

An Interview with Richard Lehman

Richard Kovar

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Editor’s Note: Dick Lehman developed the President’s Intelligence Check List, or PICL (pronounced “pickle”) for President Kennedy in June 1961. The Kennedy White House had become overwhelmed with publications from the intelligence community, many of which were duplicative in nature, and important pieces of information were beginning to fall between the cracks. The President and his advisers wanted one concise summary of important issues that they could rely on, and Lehman provided that summary in the form of the PICL.

Kennedy’s enthusiastic response to the PICL ensured that it became an Agency institution. Former Deputy Director for Intelligence R. Jack Smith writes in his memoir, The Unknown CIA, that the President engaged in an “...exchange of comments with its producers, sometimes praising an account, sometimes criticizing a comment, once objecting to the word ‘boondocks’ as not an accepted word. For current intelligence people, this was heaven on earth!” (The PICL was renamed The President’s Daily Brief [PDB] in the Johnson administration.)

For many years thereafter, Lehman played a key role in supervising the Agency’s current intelligence support for the White House, including its briefings of Presidential candidates. Former Deputy Director for Intelligence (DDI) Ray Cline in his book The CIA Under Reagan, Bush, and Casey, calls him “the longtime genius of the President’s special daily intelligence report.”

Dick Lehman joined the Agency in 1949 and served for 33 years before retiring. As a junior analyst, he worked in the General Division of the Office of Reports and Estimates (ORE) using SIGINT to puzzle out the organization and output of various Soviet industrial ministries. He then spent much of his career in the Office of Current Intelligence (OCI), eventually serving as its Director from 1970 to 1975. Lehman also served as Director of the Office of Strategic Research from 1975 to 1976, as Deputy to the DCI for National Intelligence from 1976 to 1977, and as Chairman of the National Intelligence Council from 1979 to 1981.

In the interview excerpts that follow, Lehman recalls the challenges associated with briefing DCI Allen Dulles, recounts how the PICL was born, summarizes how the Agency got to know Presidents-elect Richard Nixon, Jimmy Carter, and Ronald Reagan, and gives his candid assessment of the famous A Team/B Team exercise conducted in 1976 on Soviet intentions and capabilities.

This interview was conducted 28 February 1998 as a part of the CIA History Staff’s oral history program.

I would like to talk a bit about [Huntington D.] “Ting” Sheldon, because he was a great man. He had been in Air Force intelligence in England during the war and then went off into private life again, where he was not a great success. He came back in 1951 or 1952 to

Richard Kovar served in the Directorate of Intelligence.

be the second D/OCI, and he really was the man who built the place. He built an empire while he was at it, because OCI had its own security, its own courier service, its own print shop, and a lot of other things that were all justified by the fact that communications intelligence needed special handling. And so he really had a self-contained operation.

This enabled him over the few years after that to build a powerful organization, and he was completely ruthless in how he did it. People he didn't like were brushed aside one way or another, so that he built a core of people who were basically what he wanted for his shop, which were versatile generalists. He didn't mind having people around who were specialists, but his interests were in the generalists, because in his mind they were a core of people who could do anything. Knight McMahan, his deputy, [tried] to sort of cushion him, because he was not the easiest man in the world.

It was a good combination, and the office found its soul during those years. The thing about it was, if anything happened, people always showed up. They were committed to their jobs and could be counted on in the middle of the night to come in and do whatever was required. At the same time, [they] bitched all the time; it was built in. But while bitching, they were there.

Just to finish his [Sheldon's] story, when Ray Cline took over the Directorate of Intelligence (DI) in early 1962, I think—after Dulles left—he wanted OCI to be under

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his control, and he booted Sheldon aside, or pushed Sheldon aside, I should say. But Ting stayed on for several years as the Agency's SIG-INT Officer and also as the Agency's officer for overhead stuff, and Chairman of the Watch Committee. Then, finally, he retired and went downhill fairly fast. Lost his eyesight and all kinds of things. Eventually, he and his wife made a pact; she shot him and then shot herself. That was the end of the story. While he was there, though, he was a force for good to a great extent even though his personnel decisions were a bit difficult. He ran the place very firmly indeed. The OCI promotions board, or whatever it was called at that point, consisted of himself and Knight McMahan. No one else had a say of any kind.

Prepping DCI Dulles for the NSC Briefings

I think that I had made my mark with Sheldon by my handling of the NSC briefings under Dulles back in 1957-58, largely by calming them down. In the Eisenhower administration, the Agency's vehicle for keeping the President informed on a regular basis was Dulles's weekly briefing of the NSC. The Council met on schedule at 1000 every Friday morning, with an

agenda usually set months in advance, for which policy papers were laboriously churned out and coordinated beforehand. I can remember an occasion when the newspaper headlines were along the lines of, "NSC Meets as War Clouds Loom over Taiwan Strait." They were right: the NSC did meet, but it discussed a paper on policy toward Italy, which had been in gestation for six months, because that was the agenda, also set months in advance.

