

Interview with Paul Kreisberg

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

PAUL KREISBERG

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Initial interview date: April 8, 1989

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Tucker: I think we would like to begin by asking you how did you get interested in China, and was that before or after you entered the Foreign Service?

KREISBERG: No, I became interested in China when I was in graduate school. I went to the East Asian Institute for two years.

Tucker: At Columbia?

KREISBERG: At Columbia. When I passed the Foreign Service exam, which was while I was at Columbia, I had a choice between going on and doing what you both do or going into the Foreign Service. I chose the Foreign Service and didn't finish my Ph.D. That was in 1952. I joined the Foreign Service in the fall of '52.

I went to India for a couple of years because they made a practice of never sending you where...

Tucker: Where you wanted to.

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KREISBERG: Where you really wanted to go. They had to find out whether you were interested in the Foreign Service and not just in working on China.

But after I finished two years in India, I went off to Taiwan and did a year of language training there and then to Hong Kong. I was in Hong Kong for four years between '55 and '59 and came back and was in INR working on internal Chinese political affairs from 1960 to 1962. Then I went back into the India subcontinent field for about two years—a year of area training at the University of Pennsylvania and a year in Pakistan. I came back to the State Department desk in the spring of 1965, where I was the officer in charge of China affairs in what is currently the Office of People's Republic of China and Mongolian Affairs, but what at that time was called the Office of Asian Communist Affairs because of Chinese and Republic of China on Taiwan sensitivities. I then became the director of that office from 1968 to 1970.

Tucker: We will come back to some of that later period. During the time that you were in India, at the very beginning of your career, were you able to follow China, or was that a concern of yours?

KREISBERG: I was not following China. I was in Bombay, and China never crossed my desk. Tucker: In that case, let's go on to the period where you were in Taiwan studying language. I assume that with your interest in China, that you were an observer of what was happening around you, and you weren't just studying language. What were your impressions of Taiwan in that period? Economic conditions, political conditions, strains between the local population and the mainlanders, anything like that.

KREISBERG: Well, first was that it was a period of intense public propaganda. Everywhere that you went, there were posters and signs to support the government in Taiwan, to oppose the People's Republic of China, to “Gloriously Return to the Mainland” [Kuang Fu Ta Lu].

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There was a considerable degree of tension between Taiwanese and mainlanders, very little speaking of Mandarin in the streets. And few of the people that I knew didn't speak Mandarin at all, or if they did, with a very strong Taiwanese accent.

I had been divorced just before I went there, and I was going around with a young Chinese woman at the time. Her Chinese was absolutely execrable. I mean, it was just dreadful.
[Laughter]

Cohen: Your contacts were mainly Taiwanese, then?

KREISBERG: Those were the people who were mainly in Taichung. The concept that the embassy had was they would put us into a place where there were not a lot of foreigners, so our Chinese would not be polluted. But they hadn't really thought about the fact that there weren't many mainlanders there either. So the main good Mandarin was being spoken at the language school.

There were military around, and we saw a fair number of them but not socially. But there wasn't any violence. We never saw any overt expression of tension between the mainlanders and Taiwanese.

It, of course, was a period of very low development in town. Very few cars. Most people rode bicycles or bicycle driven rickshaws. The outskirts of the town where the language school sat at the edge of a rice paddy, was about half a mile from the very center of town. The whole population of Taichung at that point was probably under a 100,000, and now it is a city of well over a million, an industrial and major administrative center. It is the contrast and the change over the last thirty years that is striking.

Cohen: Tunghai University hadn't been built yet, had it?

KREISBERG: It had just been built, and opened while I was at the language school. We were able to go out and speak to people there because there were more Mandarin

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speakers in Tunghai. It was, of course, very difficult to, and absolutely illegal, to listen to Radio Beijing or any of the other Chinese communist radio stations. It was illegal to have materials from China. We weren't able to look at the People's Daily. We weren't able to have FBIS there. So my knowledge of what was happening actually in China was that the language school was sharply curtailed. I picked it up only when I went up to the embassy where the people briefed us.

Cohen: Rankin was still there, wasn't he?

KREISBERG: Karl Rankin was the ambassador for part of the time. [Everett] Drumright, who had been my Consul General in Bombay a few years earlier, was there subsequently as Ambassador.

Tucker: Do you have any recollections of impressions? Did you meet with Rankin or Drumright?

KREISBERG: My relations with Drumright were not good. He was an aloof and chilly person, intensely anti-communist and anti-PRC.

I violated his instructions at one point in Bombay by allowing an American newspaperman on a Fulbright scholarship to return to the United States via Europe to keep some appointments he had made there, even though we had been instructed to amend his passport so he would have to go directly back to Washington in order to testify before the McCarran Committee. He had been suspected of spying for the Chinese Communists or the Soviets. I thought this was probably absurd but in any event he said he had a brief commitment at the University of Rome or the University of Bologna. I said I didn't see any reason why he shouldn't fulfill those commitments for a few days. Drumright and I had a big fight about that. The newspaperman was eventually cleared but the experience dramatically affected his later career.

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Tucker: I don't know if it is really important, but do you remember the name of the journalist, by any chance? We can probably find that out.

KREISBERG: Yes, it was Amos Landman and his wife Lynn. He and his wife were wanted because they had written a book together in Shanghai in the late 1940s and were being accused of having had connections with a Soviet agent in Shanghai at the time.

Tucker: Yes, I have read the book, indeed.

[The book referred to is Profile of Red China (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1951).]

If I were to ask you to reflect a bit on what sort of an officer Drumright was, is that typical of the way he ran...

KREISBERG: Very rigid. He ran things absolutely by the book. Very conservative. He, of course, had been one of the staunchest opponents of the communists and strongest supporters of the KMT national government while he was in Nanking. The man became a strong policy enemy, and, I think, not a personal friend of any of the China officers who subsequently were dismissed, or cast into oblivion, by Senators McCarthy and McCarran.

Tucker: Did you ever have a sense, you may not have heard it at the level that you were able to penetrate, but I know that Washington was sometimes unhappy with Karl Rankin for giving too much support to the Kuomintang and forgetting which government he represented? Were there similar concerns about Drumright?

KREISBERG: I don't remember.

Tucker: When you went to the embassy, did you deal with other officers there? Is there anyone else that you recall that is worth mentioning?

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KREISBERG: No, not really. I can't remember any of the people who were active at the embassy at that point.

My reasons for going up to Taipei, basically, were just to pick up some food—the supplies in Taichung were much more limited than they were—or packages or mail. I was only there for ten months. I was not there for the full two years because I had had two years of Chinese before I went to Taiwan. So I was the first graduate from the language school in the post-China language school years.

Tucker: Did you have any contacts at all with the American military mission in Taiwan in that period?

KREISBERG: No, not at that period.

Tucker: Being in Taichung, perhaps you would have had an opportunity to observe Taiwan independence movement activities, if there were any.

KREISBERG: There was nothing to be seen at that point. I mean, there was a great deal of consciousness of what had happened back in 1947, but everyone was very quiet, they had really been cowed and there was virtually no discussion of it in any language that I understood. [Laughter]

My guess is that there probably was a certain amount in Taiwanese or Japanese. That was a period in which a fair number of people spoke Japanese. And you heard a good deal of it in the streets.

Tucker: Were you at all sensitive to any tensions between the Taiwanese or Chinese and Americans?

KREISBERG: Between Taiwanese and Chinese and Americans, no. No, I saw or at least felt none.

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Tucker: Because, of course, by 1957, you had riots against the Americans, but you...

KREISBERG: That's right. At that point—this was 1955—there was nothing to be seen of that sort.

Cohen: Not even after the withdrawal from the islands and the Strait crisis and the anger about it?

KREISBERG: No. I literally saw nothing and heard nothing about it. In retrospect, we were really quite isolated at the school!

Tucker: Was there any other fallout of the Taiwan Strait crisis of '54-'55 that came to your attention while you were there? Were you actually there during the latter part of it?

KREISBERG: I was there, quite frankly, because, although I had been drafted into the Army to go to Korea, my draft board thought that going to Taiwan was as brave and heroic at the time as going to Korea. And I didn't disabuse them of that. [Laughter]

Taichung really was a backwater. It was as if the politics of Taipei and international relations just skimmed right over it. I learned much more after I left Taiwan and went to Hong Kong about what had been going on then than I ever was conscious of in Taichung. It is a marvelous illustration of how one can live in a middle of a tense area and really have no awareness of it.

Tucker: Okay, then, why don't we move on to the period that you were political officer in Hong Kong. Perhaps we could start with a brief discussion, and then if you want to go back to explore some of these, what the major issues were that you were following while you were in Hong Kong.

KREISBERG: We, of course, were not terribly much involved in U.S.- China relations. There was virtually nothing going on at the time. The consulate was engaged in two things.

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One, in monitoring internal unrest in Hong Kong. Shortly after I arrived, there were major demonstrations, rioting in Kowloon directed at foreigners and at the British, and in which it was assumed that the Chinese communists had played a major role.

But the major work that I did was in evaluating Chinese internal domestic developments and change. So the principal period on which I was writing was during the period of full cooperativization of agriculture, the 100 Flowers Movement and the anti-rightists crackdown after that, and then the beginning of the commune movement and the Great Leap Forward of '59 and '60.

Tucker: Can I go back and pickup just a question that occurred to me when you talked about the internal situation in the colony of Hong Kong? The riots that you observed and then subsequent efforts towards the end of the '50s and early '60s when the Chinese allowed large numbers of refugees to cross the border...

KREISBERG: Right.

Tucker: Because of their food shortages. These seemed to Americans as efforts by the communists to destabilize Hong Kong. And yet the Chinese never took Hong Kong back. Do you have any sense of why they would have been encouraging this kind of activity?

KREISBERG: It was a period, of course, in which the United States was very hostile to China. The interpretation that the British encouraged, and that we accepted at the time, was that China wanted to make life as uncomfortable for the British as possible in the hope that this would increase the willingness of the British to negotiate an early withdrawal from Hong Kong. Now whether there were ever any direct feelers to the British on this or not, I don't know.

If you haven't interviewed Harvey Feldman, you might want to do that, because Harvey was much more involved and directly responsible for the internal Hong Kong scene than I was.

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Tucker: As long as you mentioned Harvey Feldman, who else was there at the consulate at that period, and what other sorts of things might they have been doing at the time? What were their responsibilities?

KREISBERG: Well, the head of the political section was Harald Jacobson. His predecessor was LaRue (Larry) Lutkins. Larry was there just briefly after I arrived. He lives in Fairfax.

Robert Yoder, who lives up in Vermont, was there at the time. Thomas Ainsworth, who is retired from the Service and lives here in the Washington area, was there. Let's see. Drumright was also the consul general in Hong Kong. Drumright and I kept following one another around. Cohen: Whiting wasn't there, was he?

KREISBERG: Alan Whiting was there much later. He was there six or seven years after that in the mid-1960s.

Edwin Fried, who was at Brookings, was the head of the economic section. Lindsey Grant was there; he was my predecessor as the Director of Chinese Affairs. But those were the key people who were there.

Tucker: Do you have any idea where Grant is these days?

KREISBERG: Grant lives in Bethesda.

Tucker: Was the entire attention of the consulate really focused at internal affairs on the mainland?

KREISBERG: [Kreisberg shook his head negatively.] No, the consular section was extremely busy with visa applicants and there were moderately active commercial and USIS sections. But the bulk of the work of the political, economic, attach# offices and of the CIA station was on the mainland.

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Tucker: How did you get information? What were your primary sources?

KREISBERG: Well, there were four. One was the China mainland press and the Soviet-China mainland magazines, which we were responsible for. I was in charge of that activity for a year and of buying that kind of publication, and of maps and telephone books. The second was, most of which could not legally be exported from China, the FBIS, which, of course, was the broadcast system. The third were the British interrogations of refugees and other people who came across, which were made available to us. And the fourth were miscellaneous "walk-ins", people who themselves had either got into China to do business and then came out and talked to us, or who came in to try to sell us something, and at the same time, were telling us things that were going on. Those were the four key ways. And, of course, more covert intelligence information.

