve of conservative elements in Yugoslavia. The Yugoslav military saw itself as the ultimate defender of Yugoslavia's independence and its communist system in equal measure. It reacted to the collapse



Baby-blue “Trabis” line up to cross the border from East to West.

1990 Yugoslavia’s last and greatest prime minister, Ante Markovic, tried unsuccessfully to create a united market economy. Markovic enjoyed enormous prestige across the country for having stopped a burst of hyperinflation that rivaled that of 1923 Germany. In January 1990, when the LCY collapsed, a smiling Markovic announced: “Yugoslavia will survive.” His liberal reforms failed because republican leaders, primarily interested in promoting their own separatist agendas, cooperated to block the emergence of a powerful rival at the federal level.

of communism across Eastern Europe in 1989 and the growing turmoil and weakness in Mikhail Gorbachev’s USSR with a kind of angry disbelief that ultimately led it to play a destructive role in the tragedy of Yugoslav disintegration. In one of its first issues after the Berlin Wall’s fall, the army’s newspaper gravely warned that nothing had changed in the military’s determination to defend socialism in Yugoslavia.

The spectacular collapse of ruling communist parties across Eastern Europe also affected the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, the country’s only party since 1945. Even before 1989, belief in the Yugoslav model of “self-management socialism” was crumbling. In those limited areas where small-scale private enterprises were beginning to be tolerated, they were universally considered to be superior. When I lost a tooth filling, Yugoslav friends warned me gravely to use one of the new private dentists and not a “self-management” type. In January 1990 the LCY effectively vanished when the Slovenian party walked out of what turned out to be the last party congress, and the remaining republics effectively blocked Milosevic’s efforts to take over the rump body.

The communist parties in Yugoslavia’s republics, where the real locus of power lay, reacted in different ways to the events of 1989. A liberal Slovene party faction was strengthened in its already ongoing efforts to transform itself into a social-democratic party, a trend which helped propel Slovenia toward secession in June 1991. In Croatia, a reformist group seized control of the party shortly after the fall of the Wall and announced its support for multiparty elections—which it resoundingly lost five months later to Franjo Tudjman’s Croatian nationalists, adding yet another disintegrationist element to the Yugoslav brew.

There were, of course, elements within Yugoslavia who took inspiration from the events of 1989 and hoped to emulate the success of liberal East European reformers. During 1989 and

### Portents of Hope and Danger

Preoccupation with Yugoslavia did not prevent diplomats there from being drawn to the astonishing events unfolding in neighboring countries. In Europe 1989 was the “summer of the Trabi,” when, just to the north of Yugoslavia, thousands of East Germans flooded across Hungary’s suddenly open borders when the Berlin Wall fell, many in diminutive Trabant autos known variously as a “sardine can on wheels” or a “plastic tank.”

One evening while this was going on, after a relaxed family dinner, a European diplomatic colleague and I tried to sum up our impressions of events in neighboring Hungary and beyond. Both of us had long experience in the USSR, as well as Eastern Europe; and, after carefully analyzing all of the options—our deliberations no doubt aided by some excellent wine—we concluded that the communist system was bound to disappear across the region since the people had lost any pretense of belief in it, and local parties were losing control of events.

Armed intervention seemed the only way to preserve the communist system, but that option was implausible given events then unfolding in Gorbachev’s USSR. At the end of a long evening, we agreed that our analysis was impeccable, no matter how improbable the putative end point then seemed. I cannot speak for my colleague, but I never sent in that cable announcing to Washington the imminent demise of the communist system across the region—and, as far as I know, Washington never seemed to notice its absence.

A few months later the only violence in the 1989 East European revolutions began in Timisoara, Romania, just across the Yugoslav border. Yugoslav journalist friends returned from reporting events there with two impressions: One was the murkiness of who was actually behind the bloodshed, and another was a deep worry that similar violence could occur at home.

In 1990 each of the six Yugoslav republics held multi-

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## All of the former Yugoslav republics have assumed the trappings of democracy, but it remains a fragile implant.

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party elections, the first since before the Second World War. I observed most of them, and the experience was among the most moving in my Foreign Service career. No one who has ever had the opportunity to witness people standing with patient enthusiasm in long lines to vote for the first time in their lives, when it would actually make a difference, could ever doubt the power of democracy as an ideal.

The victory of ethnically oriented parties in most of these Yugoslav republican elections was an unfortunate result of decades of communist rule drying up virtually every other option. As one of my Croatian friends somewhat shamefacedly

told me: “The new communists are actually an attractive option, but after half a century of them in charge I just can’t bring myself to support them in our first democratic election.”

The promise of democracy was inspiring, but competing ethnic visions among the victors in different republics plunged much of Yugoslavia into years of bloody ethnic conflict. Belated outside intervention and a sense of mutual exhaustion with the bloodletting eventually brought a sometimes-troubled peace. All of the former Yugoslav republics have assumed the trappings of democracy, but it remains a fragile implant. As in many other areas the forms of democracy—elections, political parties and the rule of law—risk being subverted by corruption and creeping authoritarianism.

Thirty years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, there is legitimate ground for disagreement on what needs to be done to overcome the current time of troubles in many democratic systems. But surely an important element is to understand and recommit ourselves to belief in the inspirational power of democracy that we observed in 1989. ■

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# REMEMBERING BERLIN WALL STORIES

Diplomats reflect on the events that dramatically reshaped the postwar world.



MICHAEL HAMMER



MICHAEL HAMMER

Left: Berliners at the Berlin Wall on Nov. 10, 1989. Top, right: A view that same day of the east side of the wall at the Brandenburg Gate, where West Berliners perched atop the barrier taunted the East German police as the wall is being dismantled.



## Right Place, Right Time

*Michael Hammer*

West Berlin, Federal Republic of Germany

**T**hirty years ago, fresh out of A-100 and on our first tours, my classmate Matt Bryza was serving in Poznan, Poland, and my wife, Margret Bjorgulfsdottir, and I were in Copenhagen. Matt and I had been friends in grad school at Fletcher and were eager to get together. Since Matt was serving in Poland in the bad old Iron Curtain days, he frequently went to decompress in West Berlin, so we decided to meet up there over Veterans Day weekend in 1989.

Little did I know at the time that it would be one of the most momentous experiences in my 30-plus years in the U.S. Foreign Service.

The journey got off to an inauspicious start. On the train from Copenhagen to West Berlin, an East German border guard took my diplomatic passport, barked something unintelligible and disappeared. Having seen too many spy thrillers, I thought this was it, we would be whisked away in darkness. But instead,



FSO Matt Bryza (center, in black jacket) and Margret Bjorgulfsdottir (spouse of Mike Hammer, next to Bryza) join Berliners in front of the Brandenburg Gate on Nov. 10, 1989, to celebrate the fall of the Berlin Wall.



GETTY IMAGES/BETTMANN

During the Cold War, a young West Berlin couple talks to relatives in an East Berlin apartment house (see upper window open). They have climbed to the top of the wall to have their brief conversation.

he simply returned with deutsche marks in hand to reimburse me for a visa fee I should not have paid as a diplomat.

Things got funky when we arrived at Berlin's train station and there was no sign of Matt, who had made all the arrangements for our visit. With no cell phone or way to reach him, we just waited anxiously until he came running, screaming: "They are tearing down the wall, they are tearing down the wall!" My immediate thought was that Matt must have been drinking. But, lo and behold, as we approached the Brandenburg Gate, you could hear the pounding of hammers against that hideous wall.

Without much thought, two American diplomats joined the young West Berliners on top of the wall. The West Berliners were taunting the East German guards, jumping onto the east side and then climbing back up on the wall as the guards, machine guns in hand, approached them. Thankfully, the East German guards did not fire as they had been prone to do previously when East Berliners daringly tried to flee.

I recall the lengthy lines at automatic cash dispensers as East Berliners collected the 100 DM they were entitled to upon arriving in the West. At border crossing points you could see Trabant car after Trabant car among crowds of people walking into the West, many with joyful tears streaming down their cheeks. As we strolled the streets, we ran into perhaps the only German we knew, another Fletcherite. Overcome with emotion, he uncharacteristically hugged us. That is the kind of day it was.

On Nov. 11, we had planned a dinner in East Berlin with our ambassador to East Germany, Dick Barkley, who had been a

mentor to our A-100 class—the Fighting 44th! We called him to say we would understand if dinner was off, but he insisted we come over as his wife, Nina, was already preparing dinner. We crossed through Checkpoint Charlie, and as we looked at the endless stream of people crossing to the West, we worried how my wife, then an Icelandic citizen, would get back to the West. After dinner Amb. Barkley had to excuse himself to appear on "Nightline" to discuss the dramatic events. We took that as our cue to leave.

We sensed that the opening to the West would be permanent when we reached Checkpoint Charlie and saw that now the lines were of East Berliners returning to their homes, with virtually no one crossing westward. That night, the stench of cheap champagne flowing through the streets of Berlin was the smell of freedom—and how sweet it was!

I will admit to an uncomfortable moment when I returned to Copenhagen and shared my slides with the embassy community. The deputy chief of mission stopped me at one of the slides—an unobstructed view of the Brandenburg Gate?!—and asked where the photo had been taken. I quickly moved to the next slide, not wanting to dwell on the imprudence of exuberant American diplomats risking an international incident by climbing on top of the wall in celebration.

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*Michael Hammer was a first-tour Foreign Service officer in Copenhagen, on a vacation in West Berlin when the Berlin Wall fell. He is currently serving as U.S. ambassador to the Democratic Republic of the Congo.*

## To Celebrate or Sleep?

Jon Greenwald

East Berlin, German Democratic Republic

As the embassy's political counselor in East Berlin, I spent hours that evening telling colleagues in West Berlin and State's Operations Center not to expect immediate drama.

We had been working hard for months as peaceful revolution developed in the German Democratic Republic.

A few days before, a million people had demonstrated in the heart of the city for radical changes. All week we were reporting on the Communist Party plenum that revised the Politburo and introduced a reform prime minister. We were anticipating a law to permit extensive travel for East Germans for the first time since the Berlin Wall was built. As I coordinated reporting, I watched the televised press conference; the party's spokesman, Guenter Schabowski, ended with a comment on new regulations that would allow applications for immediate travel.

My phone began to ring. Ambassador Dick Barkley had heard Schabowski and wanted us to inform Washington. Then the head of the U.S. mission in West Berlin [known as USBER], Harry Gilmore, called to say that the mayor had told him plans were ready, since Schabowski had advised him a week earlier to expect visitors soon.

"When will it begin?" Harry asked.

Schabowski said documents would be needed, I explained, though police offices would probably be swamped by applicants the next morning.

Imre Lipping, my deputy, arrived to compare notes. We agreed there were unanswered questions. There could be a long wait for passports, if only because millions would have to be issued. But if the authorities processed applications as promised, the question would arise what purpose the wall retained. Unless the GDR acknowledged it was becoming an anachronism, many would conclude liberalization was only a gambit that could be withdrawn as quickly as it was introduced.

When my wife, Gaby, a Berliner, arrived home, she recounted a troubling experience minutes earlier while returning from visiting her mother in West Berlin. As she left the checkpoint, a dozen men blocked the street. She first thought they were drunk but saw no bottles, and more people came out of apartment buildings,

apparently to join them. I knew nerves were stretched tight and hoped the restraint that had carried East Germans so far would not fray just as their demands appeared close to realization.

Our embassy was empty except for communication officers Duane Bredeck and Larry Stafford when I handed in my cables and began to drive home to the Pankow district. Downtown was empty, though lights were burning at party headquarters.

But at Schoenhauser Allee, in the shadow of the elevated train, thousands were streaming through the Bornholmer Strasse intersection. Police were struggling to keep a lane to Pankow open, but the crowd was intent on reaching the wall.

I was frightened for them and the peaceful process we had witnessed all fall. There were troops just a few hundred yards away. If Berliners did not wait for morning and demanded to be allowed through now, how would the young soldiers in the watchtowers react? Was there one panicky youth with a gun on either side of the barrier? Warnings that a violent incident could bring civil war were on my mind.

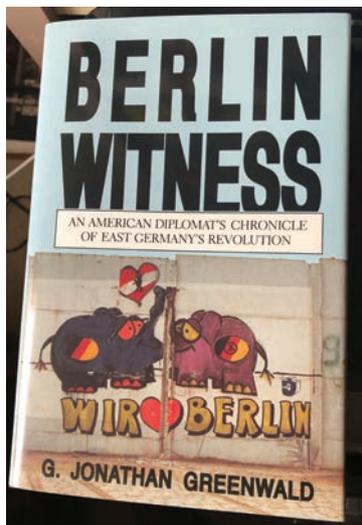
I considered joining the push toward the wall, but in that age without cell phones, it might be hours before I could reestablish

outside contact. Better to continue home to put out my alert. Unusually, lights were on in many houses on our street. Ours, however, was dark. I woke Gaby, who stood anxiously beside me as I telephoned J.D. Bindenagel, the deputy chief of mission. Thousands are pushing toward the wall, I told him, and there may be trouble.

"It's all over," he replied. "They've opened the wall. I've spoken with Washington. Turn on your television."

And so we saw the joyful scenes. Gaby, a student when the wall went up, had known it all her adult life. "I don't believe it. I just don't believe it," she said, before asking, "Should I dress? Should we go downtown?" I wanted to, but it had been a long day, with a longer one starting in a few short hours.

So we went to sleep while Berlin celebrated, though we cried a bit first. And then our embassy began to report on the new Germany that was being born.



Jon Greenwald's book, originally published in 1993.

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*Jon Greenwald is a 30-year veteran of the U.S. Foreign Service. Since 2017 he has been working on a project to bring young Israeli and Palestinian students to study together for a three-year period at leading prep schools in the United States, Germany and Israel.*

## Managing from Moscow

Raymond F. Smith  
Moscow, USSR

**W**orld-shaking events do not always occur on personally convenient timetables. If they had asked me, I'd have told the East Germans to pick a different week to tear down that damned wall.

It greatly inconvenienced me. You see, I was unofficially in charge of the U.S. embassy in Moscow at the time. I say unofficially because the ambassador was in the country, although on a visit to one of the Soviet Union's far-flung republics. With the deputy chief of mission out of the country, I was filling in for both. But that was not the real inconvenience.

Rather, my wife was out of the country, our nanny was not in Moscow and I was working out of the DCM's office with my 10-week-old son strapped to my chest in a baby pouch. My plans for the weekend included heating the reserve supply of breast milk to the proper temperature, changing diapers and, probably, getting precious little sleep. Not the best setup for trying to get information from the Foreign Ministry about Soviet views on the rapidly unfolding developments.

Of course, we were not going to get any immediate information out of the Foreign Ministry in any case, because on something like this no one would comment before Communist Party General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev or Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze did. There are times, though, when as a diplomat you know what a country is going to do. You know it because you have been there for a while, and you have what I can only call a "feel" for things—a combination of facts, firsthand observations and intuition that is almost unattainable from a distance. It is a resource that is, unfortunately, often undervalued at the political level.

Many of Gorbachev's foreign travels during the prior year had been to Eastern Europe, where he told the Communist Party leaderships that they needed to reform, that if their people rose up against them, the Red Army would no longer intervene on their behalf. He meant it. The "new thinking" that he and Shevardnadze had made the cornerstone of Soviet foreign policy had as a principal tenet an end to what he called the enemy image of the West.

This was not just a slogan. It was essential to Gorbachev's domestic reform effort, the basis for major cuts in Soviet defense spending that would free resources for domestic needs, improve peoples' lives and solidify support. None of that worked out in the long run, but there remained a lot



SHAWN DORMAN

An American visitor chips away at the wall in an open Berlin, spring 1990.

of optimism for it in 1989. Intervention would have meant the end of the reform effort; he would not allow it as long as he remained in power.

On the Monday after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the vast majority of East Germans who had crossed returned home to work. The Soviet leadership breathed a sigh of relief. Russians fear chaos, but the only explosions they had seen were of joy. The end of the wall was a *fait accompli*, the disintegration of the East German regime a probability. In the coming months, Gorbachev and Shevardnadze would seek to turn this situation to their advantage by trying to negotiate an end to their no-longer-tenable position in Germany in return for aid and Western acceptance.

The seeds of our current problems with Russia were planted in those negotiations, but that is a matter for a different discussion.

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*Raymond F. Smith, who was in Moscow when the Berlin Wall fell, was a Foreign Service officer from 1969 to 1993. A longtime international negotiations consultant, he is the author of *Negotiating with the Soviets* (1989) and *The Craft of Political Analysis for Diplomats* (2011).*

## Predicting the Fall

George F. Ward Jr.

Bonn, Federal Republic of Germany

When East Germans began streaming to the West through the Berlin Wall on Nov. 9, 1989, I was deputy chief of mission at the embassy in Bonn. The events of that day set in motion a swift process that led to the unification of Germany on Oct. 3, 1990.

The fall of the wall came as no surprise to Ambassador Vernon A. “Dick” Walters. On April 7, 1989, while preparing for his assignment to Germany, Walters had asked me to be his deputy. At the beginning of our conversation, he said, “George, we’re going to Germany at a very interesting time. The Berlin Wall’s going to come down.”

At the time, this was an astounding statement, and I was skeptical. The conventional wisdom ascribed to by some of the State Department’s Germany experts and by a number of West German political leaders was that German unification would take place only over an extended period of time, through a convergence of the systems in East and West. Walters had a broader vision and a different view. The Soviet Union had suffered a defeat in Afghanistan and was weakened economically. General Secretary Gorbachev, Walters reasoned, would not use the Red Army to quell the popular unrest that was bubbling just below the surface in East Germany. Therefore, German unity seemed plausible, even predictable.

The geopolitics of German unity were worked out through the Two Plus Four negotiating process, which involved the four World War II Allies—the United States, the United Kingdom, France and the Soviet Union—plus the two German states. The embassy in Bonn supported this process but found its principal role in helping to wind down the special status of the four powers in Germany.

The sovereign status of the four powers was most evident in Berlin, but it also provided the basis for many institutions and activities throughout Germany, including the stationing of NATO forces and even the right of the United States to occupy the embassy complex in Bonn. Along with many other members of the embassy and mission in West Berlin, I was involved in quite a number of formal and informal negotiating processes.

All of this unfolded at a dizzying pace, and the outcome was unclear until close to the end.

The most consequential negotiation concerned the future status of the more than 200,000 U.S. military personnel and tens of thousands of other NATO troops in a unified Germany. For a while, some negotiators on the West German team maintained that members of NATO forces would be restricted from entering the territory of the former East Germany, perhaps even on personal travel. Although the Allies had no intention of establishing bases in the former East Germany, the proposed travel restrictions were unacceptable.

In addition, German proposals to subject Allied military personnel and their families to German law in a number of mundane areas would have posed substantial inconvenience.

It is a tribute to the excellent German-American relationship that had been built up during the years since World War II that these and other questions were resolved through frank but amicable dialogue in time for German unification.

Embassy Bonn’s role in the German unification saga was best summed up by words included in the group honor

award it received: “a classic example of successful American diplomacy, in which intelligence, energy, dedication and a clear understanding of U.S. interests combined to produce results beyond expectations.”

For me personally, German unification brought the joy of family unification. My grandmother had emigrated from Saxony to New York early in the 20th century. When the Berlin Wall came down, I was able to establish contact with relatives in the East. Visiting with them in their workers’ apartment in Halle brought both joy and sadness—joy over discovering family I had never known, but sadness about the grim conditions they had endured since 1945.

Later, I was able to bring my relatives to Bonn for a tearful, cheerful time with my mother, who was visiting us. Our happy walks along the Rhine made me thankful for the work and sacrifices of so many that resulted in a good end to the Cold War.

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German unification brought  
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—George F. Ward Jr.

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*The deputy chief of mission in Bonn in 1989, Ambassador George F. Ward Jr. was a Foreign Service officer from 1969 to 1999. Since retiring, he has served in leadership roles at the United States Institute of Peace, World Vision and the Institute for Defense Analyses.*



COURTESY OF EDDIE SAGITTO

**Eddie Sagitto at the Berlin Wall.**

crowds were gone. It was easy to access the Berlin Wall and soak in the atmosphere. There was a lively trade going on in pieces of the wall chipped off by enterprising kids known as *mauerspechte*, a slang word meaning “wall peckers.” Some were spray-painting parts of the wall before breaking off pieces to make them more saleable. I decided to chop off my own. It was not too difficult because the wall was made of porous concrete, and I amassed a whole bag full of chunks.

Things seemed to change quickly in the weeks and months that followed. Less than a year later, on Oct. 3, 1990, West and East Germany reunited. Some of the early enthusiasm in the west diminished as the costs of reunification became clearer. The U.S. military presence also changed, as the number of U.S. military personnel stationed in Germany (and the German and U.S. civilians working with them) dropped drastically.

For me, the fall of the Berlin Wall also opened up the possibility of travel to Eastern Europe. In 1991, after quite a bit of preparation, I went to Romania in hope of adopting a child. I traveled with a colleague and friend who also wanted to adopt. With the help of a translator and advice from others who had successfully adopted, we were both able to adopt, I a daughter and she a son.

In 1995 I joined the Foreign Service and had assignments in Slovakia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Romania. The events of November 1989 not only had a profound effect on Germany and Europe, but on the direction my own career and life have taken.

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*Edwina “Eddie” Sagitto joined the Foreign Service in 1995, serving until 2013 as a public diplomacy officer. Since retiring, she has taken WAE assignments in Africa and elsewhere, and divides her time between Munich, Germany, and Phoenix, Arizona.*

## How I Became a *Mauerspechte*

*Edwina “Eddie” Sagitto*

Heidelberg, Federal Republic of Germany

**I**n November 1989 I was living in Heidelberg, working as a management analyst for U.S. Army Europe (USAREUR). On Nov. 9, while visiting the German family of my partner in the Bavarian city of Neu Ulm, we heard the news that the Berlin Wall had fallen. I was ecstatic, but my German hosts didn’t seem impressed.

I wanted to experience the change firsthand, so the following weekend I went to Berlin. The mood was euphoric, but the huge



COURTESY OF EDDIE SAGITTO

Two young *mauerspechte* sell pieces of the wall.

## View from the Velvet Revolution

*Thomas N. Hull*

Prague, Czechoslovakia

**W**hen I left Washington in August 1989 to be a public affairs officer in Prague, conventional wisdom was that communism would collapse in Czechoslovakia before East Germany. Ambassador Shirley Temple Black arrived a week later, fully prepared to maintain our strategy of encouraging dissidents, promoting human rights and opposing communism, as had generations of American diplomats before us.

Within a month, a seismic upheaval began when East German



An enterprising individual spray-paints part of the wall for later sale.

refugees crossed the open border with Czechoslovakia in growing numbers to claim asylum at the West German embassy neighboring our embassy. Disoriented refugees scaled the U.S. embassy's security wall and were redirected over the adjacent German wall. The West German embassy overflowed, forcing thousands of asylum seekers to live on the cobblestone street in front of our embassy for weeks. The crisis focused world attention on Prague until October, when trains took the refugees to West Germany via East Germany. Berliners then increased pressure to eliminate travel restrictions to the West, which culminated in the fall of the Berlin Wall on Nov. 9.

In Prague the Czechs were slower to react. Although the resolution of the refugee crisis showed that Mikhail Gorbachev would not oppose freedom, the Prague populace, remembering how the Soviets violently crushed the 1968 Prague Spring, remained uncertain. A police assault on a Nov. 17 student demonstration finally sparked a mass reaction. Dissidents and intellectuals, most of whom were close embassy contacts, formed the Civic Forum to lead the Velvet Revolution.

After demonstrations of up to 500,000 protesters spread, the communist leadership resigned on Nov. 24. By the end of December, dissident dramatist Vaclav Havel was president, and deposed Prague Spring leader Alexander Dubcek was resurrected as president of the National Assembly.

The atmosphere changed immediately. The secret police removed their hidden cameras and listening devices from my apartment. Soon thereafter, I found myself on stage congratulating Czechoslovakia for its revolution in front of President Havel and 20,000 fans at a nationally televised concert.

Our strategy quickly shifted to nurturing democracy and transforming the Czechoslovak economy. Our activities were limited only by sparse budgets and our minimal American staff, who worked 14-hour days, sometimes longer, seven days a week for months on end. Although resources eventually increased in

all embassy sections, workloads also grew exponentially.

Czechoslovakia immediately became a magnet for visitors. Ten senators and 56 representatives came in the first two months. Some had real public diplomacy value, such as House Majority Leader Richard Gephardt, who spoke on democracy to Charles University law students. Secretary of State James Baker and Supreme Court Justice Anthony Kennedy also addressed students.

We shamelessly recruited private visitors as well. Most memorably I arranged directly for rival media moguls Katharine Graham and Rupert Murdoch to dine together with Ambassador Black and me for a discussion with prominent Czechoslovak women on their role in the new democracy.

The ultimate visitor was President George H.W. Bush, who announced to 200,000 people in Wenceslas Square that the Lenin Museum would become the American Cultural and Commercial Center. The Czechs understood the significance—this was the building where Lenin established the Bolshevik party in 1912, setting a course that culminated in the Cold War.

Another consequence that commanded our attention was the rise of Slovak nationalism. The American consulate in Bratislava reopened. At the ribbon-cutting we reunited Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Claiborne Pell, who had been our last consul general in Slovakia, with his Foreign Service National assistant, Lubomir Elsner, who had disappeared in 1952 and spent 11 years as a political prisoner.

As our resources grew, we brought legal experts to Bratislava, including California Assistant Attorney General Adam Schiff, now chair of the House Select Committee on Intelligence, to advise Slovak leaders. Despite our best efforts, Slovak nationalism eventually produced a velvet divorce between the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

These recollections merely give the flavor of our diplomatic activities and accomplishments in response to communism's demise. The Foreign Service performed magnificently with extraordinary dedication throughout the Velvet Revolution. This was recognized by Ambassador Black, who presented us each with a pewter mug engraved to "Team '89 Veterans" as a memento of her appreciation when she departed post in 1992.