Dulles's performances were less structured, however. OCI prepared a series of topics to be covered at a preliminary meeting on Wednesday afternoon at 1700, together with a rough draft of what Dulles might say. He would amend the list and ask for changes that we would incorporate in another draft for a repeat rehearsal on Thursday afternoon at 1700. We would go through the same process again and have finished texts ready by 0830 on Friday, at which time we would assemble in [DDI] Bob Amory's office in South Building for a final review and to listen to the CBS news. And then Amory and I, or whoever was to accompany Dulles, would go down the hall to Dulles's office. The limousine would be waiting at the door and then would take off to the White House. Whoever went with Dulles served as a scene-shifter for his graphics and as a recorder for us, because [otherwise] the only record we had of what Dulles said to the President was what he remembered and reported. The assistant's report was our "publication of record."

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My only direct experience of the NSC briefing was the one time I was told to accompany Dulles to the White House. I therefore took the briefing package down to his office, arriving as he was putting on his coat. We proceeded to the car, at which point he handed me a sheaf of cables and said, “See if there is anything important in these.” That was my first intimation of the Bay of Pigs.

In the Cabinet Room, Dulles took his seat at the end of the table, while I sat in the back row where I could manipulate the briefing boards and point out places on the maps. The *piece de resistance* was the shelling [by Communist China] of the [Nationalist Chinese] off-shore islands. Eisenhower came in, we all rose and then sat, and Dulles proceeded with his briefing. Eisenhower had one question: “What are the calibers of the Communist guns?” Dulles referred this to me, and I said, rightly or wrongly, “Just small stuff, 75-mm or less,” my sole contribution to the session or, in fact, to Eisenhower. Then the briefing ended, and I was shooed out of the room. After the scheduled hour was up, the meeting broke up, Dulles came out, I returned the briefing boards, and we drove back to South Building. End of my first moment in the sun.

Within OCI this circus was managed by John Purcell, a bright guy who was very much in the wrong job. His nerves got to him, and he allowed himself to be driven crazy by Dulles’s work habits and by meeting deadlines in general. Thus, each succeeding stage in the process was accompanied by a higher

stage of hysteria, with the frenzy not subsiding until the limousine pulled away from South Building on Friday morning. Furthermore, it was contagious. Everyone involved was caught up in it willy-nilly.

Filling In

John was going on leave sometime in 1957, and Bill Hebert, a steady soul, was tapped to fill in, but Bill for some reason was not available and, as his deputy, I filled in instead. The experience made me, in the eyes of the Office and especially of Sheldon. He had been led to believe from John’s demeanor that the task involved a superhuman effort in the face of terrific challenges. And to John they were.

My first duty was to sit beside John while he produced one week’s briefing. I was impressed at the amount of *sturm und drang* that it generated, but I couldn’t see why it was necessary. The analysts dreaded the occasions when they had to produce pieces of the briefing. I thought it could be done more calmly and resolved to try. Just by assuming that this was a routine task, however important, and by maintaining a sense of humor about it, the whole process began to work more smoothly. We

were able to turn an operation requiring steel nerves in the face of hysteria into an occasionally difficult, but not insurmountable, bit of intelligence production.

Difficulties With Dulles

Not that Dulles made it any easier. I felt a great deal of sympathy for John, who was obviously not geared for this sort of thing. Working for Dulles had gotten to him, and he was past neurotic and into psychotic in his reactions. For AWD could be, and usually was, trying in the extreme. To begin with, a meeting scheduled for 1700 never started then. The group—Sheldon, John, the OCI analysts who had made contributions, and often Sherman Kent and one of his analysts who had prepared an estimate that was to be presented—usually sat in a waiting room across the hall for at least an hour, and often as much as two and a half. When we did get in, he was rushing to meet a social engagement and not particularly interested anyway. Sherman told a story of trying to brief him on the latest NIE 11-3/8 [Soviet strategic capabilities]. Howie Stoertz, who was the responsible analyst, had just reached the meat of his briefing when Dulles reached around for the telephone and said, “Get me J. C. King,” [chief of the Western Hemisphere Division in the Directorate of Plans] and held a long conversation with him. By the time that was done, it was time to leave for dinner and Howie was left in mid-sentence. God knows what Dulles told the NSC.



Then-Associate Deputy Director for Intelligence Richard Kerr (at left) congratulating Dick Lehman at the latter's retirement party, 22 June 1982. Also shown, behind Mr. Lehman, is then-Deputy Director for Intelligence (and later DCI) Robert Gates. (CIA photo.)

When we did have adequate time, there were still phone calls and other interruptions, invariably DDP [Directorate of Plans—now called Directorate of Operations, or DO] business. Or he would be watching the baseball game on TV. He would be in a reclining chair facing the TV, while the hapless briefer would be facing him from the back of the set. As he reached the crux of what he had to say, Dulles would remark, “Good pitcher, can’t hit,” or some such, leaving the briefer totally at a loss. He also had a habit of assessing briefings by weight. He would heft them and decide, without reading them, whether or not to accept them.

The truth was that Dulles was not interested in the DI and looked on it as a tiresome appendage to the

real business of the Agency, the DDP. His treatment of us reflected his sense of values. He was wrong, of course, but we had to live with it. I will say that when he took his hand to writing a briefing himself, as he did when Khrushchev kicked out the “anti-party group” in 1957, he paid attention to what everyone said, then dictated his own briefing, and I have to admit it was brilliant. He didn’t miss a nuance. But the rest of the time, it was made clear that we were second-class citizens. But he was, by that time, a tired, old man.