Cohen: Did you have your own refugees? Did you have a program for interviewing them yourselves?

KREISBERG: The refugees all came to the British. The only people who came to us were incidental "walk-ins". Sometimes the people were then passed on to the CIA and were then rehired but I almost never saw them then.

Cohen: I was thinking of a later time when Dick Solomon and Mike Oksenberg were going in and talking to refugees. You didn't have anybody who was going in to do that?

KREISBERG: There was little of that going on at this time.

Tucker: How extensive was the cooperation with the British?

KREISBERG: Very, very close.

Tucker: And that would be both at overt and covert levels?

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KREISBERG: Yes.

Tucker: Were their assessments of what was happening inside of China very different from American views, since their policy towards China was fairly different?

KREISBERG: No, I don't think so. I think that the general assessment of the community tended to come together around a fairly common center. There, of course, were a lot of other people who were following China. Father Ladany was turning out his China News Analysis at that time. The university, whatever it is called...

Cohen: Research Center.

KREISBERG: Well, I'm not sure it was called that at the time. It kept changing its name. It was relatively small.

Tucker: Field Services.

KREISBERG: Something like that. And they were following it. But there was a fairly common center of interpretation of what was going on, certainly in the period from, I would say, '56 to '59. There began to be some divergence after '59 over what had been responsible for the turn to the Left and the crackdown by Deng Xiaoping and Mao on the rightists and then the movement toward the Great Leap Forward.

There was a lot of uncertainty as to what one could believe about the Great Leap Forward. At that time, the viewpoints really began to diverge quite widely. It centered around what people's own personal ideologies were in part. That, I think, continued for much of the early part of the 1960s.

Tucker: Did the British themselves ever give you a sense that they were trying to convince you that their approach to China was a better one? Was there any discussion of the difference of American and British policy?

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KREISBERG: I never got a sense that there was a strong difference when I talked to people in the intelligence side of the British community in Hong Kong. But I admit I saw relatively little of the senior British political levels—the Political Advisor, the Chief Secretary, or the Governor. That was left to the Consul General, or the head of the Political Section. But I saw nothing in our reporting that suggested serious differences.

Tucker: You arrived in Hong Kong after the event, but was there any continuing impact of the Bandung Conference and China's effort to reach out to other Asian nations? Did that have an impact in Hong Kong?

KREISBERG: I didn't sense it. It wasn't the area that I was working on. I mean, we were all following Chinese foreign policy. But what you really have to remember is that we in Hong Kong knew what was going on in Chinese foreign policy from our reading of what the Chinese were telling the rest of the world. So none of us had any sense of confidence as to the accuracy of our interpretation of Chinese foreign policy. It was obviously what the Chinese wanted us to know. There were other places where people had better information on Chinese foreign policies, or thought they had.

Cohen: Where?

KREISBERG: Well, I think in different embassies—Delhi, Paris.

Cohen: From local contacts?

KREISBERG: Yes. Hong Kong was really far away from Beijing. It wasn't really used by China as its center for international foreign policy activities.

Tucker: Did you have any contacts in Hong Kong with people known to be from the mainland who were attempting in any way to...

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KREISBERG: No. We were instructed to stay far from them, and they were instructed to stay far from us. One of the “great moments” in U.S.-Chinese diplomatic relations was when permission was given—I think this was in the mid-1960s—for someone from the consulate to meet with Fei Xiaotong, the Publisher of the Communist-controlled Ta Kung Pao newspaper in Hong Kong. The degree of isolation that was imposed was almost complete. We knew no one and were supposed to know no one from the Bank of China or from New China News Agency. It was a period of great ideological intensity. Not as great as between 1950 and 1955, but the instructions were still, “You will not have contact with, discuss, shake hands with anybody from the People's Republic of China.”

Tucker: You know, Alan Whiting has said—I interviewed him—and he mentioned that it could be perilous to your career within the State Department if you could be heard speaking of Peking or Beijing rather than calling it Peiping. So that same sort of sense was true in the field?

KREISBERG: Yes, if you used it in written reports. My recollection is that in the office we often used “Beijing” simply because so much of the material we worked on used that form.

Tucker: A related question since you were monitoring radio and articles closely. One of the things that we have come across is a question over whether there were efforts by Zhou En-lai and the government to devise a peaceful solution to the Taiwan problem along the lines of “one China, but not now,” in the late-1950s. There is a speech that Chen Yi makes that Rod MacFarquhar has in his book that indicates some interest in following that sort of a line. Did you come across that? [Sino- American Relations, 1949-1971 (Newton Abbot, England: David & Charles, 1972)]

KREISBERG: I don't recall that now, Nancy. I mean, the one speech that Chen Yi made that—and it is conceivable that it was the same one—but I remember a different part of it which struck me. I thought it was about 1960 or '61, which would be a little after this. It was when Chen Yi, in effect, had adumbrated the coastal development strategy and gave a

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speech in which he spoke of Shanghai as a prospective international center for trade and commerce, which would be opened up in ways that would be broader and more favorable than other parts of the country. It was a one-time speech he made. It was never repeated. Obviously, it was Zhao Ziyang before his time. I don't remember the Zhou En-lai speech, no.

Tucker: Since your main focus was domestic affairs, I wasn't intending really to ask about that. But did you have a sense that, in watching these major developments going on in China, was there a feeling that the Chinese government was going to be so destabilized that there might indeed be a change or that anything of that magnitude was going to happen?

KREISBERG: Never. Nor from any interviews that we ever got.

Tucker: So there was a conviction then, amongst the officers, that China was going to be a continuing presence and that you would have to go on dealing with China?

KREISBERG: Absolutely. A broad consensus, I think, among most of the professionals that the sooner the United States began dealing with China, the better. The question was always how we were going to be able to create a strategy that would enable us to achieve this. But with Walter Robertson as the Assistant Secretary of State, it was a subject that one could not possibly put in writing.

Tucker: So discussions on the subject were going on in Hong Kong?

KREISBERG: Yes, no question about it. We were aware—although some of us were aware later than others—of what had been happening in Geneva with Alex Johnson [U. Alexis Johnson, U.S. Coordinator for the Conference and Ambassador to Czechoslovakia 1953-1957] specifically proposing normalization to John Foster Dulles in his bathroom. A great bathroom story.

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Tucker: Would you elucidate us on that?

KREISBERG: At one point during the Geneva talks when—what was it, '54-'55—Dulles was in his bathroom taking a bath, and Alex Johnson came in to describe the conversation he had been having with, I guess it must have been, Wang Bingnan at the time. He essentially said that the Chinese were willing to strike a deal on normalization, which would involve release of prisoners and meeting of virtually all the conditions that we had set. He recommended to Dulles that we accept it and begin the negotiations on that. And Dulles categorically and said, “No, we will not do it.”

Tucker: Was there any understanding at that point on what would happen with Taiwan?

KREISBERG: You probably ought to go and talk to Alex Johnson because I don't think Alex put this story in his book.

Tucker: No.

KREISBERG: That was an issue that was simply going to be resolved. How had not been set. It would have meant that we would have broken our relations with Taiwan, or that we would have some other kind of association with Taiwan. Conceivably where we are now except twenty years earlier.

Cohen: When did this occur?

KREISBERG: Well, it was obviously when Dulles was in Geneva, so it must have been '55. I love the image of Dulles lying in his bathtub while Ambassador Johnson is sitting on the toilet. It was obviously one of these large Swiss bathrooms.

Tucker: As far as you know, did Dulles give any reasons for not willing to explore it?

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KREISBERG: No. One could reconstruct what all of his reasons would have been. Having refused to shake Zhou En-lai's hand, it is not surprising that he would not be interested in normalization.

Tucker: One of the things I was going to ask in a moment, so I will do so now and come back to some other things, but as sort of a summation of your '56 to '59 service. Some recent work that is being done by scholars in the U.S. and indeed some scholars in China as well beginning to look at this, too, and some of my own works indicates that Dulles was not quite as inflexible as, at least the historians, have portrayed him until now.

He entertained a considerable degree of distrust and dislike for Chiang Kai-shek and found the association with the Nationalist Chinese uncomfortable. He was willing to be a bit more flexible on Communist China. That he did, indeed, explore possible ways of getting China into the United Nations without having to throw Taiwan out. That he was moving towards what we would call a two-China policy.

KREISBERG: That is interesting. I never heard that. Miss Ruth Bacon, who, of course, was for years the eminence grise in the Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs for keeping PRC out of the U.N., never gave me any hint that she had ever been asked to consider alternative contingencies. This was a subject that she and Louise McNutt—have you interviewed Louise—felt they had categorical assurances of support on from Dulles and Dean Rusk.

Tucker: I haven't interviewed her. I know her.

KREISBERG: Louise is the great residual memory on everything having to do with U.N. policy toward China. Ruth Bacon, I think, either has died or at least retired out of Washington. But your comment is new to me; that is interesting. When was that? When would that have been?

Tucker: Well, it is sort of an ongoing process, particularly the most notable occasion I can think of right now is just before—was it Senator George—he retired as Chairman of the

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Senate Foreign Relations Committee and just prior to that. So it should have been '56. Dulles talked with him about the possibility of his introducing the subject in the Senate and working at it.

KREISBERG: That is fascinating.

Tucker: Then George decides not to run again, retires, and Dulles doesn't pursue it.

Cohen: And we found some collaboration of that, because Rusk told me that Dulles approached him to go to the Democratic leadership and see if they would join him in a bipartisan effort.

KREISBERG: And was Rusk supportive of that?

Tucker: Apparently; he discussed it with the White House.

KREISBERG: That is funny.

Cohen: It fell through because George was challenged in the primary by Talmadge and withdrew and just dropped out of it altogether.

KREISBERG: Totally inconsistent with Rusk's great comment to one of the senior officers in the secretariat of the Department back in 1967—'66 or '67 that there are some young officers in the Department of State who are trying to persuade us to change our China policy, and we are not going to do it.

Tucker: Yes. We actually want to come back to talk about Rusk, but a little later.

Before we go on, what does happen around 1957 is a breakdown in America's efforts to isolate China on trade policies. There is some indication, now that we have gotten into the records, that Eisenhower actually was in favor of dropping the embargo entirely. Dulles

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was less inclined in that direction, though persuaded that in certain cases, trade might, in fact, be a good idea. Did this have much impact in Hong Kong?

KREISBERG: It doesn't ring a bell in my head. This is the kind of thing that Ed Fried is probably worth talking to about. My guess is that policy musings of that sort, and at that level, never got to anyone in the field, or even very far down into the Washington bureaucracy, anymore than it does now.

Tucker: One other sort of related question to Bandung which you mentioned not having thought of very much. But one thing that does become a bit of an issue in Hong Kong itself is there was an alleged effort to assassinate Zhou En-lai as he flew to the Bandung conference. There is some indication that the Kuomintang was involved with that and that the CIA may have been involved.

KREISBERG: I remember the incident and discussion of it. But I do not remember ever having seen any intelligence information that shed any light on what actually happened in that incident. I never talked to any of the British intelligence people about it.

Cohen: We saw some British intelligence records last summer. It seems quite clear that it all happened, and that all these different people were involved. But then we haven't been able to make the next step on that.

What did you know about covert operations against the mainland? To the degree that you can talk about it.

KREISBERG: Before I joined the Foreign Service, I was interviewed for the Central Intelligence Agency. One of the many reasons I didn't join was they tested me on my loyalty and my commitment by asking whether I would be willing to be dropped by parachute into Szechuan. My target would be to organize a group of anti-communist Kuomintang soldiers who remained up in the hills in Szechuan and work with them in a

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number of operations and then exfiltrate myself, if necessary, out through Burma. They looked at me, and they said, “Would you be willing to do that?”