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*Ambassador Thomas N. Hull was a public affairs officer in Prague in 1989. In retirement he has been Warburg Professor of International Relations at Simmons University in Boston and president of Foreign Affairs Retirees of New England. He lives in Grantham, New Hampshire.*

## What Would Austria Do?

Robert F. Cekuta  
Vienna, Austria

The U.S. embassy in Vienna in 1989 was a key post for monitoring the changes that were underway in the Warsaw Pact. In the economic section where I worked, prime concerns included East-West trade—i.e., the levels, the composition and the actors in trade and investment between the West and communist countries—as well as the control of exports of Western dual-use and other sensitive goods and technologies.

We frequently met with Austrian bankers and others doing business in the East for their view of the economic situations in those countries, as well as to get insights into the reform processes and how the West might support an economic and political transformation. Austria's media, building on traditional ties and the country's post-1955 neutrality, were useful sources; Austrian journalists in Prague, Budapest, Berlin, Moscow and elsewhere reported daily in detail on the political dynamics and democratic aspirations in each capital. We also monitored the public's hope and confusion over how events in the East were unfolding.

The relative relaxation of Hungary's border controls had brought influxes of Hungarians and, later, East Germans into Austria. East Germans tended to drive through to West Germany, while Hungarians and others came for weekend shopping along Vienna's Mariahilfer Strasse, buying appliances, housewares and other Western goods that were in short supply at home. The Austrians welcomed the Eastern Europeans, seeing their visits as positive signs of a relaxation of communist totalitarian controls and of a possible return to a prewar Central Europe.

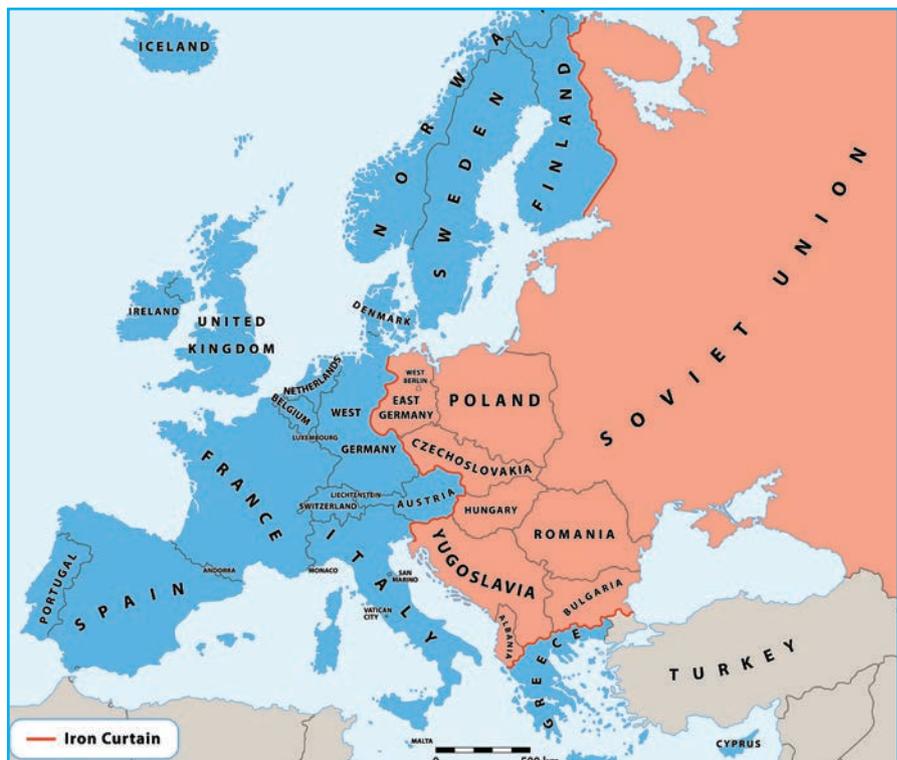
It was a shock that Friday night when we found out the Berlin Wall had fallen, and questions about what it all meant followed. My wife and I heard the news from a German friend whose brother lived in West Berlin. Though unclear about what exactly was going on, his excitement matched the mood in Vienna that weekend. Younger Austrians were euphoric. Viennese of all ages lit candles and said prayers of thanksgiving in the city's numerous churches. The end had come peacefully, bringing

hope for the people in the communist East and a sense that this opening in Berlin would assure them all a better future.

The opening of the wall and the sudden ability of East Berliners to travel to the West was a strong sign for the public that *Mitteleuropa*, the Central Europe that Austrians looked on as a lost cultural and economic entity, could now become a reality again. Certainly many Austrian bankers and business people saw great potential for investment and economic expansion.

However, at the same time, memories of Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968 led to caution and concern that the Soviets might again clamp down hard. Also, in early November 1989, there was no certainty that Prague, Sofia, Bucharest or Tirana would tolerate democratic reforms. In Vienna, initial jubilation evolved into a cautious optimism tempered by years of dealing with the Soviets and the region's other communist states.

As the permanence of the opening and changes in the East became apparent, the number of American businesspeople coming through Vienna grew markedly, and Austria's government and business community sought to remake Vienna as the center for economic activity in the Danube Basin. With the understanding in the East that democracy and prosperity were connected,



Cold War Europe.

conferences and delegations focused on what was necessary to establish free-market economies with enterprises that could compete regionally and globally.

Questions about the reunification of Germany and its implications for Austria also arose, including what it might mean for the European community if Austria joined, as it hoped to and indeed soon would. Other European governments even raised what now seems an outlandish concern: that Austria might unify with Germany.

My tour in Vienna ended in 1992. The political, economic and

social changes were well underway and becoming institutionalized, notwithstanding the growing trepidation within Austria about refugees and illegal immigrants coming from the East. The overall sense was of gratitude that the wall was gone; now our work had to be realizing the opportunities for the new Europe.

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*An economic officer in Vienna in 1989, Robert F. Cekuta retired from the U.S. Foreign Service in 2018 after serving as U.S. ambassador to Azerbaijan. He now divides his time between Washington, D.C., and Jefferson, Maine.*

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## A Study in Change

Margaret K. McMillion  
Washington, D.C.

In 1989, I was a member of the Class of 1990 at the National War College. We began the year firmly set in the Cold War. Our first reading assignment, John Lewis Gaddis' *Strategies of Containment*, set the stage for the next 10 months.

Change, though, was in the air. In the Soviet Union, Mikhail Gorbachev was promoting glasnost and perestroika. Vietnam and Laos had initiated market reforms known as New Thinking and the New Economic Mechanism (*Doi Moi* and *Chintanakhon Mai*). Yet events at Tiananmen Square that June had shown the limits of reform in China.

Throughout the fall of 1989, our class watched with wonder as the pace of change accelerated in Eastern Europe. A Solidarity-led government took power in Poland in late August. Hungary and Czechoslovakia allowed "holidaying" East Germans to travel on to Austria

and take refuge in West Germany. The East German government agreed that citizens seeking asylum in Budapest could go by train to West Germany. Following protests in Leipzig, General Secretary Erich Honecker resigned. On Nov. 9, the East German spokesman announced (inaccurately, we later learned) that citizens could leave by any border crossing. Guards opened the checkpoints between East and West Berlin, and the Berlin Wall was gone.

More was to come, and the evening news brought new developments every day: in Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia and, ultimately, Romania, democratic governments assumed power. For me, one of the most memorable events was the invasion of the East German Stasi offices in Erfurt in January 1990. An incredulous CBS

correspondent stood amid flying paper and demonstrators who were determined to stop the remaining officials from destroying their files, which today are declassified. Among the military officers in the class, there was a palpable sense of relief that they were unlikely ever to fight a war in Europe.

These events had an immediate impact on our academic program as we began to discuss a possible "peace dividend" and "new architecture" in Europe. Faculty member Stephen Szabo told *USA Today* that students faced a situation comparable to the fast-moving events at the end of World War II. His suddenly popular area studies class on Eastern Europe and the Warsaw Pact, which I took in preparation for a spring field trip to Poland, Czechoslovakia and Austria, focused more on political and economic reform

than military doctrine. By the time the course concluded in April, the Warsaw Pact was becoming a relic of the Cold War. It would later be dissolved.

The yearbook staff decided that change was the only possible theme. The winds of change were also blowing elsewhere, especially

in South Africa where Nelson Mandela walked free in February and Namibia became independent in March. We wrote in the foreword: "The challenges are many, but the opportunities have never been greater." Two pages provided a chronology of a memorable 10 months in world affairs.

It was an exciting time, disorienting in many ways, but filled with hope about the possibilities for building a more peaceful and prosperous world.

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*Margaret K. McMillion was U.S. ambassador to Rwanda from 2001 to 2004. In 1989 she was studying at the National War College in Washington, D.C. Ambassador McMillion currently resides in Bangkok.*

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**"The challenges are many,  
but the opportunities have  
never been greater."**

—National War College Class of 1990 Yearbook

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JAMES TALALAY

Graffiti on the longest-remaining section of the Berlin Wall, featured at the open-air East Side Gallery, Berlin, 2015.

## In the Airport with Walesa

John J. Boris  
Warsaw, Poland

The Berlin Wall had just fallen, and Lech Walesa was heading to the United States.

Those of us serving in Warsaw, Krakow and Poznan in 1989 had front-row seats as Solidarity, the free trade union, through negotiations, activism and elections, outmaneuvered the Polish United Workers' Party (i.e., the communists) into the step-by-step surrender of its power. As the deputy to the political counselor at Embassy Warsaw since July 1988, I had lucked into the exceptionally interesting role of maintaining working-level contact with the trade union, a job that brought regular interaction with some of Solidarity's most eminent figures, such as Adam Michnik, Bogdan Lys and, at times, even Chairman Walesa himself.

When President George H.W. Bush visited Poland in July 1989, I was the site officer for the home-cooked lunch at which Lech and his wife, Danuta, hosted the president and first lady. By the time I escorted the fourth congressional delegation—a total of 21 members over the course of 18 days in August 1989—to Gdansk, the union leader and I were simply nodding at each other in greeting. That presidential visit, and the wave of visiting legislators, led to invitations for Walesa to visit the White House and address a joint session of Congress. Walesa and his party were planning to fly out of Warsaw on Friday, Nov. 10, and several of us from the embassy planned to use that Veterans Day holiday to see them off.

I was washing my breakfast dishes that morning as the BBC

World Service reported that, late the previous evening, the East German authorities had lifted border controls. The Berlin Wall had fallen. I teared up. Poland had seen a succession of evermore remarkable “Is this really happening?” developments over the course of the year, but even by those standards, this news was breathtaking.

That is certainly how the Solidarity delegation in Warsaw's Okecie airport departure lounge viewed things. “Nie do wiary!” (Unbelievable!) averred Krzysztof Pusz, Walesa's aide-de-camp and one of my closest contacts, as we exultantly greeted each other. Ambassador John Davis and his spouse, Helen Davis—a savvy diplomatic presence in her own right—were engaged in conversation with a beaming Walesa. I could not hear what they were saying, but it was not hard to read the trade union leader's mood. Indeed, all of us in the departure lounge were quietly or giddily incredulous. Walesa's upcoming Nov. 15 address to a joint session of Congress had just taken on even greater significance.

In 1989, before Poland's market reforms had kicked in, it was common for Embassy Warsaw personnel to make several shopping runs a year to U.S. military facilities in West Berlin. By a happy coincidence of timing, my wife and I had scheduled one beginning on Nov. 13. Within days of the fall of the Berlin Wall, Anne and I were outside the KaDeWe (Kaufhaus des Westens, a department store), gaping at the Trabants full of people gaping back at us.

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*John J. Boris joined the U.S. Foreign Service in 1980. He was the deputy political counselor in Warsaw when the Berlin Wall fell. Mr. Boris lives in Annandale, Virginia.*

## Europe Changed, But Africa Didn't

Mark G. Wentling  
Lomé, Togo

Lomé, on the west coast of Africa, is a long way from Berlin. Yet when the Berlin Wall came down in November 1989, the repercussions were felt in Togo and other countries in Africa, where people were struggling to overthrow dictators and establish multiparty democracy. We all thought the fall of the wall marked the end of the Cold War, and we believed that a huge peace dividend was just around the corner.

I was USAID's representative for Togo and Benin, based in Lomé, at the time. Violent protests against the dictatorial regime in power for 22 years were frequent. The people had had enough of an authoritarian one-party system and wanted a democracy that reflected their hopes for a better future. The dismantling of the Berlin Wall raised their hopes of achieving lasting democratic change; it strengthened their case and the justness of their cause.

We thought the end of Cold War politics would mean an end to the superpower alliances in Africa, where superpowers would vie for client countries in the region, often propping up bloody and corrupt national regimes. For example, U.S. foreign aid was

often lavished on those African countries that were staunch opponents of communism, despite the despicable acts of their autocratic rulers.

We believed that in a post-Cold War era, the United States could determine its level of assistance to African countries without applying international political considerations. It could also decide more clearly what its strategic interests in each country were beyond providing humanitarian assistance.

The fall of the wall thus gave renewed hope to Togo and other African countries. Sadly, in Togo's case, these hopes were shattered, and the promise never realized. Togo's dictator, Gnassingbé Eyadéma, who stayed in power for another 16 years until his natural death in 2005, was replaced by his son. The legacy of Gnassingbé Eyadéma proved far more powerful for Togo than the collapse of the wall.

In hindsight, the fall of the Berlin Wall 30 years ago has had little, if any, consequence for Africa—or for my lifelong pursuit for the betterment of this vast continent. There are still many critical “walls” of injustice and poverty to break down in Africa.

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*Retired FSO Mark G. Wentling joined USAID in 1977 and was serving in Togo when the Berlin Wall fell. His work and travels over the past 46 years have taken him to all 54 African countries.*

## It Couldn't Possibly Happen Here

Kay Kuhlman and Brian Flora  
Bucharest, Romania

In November 1989 we were serving in Bucharest. Brian was head of the political section, and Kay was the commercial officer. The Romanian government suppressed all news of the Berlin Wall's demise, but we in the embassy were aware of Eastern European developments from cable reporting and Voice of America broadcasts.

And we were envious. The region was opening up, and there we were in a country seemingly stuck tight under the thumb of despot Nicolae Ceausescu and his *Securitate* goons. Even next-door Bulgaria, in those early days of November, joined the revolutionary movement and ousted Communist Party leader Todor Zhivkov.

Brian believed that street demonstrations would not be enough to overthrow the Ceausescu regime because the dicta-

tor would not hesitate to use deadly violence against his own people. Kay remembers telling some U.S. government visitor to Bucharest that, regrettably, it didn't look like Romania would follow its Eastern European neighbors anytime soon.

Brian had limited contact with political dissidents in the capital (it was technically illegal for them to talk to us without written permission from the Securitate), but most of the mid-December opposition activity in Romania was centered in Timisoara and other locales distant from Bucharest.

We did not anticipate that just six weeks after the fall of the Berlin Wall, Romania would follow suit, going down in the record books as the only country in Eastern Europe whose people freed themselves through a shooting war in the streets. (Our experiences during those scary, but ultimately heady, December days is a story for another time.)

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*Retired FSOs Kay Kuhlman (Foreign Commercial Service) and Brian Flora (State) live in Oak Park, Illinois.*

## “That Is the End”

John W. “Jack” Bligh Jr.

Koenigswinter, Federal Republic of Germany

**M**y wife and I were watching West German TV at our home in Koenigswinter, across the Rhine from the embassy, when the images of East Germans coming through the wall were shown. Was I surprised? Most certainly, especially by the spontaneity and lack of bloodshed.

In the following days, my job brought me into contact with a number of West German business leaders, several of whom said that they had never expected to see in their lifetimes any freedom of movement through the barrier. I like to think that I saw a tear or two in the eyes of some.

For a time after the opening, one might see an East German Trabant car abandoned beside the autobahn, probably because the fuel mix it required was not available in the Federal Republic. The magnitude of their owners’ joy at their newfound freedom is even clearer when one considers that they had waited for up to 17 years to buy a car.

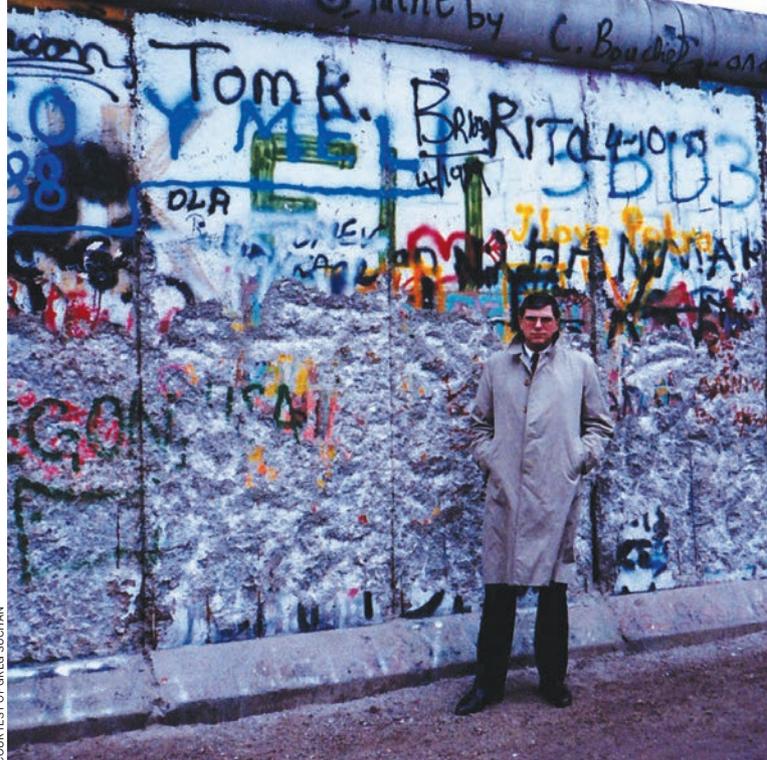
The impact on my work was not overnight, but we would soon add constituent-post commercial operations in Berlin and Leipzig, and a lot of our commercial section and country team efforts went into ensuring that American companies would have a fair shot at the privatization of state-owned companies in the East.

Not many saw the days leading up to Nov. 9 as the beginning of the end of the German Democratic Republic, but at least one did. On a Monday in October 1989, before the wall fell, I had accompanied Ambassador Vernon Walters to West Berlin. (Mondays were the days of the *Wir sind das Volk*—We Are the People—demonstrations in East German cities, especially in Leipzig.) The ambassador, our minister in West Berlin, Harry Gilmore, and I were guests at a dinner hosted by West Berlin Mayor Walter Momper.

During that dinner, an aide came in and whispered something to Mayor Momper, who arose and announced that the East German military, which had been prepared for confrontation, had not fired on or interfered with the demonstration in Leipzig. I was seated next to Momper’s predecessor, Eberhard Diepgen, who said: “That is the end of the GDR.”

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*John W. “Jack” Bligh Jr. was a Foreign Service officer from 1966 through 1996. He was serving as the Minister Counselor for commercial affairs in Bonn when the Berlin Wall came down. He lives in Manlius, New York.*



COURTESY OF GREG SUCHAN

FSO Greg Suchan (above) and his wife, Susanne (inset, right), at the Berlin Wall in December 1989.

## My Piece of the Wall

Greg Suchan

The Berlin Wall

**I**n the autumn of 1989, I had just finished two years as the pol-mil officer in Islamabad and was scheduled to begin Danish language training before setting off to Copenhagen as political counselor.

As a bridge assignment, I was sent to the NATO Defense College in Rome for six months. The course included a trip to Europe, including a stop in Berlin that happened to coincide with the fall of the wall. Swept up in the drama, my wife and I went directly to the scene of the action. We watched a German man whack away at the despised wall with a hammer and chisel.

When we identified ourselves as American diplomats, he handed over two pieces. I offered to pay him, but he wouldn’t take a pfennig. Those pieces of the Berlin Wall, mementos of a world-changing event, formed a bridge between two chapters of our diplomatic life characterized by equally historic developments.

In Pakistan, we had been witnesses to the Red Army’s final collapse and withdrawal from Afghanistan. In Copenhagen, we participated in the first outreach to the new Baltic republics that had opened interest offices in the Danish capital, playing a small role in the construction of the post-Cold War political and security architecture in Europe.

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*Greg Suchan was a Foreign Service officer from 1973 to 2007. He currently runs International Consulting LLC. He and his family live in Flat Rock, North Carolina.*



A Berliner attacking the wall with a hammer and chisel.



## After the Fall: Labor Unions in Europe

Dan E. Turnquist  
Brussels, Belgium

I was in Brussels serving as the labor counselor in what is now the European Union. I covered the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, which included most of the major unions in the non-communist world. Polish Solidarnosc also had its overseas office in Brussels. And I followed the World Federation of Trade Unions, controlled by the Soviets and headquartered in Prague, which also included communist-controlled unions in the West.

Sitting at home watching the television news Nov. 9, I saw the daughter of a close friend dancing on top of the Berlin Wall as it came tumbling down. My friend had been very active in the fight against communism and had warned his daughter to be very careful in Berlin.

We were all flabbergasted. None of us had anticipated that this would happen so quickly and completely. We had all sensed that the Eastern bloc was in trouble, but we were still surprised when it happened.

The Cold War was a very hot war among the trade unions, with the Soviets pouring money into communist unions while the Social Democratic and Christian Democratic unions, including the AFL-CIO and its affiliates, fought back. This situation—which had existed for 40 years since the communists walked out of a Socialist Congress in Amsterdam, leaving it to the Social Democrats—suddenly collapsed after the fall of the wall.

My job changed radically after that. People who wouldn't give me the time of day before were now lined up at the mission, wondering if we Americans could help them now that their KGB paychecks were in jeopardy. The head of the Solidarnosc office, who was belittled because he was not one of the well-known principal leaders of Solidarnosc in Poland and whose offices were regularly ransacked by the KGB and Polish intelligence, suddenly became the head of Poland's National Security Council. The world was being reordered.

With the subsequent collapse of the Soviet Union, we had to help Eastern Europe and the Newly Independent States set up employment offices, unemployment insurance systems and all the other trappings of capitalist, market economies. We had a whole series of meetings in Brussels as the Western countries tried to determine how to proceed in a coordinated fashion to cope with this new world.

Playing a role in all of this was the most interesting and meaningful assignment in my 35 years in the U.S. Foreign Service. I worked long hours but had the satisfaction of knowing I was involved in earthshaking events.

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*Dan E. Turnquist served in the Foreign Service from 1966 to 2001. He retired as a Minister Counselor and currently splits the year between Centennial, Wyoming, and Guadalajara, Mexico.*



COURTESY OF SUSAN STEVENSON

The view into East Berlin from Checkpoint Charlie in January 1990.

## A Good Time for a Visit

*Susan N. Stevenson*

East Berlin, German Democratic Republic

**I**n November 1989, I was in my second year of work in the private sector and busy planning an international trip. American, French and Scottish friends would join my sister and me on a road trip through what was then Czechoslovakia and East Germany in January 1990.

I remember quite well when the Berlin Wall fell on Nov. 9. We saw the images of hundreds of people crossing from the



COURTESY OF SUSAN STEVENSON

The author near a section of the Berlin Wall in January 1990.

East into West Berlin, as well as the crowds along the wall. We also heard reports of the Velvet Revolution in Prague and the toppling of leaders there and in Romania. For a few days, we wondered about the wisdom of making our trip.

Luckily, we realized the timing was actually fortuitous, as it would give us firsthand experience of a historic moment. We proceeded as planned, driving from Frankfurt to Prague and then to East Berlin. When we arrived at the Brandenburg Gate in January 1990, we were amazed to find young people sitting on top of the wall, busily hammering away at it. The soundtrack of that trip was the metallic “tap tap tap” of hammers against the concrete to bring down a hated symbol of division and suppression. What mere months before could have gotten them shot—climbing the wall, crossing into the West—was now a joyous moment of community.

I remember sharing a bottle of Russian champagne with two young East Germans on their first-ever trip to West Berlin. They were delighted to meet our international group. They were particularly happy to meet my sister Barbara, who at the time worked for Disney World in Florida, seemingly embodying the American dream. My Foreign Service career was still a few years away, but my interest in international connections was already strong.

We managed to bring back a souvenir: a piece of the wall, which my sister framed.

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*Susan N. Stevenson was working in the private sector in 1989. She joined the Foreign Service in 1992, and is now serving as ambassador to the Republic of Equatorial Guinea.*

## The USA Pavilion Goes Forward

Gert Lindenau

Frankfurt, Federal Republic of Germany

In 1989 I was attached to the American consulate general in Frankfurt as director of the U.S. Travel and Tourism Administration for the U.S. Department of Commerce. I was setting up the USA Pavilion at Berlin's International Tourism Exposition where more than 280 exhibitors from across the United States were expected in March 1990 to meet tour operators and travel agents from all over the world, expanding tourism to their individual destinations and increasing awareness of their services.

When the wall fell in November 1989, it sent shock waves throughout the tourism industry. My office was inundated with questions from potential exhibitors as to what would happen in March. Will all East Germany come? Will I need 100 times the brochures and information to pass out? Will it be safe from terrorists? Will there be enough hotels in Berlin?

Everyone was pleased to see the communist regime implode, and many rightfully expected an increasing number of visitors to the United States in the coming years. For the last day of the exposition, I planned a tour, with the help of buses provided by the U.S. embassy, so U.S. exhibitors could view the remnants of the wall. Participants met the uniformed GDR police officers, who now were very friendly. We saw Checkpoint Charlie and crossed over to East Germany to buy souvenirs (medals, uniform shirts, hats and pieces of the actual wall).

The USA Pavilion was a success even though not many visitors from East Germany were able to attend—they simply didn't have the Western currency required to participate.

The following years were different for the ITB Berlin, the world's largest tourism-related fair, and today the United States remains the number one long-haul destination out of German-speaking markets.

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*Gert Lindenau retired from the Foreign Service in 1993, having served with the U.S. Commerce Department and the U.S. Travel and Tourism Administration. He worked for the Department of Defense in Europe until 2016 and lives with his wife near Kaiserslautern, Germany.*

## The Berlin Wall as My "Bookend"

John Nix

Nicosia, Cyprus

When the Berlin Wall fell, my wife and I were in the embassy of the Soviet Union in Nicosia, celebrating the USSR's National Day. At the time, I was chargé d'affaires, and had been for two of the past three years. The Soviet ambassador, with whom I had established quite a close relationship, delivered the news to me.