Nonetheless, I liked the job. It was doing something concrete and challengingly complex, not pretending to be a deputy division chief of an ORR [Office of Research and Reports] organization which Harry Eisenbeiss could (and did) run per-

fectly well. I would have been delighted to take over John’s job but that was not to be, except occasionally. My ministrations had demonstrated that the exercise did not have to be conducted with nerves drawn out to the breaking point, my contribution was appreciated, and Sheldon had other things in mind for me. John left the Agency, I think probably just in time to save his sanity, and became the editor of *Natural History*, of the New York museum of the same name, about as far from the Dulles briefings as you could get, and was not heard from again.

Creating the PDB

As I remember, Jack Kennedy was blindsided a couple of times because he hadn’t seen message

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traffic. He complained to Bobby, and Bobby came down on [Major General Chester] Clifton [President Kennedy's senior military aide] like a ton of bricks, telling him he had to do something. Clifton called up Sheldon, with whom he had developed a close relationship.

Sheldon had asked me sometime earlier to be thinking about what we could do specifically for the President that we hadn't done before. I had developed some ideas when this thing came. When Sheldon took me down to see Clifton, he pulled out of a folder a series of intelligence publications that were daily coming in down there from all over, and he said, "What I need is something that will have everything in it that is worth the President's attention, everything that is worth his knowing in all these things so I don't have to fuss with them." He said it would be nice to be able to fit it into a breast pocket so that the President could carry it around with him and read it at his convenience, written specially for him. What he was doing in effect was laying out what I had been basically thinking about all along, a single publication, no sources barred, covering the whole ground, and written as much as possible in the President's language rather than in officialese. So what he asked us to do was what we wanted to do.

Now, Sheldon told him we would worry the thing and have something for him in a couple of days; this was, I think, a Wednesday [in June 1961]. So we went back to Q Building, and Sheldon just told me to go on and do it. So I created this

thing, and the guys in the back room worked up a format for it that was almost square, that seemed to be something you could fit into a breast pocket. I tried to write it in nonbureaucratic language and roughed up a copy, which Sheldon thought was okay. So we printed the damn thing and took it down and showed it to Clifton, and he thought it was good. Asked to have a live copy the next day, Saturday, to show to the President. Now, it so happened that on that weekend, Dulles was out of town, his deputy [DDCI General Charles Cabell] was out of town, and [DDI Robert] Amory was out of town.

So Sheldon assumed the authority to communicate with the President of the United States. We turned out a live issue Saturday morning, delivered it to Clifton, Clifton took it to the President, the President read it on the diving board at Glen Ora, down in the hunt country, and liked it. It has been in business from then on. So we produced the next one on Monday morning, and Sheldon then reported to the authorities what he had done. And we were committed. It started in June 1961.

Then Sheldon decreed that the Director should get a copy. At that point, we were printing only one for the President, one for the Director, and one for the files. To make it possible to print anything that we wanted to, we didn't go for any internal distribution, either. One of

the things Clifton asked for was that it be completely free of gobbledegook, including all the classification stuff. So we just put a "Top Secret" on the pages and let it go at that. It was called the *President's Intelligence Check List* [PICL]. The next thing that happened was that we agreed that Amory could see the drafts. *After* they went out.

A Process Evolves

We started out with only two of us taking turns at writing an issue, so we sort of alternated. I think Bill Colligan and I were the first two on the thing. We would see each other in the morning, and the guy who was on would stay around until 6 or 7 in the evening and come back in at 4 or 5 in the morning and write the stuff as up to date as possible, so that actually we could include incoming take up to about 7:30. And then it would be run off, and the guy who was writing it would then carry it down to the White House, so it would get down there at, I think, 9:00, I'm not sure. I may have my times wrong. We would deliver it to Bromley Smith, who was [Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs McGeorge] Bundy's deputy. Sometimes Clifton would be around and sometimes Bundy would be around, but technically it was delivered to Bromley Smith. He was a great friend to the Agency, too, and that relationship lasted as long as he was in the White House, quite a while. After the session, we would come back and write a memo on what had gone on down there.

Then Bundy would go up to see the President with the thing if he was there. We didn't wait. We came back with the comments that were made at the initial sessions. That would sort of wrap up the operation for the day, and we would pass the ball to the incoming guy. We would also get a call from Clifton detailing what had happened in the session [with the President] and write a memo for the record on that. Then we would be finished for the day and go home to bed. Then the next day, start the routine again. It got thin very quickly.

Another unique feature was that we undertook to produce whatever they wanted us to produce, including at different times of the day and so forth, and that we would also be prepared to furnish it to him wherever he was. Particularly when he was traveling abroad. That was not hard to do at all. But the one thing we were not able to do was brief the President directly. Actually that wasn't achieved until the Ford administration. For a while Dave Peterson [DI analyst] had a relationship with Congressman Ford that carried over into the White House, until Ford's chief of staff put an end to it.