And I said, “No.” And that was the end of my interview. [Laughter]

Cohen: If you said yes, you might have had to do it.

KREISBERG: Right! The plausibility of it was that this was about a year before [Richard] Fecteau and [John] Downey had a parallel experience, but at the other end of China.

I don't know anything about the details of what CIA was doing. But there was a very active program involving infiltrating people into China with specific targets—largely military, not surprisingly, at that point.

Cohen: Sabotage might have been...

KREISBERG: No, I don't think there was sabotage. I think it was largely intelligence. What do the Chinese have? Where do they have it? Is there any indication they are working on nuclear—even at that point, obviously, this was a constant source of concern—nuclear weapons? Where troops are being based. It was a standard semi-war kind of intelligence operation that we engaged in.

Cohen: Run out of Taiwan, I assume?

KREISBERG: Some things were run out of Taiwan. Some of those, obviously, gave us the documents. There was a lot that was run out of Hong Kong. Hong Kong was a very big station at the time. The person who you might want to talk to about that is Peter Sichel and Claire George.

Claire George lives here in Washington and was, until about six months ago, the Deputy Director for Operations at CIA. But at the time, he was a junior officer in Hong Kong.

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Peter Sichel was the head of station, and he is now in the wine business in New York.

Tucker: You mentioned documents. Could you explain what those documents are?

KREISBERG: The Lienchang documents?

Tucker: Yes.

Cohen: The ones John Lewis...

KREISBERG: Yes, John Wilson Lewis. The materials that were picked up as a result of a Chinese Nationalist operation into Fujian against the county seat of Lien-chang county. This produced what at the time, and perhaps even still, was one of the most useful collections of documents on Chinese policy. It enabled people to have a sense of the difference between implementation at grassroots and policy directives at the center. It focused on the enormous gap between what the government wanted to do, and what was actually being done.

Tucker: Who were the operatives that were being put in? You mentioned that they asked you whether you wanted to go in and train a group covertly. I would assume in information gathering, that it was difficult to drop an American in who wouldn't be spotted quickly.

KREISBERG: I have no idea whether they did much of that. This was during the Korean War. My impression is that certainly after Downey and Fecteau, they were extremely cautious about having any Americans directly involved.

Cohen: You can find some stuff in the Koo papers on who the Americans are [Ambassador V.K. Wellington Koo Papers, Columbia University]. Not that were going in, but that were going over to Taiwan and preparing groups to go over.

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Tucker: Do you know anything about the operations that were going on? You mentioned that they would have pulled you out through Burma. Anything about the operations that were going on with the Kuomintang irregulars in Burma at the time?

KREISBERG: No.

Tucker: Anything about a company called Sea Supply that was dropping...

KREISBERG: No, I don't know. You have now exhausted my operational knowledge.
[Laughter]

Tucker: Did you know Ray Cline in that period?

KREISBERG: Yes. I have known Ray Cline for, oh, 35 years. Ray was in Taipei while I was studying Chinese. On one of his many tours in Taiwan.

Tucker: Why was he so successful at what he did?

KREISBERG: Gosh, I don't know. I mean, he obviously has a very reassuring personality and is very low-key. I assume that he was, in classical operational terms, an effective person on the ground. His career, of course, was primarily as an analyst. What always struck me as being curious about Ray is that he didn't know Chinese. But he was nevertheless...

Tucker: He didn't know any Chinese?

KREISBERG: No.

Tucker: I didn't realize that. I thought he had established a fairly close relationship with Chiang Ching-kuo.

KREISBERG: Always through interpreters.

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Tucker: Interesting.

KREISBERG: Pat Wen probably was a key interpreter when he was over there. Although Pat mainly worked, I think, with the Generalissimo.

Cohen: I got set up with something Jim Ireland introduced me to when I worked there. Trying to set up something where I would write a biography of Ching-Kuo, and Pat was the go-between on that. This would have been about '65 or '66.

KREISBERG: Harvey Feldman was, I believe, considering writing a biography of Chiang Kai-shek. They agreed to open up all the Kuomintang archives to it. But he has not committed himself to do it. What is worth knowing is that the KMT is prepared to open up those archives to the right person.

Tucker: Interesting. Before we go on, one last area of concern, a major one, is the Quemoy and Matsu crisis of 1958. I imagine that even though you were focusing on internal issues, this was something that you also paid some attention to at the time.

KREISBERG: Yes. But, you see, what we were doing is, essentially, reporting on, analyzing, and picking up through intelligence and interviews information on the Chinese intentions during the Quemoy- Matsu crisis. The operational side of it was, obviously, out of Taipei since that was there the main policy was being developed. We were not, to my knowledge, doing anything on this other than informing them of what our judgments were of Chinese policy. Our judgments were, as I recall it, that they, in fact, did not intend to seize the island. That the effort was to try to frighten the KMT off the island and was to test.

Tucker: We are just talking about perceptions of PRC and tensions in the Quemoy and Matsu crisis. You were saying that the Chinese were not planning to take it violently, but were hoping to scare...

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KREISBERG: That was our judgment.

Tucker: ...Chiang Kai-shek away. There are some very recent indications, some research by a young scholar named He Di...

Cohen: He is He Kang's son, so he has got access to the actual participants.

KREISBERG: He Kang is the guy who has taken...

Tucker: The Minister of Agriculture.

KREISBERG: The Minister of Agriculture. What is the He who has taken Huangxiang's place?

Tucker: I don't remember offhand.

KREISBERG: It is another He.

Tucker: Yes. This young man is with the Institute of American Studies at CASS [Chinese Academy of Social Sciences], and he has done some research on this period which suggests that the Chinese did not want the islands and wouldn't have wanted Chiang Kai-shek to evacuate.

KREISBERG: That was our judgment at the time. Politically, if there had been a severance of the offshore islands from Taiwan, it would probably have intensified the probability of a political separation of Taiwan from the mainland. What the islands represented was the link of China with Taiwan. So it was a question of intimidation.

Then the question is what Beijing would have done had the KMT actually decided to pull out. We could never quite figure out where that was going to take them. And, of course, it was never clear to us precisely why they were running this risk. There is some evidence,

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as I recall it—which came out later, but I don't think we thought it at the time—there were differences inside the party over this whole exercise between the Minister of Defense...

Cohen: Who was Minister of Defense?

Tucker: Peng Dehuai.

KREISBERG: Peng Dehuai, yes. Between Peng Dehuai and Lin Biao and Mao at the time.

Cohen: And Zhang Aiping had some ideas about what should be done.

Tucker: Were there concerns about any Soviet involvement at the time?

KREISBERG: Well, subsequently, obviously, it became clear that that was one of the key issues, whether the Soviets were going to support China. All that we were able to see was what the Soviets were actually saying. And our interpretation from what the Soviets were saying was that their support was very lukewarm. That, obviously, was the key issue. And, subsequently, I gather, this was one of the key concerns for Mao in his ultimate break with the Soviets. But we knew nothing more than what we were reading in the press at that time.

Tucker: One of the interesting questions that I've pursued with a number of different people was at what point the Sino-Soviet split and the growth of serious tensions in the relationship begins to be a serious consideration in the minds of American analysts of China. Was the evidence that you saw in relationship to this crisis something that made you start thinking about...

KREISBERG: Well, we began thinking about the serious problems in Sino-Soviet relations back in 1956. There had been a widespread assumption that Sino-Soviet relations were strained as early as 1952 coming out of the Gao (Gang)-Rao (Shushi) case, in which it was widely assumed there was Soviet involvement. Before that, although I wasn't there, I had been told by people that there was an assumption among professionals, but not at

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a high political level in the U.S. Government, that something had gone wrong between Mao and Stalin in the long Mao stay in Moscow, without publicity, and almost by himself, in 1950-1951.

Certainly the way in which the Chinese handled the disturbances in eastern Europe in 1956. The very fact that Zhou En-lai was involved. Who else? It was Zhou. Who else went off to Eastern Europe at that time? Was it Deng Xiaoping? No.

Tucker: No, I don't think so. I'm not sure.

KREISBERG: It wasn't Deng. There was another Chinese who had gone off to eastern Europe besides Zhou. But the degree of involvement by the Chinese in the eastern European crisis suggested to us that there was likely to be considerable tension between the Chinese and the Soviets over that issue even though Zhou was supporting the Soviet Union in its effort to regain control, both in Hungary and in Poland.

So the issue of Sino-Soviet relations being strained, I think, was one that we were watching with great care throughout the latter part of the 1950s.

Tucker: How far did you expect those strains to go? Did you really expect a rupture?

KREISBERG: I don't think any of us expected it to go to the point of Soviet withdrawal, which it did in 19...

Tucker: '60.

KREISBERG: '60. And then, of course, when the ideological war began in the pages of Pravda and the People's Daily, then it was clear that the relationship was almost out of control. And the astonishing thing was, in spite of all that, that for several years, there continued to be a great reluctance inside the U.S. Government to acknowledge that there was a Sino-Soviet split. There was a widespread view that it was all a fake. It was a fraud

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being perpetrated for western consumption, an argument that drove the professionals out of their minds.

Tucker: You mentioned earlier the problems with having Walter Robertson at the helm. Was he one of those who shared that sense that it was all a fraud?

KREISBERG: Yes.

Tucker: Was he hostile to reporting of the kind that would suggest this was real?

KREISBERG: He just shrugged his shoulders and said, "These guys just don't understand." There is an ideological affinity. They are arguing, but that doesn't change the fact that there is a Sino- Soviet conspiracy, which then went on well into the Vietnam years with Dean Rusk being convinced as late as 1963 or '64 that what was going on in Vietnam was simply part of the Sino-Soviet expansion of communist power.

Tucker: What about Walter McConaughy? Does he share Robertson's...

KREISBERG: Yes. There was this cabal of Drumright, McConaughy, Rankin, Robertson and Rusk. There were the five of them who really dominated American policy toward Asia between 1950 and 1968. It was only after that group passed from the scene, that it became possible even to begin talking about a change in policy.

Tucker: Did you, sitting in Hong Kong, have any sense that there was a real danger of a larger war with China in 1958?

KREISBERG: No. None of us saw any possibility of a larger war.

Tucker: Did you take serious...

KREISBERG: I have read the studies that have been done by Mort Halperin, and [Mort] Abramowitz and a lot of other work that has been done. I don't think any of us sitting in

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Hong Kong saw war as being on the horizon. In fact, it may well have been closer than any of us thought it was. But at the time, we didn't see it.

Interviewer: Nancy Bernkopf Tucker and Warren I. Cohen

Tucker: We had just finished off with the Hong Kong years, and we wanted to talk a bit about the coming of the Kennedy Administration. We were interested in whether you saw any real shift in American policy with the incoming administration, perhaps even after Dulles' death at the very end of the Eisenhower period.

There is a debate in the field between a practitioner and a scholar. Jim Thompson essentially blames Dean Rusk for the lack of progress in Chinese policy. That is something that you alluded to in the earlier interview. Whereas Warren [Warren I. Cohen. *Dean Rusk* (New York: Cooper Square, 1980)], in the writing that he has done on Rusk as Rusk's biographer, points the finger elsewhere and says that really the blame for the lack of progress belongs with John Kennedy. What would be your sense of that?

KREISBERG: I have no sense of Kennedy. What I said about Rusk was what I remembered about Rusk. Rusk was sufficiently closed mouthed, and I was sufficiently junior that I don't have any recollection of Rusk ever giving any hint that he would have liked to have gone further than Kennedy would let him. My most active conversations and dealings with Rusk on this issue were after Kennedy had died.

Cohen: When you were director?