In fact, the Berlin Wall defined my career. After I graduated from West Point in 1960, my first assignment had been to Berlin as a lieutenant. Not long after my arrival, the wall went up on Aug. 13, 1961. The continuous alerts, the wall patrols, the October

1961 confrontation at Checkpoint Charlie, the many attempts at border crossings by desperate Germans from East Germany—all became iconic pictures I will never forget. Also in the picture: my then-fiancée, now wife of 57 years, who had been born in East Germany and had many relatives there.

I had one further assignment to Berlin as an Army officer, from 1969 to 1971, during a somewhat quieter period, when border crossings were more peaceful. After joining the Foreign Service in 1971, we were posted in Moscow and were able to take the Moscow-Berlin train roundtrip twice, after Washington's diplomatic recognition of East Germany.

At the time the wall fell, I had just learned that my next assignment would be as political adviser (POLAD) to the U.S. mission in Berlin, effectively the deputy chief of mission. We participated in the Two Plus Four negotiations that ensured the withdrawal of Soviet military forces from Eastern Europe, and then the German unification process, followed by many more events that most of us thought we would never see in our lifetimes.

I traveled and reported extensively on the former East Germany, and our efforts were recognized by the State Department's 1991 Post Reporting Award. In the East we met with, and boosted, future German leaders such as Angela Merkel and Joachim Gauck. Exciting times, indeed.

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*John Nix served in the U.S. Foreign Service for 25 years, after a career in the U.S. Army. He retired as a Senior Foreign Service officer and lives in Ashburn, Virginia.*

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**After I graduated from West Point in 1960, my first assignment had been to Berlin as a lieutenant. Not long after my arrival, the wall went up.**

—John Nix

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## Watching from Behind the Iron Curtain

Timothy C. Lawson

Moscow, USSR

Late one afternoon I received a call from Ambassador Jack Matlock, who said he needed to see me urgently. As information resources management chief in Moscow, I was frequently called to the executive office.

The ambassador explained that he had just returned from a lunch with the British ambassador, who had casually asked Amb. Matlock if he was impressed with CNN's reporting. The query left Matlock fumbling for a response. He never watched CNN reporting since it was not available in our embassy—so what was the Brit's secret? It was my job to find out.

Our embassy had been asking for almost a decade for cable television access like the "Moscow Channel 1" access we had provided to the Soviet embassy complex in Washington via cable. The answer was always a confused nyet.

There was a good reason for the confusion from the Soviets: as it turned out, the Soviet Union did not have a cable TV system like the U.S. did. CNN was actually freely broadcast through Soviet airwaves across the capital. All you needed was a 10-ruble VHF antenna, readily available at the official GUM department store adjacent to Red Square.

Well, we purchased a bunch of those antennas, and our resident telephone/radio technician installed a broadband UHF antenna on the embassy rooftop.

And just in time! As the first chunks of concrete began to crack and crumble from that all-meaningful Berlin Wall—with Gorbachev's acquiescence—the CNN signal was distributed via our own cable system, allowing all mission employees to watch it on live television.

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*Timothy C. Lawson is a retired Senior Foreign Service officer who was serving in Moscow in 1989. He lives in Hua Hin, Thailand.*



JAMES TALALAY

An old Soviet TV tower still stands beside a church in what used to be East Berlin. Berlin, 2015.

## The Wall, Delivered

Judy Chidester

Kigali, Rwanda

When the Berlin Wall came down, I was working as the information management officer in Kigali. It was a quiet town, and except for the announcement of its fall, little was said of the wall. I did have a wonderful experience related to it, though, that is pure Foreign Service.

When our diplomatic couriers came to town, they normally spent their time at my home. A few months after the fall of the wall, one of the couriers brought me a broken piece of it. It still is one of my most treasured mementos, not only because of what it is but because it reminds me of what wonderful friends the couriers were.

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*Judy Chidester joined the Foreign Service in 1960 as a cryptographer and retired in 1996 as an information management officer. She lives in Las Cruces, New Mexico.*

## The View from Rostock

Matt Weiller

Rostock, German Democratic Republic

“Honecker has resigned!” These were the first words I heard on arrival at U.S. Embassy East Berlin in mid-October 1989. East Germany’s longtime leader stepping down was a big deal. But even more momentous events were around the corner.

As a German speaker and a Presidential Management Fellow at the U.S. Information Agency, I was chosen to run “American University Bookstore,” the U.S. government’s first (and last) book exhibit in the German Democratic Republic. The exhibit, consisting of more than 500 textbooks and other materials typical of American university bookstores, was held for two-plus weeks each at Humboldt University in East Berlin, Rostock University in the Baltic Sea port of Rostock, and at the University in Magdeburg in Saxony-Anhalt. The postwar order had been teetering since the summer. But the biggest change was just ahead—and I’d have a front-row seat.

The exhibit kicked off at Humboldt with a mix of cautious optimism and state-sponsored surveillance. Our exhibit was assigned a government minder, a certain Frau Beckmann, a fluent speaker of English, Spanish and Amharic (she learned the latter two languages in Sandinista Nicaragua and Mengistu’s Ethiopia). A steady stream of enthusiastic students visited the exhibit, as did no small number of humorless, bulky gentlemen in bad suits—East German State Security (“Stasi”) agents.

One evening, after the exhibit closed for the day, I accompanied an embassy colleague to a demonstration. Police and security personnel outnumbered the protesters by at least two-to-one. A tentative step toward democracy but not one threatening the regime, I wrongly concluded.

The last weekend in October, I walked to the square in front of the Rotes Rathaus (Red City Hall) to observe another demonstration. This one was attended by well over 20,000 people, venting about issues large and small. Security forces were present but subdued and greatly outnumbered. It reminded me of an oversized school board meeting—fledgling small “d” democracy in action in

a peaceful and slightly messy way. Change was definitely afoot, but to what degree?

The following weekend more than a half million people turned out on both sides of the Berlin Wall to protest the regime. The situation had changed exponentially within two weeks. But I still couldn’t imagine what was about to happen.

On Nov. 7, the book exhibit moved on to Rostock. On the evening of Nov. 9, I was strolling through Central Rostock observing what had become regular weekly protests against the regime. I chuckled as I listened to the protesters chanting “Stasi in die Produktion” (very loosely translated as “Stasi get a real job”). As they passed my hotel, I went back to my room. During that time, I received a call from the embassy cultural affairs officer, Peter Clausson, informing me that the Berlin Wall was now open.

Needless to say, the “American University Bookstore” was overshadowed by these events. As the local populace crowded trains and roadways to West Berlin and Hamburg, the dozen or so students assigned to assist (monitor?) me and my staff of two Americans were our primary contacts. Over endless rounds of coffee and cake, the students and

other visitors to the exhibit spoke of their initial impressions of West Germany. Despite having spent their lives watching West German TV, they were uniformly struck by West German modernity and effective public services (particularly the street lighting).

While I rued having just missed the opportunity to be in Berlin on Nov. 9, I came to realize that very few Americans

could attest to having been “in the field” in East Germany on that day. After Rostock, the exhibit moved on to Magdeburg. Attendance picked up, while surveillance trailed off. Exhibit visitors opened up to us in a way they hadn’t when we started in East Berlin.

We watched similar rapid change unfold in Czechoslovakia, Romania and Bulgaria. While the East German leadership debated how to embrace historic change, there already was a palpable sense that change would overwhelm them in favor of German unification.

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**While I rued having just missed the opportunity to be in Berlin on Nov. 9, I came to realize that very few Americans could attest to having been “in the field” in East Germany on that day.**

—Matt Weiller

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*Working with the U.S. Information Agency as a Presidential Management Fellow, Matt Weiller was in Rostock, East Germany, when the Berlin Wall fell. He joined the U.S. Foreign Service in 1991 and is now deputy executive director for the Bureau of Near Eastern and South and Central Asian Affairs.*

## The View from Shirley Temple Black's Residence

Michael Hornblow  
Prague, Czechoslovakia

**I**n November 1989 I was deputy director of the Eastern Europe/Yugoslavia office at State, responsible for Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia.

My wife, Caroline, and I were visiting the region, which was undergoing rapid change. We had been to Warsaw and Budapest, and it was quiet in the two capitals. Both Poland and Hungary had new democratic governments. The process had been undramatic—nobody had been killed, and there had been no large demonstrations. Czechoslovakia, still under communist control, was a different story. But how long would that continue given developments in neighboring Poland and Hungary? And Prague was filled with thousands of East German refugees seeking a route to West Germany.

Shortly after arriving in Prague either on Nov. 8 or 9, we drove by the West German embassy. That week about 62,000 East German citizens had already left Czechoslovakia for West Germany, and thousands more were coming into Prague every day. When we drove by, the embassy garden was empty and the hundreds of refugees who had slept there in makeshift tents were gone, leaving behind a field of mud.

But everything was peaceful at the extraordinary Petschek Villa, home of the American ambassador, Shirley Temple Black, and her husband, Charlie. Ambassador Black had been in Prague for four months and had become close to Vaclav Havel and his circle. She was constantly urging him to move faster toward freedom and democracy. The license plate on her official car read “STB”—her initials, but also an acronym for the Czech secret police.

On Thursday, Nov. 9, we slept soundly in our room in the residence, the ambassador and Charlie at the other end of a long hallway. As we slept, the events in Berlin were unfolding.

On Friday morning, we turned on BBC radio at our end of the hall. The announcer reported that the Berlin Wall had been breached. We thought nothing of it, believing that yet another truck had barreled through one of the checkpoints. But it soon became clear that it was something quite different. Then our phone rang.

“Michael, this is Shirley. Come quickly. We have the TV on, and the Berlin Wall is falling.”

We walked down that long hallway into the ambassador's suite. The ambassador was lying on the floor in some sort of



Ambassador Shirley Temple Black in 1990.

a sleeping bag, and Charlie was sitting in a chair, watching CNN. We stayed with them for several hours, eating breakfast in front of the TV while the ambassador shared her memories of the Prague Spring of 1968, when she was stranded in Prague after the Red Army invaded.

We all knew we were witnessing a historic event but did not know what effect it would have on Czechoslovakia. The embassy had arranged for me to have lunch with four or five of Havel's closest advisers, and we met in a local restaurant, all of us in a celebratory mood. The pilsner was flowing. Of course, the major question was what impact the fall of the wall would have in Prague. Surprisingly, each of the advisers insisted it would not have any impact, saying they were “years away” from anything like that happening. Their views were duly reported back to Washington.

Less than a week later, the Velvet Revolution began. By the end of the year Vaclav Havel was president. The fall of the Berlin Wall did not affect Poland and Hungary directly, but sped up developments in Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, Romania and Yugoslavia. By the end of the year, all of Eastern Europe was free. The wall's collapse served as a historic exclamation point: there would be no turning back.

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*After three years in U.S. Army intelligence, Michael Hornblow joined the U.S. Foreign Service in 1966. He was the deputy director of the Eastern Europe/Yugoslavia office at State in 1989, and now lives in Fearnington Village near Chapel Hill, North Carolina.*

## Marta at the Book Fair

Don Hausrath

Leipzig, German Democratic Republic

**M**y visits to Leipzig came about before the German Democratic Republic melted away.

I loved visiting the book fair there, for any number of reasons. First, it was fun to visit a country that seemed to have been designed for a noir John le Carré thriller. Buildings still showed scars of World War II street fighting. We would drive through Checkpoint Charlie (“Sie Verlassen den Amerikanischen Sektor”) in our U.S. Information Service station wagon, its diplomatic plates bringing scowls to the faces of the GDR border guards.

East Germany heated their buildings with soft, sulfurous coal; and, thus, even with your eyes closed, you knew you were either in East Berlin or your high school chemistry lab. Dance halls in the GDR appeared to be staged by a 1930s movie director. Men and women sat at small square tables drinking beer. Men wore dark suits and danced with their hats on, a landscape of bouncing fedoras much like a snapshot of the interior of Union Square Station taken in the 1930s. Couples studiously followed Arthur Murray’s Magic Steps as they danced to “Begin the Beguine” and “All of Me.”

Our booth at the Leipzig Fair was always surrounded by fairgoers interested in the new books we displayed, which were of course banned from GDR bookstores. We piled as many titles as possible on a couple of tables and handed out glossy posters of the American Declaration of Independence and U.S. Constitution. These giveaways were prized in a country that did not then have access to such founding documents.

We were forbidden by the authorities to sell or give away our books but turned a blind eye to people who wanted to “steal” a book on display. In any case, security was tight; it was difficult once you had snatched a book to get it out of the building. Besides the casual browsers, there were serious readers sitting about the floor near our display, copying out sections of a book as fast as they could write. So it was that a woman of about 60, whom I will call Marta—I have forgotten her name—sat at our display each year, copying sections of books on American literature. She became a semiofficial fixture, and once I got her to stop long enough to share a coffee.

Marta turned out to be one of those sparkly ESL teachers one finds everywhere around the world. During the conversation, she explained that, like her fellow East Germans, she could not get access to the modern critical works she

was salivating over in our display. She wanted her students to update their dated English vocabulary. English versus American literature came up, and she said her dream was to visit London—a common desire of the world’s English teachers. “But I can’t ever get to London,” she said. “My father was allowed out of the country to go to a trade show in Germany, and never returned. *I* can’t leave because of *him*. That’s how it works.” And she went back to her copying.

I later received a letter from Marta, thanking me for a book, *The Word Finder*, that I had mailed to her from my office in Vienna. After that, I never heard from Marta again. My wife and I left Vienna for Virginia three months before the wall came down, and two years later, when we visited Berlin, even the rubble of the wall was gone.

I stood staring at the vacant strip and found myself thinking of Marta. I suppose she went on teaching, but I hope she finally got to London. I think of that gift of *The Word Finder*, and that sentence about “words that are evocative, that stimulate and unfurl the wings of the imagination,” and pause at “unfurl,” a word that has special meaning for those who have lived in the walled city of East Berlin.

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*Don Hausrath was a Foreign Service officer with the United States Information Agency from 1971 to 1995. He was posted in Vienna in 1989 and now lives in Tucson, Arizona.*

## No News, Just Visas

Annie Pforzheimer

Bogotá, Colombia

**W**hen the Berlin Wall fell, I was one month into my first tour, as a vice consul in Colombia. There were visas and more visas, using counterfoils and a hand-stamped metal plate, frequent guerrilla-inflicted power outages and phones that didn’t give a dial tone for more than a minute after you picked them up. In Barranquilla in November 1989, the newspapers were full of the drug war and the fact that a girl from a poor part of the city was crowned Miss Colombia. No internet.

I’d like to say I was a witness to this world-shaking event, but it took weeks for it to reach our media and to really sink in. And after it did ... more visas.

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*Annie Pforzheimer, a recently retired career diplomat with the personal rank of Minister Counselor, was the acting deputy assistant secretary for Afghanistan until March 2019. She lives in Washington, D.C.*

## Going with the Flow

Robert Hunter  
Washington, D.C.

One morning in November 1989, as I recall, there was a major conference of the “great and the good” at one of the Washington think-tanks. Just about every American who was anyone in the field of European security was there, a couple dozen or so. We deliberated all morning about what was happening in what was then called “Eastern” Europe. Discussion was broad and deep, and we even got some things right about the future. But no one among us, no matter how learned and experienced, suggested that the Berlin Wall would open.

And we were right—for about four whole hours! I know of no one in the business—and I knew most of them at the time—who predicted this event, though I later met some people who didn’t know much of anything about Europe who claimed they had predicted it.

The lesson, of course, is that there is a natural inclination—if not compulsion—toward conformity (and attachment to stasis) in foreign policy. The Cold War had generated so much structure—physical (military and economic), political, analytical and psychological—and

so many people (on both sides) had become “invested” in the Cold War, that its continuation for the indefinite future was the common assumption. The end of the war was virtually unthinkable, and people who did argue against the broad consensus on the Cold War were mostly marginalized.

Ironically, I had essentially predicted the process whereby the Cold War would eventually end in a book I wrote in 1969, *Security in Europe* (second edition, 1972). But I fell away from my own insights when I went into government and began to “go with the flow.” Another lesson there!

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*In November 1989 Robert Hunter was a senior fellow at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, D.C. He was a National Security Council staffer from 1977 to 1981 and served as U.S. ambassador to NATO from 1993 to 1998. He lives in Washington, D.C.*

## The Beginning of the End

Pierre Shostal  
Checkpoint Charlie, Berlin

In the fall of 1989 I was director of the Office of Central European Affairs (EUR/CE), which covered the German-speaking countries and both West and East Germany, in Washington, D.C. I had planned a visit to several of our posts in November but had not at first intended to visit Berlin. As demonstrations in favor of freedom in East Germany gathered strength, however, I changed my plans.

While visiting U.S. Mission Berlin in West Berlin on Nov. 3, Harry Gilmore, our minister in that city, hosted a dinner attended by the mayor and other city officials. As the evening progressed, the mayor kept receiving reports of a demonstration planned for the next day in East Berlin organized by the union of artists and writers. Crowd size estimates grew with each passing hour until

the mayor announced that half a million were expected to attend (as it turned out, perhaps a million came). I decided that I had to be there.

Crossing into East Berlin the next morning through Checkpoint Charlie, I saw large numbers of people streaming toward the site of the rally, the Alexanderplatz. All was quiet and orderly, and many people had brought their children,

some even pushing baby carriages with babies inside. Along the streets leading to the Alexanderplatz, young people wearing armbands chanted “Keine Gewalt!” (No Violence!) It was an orderly crowd that stopped in their tracks when a traffic signal turned red. German discipline reigned and people did not seem worried.

At Alexanderplatz, a very large space, there was a huge crowd. There I met up with colleagues from our East Berlin embassy, Jon Greenwald and another officer. Musicians serenaded the gathering, and speaker after speaker proclaimed the people’s desire for more choice, the right to travel abroad and freedom from spying on them. One singer belted out a satirical song with the refrain, “Er ist immer dabei!” (He is always there!)—a reference to the secret police who monitored every aspect of their lives. Despite the seriousness of the issues, the crowd was good-humored and seemed optimistic.

East German police stood well away from the crowd, and no

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**Crossing into East Berlin the next morning through Checkpoint Charlie, I saw large numbers of people streaming toward the site of the rally, the Alexanderplatz. All was quiet and orderly.**

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—Pierre Shostal



JAMESTALALAY

Checkpoint Charlie, one of the best-known border crossings during the Cold War, became a symbol of territorial and political division—between East and West, communism and capitalism, confinement and freedom. Berlin, 2015.

Soviet troops were visible, either. A month earlier, when Mikhail Gorbachev had visited East Berlin to help celebrate the 40th anniversary of the East German regime, he had made it clear that the regime needed to adopt a reform program like his own perestroika in the USSR. The East German leadership had strongly resisted such reform for years, but Gorbachev's warning was that without reform, East Germany was on its own. The regime remained obdurate, but the public understood Gorbachev's message and realized that Moscow was not going to crack down on them, as the Soviets had done in 1953 following a workers' revolt.

That evening Jon Greenwald and I traveled to Dresden, where we attended a performance of Gluck's opera "Orpheus and Eurydice" at the fabled Semper Opera House. Following the performance, the curtain parted, and all the musical and technical personnel appeared on stage. The lead male singer stepped forward and proclaimed that the country's artists and musicians were with the entire population in demonstrating for freedom. The house exploded with cheers and applause.

Reflecting on what we had experienced that day, I realized that we had seen the beginning of the end of the East German regime. The people had lost their fear, and the regime had lost its nerve. Five days later the Berlin Wall was opened (it did not fall) by East German border guards, and Europe entered a new chapter of its history. The United States stood by our German friends to help make this happen.

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*Pierre Shostal served in the Foreign Service from 1959 to 1995. In 1989 he was director of the Office of Central European Affairs in Washington, D.C. Mr. Shostal lives in Alexandria, Virginia.*

## A Family Story

Christiane Armstrong  
Budapest, Hungary

On the evening of Nov. 9, 1989, the phone rang in our living room in Budapest. My father was on the line from Germany: "You won't believe this, the wall just came down." He was right—I was completely surprised and astounded. In Budapest, our first Foreign Service posting, we didn't have Western television, and I had not been able to follow the rapidly unfolding events in East Germany over the previous few days.

Of course, we knew what had happened that summer in Hungary. We knew that the West German embassy had been flooded by hundreds of East Germans hoping that if they made it onto embassy grounds, they would somehow be able to get to West Germany. And then on Sept. 11, driving east through Austria on our way back to Budapest from a vacation, we were stunned by the sight of hundreds of Trabis, East Germany's "people's car," going in the opposite direction.

Hungary had, indeed, opened its borders that day. I clearly remember being overjoyed for the East Germans who were suddenly able to leave the Eastern bloc—and envious because we were on our way back to that drab world. As much as I enjoyed our posting in Budapest, with marvelous colleagues and a fantastic ambassador, I could never share our American embassy friends' enthusiasm for, as they saw it, the "quirkiness" of a communist country.

The things they chuckled about were all too familiar and

brought back unpleasant memories from my childhood and teenage years. I was born and raised near Cologne, Germany, the daughter of parents who had fled East Germany when they were in their early 20s, shortly before the wall was built. My father had been an outspoken critic of the East German regime during his high school years. He had been told by the principal of his school one day before his graduation that to prove himself a loyal East German citizen, he would be sent to work in a coal mine for two years before being allowed to study at a university.

That night my father said goodbye to his mother and father and left for West Berlin; my mother followed him a year later. His parents stayed behind in East Germany, and he was not able to see them for the next seven years. While I was growing up, we were allowed to visit my grandparents, my aunt and my cousin once a year; but those were not happy experiences.

East Germany in the late 1960s and 1970s was gray and polluted and stagnant, full of banners with optimistic slogans hanging on decaying buildings. There was nothing to buy, and my cousin and her friends treated me like a celebrity simply because I was wearing blue jeans, something they could only dream of. Every aspect of the place made me feel uncomfortable. I never knew whether our East German relatives were

so welcoming because they genuinely liked us, or whether they were just happy because we showered them with Western goods every time we visited. I was always relieved when we got in the car and started driving back to West Germany.

On the evening of Nov. 9, after hanging up the phone, I remembered those visits. I thought of my cousin, who married an Austrian because that enabled her to leave East Germany; my aunt, who could never bring herself to leave her hometown and found her little niche in the system; and my grandparents, no longer alive, who had lived two-thirds of their lives under dictatorships. But above all, I felt my father's utter joy about the sudden collapse of the East German regime and the happiness he felt knowing that East Germans would finally be able to live in freedom.

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*Christiane Armstrong was a Foreign Service spouse for 29 years until her husband's retirement in 2016. The Armstrongs were in Budapest when the wall came down.*

## No Inspections, No Guards, Nothing

*Kelly Lauritzen*

Aschaffenburg, Germany

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**W**hack! Off came a chunk from the Berlin Wall. Whack! Another chunk flew. It was two weeks after the Berlin Wall fell, and we were doing our part to reduce it to rubble.

During the Cold War, I was the platoon leader in a nuclear-tipped missile artillery battalion in Aschaffenburg, Germany. The beauty of the countryside belied the tension between East and West that was constantly on our minds. Every day at work, we were literally training for a nuclear holocaust. When cracking the "cookies" with nuclear release codes that came down in the middle of the night, we were never certain until the end that it was a training exercise.

At the time, official military orders authorized military members and their families to travel to the Soviet occupation zone. My wife Marion's parents had come to visit in October 1989. To give them a taste of communist East Berlin, we decided to travel to Berlin on the military train.

The journey was harrowing. At the border into the Soviet sector, the train was stopped. Soviet guards in fur hats closely examined our papers. The morning after arriving in Berlin, we experienced an even more tense situation at Checkpoint Charlie: concertina wire, machine gun nests, sandbags and inspections.

Strolling through the quiet plazas of East Berlin was quite a contrast to the hustle and bustle of West Berlin. In the shops, you had to ask the clerk to see an item and wait for them to get around to serving you, only to find out that items on the shelf were not actually for sale. Our visit lived up to the billing: it was a fascinating glimpse into the lives of those on the other side.

What we could not have imagined at the time was that two weeks later the whole system would collapse. Watching the TV news, we saw chaotic, joyous scenes with masses of people surging into West Berlin. We immediately knew we had to go back to personally witness this historic change with our three children.

That's how we found ourselves back at the Berlin Wall just two weeks after it fell. This time, someone had left a series of sledge hammers along a portion of the wall. We each took a few

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**East Germany in the late 1960s and 1970s was gray and polluted and stagnant, full of banners with optimistic slogans hanging on decaying buildings.**

—Christiane Armstrong

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Marion Lauritzen in front of the Berlin Wall with her children in late November 1989.

whacks to bring back our own concrete souvenirs. This time, we strolled through Checkpoint Charlie with the curious crowds moving in both directions—no inspections, no guards, nothing.

More than a decade later, I was again stationed in Germany. There were no longer nuclear artillery units; no jets loaded with nuclear weapons sitting on runways ready to take off; and U.S. forces were at a fraction of their former strength.

In the years since, we occasionally feel a pang of nostalgia for the drama of the time. Little did we know that the Berlin Wall would be so completely obliterated that the German government would have to take steps to preserve sections. Now you can buy tiny slivers of concrete attached to postcards—not the fist-sized chunks we smashed out of the Berlin Wall in November 1989.

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*Kelly Lauritzen is a management-coned Foreign Service officer currently assigned as a consular officer in Guangzhou, China. In 1989 he was serving in the military, based in Aschaffenburg, Germany.*

## A Gift from a Journalist

*James L. Bullock*  
Moscow, USSR

**I**n November 1989 I was starting my third month as press attaché with U.S. Embassy Moscow's press and culture section (known as P&C). The Soviets, for some reason I do not recall, did not allow the U.S. Information Service to operate within the USSR under its actual name.

With only Arab-world experience until then, I was not an old Soviet hand. But I had studied Russian in college, so I was asked to break a Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs assignment to fill an unexpected vacancy in Moscow. I was thrilled. It was an exciting time to be heading for the Soviet Union, as Mikhail Gorbachev's policies of perestroika (restructuring) and glasnost (openness) were upending four decades of Cold War routines.

Embassy Moscow operated primarily out of an antiquated building on the Garden Ring Road, not far from the Kremlin,

but without Soviet employees—a lingering consequence of the 1988 Lonetree scandal. By November, we had just driven our personal car down from Helsinki and were beginning to settle in comfortably. Our Moscow apartment came with all of the usual listening devices, a (ridiculously inexpensive) rented upright piano and a TV that could receive CNN in English over the air with just a “rabbit ears” antenna.