From JFK to LBJ

When Kennedy was killed, that same afternoon Ray Cline gathered us in his office to decide how to handle service to Johnson, because we were really floundering on what to do. We didn't know how much he knew. So we wrote at greater

length in order to fill in some of the background, because the stuff for Kennedy was really very much leaving out any background at all. You assumed that he knew everything that had gone before, so it was just the newest developments that you had to report to him and what they might mean, but not going into the background on why they might happen, because you had a reader that already knew that. We didn't know if Johnson knew or not. So, we were trying to bridge that gap without having to talk down to him, which was difficult. The first few issues were like that.

Johnson installed his own staff inside Kennedy's staff, and our contact was with the Kennedy staff, so we didn't know how the thing was received. I forget all the ins and outs of the thing, but it eventually became clear that the President wasn't reading. We went through a series of changes. We realized first off that one of the things that was wrong with it was that it was Kennedy's format, so we changed the title to the *President's Daily Brief*, and we changed the format so that, over a week or so, it appeared in different formats each day—different sizes and shapes and what not—in trying to search for common ground there. We never really did achieve it. We [even] did it in the evening because Johnson did his reading in the evening.

Johnson really was not that much of a reader; the thing didn't appeal to him the way it did to Kennedy. We finally settled by broadening dissemination so that we sent it to

Rusk and McNamara and, after Johnson had a Vice President, we gave it to the Vice President. Incidentally, when Kennedy asked us to include Rusk and McNamara in the dissemination after it had been in business for a couple of months, I had innocently asked the question, "What about the Vice President?" and Bromley said, "Under no circumstances!"

When Ray Cline came in as DDI, he brought Jack Smith in as Director of OCI vice Sheldon. And Jack Smith shook the place up. He, I think, was a good Director of the place, too. Then Jack reorganized the front office of OCI, with [Osborn] "Obbie" Webb as his deputy. And then he had a special assistant, and that was me. I was Assistant for Special Projects, responsible for overseeing the PDB and also for doing various kinds of odd jobs, overseeing this prodigious output of one-page memorandums for the White House that we got into the business of doing.

The Cuban Missile Crisis

I was responsible for rebuilding the office to deal with the thing [the missile crisis]. I was working 12- to 15-hour days. It involved almost everything you could think of. For the first week I couldn't tell anybody what I was doing because the knowledge wasn't shared around the office. I was having to get people like Joe Martin, Chief of the Western Area, to release people for other jobs, and he just couldn't understand why the hell anything

like this was happening. He was just completely lost in this, and I finally had to say to him, “Joe, don’t argue. Just do it.”

Once the classification controls were let down so that everybody knew about it, then, really, we didn’t have a task force because—as I remember it—everybody was involved. So we used the regular office apparatus with some shortcuts and so on. The Office, to an extent, would be bypassed on a lot of this stuff, because the readout photography was mostly briefed to the Executive Committee of the NSC by [National Photographic Interpretation Center Director Arthur] Lundahl, with Sid Graybeal from the Ballistic Missiles Division of OSI [Office of Scientific Intelligence]. So that all flowed past us and what we dealt with was sort of everything else, all the fallout from all these things. The PDB didn’t include a word. Why summarize what the President already knew?

I was called in, in the middle of the night, to draft the briefing that the administration’s emissaries were to give to the foreign leaders. It presented the evidence, but there also were some policy statements that were involved. So I was involved with that one night, and the next day they left. And then all this time we were having to get the Ops Center staffed and prepared to do all kinds of things which they fortunately had never had to do. They were ready to do it. I called Diane [Mrs. Lehman] and told her to get some money out of the bank. I told Diane, if I called, to take the kids and light out to Charlottesville and ask no questions.

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Toward the end of it, on a Saturday, I was delivering the *Check List/PDB* myself that day and was sitting with Bromley Smith. He was talking about the cables that were coming in from Khrushchev and showed me the text of one of them which hadn’t been received in the Agency. So I read it quickly and then took off to go back out to Langley and made some quick notes on the thing from memory on my way out and reported to the powers that be as to what it was. I think [DCI John] McCone probably knew about it. This was the one where Khrushchev said that, “You and I, Mr. President, hold the ends of the cord that is knotted together, and if we both keep pulling, the knot will tighten and the only way that it will come apart is with the sword,” or words to that effect. And then, in the course of that Saturday, it became clear that the crisis was on its way to a solution.

Also in the course of Saturday, I was called up to Jack Smith’s office and was asked to do a postmortem on the Agency’s performance in this thing. McCone wanted to know how we had got there—what we did right, what we did wrong, and so on—and so I did. McCone pushed the button so that everything was made available to me, and in four days I had close to 100 pages on the course of events, including a couple of longhand annexes that were done for

McCone’s eyes only. In any case, that operation sort of established me.

Briefing Presidential Candidates

I had had, ever since the PDB days, sort of a charge for dealing with the Presidential apparatus, to the extent that one could. When it came to briefing presidential candidates, I was the resident expert in that, starting really with Nixon, when we ran that satellite office in New York while the Nixon administration was creating itself.

One snowy afternoon [DDI] Jack [Smith] and I, and Vic White from Security, traveled by train up to New York and were met by Security and shouldered through the New York traffic up to the Hotel Pierre, where Nixon headquarters was. We met initially with [Nixon’s chief of staff, H. R. “Bob”] Halde- man and outlined what we could do for him, and told him what we would like to do for them if they could furnish us an establishment where we could set up. And Halde- man said, “Okay. Come back and see me tomorrow,” or something to that effect. So I was left in New York and the others went back.