KREISBERG: Right. So in that period from '61 to '63, I don't have any sense of this whatsoever. There is theory, which some people have described as fact in some of the Kennedy biographies that you know better than I, that Kennedy was going to move on China after 1964. I had never seen anything to support that other than the allegation by biographers. My recollection is that nobody has ever come up with a letter or memorandum or anything in writing from either of the Kennedys.

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Tucker: No, I have been looking, actually, assiduously for that.

KREISBERG: I bet you have. I would have thought that if there was something in writing, somebody would have found it.

Tucker: Again, maybe you were too junior at the time and not directly involved, but do you have any recollection—there was, apparently, in 1961, a secret promise by John Kennedy to Chiang Kai-shek that if the issue of Chinese representation became a serious one at the United Nations, that the United States would use its veto power to keep the People's Republic out of the U.N. Do you know anything about that?

KREISBERG: I don't. I remember having heard that, but I don't have any recollection of where it appeared. The person who would know the answer to that is Ruth Bacon. I assume you have asked her.

Tucker: That is something for the future.

KREISBERG: Ruth Bacon or Louise McNutt. They were the keepers of that kind of information.

Tucker: So you wouldn't know any of the background on why that promise would have been made?

KREISBERG: I would not have been surprised by it. I mean, it was totally consistent with everything else we were doing.

Tucker: Who, in your recollection, were the key figures in China policy making at the time in the Department that you were dealing with?

KREISBERG: We are talking about the INR years?

Tucker: Yes, the INR years.

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KREISBERG: You really have to remember that I was still really a junior officer. I had been in the Foreign Service for eight years. I was just a drone down in INR writing papers essentially on internal Chinese politics. I dealt with Oscar Armstrong, who was the head of the office at that time, and rarely with the people on the desk.

Tucker: Really? Because when I was in the Department...

KREISBERG: We were in a different building. We were in the old INR offices on 23rd Street—a building which was subsequently torn down—where the WHO building is.

Tucker: So there wasn't much cooperation between INR and the desk?

KREISBERG: Such interchange as there was at the Lutkins-Joe Yager level. Again, you might ask Joe Yager or Armstrong.

Tucker: What sort of an officer was Armstrong? What was he like to work with?

KREISBERG: He is a very capable guy, very cautious, very careful, meticulous. I never had a strong sense of what his policy preferences were. There is a whole generation of Foreign Service officers who had gone through that terrible period at the beginning of the 1950s who were more cautious than young officers in voicing their views on policy.

Tucker: One of the things that occurred to me as I was reading some of the memos that we'll talk about in a little while was the position of [W.Averell] Harriman vis # vis the Laos negotiations in Geneva. There were suggestions in some interviewing that we did in China in 1988 that Harriman was a good guy coming out of those negotiations, and that the Chinese had really appreciated his position. Did you have any sense of that?

KREISBERG: No, I have none.

Tucker: One final thing perhaps then. There was an article written about a year ago in the Journal of American History by a young Chinese-American scholar in which he talks about

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John Kennedy's preoccupation with the development of the Chinese atomic capability. He suggests that Kennedy and his people were so concerned about that they actually considered a joint military expedition with the Soviets to prevent its development. [Gordon Chang "JFK, China, and the Bomb," *Journal of American History*, 75 (March, 1988)].

KREISBERG: Well, the expression on my face tells you that I had never heard that before.

Cohen: Were you doing studies of the Chinese development of the bomb?

KREISBERG: We never did anything on it in that period from '61 to '63. It was done elsewhere, in CIA's office of National Estimates where, I seem to recall, the expectation in the early 1960s was that China was 5-10 years away from a nuclear test.

Tucker: A final question on this period. In this packet of documents that you have shown us, there is a memo in March of 1970 from you to Winfred Brown, which is one of the most interesting, which talks at some length about the negotiations on Laos and the series of stages through which all of this had gone. It gives the distinct impression of considerable Chinese cooperativeness on the subject. We were wondering, in light of that, was there ever any attempt to capitalize on that? Were there questions asked of you to see how this could be...

KREISBERG: No. The issue was never raised.

Cohen: When did you find out about those Wang Bingnan informal coffee chats? I assume not when you were in INR. That was something you heard about later?

KREISBERG: My guess is—and I really don't remember, Warren- -that they appeared in files.

Cohen: That you went through afterwards.

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KREISBERG: Yes, which we went through. One of the things that we did in the late 1960s in OSA and which is available somewhere—and I have not asked for it—is a comprehensive history and review of all the conversations with the Chinese in Geneva and Warsaw, which we worked our way through, both by subject and by time. We had those in two large binders that we used as our basic reference books.

Tucker: Do you remember when those were pulled together?

KREISBERG: They were pulled together in '68 or '69. I think '69. Then we kept them up to date until the Warsaw talks closed down in '71. Now they may have been kept up after that, but I suspect not. Those would be useful to have, I would have thought.

Cohen: Yes. I doubt though that they would give them to you on the grounds that this was foreign government material.

KREISBERG: That may be.

Tucker: After your INR period, you go off to the University of Pennsylvania, and you are studying about Pakistan from 1963 to '64, and you are posted to Pakistan itself.

KREISBERG: I was in INR while the Sino-India War was going on, and a constant series of meetings and discussions and arguments with Rhea Blue, Alan Whiting, and Oscar Armstrong about the whole Sino-Indian border issue.

Tucker: On those discussions in those meetings, what were the key points of contention?

KREISBERG: Well, the basic issues were, first, who had started it, who was responsible for precipitating the crisis? What we should say to the Chinese about it in Warsaw, what involvement we should have in the conflict? Was it an area where we should become involved? How dangerous was it? And what were the Chinese objectives and motives?

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Basically, the INR position through that whole time—which, as I recall it, all of us who were involved shared—was that it was unlikely that the Chinese were (A) going to thrust down into the plains of India; (B) try to hold on to most of the territory that they seized in the eastern sector or even a number of the areas in the western sector; and (C) as a result, that we should limit whatever engagement we—some of the people in the Department, including Rusk and, I think, Kennedy—were pushing for.

We, of course, ended up, in the Harriman mission, in proposing that we provide some substantial assistance to the Indians. But I don't think that anyone at the professional level in the State Department ever believed, ultimately, that the Chinese saw this as a major way of extending ultimate control down into India, which was the line the Indians were trying to push.

Tucker: Was there very much conflict between, let's say, the China desk and the India desk over what all of this meant? Did the India desk feel the threat was more serious than the China people?

KREISBERG: The India people saw it more seriously. They saw it as a political opportunity to strengthen ties with the Indians. It was complicated by the Taiwan Strait crisis of '62 as well. So there was a question as to whether we were seeing a variety of Chinese moves to push outward. My recollection is that INR did not think that's what we were seeing.

Tucker: So this is a more isolated conflict?

KREISBERG: That's right. Each one of these as having their own causes. There, obviously, was also, I think, the beginning at that time of some question as to whether—particularly as the Soviets backed off from supporting the Chinese—there might be a possibility of moving the Chinese and the Soviets further apart from one other. But my recollection is that that was not a big theme. It was not pursued in any major way.

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Tucker: Did the White House push very hard? You mentioned that you thought Kennedy and Rusk both saw this the same way. Did the White House push this?

KREISBERG: They saw this as more threatening. Rusk's view consistently was that the Chinese were expansionists. I have a less clear picture of what the NSC staff saw. My guess is that Jim Thompson, who handled Asia for McGeorge Bundy at that time, would not have seen it in that way. But Rusk saw every Chinese move as part of a broad conceptual Chinese expansionism.

Tucker: Could you reflect for a moment on the 1962 Straits crisis? How seriously was that taken? Was it seen, again, as a momentous thing that the United States had to respond to?

KREISBERG: Well, it wasn't seen as serious as the 1958 situation was. It was much shorter in duration. At this point, honestly, I do not recall personally aside from the sense that there was a Rusk view that we needed to swiftly exhibit our strength and show our support for Taiwan. There were, inevitably, conversations in Taipei about the opportunity that this might pose, particularly given the economic distress in China in '60, '61, and early '62. But I don't recall that it was an issue on which a great deal of concern was exhibited.

Tucker: I gather that the Warsaw talks were used to alleviate the crisis. Do you know anything about...

KREISBERG: I really should remember that, and I don't. That's one of the things that I remember is in those files that I remember having looked at the time. Fortunately, when you are doing history, you are looking at things more intensively in the past than when you are doing current policy. In State, you are looking at what's around you at the moment. So I just, honestly, don't remember that other than my recollection is going back and looking at all of those files is conviction that the Chinese never really were fully committed, at

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any point, to taking the offshore islands. Indeed, they saw the disadvantage of taking the offshore islands in terms of severing the link between Taiwan and the mainland.

Tucker: But your major focus wasn't Taiwan, so perhaps you don't have a sense of this.

KREISBERG: It was all done in the same office, but I wasn't working on Taiwan.

Tucker: Yes. My impression of the crisis in '61-'62 is that Taiwan had a large role in initiating that whole process. Does that, in any way, worsen relations between Washington and Taipei?

KREISBERG: Not that I recall. Nothing could worsen negotiations with Taiwan in those periods.

Tucker: [Laughter] Because it was too important, or because it was so bad already?

KREISBERG: No, they were good. There just wasn't anybody who wanted to see the relationship get worse. It was a very protected relationship.

Tucker: Do you have a sense of people's opinion of Chiang Kai-shek and the government? Was it a question of overlooking problems, because it was so important? Or the people just didn't see...

KREISBERG: My sense was that there was a great sense of disinterest in what was happening on Taiwan except in terms of stability. The only interest we had was stability.

Tucker: When you go off to Pakistan, is your focus there on Chinese-Pakistani relations, or are you concentrating on Pakistan?

KREISBERG: I'm across the board.

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Tucker: Can you say anything about the development of Chinese-Pakistan relations in that era?

KREISBERG: Pakistan is a very bad personal period in my life. It was just not a period that I have a deep, abiding affection or memory for. So scratch Pakistan.

Tucker: [Laughter] Good idea. I can understand that. Okay, let's move on then.

Can you talk about the creation of the Office of Asian Communist Affairs? From what you said last time, one of the main reasons for that decision was unhappiness on Taiwan's part about having a PRC desk. Were there any problems created by the separation of the ROC from the mainland in terms of the bureaucratic handling of these issues?

KREISBERG: Yes. The consequence of abolishing the China desk, which covered everything, was to turn the focus of policy attention much more on the People's Republic of China in terms of a gradual move toward normalization. That was not the reason it was done. There was a question, of course, of dealing with North Vietnam and North Korea at that time. The concept was that there ought to be an office that dealt with all the communist countries. In a way, it was a backward, more conservative way of looking at it. "These commies ought to be dealt with separately than good countries like China. So we will deal with the China desk, which will be our friends, and then we will have this other desk over here, which are the enemies."

But the consequence, obviously, was that once you set up an Asian Communist Affairs Office, there then became, if you will, a lobby that was primarily interested in that area and not just in dealing with it as an enemy, but expanding and broadening and increasing the levels of contacts with it. A few things began happening as a result of that.

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Lindsey Grant in the Asian Communist Affairs Office argued very strongly on the dangers of the escalation of the war after '63. Essentially, North Vietnam was taken away, in a de facto sense, from Asian Communist Affairs by the end of '64.

Lindsey Grant was moved out of the Office of Asian Communist Affairs, because of a blowup that he had had with Bill Bundy. He kept sending memos up saying, "You know, what you are doing is wrong. It is going to lead to disastrous consequences. We are not going to be able to control the escalation. This isn't a Chinese-Vietnamese-Soviet move to expand power. The dominoes theory doesn't work." The subsequent analysis of the Vietnam War, I think, was anticipated by a number of these memos that Grant had written.

Eventually, Bill Bundy said, "You are spitting straight into the wind, and it is blowing back in my face. Quit it."