The workload in P&C was heavy, in part because of a non-stop VIP visit schedule, but also because I was charged with maintaining the embassy’s administrative relationships with more than 100 resident American journalists. In those days, when properly registered, journalists received special embassy privileges, including medical care, APO mail and—in a city with few restaurants—coveted access to the embassy’s snack bar. I never served at a post, before or after, where they tried so hard to get on my good side.

In any case, on Nov. 9, 1989, and for many evenings thereafter, I was able to follow the earthshaking events in Berlin from the comfort of my living room. CNN’s coverage of the fall of the wall (much better than Soviet coverage) let me watch German civilians hammering away at the wall in real time. My resident American journalist charges, of course, were doing the same thing, and many were soon on their way to cover the Berlin events in person, while I stayed put in Moscow.

Thirty years later, my main memory of that time is of one American journalist, an energetic young woman who had arrived in Moscow not long after me and who had just begun the process of registering for her embassy privileges. I recall her confiding to me that she had a husband back in New York who wanted her to give up the foreign correspondent life and come home to start a family. She wasn’t interested.

Before I got her completely registered with the embassy—it took some time—she, too, was off to cover events in Berlin. When she returned, a few weeks later, she presented me with a small piece of the Berlin Wall. I still have and treasure this personal souvenir, even if she gave it to me just to curry favor. Not long after that she decamped from Moscow for the apparently greater excitement of the fighting in the Balkans where—I later learned from another journalist—she was killed by a piece of shrapnel that had ripped through her. I thought of her husband back in New York.

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*James L. Bullock, who was serving in Moscow when the wall came down, retired from active duty in 2009 after a 30-year career in the Foreign Service. He and his wife, Carole, live on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C.*

## A Vacation from History

Ray Orley

Hanover, Federal Republic of Germany

**I**n early November 1989, I was director of the U.S. Information Agency’s Amerika Haus in Hanover, West Germany. It had been gray, cold and rainy for days, and Music Days U.S.A.—a two-week festival of American music that I dreamed up—had just come to an end.

The festival comprised 15 separate events ranging from Samuel Barber performed by the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra under the baton of Lorin Maazel and solo recitals by American singers employed at the Lower Saxony State Opera to performances by rock and country groups (American and German) resident in the area and a real hoedown-style square dance with caller and audience participation. Altogether, some 6,000 Germans attended.

This rather ambitious project could not have been achieved without the valiant efforts of my excellent German staff and the goodwill of many local contacts, as well as more than six months of planning, organizing, phoning, wheedling and begging—all on a close-to-nonexistent budget and in addition to the Haus’ everyday activities. So when it was finally over, I was beyond exhausted—and it was still cold and rainy in Hanover. I headed for a travel agent, looking for a last-minute trip to somewhere, anywhere warm and sunny, and came up with a week for my wife and myself on Tenerife in the Canary Islands. Departure: Saturday, Nov. 11.

But history intervened. For many weeks there had been rumors, rumblings, even demonstrations (in *East Berlin!*). And then, on Nov. 9, the unimaginable happened. The wall was coming down, dumbfounding all the experts, including of course myself. Amerika Haus Hanover staff and library patrons huddled around the available televisions. Eventually, AH closed for the rest of the day. I rushed home. Wendy and I hugged each other, utterly glued to the TV, watching hundreds of people laughing, singing, dancing, clambering up the wall.

What to do, what to do? We could hop in the Jetta, speed (no German limits) the 180 autobahn miles to Berlin and join the dancing, the beer guzzling, the rejoicing ... maybe not the wall-climbing. Previously, because we had diplomatic plates, the advance planning and red tape involved in that drive would have been monstrous. Now, we heard, the border was unmanned, all the way to the Brandenburg Gate and beyond.

But there were those tickets to Tenerife, our flight departing very early Saturday morning. Hanover (and probably Berlin)

COURTESY OF RAY ORLEY



The “Music Days U.S.A.” square dance event in Hanover in late October 1989 drew many enthusiastic dancers.

COURTESY OF RAY ORLEY



The author holding the poster for the Amerika-Haus “Music Days U.S.A.” program in Hanover.

was *still* miserably cold and rainy. I *really* needed to relax after the music festival. I won’t keep you guessing. With some regrets, certainly, we chose the Canaries over history—and, I have to admit, we had a great week there, with only a couple of guilt pang[s] in the mix.

The following Sunday, Nov. 19, when we made our way from Hanover airport to the central city, we were rewarded with one of the most astonishing, wondrous sights we had ever beheld. Germany had extremely strict Sunday-closing laws; about the only place you could buy anything on Sundays was a very small shop in the central railway station. But on that Sunday, all the downtown department stores and shops were “OFFEN,” welcoming East Germans to load up on the necessities and luxuries that they had so long been denied.

Germans from East and West—you could tell them apart by their clothing—were strolling together, laughing and hugging. Rattletrap East German Trabants, previously a rare sight on West German roads, were everywhere, parked among local Porsches, VWs, Mercedes—or, occasionally, even just left abandoned. The atmosphere was electric, and although the celebratory mood didn’t last terribly long, on that day (cold, but not rainy) the whole thing seemed like some kind of miracle, *nearly* as good as having been in the Big City on the Big Day itself.

*Prior to joining USIA in 1975, Ray Orley was a college drama instructor in the San Francisco Bay Area. He was in Hanover, West Germany, in 1989 and now lives in Albuquerque, New Mexico.*

## Commuting to East Berlin

Jeff Biron

East Berlin, German Democratic Republic

I was a driver and mail clerk for the U.S. embassy in East Berlin when the Berlin Wall came down. During the late 1980s, the embassy hired both local Americans and third-country national (TCN) employees for administrative positions to both enhance and offset East German staff assigned by the government of the German Democratic Republic. Local U.S. and TCN employees had to be legal residents of West Berlin, speak German and qualify for a security clearance and limited diplomatic status. Every workday we would get up in the morning in lively, colorful West Berlin, go to work through an Allied checkpoint to gray, smoky East Berlin, and then after work, return home to the West.

On Nov. 9, when the announcement was broadcast on German TV that East Germans were being permitted to travel to the West, it didn't seem like such a big deal. After all, they could always limit the number of permits allowing GDR citizens to leave. East Berliners began lining up by the thousands at border crossings to apply for their travel permits. When my family and I went to bed, they were still obediently standing in line, but as of the next morning, nothing would ever be the same.

We awoke to the sound of cheering and the smell of East German Trabant and Wartburg cars in the street below our apartment in the Kreuzberg district of West Berlin. My family and I joined the celebration that wild weekend. Despite the open gates from East to West Berlin, the East German border guards continued issuing daily visas to visit East Berlin. At least for a while, the roles were reversed, and the Westerners had to stand in line.

Nov. 9 surprised every Berliner, but some signs of change had already been there. In the previous months, when I drove embassy officers to meetings at GDR ministries they commented on the low morale. One economic officer even compared the GDR government to a "house of cards." East Germans were becoming bolder about listening to AFN (American Forces Network) or RIAS (Radio in the American Sector), or even watching West German TV stations. It was common knowledge

among local staff that thousands of East Germans had gone on vacation and weren't coming back, and that hundreds had sought asylum at West German embassies in Prague, Budapest and Warsaw.

Because local U.S. and TCN embassy employees were accredited by the GDR Foreign Ministry as technical and administrative staff, we were free to travel through most of East Germany. On Oct. 4, my wife and I were on vacation for a few days in Dresden, staying at a hotel across from the Hauptbahnhof railroad station. On our way back from dinner at the Ratskeller restaurant at City Hall, we started hearing crowd noise and sirens that increased in volume as we got closer to the hotel.

Some 5,000 people were storming the station and trying to board a train carrying hundreds of their countrymen, who were now brand-new citizens of the Federal Republic of Germany.

Having sought refuge at the West German embassy in Prague, they had been issued passports and were on their way to the West. The demonstrators dug cobblestones out of the Bahnhofsplatz and were smashing the windows of the station.

The police responded with batons, tear gas and water cannons, but never opened

fire. When some noticed that we were from the West, they asked us to please let people back home know what was happening. As soon as we returned to our room, I immediately called Post 1 at the embassy and reported the events in real time to Political Counselor Jonathan Greenwald.

Our embassy, led by Ambassador Richard Barkley and Deputy Chief of Mission J.D. Bindenagel, kept the U.S. government informed right up to the night of Nov. 9. During the weeks that followed, we supported an endless series of congressional delegations and VIP visits, as well as reported and maintained critical contacts during the transition to a reunited Berlin and Germany. Before closing on Oct. 3, 1990, the U.S. embassy to the GDR received an all-hands Superior Honor Award from the Department of State.

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*Jeff Biron was a local U.S. hire at the embassy in East Berlin when the wall fell. Afterward, he continued to work at Embassy Berlin, and in 2000 he joined the U.S. Foreign Service as a general services officer. He resides in Unity, New Hampshire.*

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**Some 5,000 people were storming the station and trying to board a train carrying hundreds of their countrymen, who were now brand-new citizens of the Federal Republic of Germany.**

—Jeff Biron

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## Hungary Played a Role, Too

Donald Kursch  
Budapest, Hungary

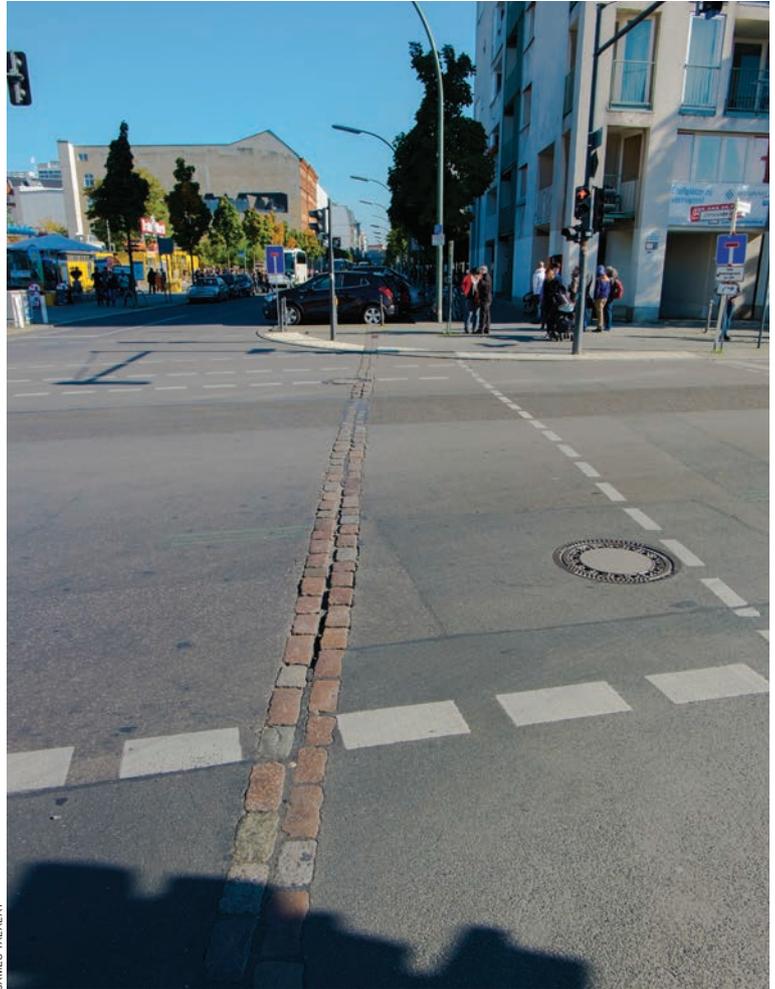
I was the deputy chief of mission at U.S. Embassy Budapest when the Berlin Wall was breached in November 1989. Although this historic moment caught us by surprise, as it did almost everyone else, on reflection we saw it as the culmination of a series of events in 1989 that brought the four-decade-long division between Eastern and Western Europe to an end.

The Hungarians were rightfully proud of the forward-leaning role they had played in the process during this momentous year. This included the dismantling of the “Iron Curtain” border impediments with Austria in May; a hero’s reburial in June of former Prime Minister Imre Nagy, who had been executed during the 1956 revolution; the government’s September decision to open its western border for East German vacationers who did not wish to return home; and the proclamation ending the Hungarian People’s Republic and establishing a parliamentary democracy on Oct. 23.

Our ambassador, Mark Palmer, skillfully led our embassy in providing practical and moral support for this process, and President George H.W. Bush’s historic visit in July 1989 made clear that the United States stood behind those who sought to create an open and democratic society in Hungary and elsewhere in Eastern Europe.

In August 1989, while en route to a luncheon at Hungary’s Lake Balaton with visiting Congressman Tom Lantos, I saw a large number of East German-plated cars whose owners appeared to have no intention of returning to the GDR. As these numbers multiplied in the ensuing weeks and these East Germans were directed to temporary facilities in Budapest and elsewhere, it became increasingly evident to me and my embassy colleagues that a weakened Hungarian communist government leadership, struggling to retain some degree of public credibility and under pressure from West Germany’s leaders, would allow these East Germans to leave for the West, which they did on Sept. 10.

In the days prior to this decision it seemed to us as if Erich Honecker and his hard-line compatriots in East Berlin had less appreciation of this reality, clinging instead to the hope that Hungary would somehow force these GDR citizens to return home. Thus, the fall of the Berlin Wall in November may have



In places where it no longer stands, the path of the Berlin Wall is marked with cobblestones set in the pavement. Berlin, 2015.

been a greater surprise to the East German leadership in Berlin than it was for us in Budapest. As we watched the wall collapse, we concluded happily that the process of demolishing the barriers between Eastern and Western Europe had reached the point of no return.

Hungary’s Foreign Minister Gyula Horn, a former hard-line communist who played the key role in the government’s decision to allow the East Germans to leave Hungary, was awarded Europe’s prestigious Charlemagne Prize in 1990 to recognize his outstanding work in the service of European unification. And although Horn’s former communist compatriots, now competing as Democratic Socialists, were soundly defeated in Hungary’s first free elections of the post-communist era in March 1990, Horn survived politically and subsequently led his party back to power, serving as prime minister from 1994 to 1998.

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*Donald Kursch was deputy chief of mission in Budapest from 1986 to 1990. He was assigned to Bonn in 1990, where he witnessed the formal reunification of Germany in October 1990. Mr. Kursch lives in Washington, D.C.*



JAMES TALALAY

Sections of the wall flank an original guard shack, battered but not removed, on what was the east side of the wall. Berlin, 2015.

## A Well-Baby Checkup to Remember

*Michael Dodman*

West Berlin, Federal Republic of Germany

While I never served or lived in Berlin, the wall is etched on my professional and personal life. Fortuitously assigned to Warsaw for my first tour in 1988, I spent most of the next 25 years working to support Central Europe's transition to democracy and a market economy. Today, like most everyone, I tend to date the beginning of the end to Nov. 9, 1989, even though I lived through Poland's first democratic election many months earlier.

But my connection to the wall is more personal than professional. On Nov. 9, 1989, I was in Berlin for the happy occasion of our first-born son's first well-baby checkup. For more than a year my wife, Joan, and I had been regular visitors to West Berlin. What started as our lifeline for shopping became even more important as the destination for prenatal care, and then the place of our son's birth in September 1989. What I remember of that fateful day was, first and foremost, that Brian passed that first exam with flying colors (I'd like to think there is a direct line between that exam and his serving with distinction as a U.S. Marine many years later).

Ensnared as always at the temporary duty (TDY) quarters the then-consulate maintained in the far southwest of the city, I do not recall being much affected by the news that the travel restrictions had been lifted. But I remember vividly an early morning

visit to downtown Potsdamer Platz, where we had gone regularly over the previous year to see the wall and the disruptions it caused to the once-vibrant center of Berlin.

It was either Nov. 10 or 11. It was incredibly foggy that morning, which made even more surreal the sight of gaps newly created in the wall, through which shabby East German Trabant autos were emerging. Somewhere far away from where I'm writing this, there is a box of old photos with one of an East German guard sticking his head through an opening in the wall—I like to imagine he was debating whether he should make a run for it, in case this magic moment ended, and the wall was resealed.

Over the following year we returned regularly to West Berlin. The hassles remained—renewing short-term East German transit visas, the dance when crossing to East Berlin of not letting the border guards stamp the diplomatic passport—but the changes came ever more rapidly. Now on our visits to Potsdamer Platz we brought a hammer and took home a piece of the wall; there was some sense of urgency about taking pictures of it rapidly disappearing.

In 1999 we returned to Warsaw for a second tour. We loved seeing the changes Poland had experienced in less than a decade; there was no longer the need to travel monthly to Berlin for shopping or medical care. For a vacation in 2001 we piled Brian and his sisters in the car and took the old route to Berlin for the first time. The two-lane road had been nearly destroyed by the freight traffic on the Berlin-Warsaw-Moscow route. Potsdamer Platz was

unrecognizable—a sea of construction cranes, with the wall obliterated. City authorities' wisdom in marking the wall's path in the pavement helped us get our bearings and provided the spot for Brian to pose for his now-and-then photos behind the Bundestag.

U.S. policy efforts beginning in 1989 stand as the high-water mark of modern American diplomacy, and I will forever be proud of having contributed to these achievements. I am thrilled that Brian's entry into our life gave me the chance to see the breaching

of the Berlin Wall firsthand, and to retain a personal memory of the destruction of the structure that defined the second half of the 20th century.

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*Michael Dodman was sworn in as U.S. ambassador to the Islamic Republic of Mauritania on December 2017. A career Foreign Service officer, he was assigned to Warsaw as an economic officer on his first tour when the wall fell.*

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## What Followed

*Elizabeth Corwin*  
Warsaw, Poland

In 1989 I was the assistant cultural affairs officer in Warsaw and in a long-distance relationship with a colleague in Bucharest. We got together every six weeks in Warsaw, Bucharest or elsewhere behind the Iron Curtain. Over Veterans Day weekend, we planned to meet in Berlin, but my partner changed his mind and came to Warsaw instead. I'll never forget waking up on Sunday morning, turning on my shortwave radio and hearing on the BBC that the wall had fallen. I was crestfallen that we hadn't been there.

On Christmas Day, however, my partner and I spontaneously met in Berlin as the embassy in Bucharest was drawn down the night before. We had a wonderful few days watching "Ossies" streaming over to the West to buy TVs and other goods, and visiting the East ourselves without the Stasi following us.

The last half of 1989 and the first half of 1990 are a blur to me. The Polish Communist Party had lost every open seat in Parliament in June 1989, and all departments of the U.S. government opened up their wallets, offering training programs and sending experts in every field imaginable. The first computer was delivered to the Parliament's library, courtesy of the Library of Congress. The U.S. Information Service executive officer created special treaty paper for the Ministry of Education so that they could sign an agreement with the Peace Corps.

I found participants for all sorts of new exchange programs in the fields of entrepreneurship, operations management and civic education. The International Visitor Leadership Program went from about 20 participants a year to more than 70 as we sent Solidarity leader after Solidarity leader to the United States. We went from one Eisenhower Fellow to a dozen. Opportunities were limitless.

Mostly, I remember working nonstop, 12 hours a day, six or

seven days a week until the spring of 1990, when I was able to add a new cultural specialist to the office. I was overwhelmed by the amount of work; the requests for ideas for new U.S. government programs; the NGOs, American universities and private-sector organizations calling, visiting and writing to inquire about how they could help and what was needed; and, not to mention, official visits by all but one member of the Bush Cabinet and many, many congressional delegations.

There were months when my breakfast was a cafeteria-supplied cheese sandwich at my desk, my lunch was a cafeteria-supplied cheese sandwich at my desk, and my dinner was, well, a cafeteria-supplied cheese sandwich that I'd buy at lunchtime and take home.

Still, I wouldn't trade those days for anything. It was exhilarating to be in such a dynamic environment and to have such resources. It was fascinating to see a society change so fundamentally, to see economic theory put to work, and to see how creativity and ingenuity can change a culture.

In 2009, I was fortunate to return to that part of the world as the cultural affairs officer in Berlin. I was there for the 20th-anniversary celebrations of the fall of the wall, along with Lech Walesa, Mikhail Gorbachev and Hillary Clinton.

*Postscript:* Cutting U.S. Information Agency resources in Europe, closing libraries, ending or diminishing exchange programs, shuttering cultural centers—indeed, closing USIA—all because we won the Cold War, has done the United States much harm and may have contributed to the shrinking of individual freedoms and rights currently happening throughout Europe. At the same time, I see values and principles that I fought for and worked on in Poland 30 years ago being stomped on in the United States itself now. Everything seems upside down.

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*Elizabeth Corwin joined USIA in 1985 and retired from State in 2012. She served in Munich, Warsaw, Athens, New Delhi, Mumbai and Berlin. She lives in Tampa, Florida.*

## The Voice of America Records History

*William H. Hill*  
Washington, D.C.

In late afternoon on Thursday, Nov. 9, 1989, I was at my desk at the Voice of America headquarters on Independence Avenue in Washington, D.C., looking out at the Smithsonian Air and Space Museum just down the street. As chief of VOA's European division, I supervised broadcasts in 14 languages to countries in Central and Eastern Europe, including a small German-language service. As usual, while I reviewed late-afternoon news and reports from our correspondents and stringers in the field, I had a large television opposite my desk turned on, with the sound off.

My television was most often tuned to CNN, but that day for some reason I had the channel set to NBC News. I glanced at the screen and suddenly turned up the volume, as I saw Tom Brokaw commenting on pictures of German civilians climbing over the Berlin Wall, illuminated in the middle of the night and surrounded by crowds of people. The setting and magnitude of this event was as unmistakable as it was unexpected.

Berlin, divided since the airlift of 1948-1949 and construction of the wall in 1961, had come to symbolize the larger division of Europe and the world between the U.S.-led West and the Soviet bloc.

The sudden, unexpected opening of the Berlin Wall was perhaps the most dramatic in a long sequence of events during 1989 that marked the end of the Cold War. As a State Department FSO first detailed in August 1987 to VOA (then a part of the U.S. Information Agency), I had a front-row seat to witness and describe many of the historic events that wound down the decades of conflict between the United States and the USSR. I spent 1987 to 1988 as deputy chief of the USSR division, where I helped organize radio bridges between VOA and USSR state radio, oversaw call-in shows for Russian audiences featuring American rock music and covered the beginnings of the Karabakh movement in Soviet Armenia in February 1988.

In the summer of 1988, I became chief of VOA's European division, where I had the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to arrange and supervise coverage of the historic events in Poland, Hungary, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria and Romania that led to the peaceful dissolution of the Warsaw Pact. I was in Poland several times from 1988 to 1989, to negotiate the first permanent VOA news office in a Soviet-bloc country. My Polish service provided live coverage of President George H.W. Bush's visit to Warsaw in July 1989 and Lech Walesa's address to a joint session of Congress in November 1989.

The summer and fall of 1989 was a period of growing excitement. Hungarian and Czechoslovak authorities declined to impede a growing flow of East Germans fleeing to West Germany through their countries. The communist government in Hungary was quietly replaced during these events, with the People's Republic formally replaced by the Republic of Hungary on Oct. 23, 1989.

Gorbachev's visit to East Germany in early October put the East German government on notice that the Soviet military would not step in to save it from a rising tide of popular opposition. The opening of the Berlin Wall a month later loosed the



A sign still on display at the site of Checkpoint Charlie, offering a warning from the U.S. Army in four languages. Berlin, 2015.

JAMES TALALAY

floodgates of reform in the rest of the Soviets' European satellites. On Nov. 10, as Veterans Day was being celebrated in Washington, D.C., I returned home after a long bike ride to urgent messages from my Bulgarian service that long-time Bulgarian Communist Party Chief Todor Zhivkov had fallen.

Within a week the ruling Czechoslovak Communist Party also toppled, although it took almost a month for the government to be formally replaced. The hardest nut to crack proved to be Romania, where mass protests led to the arrest and execution of Nicolae Ceausescu and his wife on Christmas Day.

In December I was able to visit Warsaw, where I formally opened the new VOA office; Budapest, where I signed a cooperation agreement with my counterpart from Hungarian State Radio; and Prague, where I witnessed a four-mile-long line of Czechs dancing in the streets to celebrate the fall of the Communist government and had talks with the incoming head of Czechoslovak Radio, so new to his job that he did not know the location of anything in his office.

It is still exhilarating to recall the excitement of that autumn. I believed then, as I do now, that the events of 1989 brought change, hope and opportunity to Europe similar in scope and magnitude to those of 1789. As with the French Revolution, not everything has worked out in the optimistic fashion many of us envisioned three decades ago with the end of the Cold

War. There have been clear setbacks and reversals in some of the former Warsaw Pact states. Russia's relations with the West are not what we had hoped when President George H.W. Bush and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev concluded their groundbreaking Malta summit in December 1989.

Even so, the events of 1989 brought real independence, political pluralism, market economies and elements of the rule of law to most of Central Europe. This, in my view, remains on balance a positive result; it was a privilege to have a front-row seat to witness this process.

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*William H. Hill is a retired U.S. Foreign Service officer who was chief of VOA's European Division in 1989. After leaving the State Department, he became a professor of national security strategy at the National War College in Washington, D.C. His most recent book is No Place for Russia: European Security Institutions Since 1989 (Columbia University Press, 2018).*

## High School in a Divided City

Laura D. Williams

West Berlin, Federal Republic of Germany

**I**n Nov. 9, 1989, I was a 14-year-old student at the John F. Kennedy German-American School in Berlin. My father was the political adviser at U.S. Mission Berlin, located in Clay Compound, the headquarters of the American Sector of the city. That night my parents had gone to see "Dead Poets Society" at the Outpost military theater. I was home alone, ostensibly doing homework but more likely watching MTV—still quite popular in 1989.

Our boxy landline phone had a special red button on it. My parents told me that if I ever took a call on that line, it would be important, so I should use my nicest manners. When the red line rang that evening, I answered. It was the embassy in Bonn asking for my father. The caller told me in a very excited voice that East German travel restrictions had just been lifted, and that I needed to tell my parents as soon as they returned from their

outing. I was not sure what this meant, so I called my German boyfriend. He told his parents, who were quite confused. They told us that we must be mistaken. We hung up, and I went back to my math homework and MTV.