Then the problem was to get any further than that in the midst of this swirl that surrounds a President-elect, but I finally—after sitting around in the lobby of the outer office of the floor that they had at the Pierre—managed to penetrate to Haldeman again and got some coherent instructions. He gave me a list of people to brief and told me to get in touch with Dick Allen,

who was to be the National Security Adviser. I worked it out from there. Got hold of Allen, and he decided that he had to get an okay from Haldeman, but that we could have an area in the basement of what had been the American Bible Society headquarters, which had been abandoned by the Society and had been rented out to Nixon headquarters for the campaign. They were still occupying it, but this area in the basement, which had been a chapel, was going to be made available to us. I forget the exact workings of all this, but in any case he agreed we could have it. I went back to Headquarters and got an okay to brief these guys, some 15 of them, and got Logistics set up to take care of communications and so on in the area.

Opening a New York Office

Then I got [Paul] Corscadden, who was going to be our guy up there, and Ken Rosen as his assistant. Got them set to come up, and then a couple of days after that, over a weekend, DDA did the job. They came in there and swept the place, they barricaded everything that needed to be barricaded—it was right under the sidewalk under 57th and Park—and put in the secure communications, put in new furniture and so on; it looked sort of like Langley by the time they were done. So Corscadden and Rosen could take over and be in business.

Meanwhile, I was circulating around briefing these guys. Starting with [Nixon campaign manager and Attorney General-designate John] Mitchell, and Haldeman, and

[domestic policy adviser John] Ehrlichman, and all the guys. Just sort of circulating around with a briefcase. I cobbled together a briefing of a sort that would do the trick. And introduced them to technical systems of one kind or another.

Kissinger Takes Over

It worked pretty well from a technical point of view. But then Kissinger was brought in and said, “Down, boy” to Allen and pushed him out, and he had his own idiosyncratic way of handling things. So we were dealing with Kissinger rather than anyone else from then on. He was suspicious of the Agency. I don’t know how much of it was Nixon’s suspicion that he was reflecting, or his own sense that there might be a central source of power here if he didn’t put his foot down fairly firmly. We had, at one point, at his request staged a briefing on Soviet strategic forces where we had the JCS on one side and our people on the other. It did not go terribly well. I expected it simply because they disagreed, and Kissinger was in the middle. Well, I finally realized what his problem really was. That is, we were taking too much for granted, that we had sort of grown up with the satellite business and therefore took the things that were known about the Soviet weapon systems and so on as a given, and went on from there. Kissinger felt that we were assuming things that we shouldn’t assume, and there was a great deal of wasted motion as a result of that. It resulted in the strategic estimates being three or four times as long as

they were before because everything had to be spelled out.

Corscadden duly delivered the PDB to [Nixon’s secretary] Rosemary Woods every day in a sealed envelope. At the end of his stay in New York, they were all delivered back to him still sealed. So it was an impressive performance, but to what end?

Relations With Ford

When it came to [President] Ford, we had had a briefing officer, Dave Peterson, assigned to Ford when he was Vice President, and we had worked out a comfortable relationship with him through Peterson. When Ford became President, that just continued, and we didn’t try to change a thing. Only when the [Congressional] investigations started, Ford evidently felt he had to distance himself from the Agency, so Dave was basically disinvited.

The Carter Chapter Begins

It became clear that Carter was going to be the Democratic nominee against Ford in the 1976 election. We were instructed by Ford to make the offer to Carter for briefings, and it was accepted. I was tapped to be the honcho for that. Then on the 4th of July in 1976—the bicentennial year—I had been down on the Mall for the fireworks and had a hell of a time getting out. I didn’t get home until three in the morning, at which point I got a call from [DCI George] Bush saying, “I want you to meet me in Bar Har-

bor tomorrow in the afternoon. We are going down to Hershey," where some kind of Democratic meeting was being held just prior to the convention. "We are going down to Hershey to brief Carter. Will you pull the stuff together and come on up?" So, about three in the afternoon, I was airborne in the Agency Gulfstream up to Kennebunkport, met George and Barbara there, showed George what I had—the standard briefing stuff—which at this point included a frame, one swing of the camera on the KH-9, which stretched from the Atlantic across somewhere into Mississippi right across Georgia, showing Plains, such as there is of it.

We got back on the plane and were met by Security at Harrisburg Airport, driven from there to Hershey and ushered into the back entrance of this big hotel where the meeting was. In a minute or so, Bob Strauss came in. He had been Chairman of the Democratic National Committee when Bush was Chairman of the Republican Committee, and the two of them had gotten to riding around together and were great friends, so he dropped in to say hello. Then Carter showed up and George gave the briefing. Carter was terribly interested. Said he wanted some more of this and so on. So I was to get together with "my issues man." His issues man was Stu[art] Eizenstat, now the Undersecretary of State for Economics, Business, and Agriculture Affairs; he was younger then. We got back on the plane again and flew back to town and got in about one in the morning. I went back to the Agency with the stuff and then home to bed.