Lindsey said, "As long as I am here, I feel the need to continue to say what I think about the policies." So they moved him out. He was replaced by his deputy, David Dean, who stopped spitting even though he shared Grant's view, as did I.

But the basic responsibility for dealing with North Vietnam was moved over to the Vietnam task force. For similar reasons, although less dramatic, much of North Korea was moved over to the Korean desk, which made a lot of sense, because no one was doing anything with North Korea anyway. That turned the Office of Asian Communist Affairs, essentially, into a Communist China, Mongolia, Hong Kong office. The consequence of that was that we increasingly focused all our attention on what we could do to moderate, improve, change our relations with China and Mongolia.

We worked equally on China and Mongolia. We got awfully close to normalizing relations with Mongolia, working with the Soviet desk, which was also sympathetic with that goal. So we got a group of young foreign service officers, Stapleton Roy among them, sent off to Mongolian language training at the University of Washington. We got permission to bring

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a Mongolian minister down to Washington from the U.N. and had him talk to a number of people down in Washington. Actually, by the end of the 1969 we had gotten approval to go ahead with the move to normalize relations with Mongolia. The Mongolians, who originally were enthusiastic, turned us down, apparently because the Soviets didn't want it to happen.

But in the meantime on the China side, first David Dean and then myself began, as I said, focusing primarily on China. We felt we had to move incrementally, in small steps. If we could move in largely symbolic steps that gradually began to signal to the American public and the Chinese a change in the background noise on China, we might eventually get to the point of moving on substance. So we concentrated on tiny things like changing the use of Beiping to Beijing, which seemed a great victory at the time. It was in fact seen as an important symbolic move both by Taiwan and China. It was very hard to do. It was incredible the amount of energy you had to put in order to change two or three consonants and a vowel.

Tucker: I would like to come back to that, but let me ask you a couple of things about the bureaucracy before we talk more about the substance. Given that the Asian Communist Affairs became sort of the commie desk in the Asian area, was there any negative side effect of being posted—did people not want to be on the desk? Were there any negative career implications?

KREISBERG: Not that I ever saw. There was much more interest in coming to what you call the commie desk than there was to the China desk (Taiwan).

Tucker: How about flow of information? Was there much cooperation between the two desks on China?

KREISBERG: There was a great deal of tension between the two desks. The people who were on the China-Taiwan desk saw everything that we were doing as, essentially, a threat to U.S. relations with Taiwan. The embassy in Taiwan was constantly staffed

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by very strong conservatives who did everything they possibly could to encourage—and backed in the Department by Ruth Bacon and Louise McNutt from the Office of Regional Affairs. Ruth had the advantage of a long, personal relationship with Dean Rusk going back to the early '50s. So there was a constant sense, which we could never fully document, that whenever things looked as if they might be about to shift in the process of going through the EA bureau that Ruth would go up and have a drink or lunch with Dean. Rusk would have a chat with Bill Bundy and back it down. It was obviously made more complicated by the Vietnam War, which Rusk saw as his overriding policy priority.

I have never been able to fully decide—and you guys may have a better sense of this than I, especially you, Warren—as to whether Rusk genuinely believed what he said about the China-Vietnam relationship and this being part of a global communist thrust. Rusk was, on the face of it, extremely reluctant to acknowledge the Sino-Soviet conflict longer than almost anyone else that I knew. Whether he genuinely believed that or whether it was a face that he put on his analysis and his policy in order to rationalize the deeper engagement in Vietnam to which he was committed is simply not answerable by me.

KREISBERG: So global communist expansionism then was equally bad whether it was China by itself or China and the Soviet Union or China and Vietnam.

Cohen: It didn't make a lot of difference to us. There was no way to play them against each other. They were all hostile to us.

KREISBERG: But he saw China genuinely pushing Vietnam?

Cohen: As far as I can make out.

KREISBERG: We were never able to convince him that the Chinese were no more enthusiastic at the idea of a spread of Vietnamese power and influence in Southeast Asia than we were.

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Cohen: I never got any sense that he saw that. The only thing that comes up at all that Nancy, I think, has gotten in her questions is the business of calling in Alan Whiting and trying to signal the Chinese that we were not going to go after them with our stuff in Vietnam. We were trying to avoid drawing them into the war in Vietnam. The indications are that it was a successful exchange of signals. So that you have come to terms with the fact that the Chinese are not terribly concerned about what's going on as long as you don't threaten them. If that is, in fact, true, and we have some doubts, then it would seem that something had gotten through to him that Vietnam was not an extension of China.

KREISBERG: Yes. I never got that.

Cohen: He would still probably say, "It doesn't make any difference. The Chinese are hostile to us. The Vietnamese are hostile to us. We've got to stop them both."

KREISBERG: Yes.

Tucker: One final question along those lines. Was there much interchange of personnel between the two desks?

KREISBERG: Very little.

Tucker: So people tracked separately.

KREISBERG: We got their cable traffic, and they got our cable traffic. But that's only the tip of the information iceberg.

Tucker: What was your cable traffic? I mean, since we don't have anyone in China.

KREISBERG: Hong Kong.

Tucker: You are getting your traffic from Hong Kong?

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KREISBERG: Yes.

Tucker: Are you getting traffic at all from, let's say, the British, who do have people in China? Was there much of that?

KREISBERG: We got a fair amount of information from the British through the intelligence net. We got the full flow of interviews with refugees from China into Hong Kong. It's interesting. I, frankly, have never thought about this. I don't remember having seen much British telegraphic traffic relating to policy issues at all. If it was coming through, it wasn't coming to the desk in '65, '66, '67. Now we, obviously, were following the British experience with the embassy being taken apart and partially burned. But I don't remember policy traffic.

Tucker: You spoke just a few moments ago about a policy of incrementalism, trying to make small changes to build towards a relationship. When you became, first, deputy director and then director of the office, was there a point at which you got some sort of a policy mandate from above that said you will go this way or that way?

KREISBERG: None. Everything that we did we, basically, initiated ourselves. Either it went through, or it didn't go through. But there was never anything that came down from above saying do this, do that. That was true even in the Nixon period, '69, '70. Whatever we did, we did. There was never any guidance from the White House that, you know, it's time to move on this or that or the other thing, with one exception. That was the renewal of the talks in '69 chasing the Chinese ambassador down the staircase.

Tucker: Could you elaborate on that?

KREISBERG: That was—let me see. Our ambassador was...

Tucker: Jacob Beam?

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KREISBERG: No. After Jake Beam.

Cohen: Was it Stoessel?

KREISBERG: Yes. Walt Stoessel was sent instructions by the White House—in this particular case, we saw them—saying that he should inform the Chinese ambassador immediately that we were prepared to renew talks in Warsaw. He got these instructions on the day that he was going to a concert to which the Chinese ambassador was also going. His plan was to pass the message to the Chinese ambassador quietly after the concert. But the Chinese ambassador left early! This was in November '69. Walt saw him leaving, ran out of his box, and chased the Chinese ambassador down the stairs of the concert hall, catching him as he was about to get into his car. He passed him this message saying that the US was prepared to renew the talks.

The Chinese ambassador took the note and took it away in the car with him. He didn't read it until he got into the car. He then sent back a note to us a few days later, obviously after he had checked with Beijing saying he agreed to resume the talks.

Tucker: That's interesting. That's not quite as low-key, I think, as Washington. [Laughter]

KREISBERG: It was very dramatic. [Laughter]

Tucker: Was, then, this decision to renew the talks, one that originates in Washington in the White House?

KREISBERG: That originates in the White House. We had wanted to do it, but we had not been able to get the Chinese to pick up the ball again. That the contact was renewed was a result of the exchanges, such as they were, between the President and [Nicolae] Ceausescu and the President and Charles de Gaulle, which were not made available to anybody in State. We, at the desk level and, I think, at the Assistant Secretary level, were

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totally unaware of what was going on. Bill Rogers was the Secretary of State, and my guess is Bill Rogers may not have known. I never asked Bill Rogers.

Tucker: So this came as a surprise to you?

KREISBERG: It came as a surprise to us that—well, the message was sent out through State channels, so we knew that the message was being sent. It was one of those cables that simply said, “Text received from the White House.” I had talked with people that were in the National Security Council. Their view was, “Why don't we try and renew these talks?”

Our response was, “Fine.” We were always willing to make a try. We had been trying on several previous occasions. Remember, the Chinese had broken off the talks early in the year. We had, I think, on at least one occasion, maybe more than that, suggested that we renew talks, and there was nothing going on on their side. Then this erupted on our side, and they accepted and then we went straight into the two meetings in January and February.

Tucker: Can you say anything more about those Nixon-de Gaulle, Nixon-Ceausescu talks?

KREISBERG: No, I know nothing more about those than I have read in other people's writings and what Kissinger and Nixon described. I have no idea beyond that. Maybe Ceausescu's files will tell us more about it.

Tucker: From the packet of documents that you loaned us, there were a couple of them in the spring of 1970, which, I think, I'm not sure if in both cases, you drafted. One was from Rogers to the White House. The other was from Marshall Green to Rogers.

KREISBERG: I drafted all of those.

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Tucker: Okay. Both of which seem to suggest that Nixon was out in front, and that perhaps there was some effort to slow things down, or at least get more of a quid pro quo, for what was happening.

KREISBERG: Yes.

Tucker: Could you reflect on that?

KREISBERG: My recollection at the time is that there were two things. First of all, I don't want to remember more than I think I do remember, but there were two or three key issues that strike me. One is we really were not sure what was driving the Chinese at the time. We were surprised when they seemed much more interested in moving ahead in January, than we anticipated. And because we didn't really know how far they were going to go. We were more cautious in how far we wanted to go on our next step than the White House was. Partly I suspect, our imagination wasn't leaping quite this far. We had said, "Well, let's move the discussions to a higher level in Warsaw. Let's send a special emissary, which, frankly, I did anticipate would be the Secretary of State or the National Security Advisor, to Beijing. John Gronouski thought it would terrific if he could go to Beijing. I remember that. Or Walt Stoessel would want to go. The White House was the place from which the suggestion of focusing on a high-level representative to Beijing came from. They said, "That's really where we want to have this focused."

Tucker: So from the White House rather than from the Chinese?

KREISBERG: From the White House. The Chinese came back and said, "We are prepared to have a high-level emissary."

And the White House, basically, said, "Fine." That came as a surprise to us in State.

Marshall Green, as the Assistant Secretary, was actually shocked at the pace at which this was moving. Marshall had two main concerns. One was that State not get in front of the

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White House. He thought that we were pushing faster than the White House was pushing. The reality was the other way around.

And, secondly, he was very reluctant to have us go one step further unless it was clear that we were going to inform the Japanese, because he saw this as seriously damaging our relationship with Japan if we changed policy toward China with no advance warning. He argued back and forth with the Secretary and with the National Security Council staff for a month on whether we should have our third meeting with the Chinese in March.

The meeting was not held in March in large part because of the argument that Marshall was having with the NSC over whether to move forward. Then it was put off until April. But we would suggest a date, then Chinese would suggest another date. That was part of the tit-for-tat style Beijing used. We knew that no matter what date we ever proposed, the Chinese would always propose another date. I concluded that even if it turned out to be exactly the date they were thinking of, they would still pick another date so the initiative would then be in their hands. We, basically, had no problems with their dates except for the question of a Chiang Ching-kuo visit in April. That was an area of sensitivity and a lot of pressure from the China desk, the Taiwan desk.

Tucker: The question of the Japanese. It only arises in these documents, I think, twice. It comes up that we really should, perhaps, be telling the Japanese more. Where is the decision coming from not to tell the Japanese more and on what grounds?

KREISBERG: It is coming from the NSC. The NSC is basically saying, "We want this held on an absolute need-to-know basis. When the Chinese, Taiwanese come in, when the Japanese come in, when the French or the British come in, tell them nothing. No one should know what we are doing." That is the instruction from the NSC.