An hour later my boyfriend called back to say that we needed to go at once to the

Brandenburg Gate, where a large crowd was gathering. It was bitterly cold that night, so I dressed warmly for the trip downtown via U-Bahn and S-Bahn. When we arrived, hundreds of people had gathered. Some with hammers were chipping at the wall, others were singing, still others were drinking and dancing. We walked around for hours, well into the morning. We met Peter Jennings and Tom Brokaw, who were setting up cameras to interview people. They were excited to find English-speaking students, and we had a lively discussion about what this change would mean for East and West Germany.

The following days are a blur to me. We kids were excited that school was closed for several days, and everyone was calling family and friends to rejoice. On the second or third day of that delirious, long weekend, I climbed up on the wall in front of the Brandenburg Gate. My mom joined us, but my dad was in his office at Clay Compound, writing cables. Getting onto the wall was not easy, as it was some 12 feet tall, but many helping hands

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**Getting onto the wall was not easy, as it was some 12 feet tall, but many helping hands boosted us.**

—Laura D. Williams

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boosted us. Once on our perch, there wasn't much to do but talk to others and celebrate with champagne toasts. Getting down from the wall in that condition was challenging, to say the least.

Little East German cars—Trabis—filled the streets of West Berlin. Sales of champagne and alcohol exploded. Families separated for decades were able to cross the border and reunite. Rock bands from all over the world flooded into Berlin to play sold-out concerts. Every venue was packed. It was a time of great jubilation.

As a teenager, I had been focused before on things such as trying to emulate the latest Western fashions, like acid-washed jeans and Chuck Taylor shoes. As kids living in West Berlin, 300 miles inside East Germany, my friends and I often felt very disconnected from the outside world. The sudden attention that began on the evening of Nov. 9 blew our minds.

After the Berlin Wall fell and Germany was reunited in October 1990, Berlin acquired big-city problems, immigration issues and crime. My four years there, from 1986 to 1990, were a very lucky time.

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*Laura D. Williams, a Foreign Service kid, lived in Berlin from 1986 to 1990. She joined the Diplomatic Security Service as a special agent in 2000 and is currently assigned to the Foreign Affairs Security Training Center in Dunn Loring, Virginia.*

## The Professor Gets It Wrong

Barclay Ward  
Sewanee, Tennessee

In November 1989 I was pursuing my second career, teaching at The University of the South (Sewanee), and was asked to speak on the fall of the Berlin Wall to a gathering of students and their parents on family weekend. I think that most of what I had to say about the fall of the wall and its significance for Europe was reasonably accurate, except for my final point: The Soviet Union will never, under any circumstances, accept the reunification of East and West Germany.

Fortunately for me, by January 1990 I was happily working a different temporary job at the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, safely removed from my students and their parents—who had been so badly misinformed on family weekend in November.

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*Barclay Ward was a member of the U.S. Foreign Service from 1961 to 1975. He was a consultant on nuclear nonproliferation at ACDA and the State Department until 2015. Mr. Ward lives in Brookline, Vermont.*

## From Bulgarian Student to U.S. FSO

Assia Ivantcheva  
Sofia, Bulgaria

On Nov. 10, a day after the fall of the Berlin Wall, I was on a bus in my hometown of Sofia. Someone whispered: “Zhivkov is no longer in power.” Another passenger quickly hushed him up. What if it were not true and someone was listening?

Zhivkov had been in power for 35 years, the longest-standing dictator in Eastern Europe. It was difficult to imagine him gone. But it was true. Soon mass protests began; students camped outside the parliament and “occupied” the university, insisting on free elections. I was one of those students, riding the wave of public euphoria. All of a sudden everything seemed possible. While the first election did not bring the swift changes that we hoped for, the course toward a free Europe was set.

1989 was a miraculous year for me. Only four months before the fall of the wall, I was on an exchange-student visit to Moscow State University, where I made friends with some German students from East Berlin. We were all fascinated by perestroika and the freedom the Russians enjoyed back then, the multitude of newspapers and public debates. Ironically, my new German friends and I both thought how lucky the Russians were; none of us thought we would soon see anything like this in our countries. But only months later we were writing letters to each other, describing the miraculous events in Berlin and Sofia, and comparing notes on student movements.

Joining the surge of Eastern Europeans who went to study in the United States, I traveled to New Hampshire, determined to return to the Balkans with a degree. Instead, upon graduating from college I ended up on a fellowship at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in Washington, D.C. At that time brutal nationalism and atrocities were spreading across the former Yugoslavia. I advocated passionately for the United States and Europe to intervene as I looked for my “calling” in life.

My calling, as it turned out—once I was a U.S. citizen and earned a Ph.D. in international relations—was to join USAID's Foreign Service. What better job than providing international assistance to countries experiencing democratic transitions and trying to knock down their own inner “walls”?

I did not quite choose my career; rather, it chose me. My first assignment was to Ukraine, then under President Leonid Kuchma. Few could have predicted the 2004 Orange Revolution—the regime fell without a drop of blood owing to the cour-

age of millions of ordinary Ukrainians who stood in freezing temperatures until the peaceful transfer of power was completed. I recall the tears of joy as I stood at the Maidan in 2005, welcoming the New Year and thinking that, for the second time in my life, I was a part of history. I was proud of my tiny role in the huge collective effort of the international community in support of pro-reform Ukrainian forces. Sadly, governance turned out to be harder than the revolution.

My subsequent assignments were equally amazing; I was thrown into the midst of exciting transitions. I was in Serbia in 2008 when the U.S. embassy was attacked after Kosovo declared independence, and I stayed in Belgrade as “essential personnel,” working with a team literally from my kitchen, until the pre-term election brought to power a new coalition government. Later, I joined the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and was sent to Bishkek in 2010 to facilitate constitutional reforms and election observation after

their “revolution.” Sadly, this quickly turned into reporting on the inter-ethnic conflict in the south of the country.

Over the last seven years as a senior adviser for elections and political transitions at USAID, I have been fortunate to be involved in important transitions and elections in Burma, Ukraine, Sri Lanka, Kenya and Zimbabwe. Political transitions have marked my entire life. The fact that I—a former student from Sofia—have represented the U.S. government overseas, was hardly something anyone could have predicted. The fall of the Berlin Wall not only opened up the world for my family and me, it made my professional life more fulfilling than I could ever have imagined.

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*After the Berlin Wall fell, Assia Ivantcheva left Sofia to study in the United States and later became a U.S. citizen and member of the U.S. Foreign Service. She works in the Elections and Political Transitions Division at USAID's Center of Excellence on Democracy, Human Rights and Governance.*



Heading into East Berlin near Checkpoint Charlie is a portrait of an East German soldier; GI Joe is on the other side. Berlin, 2015.



SHAWN DORMAN

Tourists at the remains of the wall in 1990.

## Changes on the Streets

*Hank Young*

East Berlin, German Democratic Republic

**M**y wife and I were asleep at our home in East Berlin when the wall came down, but we became aware of the change early the next day when we were privileged to watch events unfold on television broadcasts emanating from West Berlin.

As it was a weekend, we needed to shop, and our plan was to cross into West Berlin via Bornholmer Strasse. As we entered this narrow crossing point, we were besieged by gleeful West Berliners essentially stopping our passage with cheers of welcome. They obviously failed to recognize our diplomatic plates and offered us flowers, cans of cold Coca-Cola and bananas. We declined their kind offerings as gracefully as possible, but there were many others crossing at about the same time who gladly accepted the rare gifts.

(By way of background, I recall a previous return from West Berlin, where I had consumed a Coca-Cola. I was carrying the empty can as I left our vehicle, and a young boy of perhaps 12 stopped me to politely ask if he could have the empty can,

which I gladly gave him. As I entered our house, I turned to see the Stasi guard assigned to watch our home stop the child to ask what we had talked about. I did my best, struggling in German, to explain that there was nothing sinister transpiring, and the guard let the boy keep the can.)

The Kaufhaus des Westens (KaDeWe) was so congested with East Berliners that they had to queue outside the entrances—the store was packed not so much with shoppers but gawkers, as those from East Berlin didn't have the proper currency to shop.

The evening after the wall came down, I had a memorable discussion with a neighbor who had an apartment directly across the street, but with whom I'd rarely spoken before. I discovered that he was a history teacher who spoke good English because he had been a prisoner of war in England during World War II.

A few days later, another neighbor welcomed back family members from Ethiopia after the West German government discontinued the aid program for which he had been engaged. All members of his family spoke English, and their daughter eventually was selected to continue her education in the United States.

After the opening of the Berlin Wall and after East Berliners were provided access to German marks, many began renovating



## In the Right Place at the Right Time

Stephen Vogel

Munich, Federal Republic of Germany

I arrived in West Germany in September 1989 as a freelance reporter. I wish I could claim that I had some sense that the Berlin Wall would be coming down soon, but the truth is a friend had suggested I accompany him to Oktoberfest in Munich, and I decided to stick around for a few months to try my hand at stringing for *The Washington Post*, *Army Times* and other publications.

On the night of Nov. 9, 1989, I sat in my tiny Munich apartment watching a dubbed version of “Mr. Ed” on television, something I regularly did to improve my high school German. Halfway through the show, as Mr. Ed spoke to Wilbur in German far better than mine, the network scrolled news script below the talking horse: *Die Mauer ist gefallen* (The wall has fallen).

My German was good enough to know what this meant. I booked the first flight to Berlin the following morning and made my way to Checkpoint Charlie. My focus was on the response of the U.S. military, specifically the U.S. Command Berlin and its 5,500 soldiers.

Jubilant crowds were swarming around the command post, cheering as East Germans in Trabants and Wartburgs pattered their way through the checkpoint and into the West. West Berliners formed lines around the incoming traffic, cheering and thumping on car hoods and handing out flowers, chocolate and champagne to the arriving easterners. Many on both sides were in tears.

It was emotional for me, as well. My father had been stationed in West Berlin as a CIA case officer, and I was born in the U.S. Army Hospital there in 1960. A year later, the wall had been built across the city (not a coincidence, my father told me). I had visited Berlin and gone through Checkpoint Charlie on a high school bicycle trip through Europe with fellow German-language students. Now I was on hand to see the wall breached.

The U.S. soldiers at Checkpoint Charlie were caught up in the joy. “It’s been like a big carnival,” Maj. Bernard Godek, access control officer for the U.S. Command, told me. “It’s difficult not to get wrapped up in the emotion of the moment.”

Revelers spilled over the checkpoint’s traffic island, normally kept free of pedestrians. “We kind of looked at each other and said, ‘Why go out there as Americans and start bossing people around? Why ruin the moment?’” Godek said. “We bent the rules a little bit.”

their homes. Suddenly an unusual number of old toilets languished on our street for days. As we rode streetcars to and from work, another change we noted was the noise level among the passengers traveling along the route. Previously, the trip was virtually dead silent, with an unwritten code demanding privacy. Now talkative young West Berliners were boarding the streetcars, to the obvious chagrin of the older people, who had ridden street cars in silence for years. Occasionally an older woman would chastise a younger German into silence.

Another notable change was at East German restaurants. Previously, wait staff would be required to wait on one table only, and when the patrons left, that was it for the evening for that waitress or waiter. When West Berliners started dining in East Berlin restaurants, there was seldom enough wait staff to handle walk-in patrons despite there being empty tables. This prompted some lively discussions, with the assertive West Berliners insisting on service.

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*Hank Young was the management counselor at the U.S. embassy in East Germany in 1989. He served in management positions in 12 overseas posts between 1971 and 2004 and now resides in Asheville, North Carolina.*

Celebrants standing on concrete planters in front of the command post knocked over spotlights illuminating the U.S. flag. MPs propped up the lights precariously with crushed beer cans, which were readily available, and pleaded with people to stay off the planters.

East German border guards and American MPs, who normally studiously ignored each other, exchanged friendly greetings.

Despite all the evidence to the contrary, the official U.S. military position was business as usual. On Nov. 12, I found the U.S. commander for Berlin, Maj. Gen. Raymond Haddock, coming through the checkpoint on his way to visit the Soviet sector. "People should not use this to try to change our mission," General Haddock told me. "Our mission this week is the same as last week, and that is to protect the city, and guard freedom and security for the two million citizens of Berlin."

That mission did not last long. On Oct. 3, 1990, the day of German unification, I watched the Army's Berlin Brigade band play "The Stars and Stripes Forever" on a stage in Marx-Engels Square in front of a roaring crowd of Berliners in what until that day had been East Berlin. Four years later, I attended the Berlin Brigade's deactivation ceremony.

My planned visit of a few months in Germany turned into a five-year stay. In late 1994, I returned to the United States to take a position as a reporter for *The Washington Post*. I've periodically returned to Germany, most recently to research a book about the Berlin espionage tunnel, dug by the CIA and British Secret Intelligence Service before the wall was built. Like many visitors, I found Berlin vibrant, beautiful and, in many ways, unrecognizable from 1989. I took my family to the moving Berlin Wall memorial at Bernauer Strasse. Not for the first time, I felt grateful for the good fortune that allowed me to witness that wall fall.

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*Stephen Vogel is a journalist and author who covered the fall of the Berlin Wall and reported for The Washington Post for more than two decades. He is the author of *Betrayal in Berlin: The True Story of the Cold War's Most Audacious Espionage Operation*, published in September by Custom House, and lives in Barnesville, Maryland.*

## Movie Night in the American Sector

James A. Williams

West Berlin, Federal Republic of Germany

When the Berlin Wall fell, my wife and I were watching "Dead Poets Society" at an Army theater in the American Sector. At the halfway point the projector stopped, and a voice asked me to come to the office for a phone call. Picking up the receiver, I heard Minister Harry Gilmore say that East Berliners were reportedly swarming into the western sectors of the city. Though that report had not been verified, I went to my office at once. My wife left the theater to link up with our daughter and to get warmer clothes for what was already an incredibly cold

November night. They soon joined the growing crowd in front of the Brandenburg Gate.

For four days we saw very little of each other. In Clay Headquarters I led a team that churned out endless sitreps, summaries and analyses for Washington and the world. U.S. Mission Berlin (USBER) and the military commands in Berlin had an extensive network of reporting officers who combined their inputs for joint mes-

sages. The system worked well because we had war-gamed similar contingencies earlier that year. We had expected that, as the number of refugees from Eastern Europe continued to rise, the Allied sectors of Berlin would be affected. But we did not expect that the East German regime would open the wall with no planning or notice.

It was fortunate that the United States held the rotating chairmanship of the Allied Kommandatura that November. This meant that we spoke for the three Western sectors, and we coordinated and presented their joint approaches to the Soviet embassy in East Berlin. Those long-established channels worked well. A huge challenge was to make clear to the Soviets that West Berlin authorities had the security situation under control, especially along the wall and near Soviet properties. Working together, the Allies met that challenge.

For four days East Germans swarmed into the Western sectors. They did power shopping with "welcome money" supplied by the

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**At the end of that long and joyous weekend, everyone in Berlin was exhausted. Banks had run out of cash because of all the claims for welcome money. Most alcohol in the city had been consumed—incredibly, there was no violence or rowdiness.**

—James A. Williams

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In November 2004, to commemorate the 15th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, the city of Berlin donated these segments of the inner wall to Battery Park City, NYC. Photos taken Sept. 21, 2019.

government in Bonn. Laden with new purchases, they returned by car, foot and subway to East Berlin. West Berlin was an exotic place to visit, but East Berlin was still home. There were countless tales of West Berliners who had on impulse given goods and groceries to their Eastern brethren. One report claimed that a Mercedes sedan had changed hands that way.

At the end of that long and joyous weekend, everyone in Berlin was exhausted. Banks had run out of cash because of all the claims for welcome money. Most alcohol in the city had been consumed—incredibly, there was no violence or rowdiness. Food stocks were low. Resupply began that Monday, and it never stopped. USBER cut back on flash sitreps, because many readers had acquired Berlin fatigue. I escaped Clay Headquarters for a few hours to walk the city and see what had happened. It was surreal.

The fall of the Berlin Wall was a turning point in history. Those of us who served in Berlin at the time had a privileged seat.

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*James A. Williams served as political adviser to United States Mission Berlin from 1986 to 1990. Located in Clay Headquarters, for 45 years the hub of the American Sector of Berlin, USBER was part of the Four-Power occupation regime for Germany and Berlin that dated from 1945. Mr. Williams is now retired in Arlington, Virginia.*

## The View from Suriname

Stanley Myles

Paramaribo, Suriname

In November 1989 I was geographically far removed from the momentous events happening in Berlin and Eastern Europe. Since the summer of 1988 I had been assigned to the American embassy in Paramaribo, Suriname, as the deputy chief of mission. Still, the events in Europe had a powerful impact on the whole world, including among the people of Suriname.

At the time, Suriname had its second democratic government since gaining its independence from the Netherlands in 1975. This government had been elected in 1987 when, under pressure from the Netherlands, the United States and others, the military government that in 1980 overthrew the first democratic government agreed to permit new elections.

However, the new civilian government was weak and unstable, partly because of rivalries among the partners of the ruling coalition, but also because the leader of the 1980 military coup, Dési Bouterse, remained as commander of the Surinamese Army. The United States supported and encouraged the civilian government to resolve its internal divisions and work to decrease



ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/MODRAG MILUTINOVIC

Remains of the Berlin Wall, a historical monument of the Cold War, is today a tourist attraction.

the role of the military in national affairs. We at the embassy worked to identify ways that the United States could assist the Surinamese both politically and materially.

The fall of the Berlin Wall gave a powerful boost of hope to all those in Suriname who supported democracy and hoped to develop stronger democratic institutions in the country. I remember a senior Surinamese government official telling me how he hoped that the fall of the wall would lead to “an irresistible tide” of democratic freedom in Suriname and throughout the world.

The dissolution of the Soviet Union further encouraged Surinamers to believe that the forces of authoritarianism were in full retreat, and that the political influence of Bouterse and his supporters would continue to wane. Cooperation between the government and our embassy broadened.

Sadly, these hopes were dashed by a second coup ordered by Bouterse on Christmas Eve 1990. While the military-appointed replacement government was short-lived—forced out in mid-1991 by a second international diplomatic effort led by the United States, the Netherlands and Venezuela—Bouterse, despite being indicted by the Dutch government for involvement in narcotics trafficking, has been democratically elected twice and is currently serving as president of Suriname.

The hope of a civilian government in Suriname free of the influence of its military remains as elusive now as it was 30 years ago when the wall fell.

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*Stanley Myles joined the U.S. Foreign Service in 1971. In 1989 he was serving as the deputy chief of mission in Paramaribo, Suriname. Mr. Myles resides in Gaithersburg, Maryland.*

## Turn Off the Lights and Lock the Door

*Shirley Elizabeth Barnes*

West Berlin, Federal Republic of Germany

**T**he Berlin Wall fell in November 1989. German unification occurred on Oct. 3, 1990—two months after my arrival in August as the administrative officer for the U.S. mission in West Berlin. The mission had an overall staff of approximately 500 people, including U.S. Foreign Service officers, German Foreign Service Nationals, locally hired Americans and third country nationals. The administrative section was charged with dismantling and downsizing all

things related to general services operations of the mission's presence in occupied Berlin. The mission's overall budget totaled approximately \$35 million.

What ensued over the next two years was historic and unforgettable, both personally and professionally. From an administrative perspective, it also involved close contact, cooperation and coordination with my counterparts at U.S. Embassy Bonn and with my predecessor, Administrative Officer Don Hayes, as well as Hank Young, an FSO at the U.S. embassy in East Germany. I thank them all.

Dismantling our presence included sale of all kinds of office property and supplies—from copiers to paper clips, to heavy equipment, to housing. It entailed meetings with German officials, occasional meetings with administrative officers representing the French and British occupation missions, American family members, the American School representatives and other American private and nonprofit organizations based in Berlin. And critically, it involved downsizing personnel. It was an era when Europeans in general—and Germans in particu-

lar—expected that a job was for a lifetime. This caused enormous stress and anxiety for everyone.

However, nothing was more outstanding and inspiring than my staff, as well as the strong support we had from the embassy in Bonn, including from Ambassador Vernon Walters, Administrative Counselor Harry Geisel (later Ambassador Geisel), U.S. Mission Director Harry Gilmore (later Ambassador Gilmore) and FSO Hank Young. Retired FSOs came in on temporary duty assignments to help us, and we were supported by the U.S. Military Command in Berlin, as well.

Once during our many meetings, Harry Geisel reminded me: “Shirley, as the admin officer, you will have responsibility on the admin side of turning off the lights and locking the door to the U.S. mission's 45-year presence in Berlin.” I will never forget his words. ■

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*Shirley Elizabeth Barnes was an administrative officer at the new U.S. mission in West Berlin beginning in 1990. She served as ambassador to the Republic of Madagascar from 1998 to 2001.*

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## Diplomacy Is Our

# Mission

This November, the United States Diplomacy Center invites you to explore *Diplomacy Is Our Mission*, a preview exhibit featuring stories and artifacts of American diplomacy. In honor of the 30th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, we also are opening an exhibit on our *Signature Segment* of the Berlin Wall, which features 27 signatures of key leaders who played a role in ending the Cold War and reunifying Germany. Tours of the exhibit will be held every Friday, with timed entry passes available through our website.

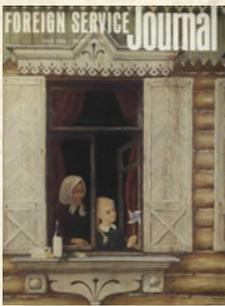
To kick off the opening, please join us for a celebration of the exhibit during our monthly happy hour, Diplomacy After Hours, on November 13, 2019 from 5-7:30 pm. If interested, RSVP at this link: [Tiny.cc/DiplomacyMuseum](https://tiny.cc/DiplomacyMuseum)

Learn more at [diplomacy.state.gov](https://diplomacy.state.gov).



# Looking Back on a Divided City

## From the FSJ Archive



### The Berlin Wall

FSJ JULY 1971

Washington was, at this time [mid-1961], becoming increasingly concerned about the growing flood of refugees into West Berlin. After Vienna, many East Germans again were gripped by the fear that the door was about to be closed. Many who had hesitated to abandon their homes

and loved ones before now decided that they had better make their escape while they could. Although the border with West Germany was sealed, they could travel by train or bus to East Berlin. From there, they easily skipped into West Berlin on foot, by streetcar, or subway, for the controls at the sector boundary were perfunctory. ...

[East German head of state Walter] Ulbricht began controlling movement between East and West Berlin in 1951. Over the years, the number of crossing points were progressively reduced. While these still permitted a great deal of movement back and forth—an estimated half million a day—he had established the principle that he controlled the number of crossing points. During 1960 Ulbricht introduced new controls regarding travel by West Germans and West Berliners to East Berlin but eased off when Adenauer threatened to suspend interzonal trade. The issue subsided until after the Vienna conference.

Washington knew that something was afoot when Ulbricht flew off to Moscow in early August 1961. ...

During the week of August 6, the war clouds accumulated rapidly. The NATO Foreign Ministers concluded their meeting in Paris and reaffirmed their determination to maintain the freedom of West Berlin. On Wednesday, August 9, Khrushchev boasted of his superbomb. ... On Thursday, August 10, Kennedy admitted the seriousness of the situation and expressed the hope that the Berlin question could be settled with negotiations. ...

On Saturday, August 12, Khrushchev and Ulbricht drew two more cards. The East German Council of Ministers adopted a decree making the line through Berlin a state boundary. East Germans and East Berliners could cross only with special permission. ... The Minister of the Interior, Karl Maron, issued a decree, which designated 13 crossing points. The decree concluded by

saying, euphemistically, “Citizens of the German Democratic Republic who do not work in Berlin are asked to refrain from traveling to Berlin until further notice.” ...

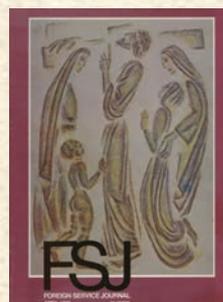
Meanwhile, Marshall Konev had flung an armed ring around Berlin. Soviet and East German forces were placed on alert.

Shortly after midnight, on Sunday, August 13, the subways stopped at the sector boundary. Police told the passengers to get off. They could not cross the line. Police also halted all vehicles and streetcars. Soon people on foot or on bicycles were caught in the net. Guards began stringing barbed wire. Others placed obstacles in the roads. Gradually, movement across the boundary ground to a halt.

In the morning, Berliners awoke to find their city divided—with both incongruous and tragic results. A man who had gone to East Berlin for a party and stayed the night found himself trapped. Another, who had gone to East Berlin to visit his mother, was separated from his wife and children. Men and women who had worked in the other half of the city were suddenly unemployed. Moreover, thousands of East Germans who had waited one day too long were trapped in Ulbricht’s concentration camp. ...

For six days, Ulbricht watched the reactions and strengthened his fence. He began construction of the wall on August 19. Four days later, he reduced the number of crossing points from 12 to seven. ...

—John Ausland, from excerpts of his manuscript on the Berlin crisis published in the July 1971 FSJ. He was as a member and later deputy director of the Berlin Task Force from 1961 to 1966.



### American Foreign Policy and East Germany

FSJ APRIL 1975

Three years after signing the 4-Power Accords on Berlin [on Sept. 3, 1971], the United States has entered into full diplomatic relations with East Germany. ...

Washington should immediately recognize that the nature of East German-Soviet relations

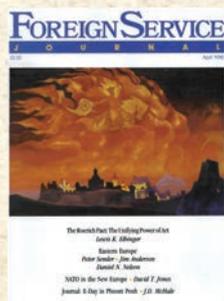
precludes the development of a “special” American link with the SED [Socialist Unity Party of the GDR]. Here Moscow has a formidable advantage over the United States in the realm of all-German affairs, for while the Soviet Union has been able to forge a wide ranging consultative relationship with Bonn ever since Brandt launched his concept of peaceful engagement with the USSR and Eastern Europe in the fall of 1969, Washington has only one foot anchored in German politics, namely Bonn. At least on the German level, American influence is asymmetrical. As one tangible consequence, U.S. policy towards East Germany is robbed of that potential dynamism gained when domestic American leverage can be used against the Soviet Union, as has occasionally been the case in relations between Washington and Warsaw, and frequently the case with Belgrade. In terms of the GDR, the Soviet Union cannot be shortcircuited. ...