I had to meet Eizenstat first at the Democratic Convention. I went up to New York and fought my way into the convention and finally laid my hands on Eizenstat, who was as busy as a one-armed paper hanger. He gave me some rough outlines of what he wanted, and then I had to go to Atlanta a few days later to meet him again, and we finalized what we were to do on this thing. Got an agenda and proceeded to get the requisite people together to brief on this stuff, half a dozen or so I guess.

I organized the trip [to brief Carter in Plains]. We flew a whole bunch of us on the Agency plane with Bush. Ford had directed that Bush preside over these sessions; he didn't much want to do it, but Ford made him. Bush didn't want to appear to be too close to the Democrats because he had his own future to think of, but he was a good soldier and did his job. Then we flew down in the Gulfstream, down to Fort Benning, and at Fort Benning they got a couple of choppers for us.

The Army pilots were told we were to land at Peterson Field, and they couldn't find Peterson Field on the map, so finally it turned out that it was farmer Peterson's field. We arrived and the choppers sat down and all the press was there. It was mobbed. The rest of us bailed out one side of the helicopter while Bush bailed out the other and dealt with the press.

Well, he talked to them for a while, and again Security had cars, and we were wafted from there to Carter's house, which was a sort of

standard suburban brick rambler set in the pine woods. We came in, and he greeted us and led us down to his study, which was in the one wing of the place which had an air conditioner—nothing else did—and this was July in Georgia. We all sat around in straight wooden chairs, and it was hotter than hell, and in order to be able to hear you had to shut off the air conditioner. The temperature was unbearable and your clothes stuck to the back of the chairs. We started at one o'clock and were still going at six, during which time Carter sat without getting up and very intent, totally concentrating and taking it all in.

And there was a second session a week or so later with another group of people covering some more subjects as specified by Eizenstat. He got caught up, as you might suspect he would, in the campaign, and we didn't do much for him, although we did stay in touch. In the first session, Mondale had been present, the Vice Presidential candidate, and Mondale's issues man, who was David Aaron, was excluded, although he was present in Plains. We could see him prowling around outside. He was excluded because he didn't yet have the clearances. I don't think he ever forgave us for that, if he was well intentioned toward us to begin with, and I doubt if he was.

That's really the end of the story until after the election, at which point we had to set up a beach-head down in Plains and stationed a guy down there who was a security officer really, but he took the PDB to the Carter house. We set

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Reagan wanted some briefings in Washington before he was inaugurated.

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him up in Americus, which was a few miles down the road. But he would drive over every morning, and Carter would read it.

He was there all the time, and then I went down all the time to see how things were going. Saw Carter once or twice. One time I went down and went to the house and walked through the Secret Service cordon that had been thrown around the house. I went into the house, and Carter was alone—he had no help, and the Secret Service was kept back from the house, so he was completely by himself. On a cold, rainy November, December day, having to worry about when Amy came home from school and fixing her up with money to do something or other and sending her off again. Meanwhile, he wanted to talk and, well, I talked. For nigh on two hours. He asked me how various people would be as Director and a number of other things, and, “Has Brezhnev ever lied to us?”

Finally, in the course of this whole business of how we approached the Soviets, I told him that you had to make up your mind whether the Soviets are what we think they are, or whether they are a different kind of animal, that is, whether or not they are out to do us in regardless of what, or whether they are people you can negotiate with. I finally got him to agree that we should do a paper on this subject, and that we would produce it and shuttle it down in a week or so, as a way of thinking about the Soviet Union. Again the question, “Has Brezhnev ever lied to us?” And I had to say I

didn't know that he had, but that didn't make him any better.

As it turned out, the scales dropped from his eyes only after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Carter felt betrayed by Brezhnev, but Brezhnev never betrayed him; Carter was just too naïve and too stubborn to listen. To finish this story, I went back and reported this extraordinary conversation to Bush and to no one else, and George was sort of shattered that I had gotten involved in a conversation of this kind, but no harm came of it. As far as that paper was concerned, the guys were grinding it out and then Aaron called me in great glee, which he didn't bother to conceal, delighted to tell me they didn't want it. By then Aaron was permitted in meetings.

The Reagan Era

When Reagan was nominated, we, of course, offered him briefings. [DCI Stansfield] Turner insisted on giving them. I should mention that Bush, in the course of the campaign, having been the Ambassador to China was going out on a trip out there to make contact with Chinese leadership, and he asked us to come up and brief him at Kennebunkport.

He was the Vice Presidential candidate. So we went up and did it. It was old-home week with Bush. We had lunch afterward, during which

I renewed my contact with Dick Allen. I offered him a ride back on the Agency plane with the rest of the briefers, which he was happy to accept. He and I talked at some length on the way down, which came in handy shortly afterward.

Reagan wanted some briefings in Washington before he was inaugurated. He was living in one of those little houses on Lafayette Square, because Blair House was under renovation. Again, Turner insisted on being the front man on these things. He also insisted on giving a briefing on [Soviet] strategic forces, which he had been specifically asked not to give. The point was, I think, that we had superiority. But, indeed, he gave the damn thing anyway, not to great applause. It became clear that he expected to continue in the job. It also was clear to everyone else that he didn't stand a chance in continuing in the job. This became very embarrassing, because he insisted on putting himself in front, thereby antagonizing everybody, and preventing us from making the connections that needed to be made. Finally, I called up Dick Allen and said, “Look, put the man out of his misery,” and I don't know exactly what happened after that, but it was evident that someone had gotten to Turner and told him he was not going to continue to be Director anymore. In fact, that [William] Casey was. At that point, he sort of faded out of the picture.