That makes us all at State very uncomfortable for three reasons. One, none of us particularly liked lying. Second, we all saw this as being absolutely critical politically to the Japanese. No disagreement on that among any of us. Third, we saw the political problems

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being magnified with Taiwan given the support that they still had on the Hill if this simply came fresh out of the air with no prior warning. The other side of it was that we knew that if we briefed Taiwan, they would leak it. We would then have a major problem. So we were unhappy about Taiwan, but willing to hold on.

But on the Japanese side, I remember, there were a number of fierce arguments over whether the Japanese had ever leaked anything. Basically, people at State were saying, "None of us recall a single instance where we had ever told the Japanese anything really secret which they had then leaked." And with the NSC saying, "We can't trust the Japanese, so we don't want them to know."

Tucker: Would you say that the people at NSC were less aware of what the potential implications of not telling them were, or was secrecy so dominant that it didn't matter?

KREISBERG: Secrecy was so dominant that it didn't matter.

Cohen: Largely Kissinger's personality, I assume.

KREISBERG: Yes. I think it was Kissinger and Nixon. I am not sure who was the more paranoid about secrecy. My guess is that Nixon is probably more paranoid about secrecy than Kissinger. I have been reading the biographies of these people.

Tucker: It's hard to keep track of which one seems worse. What about the Soviets? It is clear, again from these documents, that you are aware that the Soviets are nervous and unhappy about what they think is going on here.

KREISBERG: Yes. You see from some of these memos that we flag the fact that there is a Soviet dimension to the question of moving forward with China. But one of the key differences between State and the NSC is that we in ACA saw the process of normalization with China as mainly being beneficial to us in an Asian context. It is clear, in retrospect, that the Asia context was minor from the White House point of view. They saw

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it mainly in Soviet terms. That was an issue that never surfaced in debate. The European bureau was totally out of this. There was never any engagement with the Soviet desk in anything we were doing with China. My sense is that they didn't know anything about what Kissinger had in mind in terms of using this as a China card.

Tucker: So they were really uninvolved in it entirely?

KREISBERG: The strategic approach that we in State were taking and that Kissinger was taking was really quite different. We saw the Soviet Union as one factor, but not the driving one. He, obviously, saw it as the driving one. I have subsequently argued with people who were on the NSC staff—with Hal Sonnenfeldt and Bill Hyland and with Henry Kissinger himself and with Dick Solomon—over how important, in reality, the China card was in our Soviet relations. I have never been totally satisfied with their arguments, and they, obviously, have always shrugged their shoulders and said, “Kreisberg, you really don't understand anything about geopolitics.”

Tucker: From where did the new formulations on Taiwan come? You suddenly get new language about force reduction and about the need to acknowledge that there is only China.

KREISBERG: We made it up.

Tucker: Again, was that from within or from the White House?

KREISBERG: Totally in our office. All of that language and that whole conceptual approach was invented in the office. What we were looking for was language that would enable us to bridge the positions that the Chinese had been holding for the previous decade without, ultimately, giving away the store so far that it would be totally unacceptable on Taiwan or on the Hill. So we just played these word games. Eventually, obviously, we found that if you played the right word games, it would work. Essentially, each side was holding on to its own position, but changing around the way that you talked

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about them in such a way that everyone's face was being saved. That was our intent, and, ultimately, it turned out to be successful.

What was interesting about this is that throughout this entire game, I never met Kissinger. I would talk from time to time with Solomon. But the first time I ever met Kissinger was in Delhi. Kissinger came over there, and we were all receiving him at the airport. Pat Moynihan introduced Kissinger to me, and Kissinger stopped and said, "Ah, yes, Kreisberg. I know your name well." There was the typical enigmatic Kissingerian smile. He nodded and then went on. That was the end of the dialogue. [Laughter]

We were going in the same direction as the White House. They saw that. All they really needed to do was watch what we were sending over and see whether it meshed with things that they wanted. As long as it did, they were prepared to let it go forward. You can see in some of the draft cables words were crossed out, and new words were written in. The words that were written in were basically NSC changes. There are not a lot of them. But they are NSC changes, and they are interesting changes.

Tucker: You referred once or twice in passing to Congress and the need to be concerned about the China lobby types.

KREISBERG: We never talked to anybody in Congress.

Tucker: There was no effort to cultivate those people who were more favorable on...

KREISBERG: No. We went our own way. It is possible that someone on the White House staff was doing briefing, but to my knowledge, nobody in State was.

Tucker: The Congressional Liaison Office (H) did not come to you and say...

KREISBERG: They weren't involved. They weren't cleared for this. This is all Secret/NODIS stuff. There was nobody in H who was cleared for it. It is conceivable that the Secretary was doing it, but I doubt it. That Secretary of State was also not that deeply

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involved and was not being used for congressional contacts. And Kissinger was never that close to people on the Hill. As far as I am aware, there was nobody on the Hill who was aware of this, which may be one reason why when it all finally broke, there was a lot of surprise and a certain amount of broken crockery.

Cohen: Kissinger used Fulbright a lot. It might be worth checking that one out.

Tucker: Given that things seem to be moving the way they are and that the Chinese seem to be responsive, and all of this is going on, why was it necessary, ultimately, to use Pakistan to get Kissinger into China?

KREISBERG: I never understood that.

Tucker: [Laughter] Oh. I wanted a revelation.

KREISBERG: No. I could never figure it out. You obviously want to talk to Winston Lord, unless you already have, and get his personal view of why they went that route. I think in large part it was Kissinger's obsession with secrecy and the feeling that if he went into China by the back basement door, that it was more likely to be secret than if he went in any other way. That may be true. I mean, if he went in from Hong Kong, it was more likely to surface. If a Kissinger plane took off from Hong Kong or Korea and disappeared, people would know about it. I guess, in theory, he could have flown out of Kadena in Okinawa or out of one of our air bases in Korea. It sure as hell wasn't the most convenient way to go. But I think the only reason for it was secrecy.

And the only reason for the secrecy was amore propre. Once you've decided to make the visit, and once it is clear that the Chinese are willing to have you come, it is inconceivable you can hold the secret indefinitely. But they wanted it to come as a great headline. I think part of the strategy was that by having it emerge that way, public excitement would sweep away a lot of the uncertainty, suspicion, hostility, criticism that might otherwise have accrued.

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Tucker: To go back a little bit to the pre-Kissinger visit. I was under the impression that Nixon had hoped to use better relations with the PRC to help get out of Vietnam. Yet, in these memos...

KREISBERG: Nothing of that appeared.

Tucker: No. In fact, there seems to be a specific effort to avoid raising Southeast Asia as an issue with the Chinese. Do you have any idea why?

KREISBERG: No, I don't. This question has also occurred to me. The only explanation that I can make is that it's something that Nixon may have thought that he could do directly or do indirectly through Kissinger, and he didn't want to involve State again. This, then, comes down to this whole question of secrecy. But it doesn't come out in Kissinger's book. There is no sense from Kissinger either that we were going to use the China talks directly with relation to Vietnam.

There was a sense that somehow it was thought that if we were able to improve relations with China, that we would indirectly diminish the Chinese interest in supporting the Vietnamese. That it would happen, not that it was an objective to talk about Vietnam a lot with the Chinese. Every time we did talk about Vietnam with the Chinese, the Chinese said the standard things, as you see in the cables and memoranda on the talks with the Chinese. That's literally all that I know. The subject never came up in instructions. Winthrop Brown, the Deputy Assistant Secretary handling Vietnam in the Far Eastern Bureau were raised. Nobody ever asked us to do much on it.

We looked at Laos, as you saw from that Laos memo. The decision, essentially, was made not to do much on Laos.

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Tucker: Was there an awareness that there were problems between Vietnam and China that might diminish the Chinese ability to serve American purposes, were that to arise? I mean, how was the Chinese-Vietnamese relationship seen?

KREISBERG: By whom?

Tucker: By people in ACA.

KREISBERG: Well, as I said, this was at a time when, for several years, ACA had been taken out of the Vietnam net. I never had a sense, however, that there was a consciousness in State of the growing level of Vietnamese-Chinese tension.

Tucker: And not at the White House then either?

KREISBERG: Not at the White House either. I mean, the Chinese were continuing to give the Vietnamese aircraft refuge. There were Chinese anti-aircraft gunners and logistics people in North Vietnam. In principal, there was no reason why anyone should have seen tension growing.

Tucker: We mentioned it before, and perhaps we answered it— tell me if we did—Alan Whiting has talked about the process of signaling between China and the United States. That nobody wanted to go to war over Vietnam or in Vietnam with each other. Were you involved in any of that at all? Were you aware of what was happening?

Cohen: Wang Bingnan seemed to be confirming that in our interviews with him.

KREISBERG: Well, we constantly were saying in the Warsaw talks and in public that what we were doing was not designed to threaten China.

Cohen: You say reference to reassuring the Chinese.

KREISBERG: We said this over and over.

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Cohen: The Warsaw talks are a vehicle for that.

KREISBERG: Yes. The idea that we are telling China we are not threatening them is one that we are using continuously. It is less clear to me how the Chinese are using the Warsaw talks to communicate on Vietnam to us. Although in things that they write, the Chinese led Alan Whiting and, I think, others to conclude that the Chinese are defining what the terms are under which they might feel compelled to become involved. Everybody is setting limits. I think that is right. So I think that we were all aware when we saw things that the Chinese said, what they were telling us. In part, that was one of the reasons we kept telling them that we do not plan to expand the war.

Part of the issue is that after 1966, certainly '67, and until the great Hanoi-Haiphong bombing raids in the early '70s, I don't think any of us were terribly concerned about that issue. I mean, we didn't see the Chinese coming into the war in Vietnam in any deeper way. As a matter of fact, most of us were surprised as we found out to what degree the Chinese had engaged themselves. It was a surprise that the Chinese were doing as much as they were doing on the ground. Basically, we didn't anticipate that the Chinese wanted to expand the war or to become engaged. We certainly didn't want a fight with them.

And when occasionally there would be discussions over whether to we take out the Chinese airfields in Yunnan where Vietnamese planes were being stashed—this was always a clear question: do we want to bring the Chinese in? How dangerous are those fighters? How effective are they being used? Obviously as the war went on, they were less and less effective. Even the Defense Department never really made a big issue of it.

So, no. I think we all saw the Vietnam-China issue as one that we needed to flag, but one that was, essentially, peripheral. Because most of us, I think, on the desk and at the EA bureau level saw the Chinese, at most, as wanting to use the Vietnam War as a lever to weaken the United States, but not to expand the war and not to risk war with us. And when we talked about it in Warsaw, they never wanted to say very much about it other than to

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support the Vietnamese and say, "You've got to get out of Vietnam." It was never a terribly productive issue for us to talk about.

Since the issue wasn't productive, we on the desk tended to put Vietnam to one side and say, "Now where are the areas where we may be able to signal that we want to make progress?"

Tucker: How important were the Warsaw talks?

KREISBERG: I am probably the wrong person to ask, because we were running them, so we thought they were important. At the same time, they were frustrating, because so much of the time we were just talking past one another. I guess I saw them as being important primarily in 1970.

And they were important in a negative sense in that when the Chinese suspended talks and let long periods go by without any taking place, this left us feeling that the prospects for making any progress were low. And, obviously, the rationale for our arguing for moving forward on policy change with Beijing diminished. It was very hard, if they wouldn't even meet with us in Warsaw, to make the case that there was a possibility for making progress. So '68 and '69 were very bad years, primarily because of the Cultural Revolution. That was really a great setback for any strategy aimed at stabilizing and normalizing the relationship.

Cohen: Were there any plans in your days with ACA for taking out the Chinese nuclear facilities?

KREISBERG: None.

Cohen: Rusk's concern with a billion Chinese...

KREISBERG: No. If that was discussed, it was never discussed with us.