It should come as no surprise that a more dynamic West German foreign policy toward Eastern Europe since late 1969 has put an end to the extremely close, and from Bonn’s end, dependent, collaboration between ourselves and West Germany. A suppressed tradition of all-German nationalism, temporarily eclipsed by the rise of Adenauer and the premature death of Kurt Schumacher, has been an unavoidable consequence of West Germany’s emergence as Europe’s second strongest power. In recognition of changes at work in intra-German relations, and the on-going sensitivity of Berlin issues, Washington has every incentive to keep West Berlin out of the domestic politics of the Federal Republic. If Washington has the responsibility and obligation to remind Moscow of its responsibilities toward the maintenance of West Berlin’s security, it also has the obligation and responsibility to keep West Germany party politics from complicating the gradual establishment of political relaxation in one of Europe’s most sensitive areas.

—John Starrels, professor at George Washington University.

*He participated in the briefing of John Sherman Cooper, the first U.S. ambassador to the German Democratic Republic.*

*Excerpted from his article by the same title in the April 1975 FSJ.*



### Anno 1990: Impressions from Germany

FSJ APRIL 1990

At the old demarcation line, the watchtowers stood empty, and the dogs were gone. ... From Leipzig station, I walked over to the brightly restored Nikolaikirche, birthplace of the 1989 revolution, and joined the parishioners

streaming into the now traditional Monday 5:00 p.m. service ...

By this mid-January night the future of the GDR had already been decided: it was to have none. West German film crews were passing live to their audience Leipzig’s quasi-unanimous vote for unity.

Jens-Otto Reich of Neues Forum, Rudolf Bahro, Pastor Fuehrer himself, all those who thought the second German state should have the chance to show that it could develop into something decent, durable, and socialist, had been overrun. For better or for worse—and I met many ordinary East Germans who regarded unity as an unavoidable necessity rather than a patriotic duty—the revolution had become all-German. ...

I doubted then as I do now that East Germany is as economically bankrupt as its people say. ... I discerned an air of expectancy as I watched people in Leipzig and East Berlin go about their business in a normal manner. ... East Germany will be part of a unified German state that will not have come into existence by humiliating powerful nations, as was the case with the German Empire in 1871. If ever a region was primed for a takeoff, it is the current GDR.

—Peter Semler, at the Foreign Service Institute’s Center for the Study of Foreign Affairs, from his article by the same title in the April 1990 FSJ.



### Bonn Voyage: Bumps Along the Autobahn

FSJ MARCH 2000

In those days [1962-1989], there was no denying the importance of America’s embassy in Bonn. It was the vital center of U.S. policy in Europe. From it, and from consulates general and America houses administered by USIS to pro-

mote American culture throughout West Germany, American diplomats engaged the events and crises of Europe’s postwar history as both observers and participants. With their German and other European partners, they wrote a proud record of accomplishment in pursuit of democratic ideals during difficult and dangerous decades.

Then, one November night in 1989, people pushed, and “The Wall” came tumbling down. Within days, Berlin began to reunite, and Germans and Americans alike were confronted with an utterly changed world. While staff in U.S. embassies in East Berlin and Bonn raced to keep abreast of political events, embassy administrators on both sides of the former East-West divide contemplated the bewildering management challenges

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## Almost overnight, administrative structures that had supported the most important U.S. diplomatic landscape in central Europe were rendered obsolete.

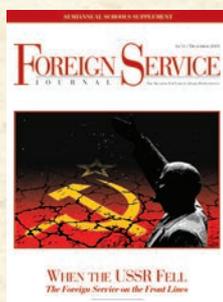
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brought on by the collapse of the German Democratic Republic and imminent German unity.

Almost overnight, administrative structures that had supported the most important U.S. diplomatic landscape in central Europe were rendered obsolete. Accustomed to the post-1945 world with its marked financial advantages for occupying powers, Department of State planners, with one eye on the U.S. government's deepening fiscal crisis, could not be blamed if they regarded German unification and the subsequent decision in 1991 to restore Berlin as Germany's capital as developments representing distinctly mixed administrative blessing.

From the twisted knot of property ownership—the U.S. owned few properties outright in Berlin—to complicated issues of organization and staffing involving U.S. missions throughout Germany, the management agenda was complex and overwhelming. Since the embassy other work never slackened, the move was a bit like remodeling an airplane in full flight.

—Richard Gilbert, a retired USIA FSO, excerpted from his article by the same title in the March 2000 FSJ.



### Cold War Lessons

FSJ DECEMBER 2011

“General Secretary Gorbachev, if you seek peace, if you seek prosperity for the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, if you seek liberalization: Come here to this gate! Mr. Gorbachev, open this gate! Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!”

So spoke President Ronald Reagan

in 1987. In the background was the Brandenburg Gate, all too visible behind the Berlin Wall. Reagan's stirring words, though noted at the time, came dramatically alive when the wall was literally and joyously torn down in 1989. It was a gripping episode in the events that led to the end of the Cold War. ...

The disappearance of the wall is a metaphor for the end of the Cold War, which occurred largely without bloodshed. And the lessons we should learn are potentially useful because

security concerns once again threaten the freedom and prosperity of our world.

One of the most important reasons for success in ending the Cold War was that we in the West had a strategy that we sustained for almost a half-century. The basic architecture was put in place and solidified in the Harry Truman and Dwight Eisenhower years, and that architecture, particularly the NATO alliance, served us well throughout the Cold War. ...

So here we see on display a set of important ideas:

- Change toward freedom and openness is possible.
- Economic development goes hand in hand with political openness.
- Strength of purpose and capability are essential.
- Strength works in tandem with diplomacy.
- A deep and continuing consultative process among like-minded people creates the understanding necessary to make hard choices.
- A successful strategy must be based on realism and sustainability.

The Cold War is over, but lessons learned from the way it ended are important to remember as we confront the serious threats facing the world today.

Strength is always key: the military capability, willpower and self-confidence to act when necessary. But consultation and diplomatic engagement are equally essential. To paraphrase Helmut Schmidt, there is no substitute for human contact. Just be careful about what you say, and be sure your diplomacy is supported by strength.

Perhaps we can also gain some momentum for this agenda of strength, cooperation, containment and diplomacy from the pursuit of two big ideas on a global scale. Each is drawn from the Ronald Reagan playbook used during the Cold War.

First, can we find our way to a world free of nuclear weapons? ... Second, can we reach a broad consensus to attack the issue of global warming? ...

The pursuit of big ideas on a world scale might well generate just the sense of cohesion that would help likeminded nations face down other problems that threaten our peace and our prosperity. Heeding the important lessons from the end of the Cold War will help us as we work to solve today's most urgent problems. ■

—George P. Shultz, Secretary of State from 1982 to 1989, from his article by the same title for the December 2011 FSJ “Focus on the Breakup of the Soviet Union.”

# A Lingerin<sup>g</sup> Poison Tehran, 40 Years Later

## What Have We Learned?

**Events of four decades ago continue to cast their malevolent shadows over a relationship that should have long since become more productive.**

BY JOHN LIMBERT

**O**n Nov. 4, 1979, a chilly, wet Sunday in Tehran, a group of Iranian engineering students calling themselves “Moslem Student Followers of the Imam’s Path” stormed and occupied the American embassy compound on Taleghani (formerly Takht-e-Jamshid) Avenue. Planned as a 48-hour protest against U.S.

policy, their action turned into an international melodrama that has for 40 years poisoned American-Iranian relations in ways few could have foreseen at the time.

Since that fateful day, the United States and Iran have been stuck in an endless downward spiral of futility. The two countries glare at each other across an abyss and trade accusations, insults and threats. A war of words sometimes escalates into violence, although the two sides have so far mostly avoided direct conflict. Attempts by either side to break the spiral have crashed on the rocks of third countries’ interests, toxic domestic politics, deep mistrust and bad timing.

One constant of these dysfunctional relations is that whenever there is promise of change, bad luck or a dumb decision sets everyone back

into familiar patterns of unthinking hostility and chest-beating. For example, whatever its limitations, the 2015 agreement on restricting Iran’s nuclear program (the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action) represented a different way of doing things. It demonstrated that long-neglected tools of diplomacy—consultation, patience and listening—could accomplish more for both sides than decades of repeating empty slogans and insults.



Iranian students storm the U.S. embassy in Tehran on Nov. 4, 1979.

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Then, in 2016, something unforeseen occurred. As in Monty Python's world, where "no one expects the Spanish Inquisition," no one expected the election of a President Donald J. Trump obsessed with undoing the work of his predecessor, hiring anti-Iranian zealots as advisers and presenting himself as the world's greatest negotiator. But the unexpected happened, and so events of 40 years ago continue to cast their malevolent shadows over a relationship that should have long since become something more productive. Most recently, we have seen a "locked and loaded" administration—already suffering from low credibility—determined to blame Iran immediately for the September attack on Saudi Arabia's oil facilities without bothering to present evidence.

What happened?

### The Iranian Setting: Ideologues Ascendant

Most Iranians welcomed the fall of the Pahlavi monarchy in February 1979, if only to end the violence that had torn the country apart for more than a year. But the change brought Iranians neither order nor the promised paradise. Members of the diverse coalition that brought down Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, the last king of Iran, were soon at each other's throats. Hard-line Islamists, Maoists and everyone in between battled in the media, in the schools and in the streets. Ethnic separatists threatened to seize control in Arabic-speaking

areas. The government maintained a measure of authority in the Kurdish areas only because Marxist and anti-Marxist Kurds hated each other more than they did Tehran.

A provisional government led by Mehdi Bazargan and his religious-nationalist allies was supposed to run affairs until a constitutional assembly could finish its work and establish the new Islamic Republic's permanent government. But Bazargan and his colleagues never had a chance. By the fall of 1979, they had lost authority to an informal "state within a state," run by an alliance of senior clergy linked to Ayatollah Mohammad Beheshti and his Islamic Republican Party. In the provincial towns, Friday prayer leaders overshadowed governors; in offices "Imam's (i.e., Khomeini's) representatives" overshadowed titular chiefs; and in neighborhoods local *komitehs* (revolutionary committees), answerable to powerful clerics and able to arrest anyone for any reason, overshadowed what was left of the police.

In this confusion, moderates, nationalists and liberals were squeezed between radicals of left and right. Extremists on both sides were well organized, armed and unconcerned with democratic niceties. While some wrote penetrating articles, others used clubs, chains and acid to make their points. When Islamist goon squads attacked liberal papers and demonstrations, the leftists, including the Mojahedin-e-Khalq (MEK), cheered them on.

Strong in the media, schools and universities, the leftists found a powerful message: anti-Americanism. They argued that America was using its agents in Iran to undermine the revolution, and that the new authorities had not gone far enough in purging the remnants of feudalism, capitalism and American influence. They attacked clerics for being "soft on America" and members of the provisional government for taking orders from the U.S. embassy. When a Tehran *komiteh* arrested MEK member M.R. Sa'adati in May 1979 on charges of spying for the Soviets, the leftist media launched a tirade of vitriol against Foreign Minister Ebrahim Yazdi, claiming that he had ordered Sa'adati's arrest on American instructions.



*John Limbert is a retired Foreign Service officer and academic. During a 34-year diplomatic career, he served mostly in the Middle East and Islamic Africa (including two tours in Iraq), was ambassador to the Islamic Republic of Mauritania and president of the American Foreign Service Association. From 1981 to 1984 he taught political science at the U.S. Naval Academy, returning there as the distinguished professor of Middle Eastern studies in 2006. From 1991 to 1992 he was a senior fellow at Harvard University's Center for International Affairs. In 2009, he was appointed as the first U.S. deputy assistant secretary of State for Iran. He has written three books on Iran: At War with History (Westview Press, 1987) Shiraz in the Age of Hafez (University of Washington Press, 2004) and Negotiating with Iran: Wrestling the Ghosts of History (U.S. Institute of Peace, 2009). He is about to publish, with co-author Marc Grossman, an espionage novel, set in Iran and Washington after the revolution and in the present.*

## The American Setting: Mission Impossible

In 1979 officials of the Jimmy Carter administration struggled with two questions: What had happened in Iran, and what do we do now? The first led to the ever-popular Washington game of finding a scapegoat. Historians, journalists and former officials—both Iranian and American—continue their arguments on this subject to the present day.

As for the second question, no one knew the answer. In 1979 the Cold War “prime directive” of Washington’s Iran policy—resist communist expansion—remained in force despite the upheavals in Tehran. “We have a common enemy to your north,” Carter’s National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski told Bazargan’s provisional government. Thus, the Cold War gave U.S. Embassy Tehran its mission: maintain a relationship with whoever rules Iran, which remains important for its oil and location, as a customer of American goods (including military equipment) and—above all—as a barrier, whether as monarchy or theocracy, to Soviet ambitions.

The United States could not remain untouched by Iran’s post-revolution strife. Maintaining anything like a normal relationship was going to be very difficult, and would require more agility and good luck than was available. Islamists and

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## Members of the diverse coalition that brought down Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, the last king of Iran, were soon at each other’s throats.

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leftists were beating their anti-American drums, amplified by state radio and television under the leadership of the quixotic Sadeq Qotbzadeh (a former Georgetown student). Neither group was interested in anything approaching normality, which they equated with betrayal. In October 1979 Secretary of State Cyrus Vance encountered this reality at the United Nations when his question to his Iranian counterpart—“Where can our two countries go from here?”—elicited only a recital of grievances.

The final straw was the fate of the deposed shah and his desire to come to the United States. In July 1979 Chief of Mission Bruce Laingen advised Secretary of State Vance that admitting the shah while Iran remained unsettled would have the following results:

- The moderate provisional government would fall.
- Any chance of a U.S.-Iran relationship would vanish.
- There would be no American embassy in Tehran.

Until October 1979 President Carter and Secretary Vance had resisted calls to admit the shah. That month the president learned—apparently for the first time—that the shah was sick with cancer in Mexico and needed to come to the United States for urgent treatment. The shah’s illness led Vance to change his position; and Carter, isolated among his staff, reluctantly agreed. According to Chief of Staff Hamilton Jordan’s account, the president asked his advisers: “Tell me one thing. What are you going to advise



Iranian students climb over the gate of the U.S. embassy in Tehran, Nov. 4, 1979.

WIKIMEDIA COMMONS



Former Iranian Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh (front right). The democratically elected prime minister was removed from power on Aug. 19, 1953, in a coup supported and funded by the British and U.S. governments. He was imprisoned for three years and then put under house arrest until his death in 1957.

me to do when our embassy is overrun and our people taken hostage?" Jordan did not record any answers.

In Tehran, we at the embassy learned of the president's decision on Oct. 20. The message to us was clear: "You are expendable. Good luck." Never was there any mention of total or partial evacuation of embassy staff. Someone apparently believed that the United States could have it all: admit the shah, keep an embassy in Tehran and continue to resist Soviet expansion.

### Iranian Plans: Who Is the Enemy?

In all this fog a group of engineering students from five Tehran schools met to decide how to show their dissatisfaction with the course of events. According to (later) accounts of their leaders, the group believed they needed to take some anti-American action and began planning a brief occupation of the American embassy. Two of the original five—including a future president of Iran, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad—disagreed with the plan and proposed attacking the Soviet embassy, which, in their view, was supporting the Iranian leftists—the most serious threat to the revolution. The others objected, claiming that America was giving shelter to the deposed shah

and plotting his return in a rerun of the 1953 coup, and was thus the greater danger. Ahmadinejad and his ally left the group, although later, as president from 2005 to 2013, he would bring former hostage-takers into his cabinet.

Recent research has revealed that these students also feared that their leftist rivals would outflank them with their loud anti-American rhetoric. If the Islamists took no action, they would be vulnerable to charges of being "pro-American" and would find themselves isolated and weakened in the ongoing domestic power struggles. By attacking the American embassy, they could seize the anti-American mantle, preempt the leftists and proclaim: "Others talk. We act."

Events unfolded precisely as President Carter and COM Laingen had foreseen. When the students attacked the embassy, the nominal Iranian authorities could do nothing. Urgent calls to officials of the provisional government met only questions about visas. The Marine Security Guards had orders not to fire on the attackers; thanks to these young men's training and discipline, we avoided a bloodbath.

Ayatollah Khomeini may have been unhappy with the students' action, but he would not end it. Presented with a fait accompli and an apparent surge of support in the streets, he decided to ride this wave rather than stand against it. He understood how to use the occupation to cement control of the new state by his closest allies, clerical ideologues sharing his harsh vision of Iran's future. He endorsed the occupation, calling it "a second revolution, greater than the first" and used it to purge nationalists, moderates and, eventually, leftists from the revolutionary coalition. Iran's provisional government, now exposed as powerless, collapsed. Anyone who would answer American phone calls could do nothing; those who could do something were not taking calls.

All these calculations meant that we at the embassy were

in for a long detention as we waited for the adults in the room to intervene. Those adults never appeared, however; and our hours in captivity became days, weeks and months. Khomeini relished his role as “defier-in-chief,” rejecting appeals from dozens of international figures. The more obstinate he was, the more popular he became, earning the title *aashti naa-pazir* (implacable).

Some of our captors have since claimed that they never intended events to unfold as they did, but that they were used and caught in the role of long-term prison guards and pawns in Iran’s raucous political chess game. They became like the dog that caught the bus. They had captured the embassy and its people. Now what should they do? One of them told me bluntly: “All this is not about you. It’s not about the shah. It’s not about the United States. We have scores to settle with our Iranian enemies, and you are crucial to our doing so.” How does one answer that? One sits and waits.

### Lessons Learned ... and Ignored

It is certain there are lessons to be learned from these events. It is less certain anyone has learned them.

**Respect the power of history and ghosts.** Powerful ghosts of repeated humiliations have troubled Iran’s relations with the outside world for more than 200 years. These indignities long predate any U.S.-Iranian interaction. They include the unequal treaties of Gulistan (1813) and Turkmanchai (1828), the larcenous D’Arcy oil concession of 1901, the cynical Anglo-Russian agreement of 1907 and the Allied occupation of Iran during World War II.

More recent humiliations did involve the United States. They include the CIA coup of 1953, the status of forces agreement of 1964, the appointment of the head of the Central Intelligence Agency as U.S. ambassador to Iran in 1973 and the death of 300 civilians in the destruction of an Iranian airliner in 1988.

When President Carter agreed to let the shah come to the United States, he ignored history and the ghosts of 1953, when Washington had helped topple a nationalist prime minister and returned the shah from abroad. In October 1979 our orders in Tehran were to “inform the Iranian government that the shah’s admission was based on purely humanitarian grounds and had no political motive.” We did our best. But, given the history, what Iranian over the age of 3 would believe such a statement—even if it were true?

**Expect the unexpected and avoid the easy assumption.** We fell into a trap of our own making when we made assump-

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**Someone apparently believed that the United States could have it all: admit the shah, keep an embassy in Tehran and continue to resist Soviet expansion.**

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tions about likely Iranian reactions to admitting the shah. President Carter ignored his own misgivings. His administration ignored clear reports from its diplomats in Tehran and media stories about the prevailing anarchy there and the growing power of extremists. It misread the situation of Iran’s provisional government and its ability to control events. It assumed the clerical authorities, particularly Ayatollah Khomeini, would calculate their interests in a certain way. It never considered that those with power in Iran would encourage and exploit anarchy rather than control it.

The irony is that events of 1978—the uprisings that led to the shah’s downfall—should have taught us to question all assumptions. A few weeks before the first of those uprisings, President Carter was in Tehran toasting the shah as a beloved leader of a country he called “an island of stability in a troubled region.” A year later the shah was gone, and the island of stability was in chaos. Obviously, we learned nothing from those unexpected events, when the leader of a strong, prosperous and friendly country could be toppled so easily by unarmed crowds loyal to an aging, exiled theocrat. In 1979 we repeated our failure of 1978 when we declined to look closely at reality and instead continued to believe what we wished to be true. Perhaps in both cases reality was too unpleasant to consider.

**Make noise, and be a pain in the ass.** This is hard. We are a disciplined, polite and collegial Service; but we still owe the country our best (and often unwelcome) judgments. We are not sent overseas to participate in groupthink and to remain silent when ill-considered decisions put lives in danger.

In Tehran 40 years ago we survived only by good fortune. A more violent Iranian group could have attacked the embassy; a Marine Security Guard could have panicked and opened fire; we could have faced an uncontrolled mob of 100,000; the rescue mission sent in April 1980 might have reached the embassy, with unpredictable consequences. (As it were, that mission cost the lives of eight American airmen and Marines in the central desert.)



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Dear Colleagues and Friends,

As readers of the FSJ, you understand and may have witnessed the suffering of victims of human rights violations and mass atrocities. **Project Expedite Justice (PEJ) is a 501(c)(3) tax exempt organization with a track record on holding perpetrators - both individuals and organizations - accountable for their crimes. I would encourage you to consider how you can help PEJ expand its work with local partners to develop their capacities to achieve the universal goal of justice for all.**

Ravic Huso, Ambassador (Retired), PEJ Board Member

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## Khomeini understood how to use the occupation to cement control of the new state by his closest allies, clerical ideologues sharing his harsh vision of Iran's future.

It could have been much worse, as my cautionary tale of the diplomacy and power politics surrounding the Treaty of Turkmanchai in 19th-century Iran indicates (October 2017 FSJ). The Iranians' attack on the Russian embassy in 1829, in response to a harsh and unwelcome Russian dictat and perceived threats to Iranian honor, resulted in the death of the ambassador and his staff when the Cossack guards panicked and opened fire on the crowd.

Being obnoxious may be the only way to get attention, although doing so goes against all the values of our Service. In hindsight, when it was clear in October 1979 that the American administration was going to admit the shah despite the best advice of its own people, our response at the embassy should have been: "Fine. You have ignored our advice and left us exposed. Tehran is in chaos, and the so-called government has no power to protect us. Now we are ordering an evacuation. To hell with your Cold War calculations." Instead, those of us "experts" who supposedly understood conditions in Tehran sat quietly waiting for the ax to fall. There was a failure less of leadership than of "followership." By our silence we betrayed ourselves and our colleagues.

What began as a 1970s-style student sit-in (with a few handguns to back it up) soon became a full-scale international crisis that would eventually destroy the Carter presidency and make it almost impossible for the United States and Iran to reach anything resembling a normal relationship. On the American side, officials continue to sermonize about Iran's "malign behavior" and dismiss questioning voices as delusional. On the Iranian side, the mindless chanting of empty slogans continues, and the authorities commemorate Nov. 4, 1979, as a victory and pretend that the embassy seizure was an act to be proud of. They will not admit, despite all evidence, that it was a shameful action that did enormous harm to Iran and its people. ■

## TSP Rule Changes and New Tax Law: An Expert's Take

Certified Financial Planner Edward A. Zurndorfer returned to AFSA headquarters Sept. 4 to lead a seminar on recent changes to the Thrift Savings Plan and U.S. tax law, and their implications for members of the Foreign Service.

Mr. Zurndorfer discussed changes to TSP's withdrawal options. Many have complained in the past that the TSP has been too rigid about withdrawals, he said.

Under the old rules, when you left federal service, you were allowed to take one partial withdrawal, of at least \$1,000, from your TSP account. If you made one partial withdrawal, however, you couldn't make another one, he said.

And if you made that withdrawal, you could not also roll money from your TSP into a traditional IRA account.

But under the new rules, which took effect in mid-September, TSP account owners 59.5 years old or older are now able to take up to four partial withdrawals per calendar year while they are working, or up to 12 partial withdrawals per year after they retire. And these withdrawals can include rolling money from your TSP to a traditional IRA account.

Mr. Zurndorfer is a repeat and valued participant in AFSA's Federal Benefits Speakers Series. A registered employee benefits consultant, he is a recognized expert on



Edward Zurndorfer leads a seminar at AFSA headquarters on recent changes in tax laws and TSP rules.

federal benefits and retirement and tax planning. He is the owner of EZ Accounting and Financial Services in Silver Spring, Md.

To watch a video of Mr. Zurndorfer's presentation, visit [www.afsa.org/video](http://www.afsa.org/video). ■

## CALENDAR

November 1  
12-1 p.m.  
**Job Search Program  
Graduation Reception at FSI**

November 11  
**Veterans Day –  
AFSA Offices Closed**

November 11  
**Federal Health Benefits  
Open Season Begins  
(through December 9)**

November 19  
12-2 p.m.  
**"FEHB Open Season"  
with Paula Jakub**

November 20  
12-2 p.m.  
**AFSA Governing  
Board Meeting**

November 28-29  
**Thanksgiving –  
AFSA Offices Closed**

December 2  
**AFSA Scholarship  
Applications  
Available Online**

December 11  
4:30-6:30 p.m.  
**AFSA Holiday  
Happy Hour**

December 18  
12-2 p.m.  
**AFSA Governing  
Board Meeting**

December 25  
**Christmas –  
AFSA Offices Closed**

January 1  
**New Years Day –  
AFSA Offices Closed**

## Support AFSA's Legal Defense Fund

Please consider contributing to the AFSA Richard C. Scissors Legal Defense Fund. The fund provides financial assistance to members with legal issues that have possible far-reaching significance to the rest of the Service, such as cases involving due process or fundamental fairness.

AFSA routinely provides legal assistance to hundreds of Foreign Service members a year, both active-duty and retired. This excellent

assistance and advice is a member benefit.

Inevitably, however, cases come along that require additional legal expertise or time that AFSA is unable to provide. In such instances the Legal Defense Fund can provide financial support that assists the member in retaining an outside attorney with expertise in a particular area of law.

Unfortunately, this is one of those times. We have members in need, and your

contribution can help.

If you would like to make a donation, please visit <http://bit.ly/afsa-legal-fund>. You may also send a check made out to "Legal Defense Fund" to AFSA, c/o LDF, 2101 E St NW, Washington DC 20037. By making a contribution, you are helping AFSA preserve the very fundamental right to due process. (Please note that donations are not tax deductible.) ■



## One Foreign Service

AFSA works hard for its members, generalists and specialists alike. But occasionally, we hear that some specialists think AFSA does not look out for their interests or that their concerns take a back seat to those of generalists.

First, let me say that AFSA values each and every member—including all specialists in each of the 22 categories, from diplomatic security agents to office management specialists (OMS) to construction engineers. We will never promote the needs of one group of members over another. Together, we all contribute to the ability of the State Department—and indeed all the foreign affairs agencies—to get the job done.