The “Morning Meeting”

The D/OCI was a member of the DCI's Executive Council (the

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Helms liked to keep the meetings short. He also liked to have familiar faces around the table and was quite uncomfortable when someone was missing.

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“morning meeting”), which met every weekday morning at 0900 sharp. It consisted of the DCI, the DDCI, the Executive Director-Comptroller, the four Deputies, the General and Legislative Counsels, D/ONE, D/OCI, and others on occasion. The membership varied somewhat with organizational changes. For instance, during investigations, whatever we called the public affairs officer would be added.

I first began attending morning meetings as a stand-in for Drex Godfrey [the Director of OCI from 1966 to 1970], then on my own [as Director of OCI from 1970] until I left OCI in 1975. Then I was back—in late 1975—sitting in the back row as a special assistant to Colby, and then to Bush, until I belonged again when I became [in 1976] the senior NIO [Deputy to the DCI for National Intelligence]. Then I dropped out again when [Robert] Bowie took over [as Deputy to the DCI for National Intelligence], and I did not return as a full member until 1979. Then out again in 1981, except for standing in for [National Intelligence Council Chairman] Harry Rowen. All together, a span of 16 years and six Directors.

The meeting ordinarily opened with a short briefing by D/OCI, mostly on overnight developments, and then the DCI would go around the table for any matters of interest that people thought appropriate for such a forum. This meant some pressure on the D/OCI first thing in the morning. I was in the office at 0800 and spent the first 20 minutes or so reading the night's take. Then the retiring night duty officer would

come, along with the DD/OCI, and we would send for analysts according to the take. Sometimes, some hapless analysts would have to brief me as I rushed down the hall to the DCI conference room. Then the meeting itself would run from a half hour to an hour and a half (the latter during the Congressional investigations). Then I'd have to fill in the OCI boys on what had transpired, and any actions that were required of us, so I was rarely ready for ordinary business before 1100.

[DCI Richard] Helms liked to keep the meetings short. He also liked to have familiar faces around the table and was quite uncomfortable when someone was missing. I had been accustomed to taking all my leave in one batch in the summer, when I went north. He couldn't stand it, and we finally compromised on three weeks. That went as soon as Helms did.

The only time I saw Helms really angry was when the Greek colonels' coup took place in 1967. What happened was that the Greek generals had been planning a coup against the elected government, a plan we knew all about and was not yet ripe. But a group of colonels had trumped their ace and acted without warning. Helms had expected to be warned of the gen-

erals' coup, and when a coup occurred, he naturally assumed it was this one, and he was furious that he had not been warned. Jim Critchfield, who was C/DDP/NE, was at the Farm giving a lecture. “Get him back here immediately!” I tried to cool Helms off by pointing out that this was a different coup which we had no line on. This was a new thought and seemed to cool him off a bit, but it was a memorable meeting.

[DCI James] Schlesinger didn't like these meetings and tended to de-emphasize them. He preferred to do his business one on one in the brief time he was there.

[DCI William] Colby, however, restored them, and they eventually became his primary instrument for dealing with the [Congressional] investigations. The tactics for coping with each new bit of madness were exhaustively discussed, with the whole table taking part, morning after morning after morning as the whole horrid thing unfolded. It was hard to do one's real job with all the complexities of this other, irrelevant mess getting in the way.

One session I remember that did not concern the investigations came in 1975. It was my first meeting after a European trip, and the first thing that the DO duty officer said when I came into my office was that he had already called the Vietnam analysts up to brief. The dam had broken in Vietnam, and the end [of South Vietnam] was in sight. So I had to tell Colby that we had identified the regular North Vietnamese divisions marching south. And I so reported: “They are com-

ing south in the order 316th, 308th, etc., and could be in position to attack Saigon in about a month, and there is nothing left to stop them with.” Colby, seeing the collapse of all his efforts since the mid-1950s, did not flinch. I suspect I just confirmed what he had been expecting. But I will always remember it.

[DCI George] Bush, with his usual grace, made his meetings a “band of brothers” and, still faced with the investigations, used the meetings as Colby did. [DCI Stansfield] Turner was his usual insufferable self. [DCI William] Casey, like Schlesinger, didn’t like big meetings and tried to work around them, and he mumbled. By that time, in any case, the band of brothers that had held the place together through the difficult years had been pretty much disbanded.

The Team A/Team B Headache

Almost the last thing George Carver told me about as he pulled out of the business [turning the job of Deputy to the DCI for National Intelligence over to Lehman] was the thing with the President’s Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board, this so-called competitive analysis experiment. He had been negotiating with them on the terms of this thing and had in fact settled the negotiation just before he left and then handed it to me. This is what terminated in the infamous Team A-Team B experiment that was all over the papers. On the one hand, by a team of professional intelligence officers—who were themselves divided—on the other

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The basic question was whether the Agency, really the Agency not the Community, had underestimated the Soviet threat.