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Tucker: The whole question, I guess, is one in Kissinger's memoirs: the idea that the Soviets approached us to talk about doing precisely that. Had you ever heard anything about that?

KREISBERG: I heard about it after the fact. I knew about it while I was there. That contact and the response were handled in the National Security Council, not at State. I think if I were to sum up what State did at that point, the White House clearly had its own agenda, which they wanted to conduct with the Chinese. What we were used for is as an idea factory to provide language and provide some conceptual approach to moving the relationship forward, but without telling us why they wanted to move it forward. To let us make up our own rationale, and make up our own reasons, but using the language that we produced, because nobody over there had the time or maybe they didn't have the confidence. Solomon probably could have done it, but perhaps he had a lot of other things to do more important than that. So they used a lot of our ideas in substance.

At the time, we thought we were driving the car. But it was kind of like learning how to drive on a dual-controlled car. In reality, it turned out that somebody else was doing the driving, and we were only turning the wheel. Whenever we didn't turn it far enough, someone would turn it a little bit further. And when we were not going fast enough, someone else would put his foot on the accelerator.

Tucker: You mentioned before we got on the tape something about the draft of the Shanghai communiqu#. Could you talk a little bit more about that?

KREISBERG: That is one of the things that does not appear in here. What we did was to draft, essentially, much of the key language on Taiwan that ultimately was pulled out into the Shanghai communiqu#. And at one point, John Holdridge told me that when they were drafting the communiqu#, they had gone back to what we produced in early '70 and literally, lock, stock and barrel, plugged it into the Shanghai communiqu#, which was the

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“Chinese on both sides of the Taiwan Straits” language and “As tension declines, forces will be removed” language.

Our intent had been, at the meeting scheduled for March and then subsequently for April, to float that language with the Chinese. And we never had a chance to do it. So the first time it saw the light of day, actually, was in '72. I don't whether Kissinger used it in '71.

I never actually went down and read the memoranda of conversation on the Kissinger and Nixon visits. I kept meaning to go down when I was...

Tucker: I wish you had.

KREISBERG: On the policy planning staff. They pulled the stuff aside, and they had it in a file in the East Asian Bureau. I cannot actually tell you from my own memory what he did and didn't say.

Tucker: So all the credit that Deng Xiaoping has gotten for “one country, two systems,” really should go to your office?

KREISBERG: No. The “one country, two system” line we never thought of. It would be interesting if we had, but I don't think we would have come up with “one country, two systems.” We might have come up with a concept of “one sovereignty, two governments” kind of thing. Something that looked like the British Commonwealth. I mean, if we had actually gotten to that point.

The other line we designed that appeared in the Shanghai communique was on the settlement of the Taiwan issue by peaceful discussions between both sides and by the two sides themselves. Our concept of how we should proceed on Taiwan was to disengage the United States from direct involvement in resolving that problem. If the whole thing was going to work, it was that Taiwan was to be put to one side. It was no longer to be an

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issue. If we could get to that, then we saw how we would be able to work our relationship with Taiwan and with China.

The concept of how we dealt with Taiwan itself was—well, we can get to that later. That was an issue on which there were a lot of arguments, but that didn't surface until the late '70s. The Policy Planning Staff had a different view from the East Asian Bureau and the White House at that time. We lost. Cy Vance was on our side for a period of time, and then he backed away. But we can get to that.

Tucker: I would like to come back to that in just a minute. Before we leave this slightly earlier period, I guess, I would be interested in knowing in terms of the Warsaw talks over time. You have Gronouski, you have Cabot, you have Beam.

KREISBERG: With Cabot, it was...

Tucker: Cabot first.

KREISBERG: Cabot, Gronouski, Stoessel, Beam. I think.

Tucker: I think that's right. Do you think that those personalities have any real affect on the way the talks worked? Do you see anything that is worth recording on these various people?

KREISBERG: They were such totally different characters. My guess is that the Chinese probably felt most comfortable with the career people, with Cabot, Beam, and Stoessel. Gronouski, I think, constantly threw them for a loop, because he made jokes. He just had a personality that, I think, they never could quite figure out. But I don't think they made much difference, any more than the Chinese ambassadors made any difference. These were really "made in Washington and Beijing" conversations.

There was no free dialogue whatsoever. People made their presentations, then they commented on their core presentations in set pieces. Then they commented on the

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comments of the presentations in set pieces. The only time they began to shift a little bit was when we began to have a private dialogue after the meetings in '69, '70.

All that the talks did, in retrospect, after the early days—they were really quite substantive in the 1950s, because we were dealing with some very concrete issues. But after that, in the 1960s when they moved to Warsaw, they were simply means of a private conveying of messages. That's all. It could have been done anywhere, and it could have been done in a lot of other ways.

The fact that we were meeting face-to-face was important, I think, in and of itself. It was the only way in which Americans and Chinese were able to talk to one another, since everybody was under instruction not even to say hello in any other context. But as a substantive channel, it was probably about as low a level of substantive diplomatic exchange as you can find.

Tucker: I spent some time last year reading John Cabot's diaries, and he was quite upset when Gronouski replaced him, both, I think, for career reasons and because he thought Gronouski was totally inappropriate. That kind of thing didn't matter in the Department.

KREISBERG: It didn't make any difference. The Chinese must have raised their eyebrows at this Pole and wonder what a postmaster general had to do with bilateral negotiations. It might be interesting to ask whether the Chinese thought the negotiations were being downgraded by bringing in somebody like Gronouski or upgraded by bringing in somebody who was a personal or political appointment of the President.

Cohen: They probably debated that for two weeks.

Tucker: [Laughter] They probably did. Again, you mentioned also that the personality of the Chinese representatives probably didn't matter much. Did you have any sense of Wang Bingnan as an individual?

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KREISBERG: I never dealt with Wang Bingnan. David Dean and Lindsey did. But my sense, from reading the memorandums of conversation and of the talks and from talking to them, was that he couldn't have made much difference. When the Chinese wanted to express nastiness, nastiness was expressed. When they wanted to be relaxed, relaxation was expressed. That was true whether they had a charg# d'affaires or an ambassador. I don't think we ever conducted these with charg# d'affaires. We never, I think, thought that was an appropriate thing to do. The Chinese didn't give a damn. Tucker: Well, we did, at one time, lower the level in the '50s when Ed Martin was involved for a brief period of time.

KREISBERG: That's right. Ed Martin, of course, was a minister at the time.

Tucker: I am inclined unless you have, again, some China side to it, to skip over Dar es-Salaam. Is there anything—

KREISBERG: The only funny thing about Dar es-Salaam was that there was a widespread speculation in the diplomatic corps that when I went down to Dar es-Salaam, that we were shifting our talks down to Dar es-Salaam. I was being sent down there because there were 20,000 Chinese in Tanzania, and we saw that as a major point of importance for us. That did not last very long. I mean, it was incredibly stupid, and I thought more funny than anything else.

Aside from that, I had no contacts with the Chinese. They refused to talk to me in Dar es-Salaam. I'm sure they must have been under instructions not to. So let's skip over Dar es-Salaam.

Tucker: That takes us to the period, 1977 to 1981. I guess the basic question to ask is what was your role vis # vis normalization with the People's Republic.

KREISBERG: Well, the Policy Planning Staff was deeply involved in the process of putting together a strategy. The person to talk to about the initial drafting of that was Alan

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Romberg since it began in January of 1977, and I arrived in Policy Planning in the middle of April. So a good deal of the drafting had already been done by Alan and Stape Roy.

My sense was that, at that point, there were no serious issues. The decision to move ahead and exactly the way we eventually did move ahead, with one exception. The only issue which became a point of major debate and major controversy was what relationship we were going to have with Taiwan.

It was clear that we were going to have to break relations with Taiwan. We were going to have to terminate the treaty, withdraw the few military forces that remained there. But it was also clear that we were going to have to find a way to maintain all the substantive relationships that we had with Taiwan. How were we going to do that? The bottom line was whether we dealt with Taiwan in a totally informal way—as we eventually did—or whether to try to maintain some form of official representation by having a consulate general or some other presence—an “interests section”—there. And, basically, tell the Chinese, “We recognize you as the sole government, but there are other places in the world where we have had consulates where we have not had diplomatic relations. And that is what we intend to do.”

My preference, and that of the Director of Policy Planning Tony Lake and the case that we argued strongly with the support of the legal bureau to Cy Vance, was that we ought to try to hold on to a consulate general or some formal status. That we might, ultimately, have to back away from that was clear, but the issue that we felt we should put to the Chinese was that we wanted to hold on to a consulate, and see if we could make that wash. The bureau view, supported by Mike Oksenberg in the NSC, was they didn't want to get involved in that. It wouldn't work. They wanted to go to a clean break and establish the kind of relationship that the Japanese, the French, other countries had with the Chinese. Travel agencies and whatever else you want to have.

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That issue was very hotly argued. Cy Vance, as a lawyer and seeing that an American institute in Taiwan format was getting us into absolutely new, fresh, uncharted, highly peculiar, and very complex legal waters, also thought it would be preferable “to see if we can do it with a consulate general?” Eventually, Cy changed ground and said, “Well, I guess if we try to do it with a consulate, it really is going to be very hard to make the case that the U.S. doesn't have an official relationship with Taiwan.” “The official relationship,” the opponents argued, “would be the key single issue with the Chinese.”

My view at the time was that that was right, but that we should not let the Chinese view on this totally drive us without at least trying it. If we tried it, we could have made the case on the Hill that we had made an effort, and we eventually had had to back away. But that was not the way in which it went. So that was the only issue on which there was a major debate.

The second point at which the issue became heated was what the Taiwan relations act should look like. The Dick Holbrooke-Roger Sullivan version was that it should be leaner, sparer and vaguer than it turned out to be. Again, the Policy Planning staff and the legal office and H argued that wasn't going to work.

Tucker: Congress wouldn't buy it?

KREISBERG: Congress wouldn't buy it. But the East Asian Bureau decided, again, with Oksenberg on board, to try because at this point—although Holbrooke and Oksenberg detested one another—there was an agreement that we ought to go for the deal that would be easiest to work with the Chinese. The Chinese weren't going to like anything, so the less it looked as if we were perpetuating the language of the treaties, particularly those relating to security, the one that bothered them the most, and the less there was that implied a continuing U.S. commitment to Taiwan, the better off we would be. So that was the version that eventually the President signed off on.

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Eventually, the executive branch backed up the entire nine yards and bought on to whatever Congress wanted, which, essentially, was all the U.S.-Republic of China treaty and agreements language less the references to an official relationship.

Tucker: Before we go on, let me just go back on the question of Vance shifting his position on whether to go for a consulate or an informal relationship. Do you have any idea what pushed Vance over the edge? Was it White House pressure, or was it his own judgment?

KREISBERG: I don't know. The meeting at which he changed his mind was one that I didn't sit in on. It was with Tony and Dick Holbrooke and probably Peter Tarnoff and a couple other people.

Tucker: What were their positions at the time?

KREISBERG: Tony Lake was the director of the policy planning staff. Holbrooke was Assistant Secretary for East Asian Affairs. Peter Tarnoff was the Executive Secretary for the Department. My guess is that Warren Christopher as Vance's key legal and Congressional advisor and the Deputy Secretary of State, was probably engaged in this as well, Christopher was Vance's key man on the Hill on all major issues involving treaties and agreements. While the drafting was done in EA, the negotiations were largely done through Christopher. Herb Hansell, as the legal advisor, was involved as well.

Tucker: Again, to go back to something you just had said before we go on. The Holbrooke-Oksenberg dislike, how important a factor is it? You say that, nevertheless, they ended up on the same side of this particular question. Is it an important factor in the normalization process?