In the past year (July 2018 to July 2019), relative to their percentage of the workforce, generalists and specialists have sent our Labor-Management team about an equal number of requests for help.

While I have not heard of any specific complaints, numbers may not tell the whole story. If you are a specialist and feel that you are not getting the treatment and service you deserve, please let me know directly.

As I enter my second month on the job, here is a rundown of some of the current issues we are working on. Please feel free to let us know what you think.

**Promotion numbers.** Congrats to all those who were promoted! Numbers are up

over last year generally, which in turn was an improvement on 2017. DS special agent promotions from FS-4 to FS-3 increased by 47 percent this year (139) compared to last year (93), which brings them back up to the levels of 2015.

OMS promotions saw modest increases at all levels, and information management specialist promotions from FS-4 to FS-3 also rose slightly, though we would like to see more.

We will meet with HR to parse the numbers—including the impact on diversity—and keep you posted.

**DS and HR delays.** We will raise with management the significant delays in the Offices of Personnel Security and Suitability (DS/SI/PSS) and Conduct, Suitability and Discipline (HR/ER/CSD) to process employee cases, e.g., security clearances and potentially adverse administrative actions.

While affected employees await the processing of their cases, their tenure and/or promotions are withheld. Once bidding season comes around, despite being recommended for promotion, these employees are unable to bid on assignments at the next grade. In security clearance cases, employees are forced to return to Washington on over-complement status until their cases are processed.

We estimate that, on average, an employee is in limbo for approximately two and a

### AFSA values each and every member. We will never promote the needs of one group of members over another.

half years in security clearance cases. With HR-driven cases, it is not unusual for individuals to go through two promotion cycles and be recommended for promotion each time, only to be told the promotion is held in abeyance pending resolution of their case. Our goal here is to collaborate with DS and HR to find ways to make the process more efficient.

**VLAs.** AFSA is addressing challenges related to the Visa Lookout Accountability issue, a concern for consular officers and fellows alike.

VLA violations occur when the department determines that officers have not made good-faith efforts to properly resolve all information available before issuing visas (per 9 FAM 307.3-1). In some cases, however, we've observed that officers have received VLAs because of conflicting guidance between different entities within the department.

We are looking at these problems and examining the possibility of mitigating the discipline, among other issues. Of course, we are not against disciplinary action, if it is warranted. But we must ensure that the policy is clear on what constitutes a violation and what is a fair basis for taking any such action.

#### Locality pay for local

**hires.** This was a sore point for me when I joined the Foreign Service as a local hire in October 1991. Back then, local hires—including specialists—could not benefit from lodging and per diem for any time they were in training at the Foreign Service Institute, even though we all had the same expenses.

The department now provides locality pay for all trainees at FSI for more than six months, but not for those whose training is less than six months.

We believe the time has come to ensure that *all* local hires are treated equally from day one, whatever the length of their training period before deployment overseas. We have officially asked the department to make this change.

Finally, the department has a new extended leave without pay program that will allow employees to take unpaid leave for up to three years at a time. AFSA worked with the department on developing this important work-life balance program in 2016, but it was placed on hold during the subsequent hiring freeze. We are happy it is now back on track, which will help both with retention for the department and flexibility for employees. ■



## Workforce Planning: The Horse That Should Pull the Reorganization Cart

Foreign affairs agencies—and I still count USAID as one despite some worrying trends—are complex institutions. There are a lot of moving people, shifting timelines, complicated technical challenges, multiple stakeholders and competing priorities that can turn on a dime (or rupiah, piaster, afghani, pula, dinar, peso, birr...)—and, of course, plenty of rules and regulations.

For Foreign Service officers, much of the complexity centers on the merit-based nature of the Foreign Service and the need to chart a multi-decade career path while managing assignments, family demands, trainings, promotions and the like. We find ourselves sharing a passion for mission and also competing with one another for assignments and promotions.

And, regardless of backstop, we know there simply aren't enough FSOs to achieve the agency's goals. So the agency's capacity—and commitment—to workforce planning to address these challenges is crucial to maintaining a strong, sustainable USAID and critical to an effective reorganization.

"Workforce planning" is a self-defining term, but since we're bureaucrats (and I say that with pride), let me offer the Office of Personnel Management's definition:

*Workforce planning is*

*the systematic process for identifying and addressing the gaps between the workforce of today and the human capital needs of tomorrow. Effective workforce planning enables the organization to:*

*Align workforce requirements directly to the agency's strategic and annual business plans;*

*Develop a comprehensive picture of where gaps exist between competencies the workforce currently possesses and future competency requirements;*

*Identify and implement gap reduction strategies;*

*Make decisions about how best to structure the organization and deploy the workforce; and,*

*Identify and overcome internal and external barriers to accomplishing strategic workforce goals.*

But for years now, USAID has had little to no ability to conduct this critical function. This condition persists even as we Transform. How can this be?

A lot comes down to agency leadership commitment and institutional capacity. Or, more specifically, the agency choosing *not* to dedicate adequate financial and human resources to build and sustain this fundamental workforce planning capacity—be it for FSOs, Civil Service colleagues or people hired through other mechanisms.

For many years, we have heard the refrain, "USAID's largest and most valuable asset is our people: their skills, their knowledge and their experience." But instead of focusing on building the strong workforce planning capacity to support our people, we rely on dedicated backstop coordinators, most of whom work full time in other positions, to maintain informal records on "their" backstop staff.

We rely on a few (too few!) committed individuals in the Human Capital and Talent Management and Administration and Management Support offices to keep track of who's going where when, and who's not going there and why, and who is tandem, and so forth.

I know HCTM and other colleagues are working hard (and sometimes burning out), and I know the technology and legacy systems they deal with are old, but there's a reason for this: agency leadership has chosen not to allocate the resources, management bandwidth and staff to effectively tackle these issues. And, as a result, the effectiveness of both the agency and FSOs is hurt.

In February, State published its "Five-Year Workforce and Leadership Succession Plan Fiscal Years 2018-2022." I don't know if my State colleagues would agree with all of

its findings, but the report and recommendations are driven by data, analysis, identified gaps and priorities.

Right now, USAID has Bureaus and Independent Offices trying to navigate myriad systems to encourage staff to get the job done.

The Hiring Review and Reassignment Board assesses Civil Service-related requests, and B/IOs submit "Foreign Service Limited" appointments, largely to convert Participating Agency Service Agreement positions or in response to HRRB denials.

Congress has told us to hire more Foreign Service officers (we welcomed 22 in September; great, but where are the rest?). Personal services contractors continue to fill the bulk of some B/IOs, and missions continue to seek more FSOs to ease their staff burdens and implement the USAID Administrator's vision.

Where is the workforce "corporate"-level planning, even as new bureaus, centers, hubs, gears, spokes and the like are being stood up?

There are many developmental reasons why the proposed reorganization structures make sense (though as development professionals I'm sure we could debate the details ad nauseam).

But the *big* question remains: How can we forge ahead with the biggest reorganization in decades without fundamental workforce planning in place for staff (our most valuable resource)?

AFSA welcomes an agency response. ■



Views and opinions expressed in this column are solely those of the AFSA USAID VP. Contact: jay.carreiro@trade.gov

## The Commercial Service at 40? Actually, It's Been a Bit Longer...

The Foreign Service Act of 1980, which established the framework for the Foreign Service as we know it today, is about to reach its 40th anniversary. However, the roots of the U.S. and Foreign Commercial Service, as we are officially known, stretch back much further and deeper than you may realize.

Obviously, commerce and trade have always been important elements of U.S. foreign policy, but formal, federal acknowledgment of its vital role to security and prosperity did not really happen until the late 1800s.

Back then, the Foreign Service did not exist in the way we know it today. For one

thing, the diplomatic and consular services were separate. And it was not until 1897—with the creation of a new Bureau of Foreign Commerce within the State Department—that a commercial track for our diplomatic efforts abroad was officially established.

After a short time at the State Department, the bureau was moved to the newly created Department of Commerce and Labor in 1903. A few years later, it was renamed the Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce. The name was an important nod to our domestic colleagues, as Export Assistance Centers had already been operating in several states.

Select civil servants from the bureau, known then as trade commissioners, were sent to key markets around the world to promote U.S. commercial interests. However, trade commissioners were not considered diplomats, and consequently were not afforded diplomatic status in their host countries.

This arrangement seemed to work, at least until 1924 when the Rogers Act brought together the diplomatic and consular services as a single Foreign Service under the U.S. State Department.

To address the issue of U.S. trade commissioners working abroad without diplomatic status, and to clarify the commercial role in diplomacy, Congress passed the Foreign and Domestic Commerce Act of 1927. The act created the Foreign Commerce Service (not a typo) to promote foreign and domestic commerce, just as the name implied.

The act also formally granted diplomatic status to trade commissioners, who were renamed commercial attachés. However, the commercial attachés were still technically civil servants because they were not commissioned Foreign Service officers under the Rogers Act.

So in 1939, all non-State Department foreign services were consolidated under the State Department umbrella. The Export Assistance Centers, however, remained with

the Commerce Department.

This new arrangement lasted for 40 years. But as time and attitudes shifted, commercial matters once again came to the fore, and Congress decided a new direction was needed. In 1979, the Trade Agreements Act finally transferred overseas commercial programs from the Department of State to the Department of Commerce, where they remain to this day.

In 1980 the Foreign Commercial Service was officially created, and the Foreign Service Act of 1980 established the system that all foreign services, regardless of agency, live under today.

In 1981, in a final bit of important housekeeping, the Foreign Commercial Service was renamed the U.S. and Foreign Commercial Service, harkening back to the old Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce. As was the case then, the name emphasizes the unique and essential connection of our domestic and overseas operations.

Today, we have colleagues posted in more than 75 markets throughout the world, collectively representing more than 92 percent of worldwide GDP. Additionally, our domestic colleagues work to help U.S. exporters every day from more than 100 locations throughout the United States. Working together, we help U.S. companies reach new markets and new heights.

So, a happy 40th to the modern Commercial Service, and many happy returns!



### AFSA Governing Board Meeting, Sept. 18, 2019

**USAID Standing Committee:** Jason Singer asked for approval to remove three people and add three people to the USAID Standing Committee. The request was approved.

**Awards Committee:** John Naland moved that 10 individuals each be recognized for their achievements in the study and utilization of difficult languages in 2019 by awarding each individual a \$1,000 Matilda Sinclair award. Tamir Waser asked to have FSI language names appropriately used in award descriptions. The motion passed.

**AFSA-PAC:** Mary Daly moved to elect Virginia Bennett to serve as AFSA-PAC Treasurer, John Naland to serve as AFSA-PAC Assistant Treasurer and Kalpna Srimal to serve as AFSA-PAC Keeper of Records. The motion passed.

**New Associate Members:** Jeffery Austin of the Membership Committee moved that four people be approved as new associate members of the American Foreign Service Association. The motion passed. ■



Views and opinions expressed in this column are solely those of the AFSA FAS VP.  
Contact: michael.riedel@usda.gov | (202) 720-2502

## The Trees or The Forest?

Returning to Washington, D.C., from an overseas posting always has its challenges and “opportunities for growth.”

Coming back to start as AFSA vice president offers me the chance to serve the greater good, and provides additional opportunities to be immersed in a whole new universe of issues. I am quickly reminded that the woods are always made up of trees, and also their branches and roots. But enough with the forestry analogies.

Serving as VP for our chronically understaffed Foreign Service corps in FAS is an honor that compels one to focus on so many areas. Some of these are forest-sized—such as the need for

AFSA to play a constructive role in the ongoing “Thrive” reconfiguration—while simultaneously fulfilling its role as the first line of defense for our Foreign Service community.

“Thrive,” according to FAS Administrator Kenneth Isley, is a “reorganization [that] will better position FAS to capitalize on its elevated role by making the agency more efficient, effective and customer-focused. In the new organizational structure, FAS mission-critical functions will be realigned to four program areas: Trade Policy and Geographic Affairs, Global Market Analysis, Global Programs and Foreign Affairs.”

Thrive was originally scheduled to be implemented on Oct. 1, but it has been

delayed as adjustments and negotiations continue.

AFSA and FAS must continue to take everyone’s concerns to heart and help people arrive at the best possible outcomes. What affects one member affects not just that individual; it almost certainly has an impact on our entire Foreign Service family. After all, the concern of one member is sure to be the concern of someone else as well.

This brings me back to the original question posed in this column’s title. I submit that, without tending to and strengthening the health of FAS, we (AFSA FAS) will not be living up to our responsibilities to our individual members.

And vice versa: if we do not care for and assist each

of our members, then why tend to our interests in a healthy FAS? Luckily, we don’t need to choose.

As a strong and constructive partner to both FAS as an organization, and to each member of our Foreign Service family, AFSA will continue to fulfill its mandate.

In my next column, look for more detail on the issues (no trees or forests, I promise) that AFSA FAS aims to address over the next two years. Near the top of that list is the stigma of mental health issues, its acknowledged devastating effects, and ways for us all to “get over it” and openly fight it in our Foreign Service, agency management and professional communities. ■

## AFSA Congratulates Job Search Program Graduates

AFSA President Eric Rubin congratulated graduates of the Job Search Program at the Foreign Service Institute on Aug. 30 and thanked them for their years of service.

He noted that it is important to maintain a strong network in retirement, and that AFSA’s resources, including the retiree directory, are some of the best ways for JSP graduates to preserve and grow connections to the Foreign Service community.

AFSA encourages graduates to join AFSA’s campaign to educate the public about

what the Foreign Service does, and why it matters.

Foreign Service graduates of the JSP program who are interested in sharing the story of the Foreign Service should consider volunteering to take part in AFSA’s Speakers Bureau. AFSA can provide talking points and other resources for retirees (as well as active-duty members) who speak at high schools, colleges and to community groups.

Switching from active-duty to retiree membership with AFSA is not an auto-



AFSA President Eric Rubin congratulates graduates of the Job Search Program at the Foreign Service Institute.

AFSA/CHRISTINE MIELE

matic process, so members approaching retirement should contact Member Services (member@afsa.org) to ensure that they do not lose out on the benefits of being an AFSA member.

Those benefits include access to the AFSA online forum, dedicated retiree counseling and a bimonthly newsletter, as well as a subscription to *The Foreign Service Journal*. ■



## Rejecting Retreat

On Sept. 6, the Chicago Council on Global Affairs released *Rejecting Retreat: Americans Support US Engagement in Global Affairs*, which examines American attitudes toward foreign affairs.

Much of the content of the Chicago Council's polling has direct relevance to the ecosystem in which American diplomacy works, and certainly to the American Foreign Service Association's ability to connect with audiences around the country when we tell the story of the U.S. Foreign Service.

The Chicago Council's polling is also especially useful because it directly focuses on what Americans think of the U.S. role in the world—and because the council has been asking these questions for the past 45 years.

Intentionally or not, this year's report title evokes the wording of the 2017 State and Foreign Operations subcommittee report that called the then-proposed 32 percent cut in the international affairs budget a "doctrine of retreat." Just as Congress *then* made a strong statement against American retreat, according to the polling, Americans are rejecting a U.S. retreat from the world *now*.

Here are a few numbers. As in earlier years, nine in 10 Americans want the United States to have a leadership role in the world. Consistent with earlier findings, 66 percent want that leadership role

to be shared. A full 74 percent think alliances make the United States safer. Seventy-three percent say the North Atlantic Treaty Organization is essential for our security.

Support for international trade is still rising. There is robust general support for international trade as being good for the American economy (87 percent) and for American companies (83 percent)—and yet there are high levels of Republican support for tariffs.

The report's authors lightly speculate that the seemingly contradictory outcome "partly reflects support for President Trump's trade policies"—the inference possibly being that Republicans think that tariffs are a good way to open trade further.

Getting below the top lines, the report shows a strong partisan split on the notion that immigration is a critical threat (78 percent of Republicans to 19 percent of Democrats) and the idea that climate is a critical threat (78 percent of Democrats to 23 percent Republicans).

Americans support the use of U.S. troops to come to the aid of allies only selectively (depending on the country). More Republicans see the rise of China as a critical threat (54 percent of Republicans to 36 percent of Democrats). However, for the first time since the question was asked in 2008, a majority of Americans

**Americans want the United States to be involved in the world *with our allies*—not necessarily always with troops, but with cooperation.**

(54 percent) sees climate change as a critical threat.

These findings are encouraging. Despite some influential voices who would ignore or antagonize our long-standing allies, Americans want the United States to be involved in the world *with our allies*—not necessarily always with troops, but with cooperation.

Keep these numbers in mind when the going gets tough—and these days, we know it can get very tough. *You, working around the globe to strengthen America's relationships, are in sync with the American people.*

And we here at AFSA want to be in sync with you. AFSA's active-duty survey closed in early September. While the survey certainly confirmed widespread support for AFSA's current activities, you told us that AFSA could do better.

For example, you told us we could do a better job in focusing on Foreign Service Specialists and Foreign Service personnel in non-State agencies. You told us to reach out to more parts of the diplomatic family—like Diplomatic Security members.

You also told us that you want help to be more avail-

able when you might be in trouble. Finally, you told us that we need to communicate more about what we are doing on your behalf and we need to sustain forceful advocacy on Capitol Hill and with agency management.

We hear you loud and clear, and we want to bring more voices into the conversations we have with members. Our resumed structured conversations started off with the Foreign Commercial Service, and we hope to continue with the U.S. Agency for International Development, the Foreign Agricultural Service and the Animal Plant Health Inspection Service, and then move to State specialists.

We will look for ways to expand our bandwidth so we can better respond to your needs. We will continue to tell the Foreign Service story on Capitol Hill and all around the country, and we will fight for our members when the going gets tough—and in current circumstances, we know it will.

Thank you for your service. Thank you for the time you took to complete the survey. Finally, thank you for the honest feedback, and keep it coming! ■

## FS Retiree Outreach and a Return to Chautauqua

A key part of every AFSA president's outreach is regular meetings with the many Foreign Service retiree associations across the country. Our retiree members are engaged and energetic, often playing a key role in amplifying AFSA messaging nationwide and taking a lead role in calls to action on advocacy issues.

On Sept. 17, AFSA President Eric Rubin met with the Foreign Affairs Retirees of Maryland and the District of Columbia. Joining the group for lunch and a presentation at the Five Star Premier Residences in Chevy Chase, Md., President Rubin discussed AFSA priorities and recent advocacy issues, the role of outreach in AFSA's strategy and the importance of retaining one's AFSA membership in retirement.

The crowd was lively and



AFSA Senior Adviser for Strategic Communications Lynne Platt speaks at the Chautauqua Institution in western New York.

asked a number of incisive questions, touching on the status of the USAID reorganization, the role of the State Department's Office of the Inspector General, and how President Rubin sees the engagement of new officers.

AFSA appreciates the leadership of F. Allen "Tex" Harris in this association and is grateful for the invitation. The opportunity to meet with

members in this way is invaluable to AFSA, and we encourage all Foreign Service retiree associations to provide a platform for the AFSA president when possible. Please contact Christine Miele at [miele@afsa.org](mailto:miele@afsa.org).

President Rubin's next meeting with retirees is with the Foreign Affairs

Retirees of Northern Virginia (FARNOVA) on Nov. 19, and there are plans to meet with the Florida retiree association in early 2020.

Elsewhere, AFSA returned to the Chautauqua Institution in western New York in September for a second time this year, to offer a Road Scholar program focused on the Foreign Service and diplomacy.

More than 120 participants attended from all over the country and had the opportunity to hear from six retired senior FSOs: James Benson, James Bever, Lynne Platt, Philip Shull and Ambassador John Dinger.

Platt, AFSA's senior adviser for strategic communications, gave talks about U.S.-Canada relations as well as the benefits the Foreign Service brings to our citizens back home, while AFSA Manager for Outreach Allan Saunders gave a primer on the Foreign Service.

The Chautauqua programs are an important part of AFSA's educational outreach efforts, as they have a high profile and attract large audiences. We have worked with Chautauqua since 1996 and greatly value this long-standing collaboration. ■

## What's New at DACOR?

As its historic redbrick federal mansion at 1801 F Street in northwest Washington, D.C., nears its 200th anniversary, DACOR—which was founded in 1952—has embarked on a journey of renewal.

The organization has new leadership, a new executive director and a renewed commitment to its mission: promoting diplomacy, supporting the Foreign Service

and bringing together the larger foreign affairs community.

DACOR, whose members number 1,700 worldwide, is dedicated to bringing foreign affairs professionals together in support of the Foreign Service, to enhance public understanding of diplomacy and to preserve the historic DACOR Bacon House as a



**DACOR**  
An Organization of  
Foreign Affairs Professionals

meeting place for frank and constructive dialogue about international events and diplomacy.

DACOR's ongoing partnership with AFSA includes events such as hosting the celebratory lunches for the

*Continued on p. 96*



DACOR President Paul Denig



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## AFSA NEWS

*DACOR Continued from p. 95*

graduates of the Job Search Program at the Foreign Service Institute and co-sponsoring the Department of State's annual Foreign Affairs Day.

DACOR's new leadership team—President Paul Denig, Vice President James Dandridge II, Secretary Angela Dickey, Treasurer Lange Schermerhorn, Assistant Treasurer Robert Reis, Jr. and Assistant Secretary Richard McKee, supported by new Executive Director John Bradshaw—is pursuing priorities identified in a recent strategic planning effort.

DACOR has begun new outreach efforts in support of local teachers and students, expanded its presence on social media and started a bicentennial research project to interpret its museum holdings and learn more about the earliest inhabitants of the DACOR Bacon House.

DACOR continues to host weekly luncheon programs, an evening salon dinner series, the fall annual conference and its fellowship awards program.

Drawing on endowment funds, DACOR's sister organization, the DACOR Bacon House Foundation, awards \$250,000 annually through five programs including fellowships for second-year graduate students, as well as scholarships for undergraduates administered by AFSA.

Paul Denig assumed the presidency of DACOR and the Foundation in May after serving two years as vice

president, succeeding James Benson. Mr. Denig retired from the Foreign Service in 2008 after a 25-year career with the State Department, returning immediately as a Civil Service employee to lead the Office of U.S. Speaker and Specialist Program until 2010.

His overseas posts included Belgrade and Sarajevo, Yugoslavia; Hannover and Hamburg, Germany; and Durban, South Africa.

Newly elected Vice President James Dandridge II joined DACOR in 1997 after retiring from the State Department, USIA and, earlier, the U.S. Army. He served one three-year term on DACOR's board of governors and has been a DACOR member for the past 22 years.

Ms. Dickey was re-elected DACOR secretary, and former Ambassador Schermerhorn and Mr. Reis continue in their positions.

DACOR's new executive director is John Bradshaw, a former Foreign Service officer who assumed the position at DACOR in February, succeeding Susan Cimburek. Mr. Bradshaw most recently served as executive director of the National Security Network and the Enough Project and is a member of the board of directors of Disability Rights International. After a stint in the Peace Corps, he spent 14 years with the Foreign Service, serving in Venezuela, Brazil and Burma, as well as in Washington. ■

■ **Betty Ana Bernstein-Zabza**, 60, a retired Foreign Service officer, died on Aug. 3 in a hit-and-run accident in Falls Church, Va.

Ms. Bernstein was born on March 6, 1959, in Monticello, N.Y., to Gloria and Charles Bernstein. She earned degrees from the State University of New York-Binghamton; the former Antioch Law School in Washington, D.C.; and the National Defense University in Washington, D.C. In 1996 she married Pawel Zabza in Warsaw, Poland.

Ms. Bernstein-Zabza served as a Foreign Service officer for the State Department for 25 years, with postings in Poland, Switzerland, Germany and Israel, as well as Washington, D.C. Though she was tireless in her commitment to representing the United States abroad, her real passion was her work on gender equality, colleagues recall.

She held senior positions in the Office of Women's Issues and the Bureau of Counterterrorism and Countering Violent Extremism. She was a sought-after speaker on issues related to gender equality.

Friends and family members recall her sense of humor, compassion for those less fortunate and devotion to family and friends.

She is survived by her husband, Pawel Zabza; a son, Thomas Zabza; a stepdaughter, Alicja Zabza; her mother, Gloria Bernstein; a brother, Martin Bernstein; and nieces, Claire and Hannah Bernstein.

Memorial contributions may be made in her name to a charity of choice working on gender equality or animal welfare.

■ **Astrid Johanne Aarland Drotos**, 66, wife of retired Foreign Service Officer John Drotos, died on Aug. 27 in Boston, Mass., after a long struggle with ovarian cancer.

Ms. Aarland was born in Bergen, Norway, on Sept. 5, 1952, to Hans

Andreas and Johanne Aarland (née Tyssoy). A studious adventurer, she loved learning. She studied politics and government at the University of Bergen, French culture and language at the Sorbonne, English at Homerton College in Cambridge, U.K., and international law at the University of Leicester.

She was fluent in seven languages—her native Norwegian, Danish, Swedish, English, German, French and Russian.

Always seeking to know the world, Ms. Aarland served for a year on a Norwegian cruise ship. She worked for the Norwegian government and was deployed to Cambodia as a United Nations election observer and to Somalia as a political officer with the U.N. peacekeeping mission.

While serving in Somalia, she met and in 1997 married John Drotos, the mission's security adviser who was on loan from the State Department.

She visited Mr. Drotos during his assignments to Zagreb, Croatia and Hanoi and later accompanied him to Kazakhstan, serving as his interpreter and supporting his work as the country director of the U.S. Peace Corps program.

Her active participation and development of social and cultural programs for Peace Corps Volunteers and members of the diplomatic community pushed forward the U.S. government's foreign policy goals.

When they were not traveling, the Drotoses lived in Newport, R.I., where she worked as a guide and staff manager for the Preservation Society of Newport County and, later, for Destination Newport.

After Ms. Aarland-Drotos was diagnosed with ovarian cancer, the couple returned to Norway several times, toured Scotland and visited Canada, Paris, Cambridge, Berlin, Vienna, Budapest, Innsbruck and Liens.

On her deathbed, Ms. Aarland-Drotos said that giving away her possessions gave her great joy, knowing that these gifts would make others happy.

She leaves behind her husband, John; a brother, Audun; and sisters, Gerd and Malfrid, and their families.

■ **Brendan Andrew Hanniffy**, 75, a retired Foreign Service officer, passed away on Aug. 2 of respiratory failure in Hendersonville, N.C.