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by a team of howling rightwingers. Not necessarily academics. They were conservative all right. One side went off and produced a coherent inflammatory document on the state of the Soviet forces and so forth. The other side went off and produced a divided document that was sort of reasoned but certainly made no waves. Well, it was, as anticipated, a disaster. And I spent most of my time on that for a while. There was a subcommittee of the Board, the President’s Board, headed by Bob Galvin, the CEO of Motorola. I went out to Chicago at least once to deal with Galvin, who was in fact a good soul. He, as well as I, had come to the conclusion that the B Team was out of control.

And they were leaking all over the place, as I say, putting together this inflammatory document. Then one day I got a message from Galvin saying that he would be at the private plane terminal at National Airport at 1200, and would I meet him for lunch. I went down, and there was Leo Cherne, who was on the Board. I think at this point he was Chairman of the Board. Precisely at 1200 the plane sat down. He sent the crew off once they had served lunch, and we climbed on board and ate it. Then we discussed the problem, and at 1300 precisely we departed and the crew came on board and pulled their wheels up and were off to New

York. It’s a life that I don’t believe I want to live, but it was sort of fun. Then, after a great deal of pushing and pulling and milling around, the Board decided they would have a debate in front of them. Between the two teams.

It was painful. The A Team did its stuff in the standard intelligence officer manner with a GS-13 from the Agency upholding his side and a corresponding one from DIA upholding the other side, because they were split. Then the B Team came forward, and the chairman of their group was [Harvard historian] Dick Pipes, who was a very eloquent speaker. He presented their case, all full of things that were nonsense but which sounded good. At that point, as soon as he finished, Admiral Anderson—who was a member of the Board—leapt to his feet and said, “Now, that’s what we’ve been waiting to hear!” It was really embarrassing, and some of the more sensible members of the B Team were embarrassed by it, too. But nonetheless, the right wing had their triumph.

The basic question was whether the Agency, really the Agency not the Community, had underestimated the Soviet threat. It was really a question of a time lag. Indeed, they [the Agency’s analysts] had said the Soviets would build up to a certain point and then level off. Unfortunately, the Soviets didn’t level off. But it was a couple of years, given the time lag on these things, before it was apparent that they hadn’t leveled off. And in that time lag, the estimates were understated. They were underestimated substantially. But by the time that this so-called

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While there had been an attempt to politicize the estimates, they hadn't succeeded.

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experiment took place, we had corrected that. The current estimate was pretty much on the money, but nonetheless they had their performance while the Board wagged its tail. Then the whole thing leaked, and, of course, with a strongly pro-B Team slant in the leak. Pipes called me in horror—he was really a decent guy, just out of his depth in this kind of thing—and he was in a state because all this had leaked.

I calmed Pipes down and told him it was something we lived with all the time. And then the thing just went away. It left its scars on the press reporting of the thing, but that was about it. There were actually three different subjects the B Team was concerned about: one was missile accuracy, one was low-altitude air defense, and one was this big amorphous, “What are they up to?” The missile accuracy was the old business about the SS9 being MIRVed and so on. [It] was a sterile debate. The A Team had won its case years before, but it was not accepted by the B Team, so they rehashed the old arguments. Nothing came of it, and nobody paid any attention. On low-altitude air defense, the B Team was rational. It had some points to make about uncertainties that had been underplayed in the estimates, and we adjusted the estimates as the result of their criticism. That was an argument among reason-

able men. Worked fairly well. It was just on the Soviet objectives business that all the hurrah occurred [played out in the media].

Now, we did have a series of picking up the pieces. We had to go down and brief the Congressional committees on what this was all about, and [we made] the point that we had not changed our estimates [on Soviet strategic objectives] on the basis of what they had done. I went off to Europe to brief various Allies on the subject. While there had been an attempt to politicize the estimates, they hadn't succeeded.

Bill Casey and Retirement

Just after Christmas [1980] DCI-designate Bill Casey called Bruce [Clarke, the DDI] and me in for a get-to-know-you session. We prepared the standard briefing, but he interrupted us, saying in effect that he already understood all that. And he did. Apropos the relationship of the DCI to the President, he said, “You understand, I call him Ron.” In retrospect, I can see that Bruce and I had been decapitated, but we just didn't know it yet. I think he

thought we were insufficiently hard in our view of the USSR.

Casey was never one to communicate directly about matters of this kind, but in the next few months I began to get intimations that Harry Rowen had been given my job. There were several things of that kind where NIOs learned indirectly that they had been replaced. They were never told anything. For some of them, I had to tell them.

It became clear to me that Rowen was going to take my job. At that point, I made up my mind that, after two Directors had removed me from the same job, that it might be time to retire. I sent Casey a note saying that I understood that he might want his own man in my job, and I would step aside without fuss. But I undertook to stay on with Harry for a year.

Working for Casey was a trial for everybody, partly because of his growing erraticism and partly because of his own rightwing tendencies. Although I will say that, when you argued with him, he listened, and he could change his mind. He was amenable to argument, but it took a hell of a lot of argument. In general, it was an increasingly uncomfortable situation, so I was not sorry to pull out. Which I did in 1982.