KREISBERG: In the last analysis, it is not. Bureaucratically, it is important, because they were constantly working behind one another's backs and hiding information, being devious in the way in which they dealt with information. It in part personal, in part protection of bureaucratic turf with Oksenberg protecting Brzezinski and Brzezinski's direct links with the

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President, and Holbrooke protecting Holbrooke. Less Holbrooke defending Vance. A lot of the issues were petty. Some involved substance.

The question, for example, of what kind of security relationship we wanted to have with China was one of those. The White House wanted to build a security relationship with China. State, in this case both SP [Policy Planning Staff] and the EA bureau and Vance, were much leery about the risks of doing that. And, certainly, the Soviet bureau was very leery about it. The White House wanted to move ahead on China first and foremost. Holbrooke thought we could move ahead on Vietnam and get Vietnam and still get China.

So in September and October, there was an enormous amount of tension with the White House constantly pushing to put China first and with Vance and Holbrooke trying to work out something with the Vietnamese. Holbrooke's conversations with the Vietnamese in September were intentionally designed to try to tell the Vietnamese that it was now or never. He felt that he had gotten the go-ahead from them. That was one of the key issues.

Then Brzezinski and Oksenberg had been consistently arguing that we needed to be able to promise the Chinese that there was going to be a substantive security relationship for two reasons. One is it was in our interest to know more about what the Chinese military was doing. And, ultimately, perhaps-this was coming in part from Defense as well—to be able to use China as a base against the Soviet Union. The Air Force wanted landing rights in China. The Navy wanted to call at Chinese ports. The question of aerial and electronic reconnaissance that might be conducted over China and targeted at the Soviet Union was raised in the U.S. Government. The idea of flying over China in order to get to Pakistan, without going all around Southeast Asia, en route to the Middle East was attractive to the military. The possibility of more intelligence facilities—all was being actively discussed, but at very secret levels in Defense and with NSC support and encouragement. State's view on this was much more conservative.

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Oh and finally, the concept, from the White House side, that in the long run, a major constituency that you needed to have on your side in China was the military. By offering supplies, cooperation, training, and equipment, whatever, that you would, in effect, engage the Chinese military with the interest of U.S.-Chinese relations.

Some of these arguments washed in State, and some of them made everybody very nervous. Several made me very nervous. I was simply not that confident that in the long run, our interests with the Chinese would be so much in parallel that I wanted to strengthen the Chinese military. Moreover, the view of the European bureau, which I shared, was that it was not in our interests to build up Soviet fear of China by strengthening the concept of the U.S.-Chinese global strategic alliance. That what we wanted to do, when appropriate, was to move in parallel with China, not in alliance.

This is one of the reasons why Vance was attracted by the idea of moving first with Vietnam and then going on to China. It wasn't that he was so engaged on Vietnam, but he was engaged with the Soviet Union. And he would have preferred to put off the China connection until after the meeting that he had scheduled with Gromyko in December. But Vance kept losing each time with the President who clearly wanted to move ahead on China as the great new, fresh capstone in his foreign policy initiatives.

Tucker: How does Vietnam get lost in all of it?

KREISBERG: Well, Vietnam gets lost simply because the Vietnamese waited too long to make up their minds, and the President made the decision that were going to move first on China. That was precipitated by Deng Xiaoping's in effect saying in late November, I think, "This is the time to move, and we want to move now. You better move now or the door will close." That, then, was followed fairly quickly on Deng's trip to Washington by an indication of the Chinese plan to move against Vietnam after Vietnam's occupation of Cambodia, a step which totally turned everybody off on Vietnam.

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And, of course, the NSC staff was able to argue, "You see, we saved you guys, because if you normalized with Vietnam and then they had moved into Cambodia, wouldn't the President have looked like an absolute fool?" Which he might have, in fact.

Cohen: He did, anyway.

Tucker: How much influence would you say that SP had in that period?

KREISBERG: SP was engaged and had some influence because of Tony Lake's direct tie with Vance. But the key player was the East Asian bureau and Dick Holbrooke, an absolutely outstanding bureaucratic gunfighter. He fairly consistently won on all Asian issues. Tony Lake had made a decision he was not going to fight Dick Holbrooke on most issues in Dick's area, and there were only a few on which he was willing to take him on. Tony wanted to move ahead on Vietnam, and if something could have been done in October, he would have pushed very hard on that. As it was, the Vietnamese, as you know, kept stumbling over their own feet, and they kept thinking they could get more out of us than we had given so far, and ended up by losing it all for a decade. Whenever push came to shove, Tony basically backed off.

Tucker: You mentioned a few moments ago the concern on the part of the Department and Vance about not making the Soviets nervous about an increased strategic relationship between China and the United States. Was that not one of the motives that the White House was pursuing?

KREISBERG: Sure. That was the major point of tension between Vance and Brzezinski. No question about it. Vance saw the possibility of improving of Sino-U.S. relations. Brzezinski saw the Soviet Union as becoming increasingly threatening, and argued the focus of U.S. policy should be on surrounding, weakening, and diminishing Soviet power. It was the fundamental issue of the administration and fought out in arena after arena.

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Tucker: How much warning did you have that you were going to end up with the Taiwan relations act? You mentioned that the Department was engaged in drafting something. Who initiates that process?

KREISBERG: The drafting was done by L and EA. I mean, Vance basically saw this as a technical policy issue and assigned Hansell and Holbrooke the responsibility for doing it together with the congressional bureau. Policy planning was, essentially, out of that loop except when we saw the drafts as they went through, and we put our nickels and dimes on the table. But it was just nickels and dimes. The really strong currency was in the other bureaus.

Tucker: Was there much White House concern about this? Did they care?

KREISBERG: The principal thing the White House wanted was that it be done without a lot of blood on the floor. As happened repeatedly in the Carter Administration, their intelligence on what was going to be necessary on the Hill was bad. I think the Carter White House probably handled the Congress about as badly as any presidency that I can recall in the last forty years. Anybody who really had their heads screwed on should have seen the way the wind was going to run in the Congress. And they would have seen it if they talked to enough people about it.

But it was a draft that was done in secret and put together in State and in the NSC. Again, with Brzezinski and Oksenberg, along with Holbrooke and L, driving a simple version. It had the consequences that you saw.

Tucker: And there is no effort to deal with the congressional staff on the drafting stage or any of that?

KREISBERG: The initial draft was brought over to the Hill as a draft without congressional input. As soon as they brought it over, they began getting a lot of flak, and a lot of people saying, "This doesn't go anywhere nearly far enough. We are going to have to totally

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rewrite this.” There was an effort on the part of the administration to fight for and defend the draft that it sent over.

Tucker: When you finally get a relations act that looks quite different, there must have been consternation on how to present this to the Chinese and how to make the Chinese realize that, you know, it is not our fault, Congress did it.

KREISBERG: The Chinese are screaming at this all along. I mean, they are seeing this process. It is out there in public. They've got a liaison office, and they are coming around and saying, “We really don't like this. This is a real problem.” I do not have a personal knowledge of the conversations that took place on that.

Tucker: I guess part of my curiosity is that it seems to me that, until really quite recently, the Chinese haven't fully understood the division of powers between the Hill and the Department.

KREISBERG: Nobody understands the division.

Tucker: [Laughter] Okay.

KREISBERG: Including in this country. That is absolutely right. I constantly have foreigners come to me and ask me questions or ask why Congress was doing this and can't you do that, which reflect absolute, total ignorance of the way in which the Congress functions. To this day, many Chinese do not understand what the Administration's role is on legislation attacking China. They are convinced that the President can turn off Congress.

Cohen: We did get a fairly sophisticated analysis from Li Peng on the Tibetan question in '86 in which he said, “Oh, we understand that's Congress.” We were surprised at that.

KREISBERG: That is interesting. It is totally unclear to me, and has never been clear to me, whether Kissinger and the President, Oksenberg and whoever else was involved,

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thought about what the effect would be on China in sending troops to Cambodia in 1970. You know, I have never asked Oksenberg that question. It would be interesting.

Cohen: This would be Dick Solomon then.

KREISBERG: Dick Solomon, sorry. I have never asked Dick Solomon or Kissinger that question. It would be interesting to know. It so irritated to me. I mean, that was the reason that I asked to leave the bureau. I knew that the Chinese would come back on to the scene eventually. But I also knew that it was going to be at least nine months or a year. After five years, I'd had enough of that. I specifically asked to be sent as far away from China as possible, which is the reason they sent me to Dar es-Salaam. The irony is of sending me down where there were more Chinese outside of China than any other place in the world outside Asia and North America. [Laughter]

Cohen: This reminds me of one memo that you drafted—I think dated May of '70, it might have been a little earlier—in which you say something about the importance of improving relations with the People's Republic of China as being one of the driving forces for all of this. I was curious as to whether there was something in particular in April or May of 1970 that you had in mind.

KREISBERG: The reason for writing that memo was to write a broad conceptual piece on what we are up to, what the reason for all of this was. There is another memo that they did not declassify, as I recall it—or maybe it is also part of that memo, which they took out—in which I said that there is a down side to this. It is possible that having normalized relations with the Chinese, that the Chinese could feel that they were now free of danger from the United States. They could take a more active, and not necessarily friendly, policy stance in Southeast Asia in dealing with Cambodia, with Thailand, other countries in ASEAN.

But the principal argument that I was making was that in the long run, which is, I think, the principal case now for maintaining good relations with the Chinese, is that the principal reason for viable and friendly ongoing relations with the Chinese is that they are important

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to the stability and security of the region as a whole. That is overwhelmingly the long-term primary objective we had. It is not the great global role that China will play, because China is not really playing a great global role. This was the reason for my arguments, subsequently, with Kissinger and Solomon and the people on the Soviet side. That whatever short-term gains we might make vis- a-vis the Soviet Union, the long-term interest was Korea, Japan, Southeast Asia. The stability of China and China's foreign policy was critical in that area and secondary elsewhere. So that was what I was trying to say in that piece.

Tucker: Is there anything that we should have asked you about?

KREISBERG: No. You have asked me more than you should have asked me. I probably told you more than I know. [Laughter]

I wish my memory on some of these things was better.

Tucker: It's been great.

KREISBERG: I really think you ought to try to do these things as soon as possible after people leave the government and not wait for ten years. I should have actually sat down and taped what I knew.

Tucker: Did you keep diaries? No?

KREISBERG: If you go around the Foreign Service, you will find among retired Foreign Service officers that virtually everyone regrets that he didn't keep a diary. There is just so much going on. I have never been able to understand how people have the time to keep diaries.

Cohen: Pre-World War II they all did. It was wonderful.

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KREISBERG: That's right. Well, the answer is that the total flow of information in those days was so much less that you could have the time to do it. But as useless information proliferates in boundless form, you don't have the time to do more constructive things. You spend all of your time reading this incredible detail that has no long-term value at all and not much short-term value. The opportunity to sit down and write ten thoughtful pages a week on policy issues just isn't there. So, no, I did not, and I don't know anybody who has.

Cohen: If it is any consolation, I have read hundreds of these things, and your memory is better than 99%.

KREISBERG: God help the historians. Most of it really is in the files. The most important files are the internal agency-to-agency files. I mean, if we could get copies of all of the memoranda that went between State and NSC and all of the memoranda that went internally within State, you would know a lot more. Those are the ones they will not give up. Memoranda that I wrote for Tony Lake or that I wrote to Dick Holbrooke or that Holbrooke wrote to Cy Vance really will reflect much more of the tensions in the system than things that are formal papers. I am surprised that they did free up some of these things that State sent to the NSC. I have asked for all of the stuff from the NSC to State, and I asked for that three years ago. None of that has surfaced.

Tucker: Is it that they haven't surfaced, or have they turned you down?

KREISBERG: They haven't turned me down.

Cohen: You know NSC had a tremendous backlog with the Iran Contra stuff. They are just trying to catch up on the stuff for the Foreign Relations Series.

KREISBERG: Well, it may be that, eventually, something will turn up. But I guess that a lot of this isn't going to at all.

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End of interview