Mr. Hanniffy was born in Glasgow, Scotland, and immigrated to the United States in 1947. He graduated from the Air Force Academy and received advanced degrees from the University of West Florida.

Serving in the Air Force during the Vietnam War, he received the Distinguished Flying Cross and Air Medal with four silver oak leaf clusters. He later served in the Air Force Reserve and the Air National Guard.

In 1978 Mr. Hanniffy joined the U.S. Foreign Service. His first posting was as a consular officer on the border in Matamoros. He then served as an economic officer in London, Mexico City, Guatemala City, Los Angeles and Washington, D.C.

He particularly relished serving as civil aviation attaché in London from 1990 to 1994, and as head of the Office of Foreign Missions in Los Angeles from 1994 to 1996.

Mr. Hanniffy retired to western North Carolina in 2003. He enjoyed reading history books, collecting coins, traveling and spending time with family, who will remember him for his irreverent sense of humor, incredible breadth of knowledge and fondness for great meals out.

He is survived by his wife of nearly 51 years, Carol E. Hanniffy; children Elizabeth Kroupa (and her husband, Zachary) and Andrew Hanniffy; and grandchildren Lucinda, Flora and June.

■ **Deane Lawrence Hutchins, M.D.**, 94, a retired Foreign Service medical officer, passed away on July 8 at his home in Camden, Maine.

Mr. Hutchins was born in Kingfield, Maine, in 1925. He served with the Navy in the Pacific during World War II. Afterward, he graduated from the University of Maine and the University of Rochester School of Medicine and Dentistry in Rochester, N.Y.

Opening a family practice in Boothbay Harbor, Maine, he also provided medical care at the Student Health Center at the University of Maine. He later accepted a position with the World Health Organization's initial Worldwide Smallpox Eradication Program in Northern Nigeria and Sierra Leone.

Dr. Hutchins then joined the State Department as a medical officer, serving in Nigeria, Kuwait, Yugoslavia, Burma and Germany, as well as Washington, D.C.

After retiring from the Foreign Service in 1986, Dr. Hutchins served on the board of the Regional Medical Center in Lubec, Maine. He was a dedicated founding member of the West Quoddy Head Light Keepers Association and enjoyed silversmithing, woodworking, gardening, skiing and golf.

Dr. Hutchins is survived by his wife of 69 years, Virginia, and their daughters, Jean, Sally, Nancy and Becky.

Donations may be made in his memory to the West Quoddy Head Light Keepers Association at 973 S. Lubec Road, Lubec ME 04652.

■ **Rodney Charles Johnson, M.D.**, 87, a retired Foreign Service psychiatrist, died on July 29 at Countryside Manor in Sheboygan, Wis. He had been a resident in Countryside Manor's memory care unit for seven months.

He was born on March 30, 1932, to Alice (Jensen) and Ed Johnson in Audu-

bon, Minn. He graduated from Lake Park High School in 1950. In 1958 he married Dolcye Ann Torgerson, and they became the parents of three children.

Dr. Johnson completed his medical training at the University of Minnesota in 1961 followed by a residency in psychiatry. In 1965 he accepted a position on the staff of the Sheboygan Clinic.

In 1980 he joined the State Department as assistant medical director for clinical psychiatry. He participated in the debriefing of the American hostages when they were released by Iran.

Dr. Johnson traveled to various posts, including Mexico City for three years, where he served all of South and Central America and the entire Caribbean region.

As a lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Army Reserve, Dr. Johnson was deployed to Iraq during the Persian Gulf War in November 1990, serving on the front lines during Operation Desert Storm with the 7th Corps, 3rd Armored Division.

In retirement, he spent summers on Detroit Island in Lake Michigan, where he docked his 72-foot sailing ketch, the *Barlovento*. His proudest achievement was building a two-story stone house on his beloved island, setting every stone himself.

His love of sailing led to his crossing the Atlantic Ocean seven times in various sailboats.

Dr. Johnson is survived by his wife, Dolcye; sons, Kirt and Kristian; daughter, Kirstin (and her husband, Henry III) Brandtjen; twin grandsons, Douglas Charles and Conrad Robert; grandson Henry Brandtjen IV; two brothers; and one sister.

■ **David Taylor Jones, 77**, a retired Senior Foreign Service officer of Arlington, Va., died on Aug. 6 in Philadelphia, Pa., surrounded by his wife and daughters.

Mr. Jones was born on Dec. 22, 1941,

in Scranton, Pa., to William Taylor Jones and Martha Evans Jones. He earned bachelor's and master's degrees in international relations at the University of Pennsylvania.

At Penn he met Teresa Tie-Liang Chin, who would become his lifelong partner. They were married in Philadelphia in 1964, shortly before Mr. Jones' departure to Korea for a tour as a second lieutenant in the intelligence branch of the Army.

Two years later, Mr. Jones left active duty to pursue his passion for international relations by joining the U.S. Foreign Service. But he remained in the Army Reserve for more than 20 years and was awarded the Joint Service Commendation Medal for distinguished service when he retired as a lieutenant colonel in 1992.

Throughout his 34-year State Department career, Mr. Jones specialized in politico-military issues, including arms control. Following assignments to Paris, NATO/Brussels and the Greek Base Negotiations, he played a key role in the negotiation and ratification of the Intermediate Nuclear Forces treaty.

He was special assistant to Ambassador Maynard Glitman for the INF negotiations in 1987, and served as deputy director of the INF Treaty Ratification Task Force in 1988.

On promotion to the Senior Foreign Service, Mr. Jones became the foreign affairs adviser (POLAD) to two Army chiefs of staff from 1989 to 1992, for which the Department of the Army presented him with the Meritorious Civilian Service Award.

He was then awarded an Una Chapman Cox Fellowship, which he used to write "The Politico-Military Function and the Department of State: The Future of Foreign Policy Advisors (POLADS) in the 21st Century" (self-published, 2009).

His final assignment was a four-year posting as political minister counselor

at Embassy Ottawa, which sparked his deep abiding interest in U.S.-Canadian relations. He retired from the Foreign Service in 1998, after receiving several State Department Superior Honor and Meritorious Honor awards.

Not only did Mr. Jones enjoy the intellectual challenge of the work, but he was also passionate about serving his country, colleagues and family members recall, and treasured the friendships that emerged during his assignments.

In retirement, Mr. Jones enjoyed a prolific second career as a writer and editor. He wrote hundreds of articles, columns and monographs in Canadian and U.S. newspapers and journals, including *Hill Times*, *Policy Options*, *Embassy*, *Ottawa Citizen*, *Washington Quarterly*, *American Diplomacy*, *Orbis*, *Epoch Times* and the *Penn Gazette*, as well as articles for the Foreign Policy Research Institute. He was a frequent contributor to *The Foreign Service Journal*.

He edited numerous sections of the annual State Department human rights report and the international religious freedom report, and co-authored an analysis of the Clinton administration Middle East peace process for the State Department Historian.

He also authored or co-authored several books, including *Alternative North Americas: What Canada and the United States Can Learn from Each Other* (2014); *The Reagan-Gorbachev Arms Control Breakthrough* (2012); and *Forever Tandem* (2011).

Family members recall Mr. Jones' love of reading (5,250 titles were on his list of books read), travel, vanilla ice cream, "granny" cookies, baseball, a desire to wear all the Penn alumni regalia at homecoming and a habit of punning at every opportunity.

Mr. Jones is survived by his wife, Teresa

Jones; his three daughters, Martha, Lisa and Margaret Jones; two grandsons, David and Alexander Marshalleck; and a sister, Elizabeth Pendley.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests donations in memory of Mr. Jones to the Class of 1963 University of Pennsylvania Fund or the American Cancer Society.

■ **Robert "Bob" Alan Martin, 87**, a retired Senior Foreign Service officer, died on July 22 in Menlo Park, Calif., of cancer.

Mr. Martin was born in Philadelphia, Pa., and graduated from Episcopal and Andover academies. At Yale, he studied international relations and was a member of the *Yale Daily News*, graduating in 1954.

Drafted later that year, he served two years with the U.S. Army Counter Intelligence Corps in Germany before earning a degree in 1959 from the University of Pennsylvania Law School.

In 1960 Mr. Martin entered the Foreign Service to begin a 35-year career focused principally on arms control and other national security issues. He was assigned to the Arms Control and Disarmament Committee from 1961 to 1964, serving in Geneva as a member of the U.S. delegation to the Eighteen-Nation Disarmament Conference and in Cairo at the Second Non-Aligned Conference. He then spent a year in the Bureau of European Affairs.

In 1967 Mr. Martin was posted to the U.S. Mission to NATO in Paris, which was soon relocated to Brussels as a result of the French government's decision to withdraw from its military relationship with NATO.

Returning to Washington in 1970, Mr. Martin was assigned to the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs office supporting the SALT treaty negotiations. Introduced by an A-100 colleague in the department, he met and married Joanna Woods Witzel, a fellow FSO, in 1971.

In 1974, as one of the early tandem couples, Mr. and Mrs. Martin were posted to Vietnam—initially to Nha Trang and subsequently to Saigon. That unique assignment ended abruptly on the night of April 29, 1975, with Mr. Martin leaving from the embassy's roof to the aircraft carrier USS *Hancock* in the South China Sea.

Arriving back in Washington, he became State's representative on the delegation to the Peaceful Nuclear Explosions talks in Moscow. He was then assigned as political-military counselor at the embassy in Tehran.

Returning to the department in 1978, Mr. Martin was assigned to the Operations Center and then led the Political/Military Office in the Bureau of Intelligence and Research until 1982. He attended the Senior Seminar in 1983, and in 1984 was assigned to the U.S. Information Agency to handle the Geneva Summit.

From 1986 to 1990, he was posted to Frankfurt as political adviser and directed an interagency counterterrorism response team. He returned to Washington, and then retired in 1994.

In retirement, Mr. Martin took the opportunity to travel abroad. At home in Menlo Park, he closely followed national policy issues and enjoyed continuing education at Stanford University, gardening and docent service at a local National Trust property.

Mr. Martin is survived by his wife, Joanna; his sister, Barbara Pettinos; and many nieces and nephews.

■ **Erik Sedman Ronhovde, 82**, a former Foreign Service officer, died at his home in Washington, D.C., from pancreatic cancer on July 10.

Born in New York, N.Y., Mr. Ronhovde was the son of Andreas G. Ronhovde and Virginia Sedman Ronhovde. He attended elementary school in Stockholm, Sweden,

and graduated from St. Albans School in Washington, D.C.

In 1959 he received a bachelor's degree in Slavic studies from Harvard College. He was awarded a Rhodes Scholarship and studied international relations at The Queen's College, Oxford.

Mr. Ronhovde joined the U.S. Air Force in 1962 and was assigned as a first lieutenant to teach geography, international relations and defense policy at the U.S. Air Force Academy in Colorado.

In 1966 he was appointed a career officer in the U.S. Foreign Service, serving in Berlin, Vienna, Moscow and Budapest. He became fluent in Russian, German, Swedish, Hungarian, French and Italian.

Following his resignation from the Foreign Service in 1981, Mr. Ronhovde worked for nine years as a foreign exchange program manager for the USDA Graduate School's International Institute.

Mr. Ronhovde is survived by two sisters, Andrea Ronhovde and Nora Hohenlohe; a brother-in-law, Christian Hohenlohe; a sister-in-law, Julie Ronhovde; three nephews; two nieces; and 11 great nephews and nieces.

■ **Oliver "Ollie" Charles Shaw**, 85, a retired Foreign Service officer, died on Aug. 3 in Albuquerque, N.M., after a long fight with Parkinson's disease.

Mr. Shaw was born in St. Louis County, Mo., to Oliver and Clara Shaw, and he was raised there along with his sister, Shirley. He would later serve in the U.S. Army's 82nd Airborne Division.

In November 1961, Mr. Shaw joined the U.S. Foreign Service and served as a communications officer in Rangoon, Guatemala City, Brussels, Asuncion and Jakarta.

He then served as a budget and fiscal officer in Tehran, Tokyo, Nairobi, Cairo, La Paz, Kuala Lumpur and Hong Kong, from where he retired in 1991.

Mr. Shaw's three decades abroad included a broad range of experiences. On his first day in Rangoon, his first post, the communication center was too busy to show him the ropes, and he was told to "go sit in the corner," which he did all day. Only later in the day did he find out that a military coup was taking place.

His second tour, in Guatemala City, was spent under martial law, and there he witnessed a terrorist attack on a military convoy on his way to the airport.

In Tehran (even before the fall of the shah and U.S. embassy), he and other embassy personnel and their families were under constant terrorist threat.

In Kenya, he handled VIPs who arrived for the funeral of President Jomo Kenyatta. In Cairo, he took care of VIPs who came for the funeral of assassinated President Anwar Sadat, and was also in charge of security for three former U.S. presidents (Nixon, Ford and Carter).

Mr. Shaw's retirement was filled with music, books and discussions of politics and national and international events with anyone at any time. Friends and family recall his good humor, quick wit and big heart. His family feels so fortunate to have traveled the world and experienced a multitude of cultures.

Mr. Shaw leaves behind his wife of 56 years, Janet S. Shaw; a daughter, Michelle Crockett, and her husband, Robert, from Arvada, Colo.; a daughter-in-law, Jodi Shaw, from Honolulu, Hawaii; and three granddaughters, Jenna Crockett, Hayli Crockett and Lauren Shaw. He was predeceased by his son, Patrick L. Shaw.

■ **Jean Marie Heywood Tueller**, 90, wife of retired Foreign Service Officer Blaine Carlson Tueller and mother of U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Matthew Heywood Tueller, passed away on Aug. 14 in Lehi, Utah.

Ms. Heywood earned a bachelor's degree in home economics from Utah State University in 1952. She married Mr. Tueller in 1953, after his return from a church mission in Holland. They had met in 1944 as they began high school in Cedar City, Utah.

Mr. and Mrs. Tueller spent 30 years traveling on assignment with the Foreign Service, making homes in Dublin, Vienna, Tangier, Caracas, Panama City, Manila and Madrid.

In retirement, the couple returned to Utah and were called to preside over the Athens mission of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. From there, they traveled in Turkey, Albania, Cyprus, Jordan and Egypt.

Mrs. Tueller is survived by her husband, Blaine Carlson Tueller; their 10 children; 30 grandchildren; 19 great-grandchildren; and two sisters, Helen Davis and Myrl Jenkins.

A scholarship for international students has been established at Utah Valley University to honor Mr. and Mrs. Tueller's legacy of education, family and global community: the Blaine Carlson and Jean Marie Heywood Tueller Scholarship.

■ **Michael Masahiko Uyehara**, 64, a retired Foreign Service officer, died of cancer Jan. 10 at his home in Fairfax, Va.

Born in Honolulu, Hawaii, Mr. Uyehara joined the Foreign Service in 1986 and served in London, Belfast, Manila, Washington, D.C., Yokohama, Tokyo, Kyiv, Baghdad, Vienna and Belgrade. He retired in September 2018.

Before joining the Foreign Service, Mr. Uyehara served in the U.S. Army for eight years both as an enlistee and as an officer.

Mr. Uyehara is survived by his wife, fellow FSO Margaret A. Uyehara, and five children: Andrew, Leilani, Ryan, Christopher and Malia. ■

## Diplomacy in Desperate Times

### Lincoln, Seward, and US Foreign Relations in the Civil War Era

Joseph A. Fry, *University Press of Kentucky*, 2019, \$60/hardcover, \$55.10/Kindle, 256 pages.

REVIEWED BY JOSEPH L. NOVAK

There are far fewer books on the international diplomacy surrounding the Civil War than on its military campaigns and decisive battles. Into this mix comes Joseph A. Fry's concise *Lincoln, Seward, and US Foreign Relations in the Civil War Era*.

Professor emeritus at the University of Nevada–Las Vegas, Fry has given us fascinating portraits of President Abraham Lincoln and Secretary of State William H. Seward, and delves into their leadership and management of U.S. diplomacy during the war. His book shines a spotlight on how their successful collaboration helped save the Union.

Fry begins with brief biographic sketches of Lincoln and Seward, who could not have been more different. Seward came from an established family in upstate New York and was a well-known politician with service as governor and senator. Lincoln, in contrast, was from modest means in Kentucky and Illinois and, before his election as president in 1860, had served only sporadically in political office.

Fry goes on to describe what came to unite them: they were Whig Party members who then became Republicans and, most important, were both strongly antislavery.

The book hits its stride when probing Lincoln and Seward's diplomatic partnership that took shape amid the drumbeat of announcements by South-

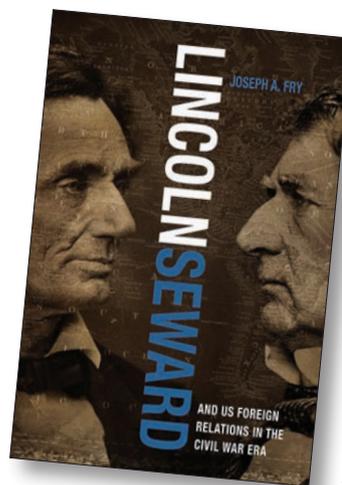
ern states that they were seceding from the Union. With the start of the war in April 1861, Fry vividly describes the tensions and uncertainties of the time as Lincoln and Seward took up their positions to get a grip on the situation.

On the foreign policy front, Lincoln and Seward rapidly developed the core policy guiding all of their diplomatic efforts: the United States, already on the defensive in the conflict with the South, must fight only "one war at a time."

As Fry makes clear, the practical result of Lincoln and Seward's policy was to work to prevent the "superpowers" of the era—Britain and France—from taking steps that could tilt the balance of the war in favor of the South, without the North entering into an actual military conflict with either country.

**This riveting book is at its best in describing how Lincoln and Seward worked together and with U.S. diplomatic missions abroad to prevent various crises from degenerating into permanent rupture and war.**

With the North flailing on the military front, both London and Paris quickly recognized the South as a lawful belligerent and seemed to be inclined toward granting outright diplomatic recognition. British Chancellor of the Exchequer William E. Gladstone even publicly stated in 1862 that "Jefferson Davis and other leaders of the South have [no doubt] made an army; they are making, it appears, a navy; and they ... have made a nation."



There was talk that a consortium of European nations would force the North to compromise and end the war. Lincoln and Seward knew that European intervention would likely be the death knell of the Union; they scrambled to head off that decision.

This riveting book is at its best in describing how Lincoln and Seward worked

together and with U.S. diplomatic missions abroad to prevent various crises from degenerating into permanent rupture and war. It was a close-run thing: controversies such as the Trent Affair (the 1861 interception of a British ship carrying Confederate officials) and the building of ships meant for the South's navy in foreign dockyards almost sparked conflict. Lincoln and Seward, however, were effective at making clear that the North had specific red lines that, if crossed, would lead to war.

They routinely took the off-ramp, however, before tensions spilled over into conflict, actively engaging London and Paris in diplomatic exchanges that resolved each crisis. Charles Francis Adams Sr., the U.S. minister in London and scion of the illustrious Adams family, and U.S. Minister to France William L. Dayton ably implemented Lincoln and Seward's policies. With Northern forces gaining ascendancy on the battlefield (e.g., Gettysburg and Vicksburg in July

1863), the threat of foreign intervention gradually faded away.

We know the rest of the story. Lincoln's tragic assassination in April 1865, days after the achievement of victory at Appomattox, ended the partnership.

The latter part of the book focuses on the rest of Seward's time as Secretary of State, and it seems a bit of an add-on that does not fit with the original focus on Civil War diplomacy. Subjects of particular interest in this section are Seward's close relationship with President Andrew Johnson, a controversial figure, and Seward's successful effort to ensure that the United



Abraham Lincoln.



William Henry Seward.

States purchased Alaska from Russia in 1867.

Fry acknowledges that he has neither used nor uncovered new sources of information, and so his book represents a synthesis of available information. The back of the book does include a

wide-ranging notes section that points the reader toward additional sources on specific subjects.

Overall, Fry's book is highly readable and of service to the history of U.S. diplomacy. In the course of American history, finding anything equal to the effectiveness of the Lincoln-Seward diplomatic partnership would be difficult. Fry convincingly makes his case that Lincoln and Seward deserve great credit for recognizing early on that a superior foreign policy would be a key to Northern victory. ■

---

*Joseph L. Novak, a Foreign Service officer, serves as a senior adviser in the Bureau of International Organization Affairs at the State Department in Washington, D.C.*



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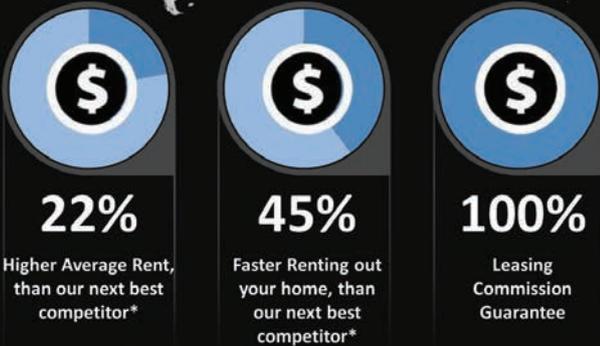
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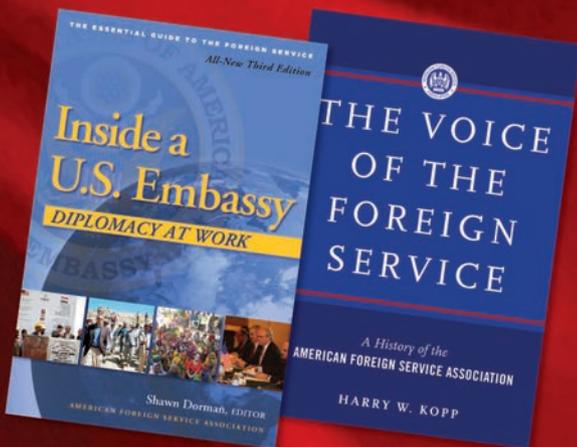
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# A Past Not So Distant

BY AMY CRAGUN HALL

Throughout my childhood, Christmas excitement was wrapped in the traditions my family had established at our first overseas post, West Berlin, in 1973. Included were chocolate coins, advent wreaths and a German pyramid.

No matter our locale, whether in the Congo or the United States or Mexico, we placed a red wax candle in an east-facing window on Christmas Eve, meant to show family and friends who were just out of reach that they weren't forgotten.

On Christmas Eve in 1988, that huge candle finally burned out, in our family room in Kinshasa, not long before the Berlin Wall came down.



We were a very young family when we arrived in West Berlin. My parents had only been married a couple of years, and I was 12 weeks old.

Since I was so young, my memories of our five years in Berlin come as impressions, not stories. I remember carrying a blue paper lantern at the end of a wooden dowel on St. Martin's Day. I remember standing in line to buy ice cream from the truck that stopped near the housing playground, my mom digging pfennigs out of a red plastic coin purse so I could pay for it.

I remember a ride on the duty train from West Berlin to Frankfurt and a ven-

dor's voice singing out "Orange juuuuice! Apple juuuuice! Peeeeepsi Colaaaa!"

And I remember the wall—bright, colorful and noisy on our side; gray and quiet on the other.

I remember our drives through East Germany to West. Soldiers and checkpoints and stopping to wait. Young Russian guards peered into our car as we waited and waited while Dad presented his flag orders and filled out the paperwork that would allow us to leave Berlin for a while.

My brother and I used to roll down the window just an inch and slip the guards Oreos, which they'd quickly hide in their pockets, paying us for the contraband with surreptitious smiles.

The wall, the borders and those checkpoints—and all the not-so-physical barriers that came with them—meant tension to me. They meant worry, and grumpy adults, and having to stay still and quiet when I wanted to run and wave and shout questions.

I didn't know anything about global politics, or realize that I was living my Western life on a tiny island surrounded by the East. But I understood those feelings, and I remember them.



Forty years later, I find myself living on what was once the "Other Side," having traded the Southeast Asian riots of

color of our most recent postings for the long, gray winters of Warsaw.

Warsaw in 2019 is certainly not West Berlin in the 1970s, but there are echoes that awaken those memories ... the crusty bread, the accompanying *schmaltz* (*smalec* here in Warsaw) and the leafless trees in the parks during wintertime.

Maybe it's the playgrounds at the center of apartment blocks that remind me of looking up from the sandbox to find my bedroom window, the one covered in foil to keep out the early summer sun. Maybe it's the stoicism I find in the Polish people, the sense of endurance and of a heavy past, not very distant. Or maybe it's simply the bright graffiti on gray walls, reminding me of a similar contrast in colors from so long ago.

This part of Europe is a different place now, with open borders and freedom of movement. I can drive from my house in Warsaw to Berlin in less than six hours. There are no more checkpoints, no more time limits. But this place is also where memory is long, and the past is somehow always present.

I recently sat at a coffee shop with a Polish woman who made frequent East-West crossings all those years ago. She shared some stories and I shared some memories; and those feelings bubbled up again—some bitter for her, others full of tension for me.

I told her it was so long ago, and I was so young, that I can't be sure that my impressions are real. Maybe I imagine I remember these things.

"No," she said. "You know. We know." And we cannot forget. ■



*Amy Cragun Hall currently works as a CLO coordinator at the U.S. embassy in Warsaw. She and her husband, Consular Officer John Hall, have also served in Bangkok and Chennai. Amy grew up in a military and Foreign Service family in Berlin, Kinshasa, Mexico City and Santiago. She is happy to be raising second-generation third-culture kids.*



**S**oviet leader Vladimir Lenin, sitting and enjoying a book near Druskininkai in southern Lithuania. Statues of him and many of his communist-era contemporaries can be found at Gruto Parkas, a sort of theme park dedicated to preserving and displaying unwanted, and definitely unloved, memorabilia from the days of the Soviet Socialist Republic of Lithuania. After the fall of the Berlin Wall and collapse of the Soviet Union, the statues were removed and stored. Lithuanian businessman Viliumas Malinauskas collected the statues and other relics, and opened Gruto Parkas in 2001. ■

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*James Talalay is a Foreign Service spouse, currently posted in Kuala Lumpur. His previous posts were Chennai and Vilnius. This photo was shot with a Fujifilm X-T10, 35mm lens. You can see more of the statues from Gruto Parkas at James' blog, [hellotalalay.blogspot.com](http://hellotalalay.blogspot.com).*

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