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More on the Felix Bloch Story

The Post has stated more than once that Felix Bloch had reason to be thankful to our system of politically appointed ambassadors because it catapulted him to the No. 2 job, deputy chief of mission (DCM), in Vienna [news story, July 30]. As a retired Foreign Service officer who has spent 25 years with the U.S. Information Agency, I know that this is nonsense. Mr. Bloch was economic counselor in 1980. The next step on the career ladder in an embassy after counselor is DCM, which he reached three years later.

Officers do not usually occupy those two jobs in the same country, but there is nothing that says they cannot or should not. Furthermore, DCMs are invariably career officers, whose main task in highly sought-after posts such as Vienna is to "provide guidance" for politically appointed ambassadors. In real life that often means keeping them from walking off every political cliff on the local landscape.

Perhaps Mr. Bloch should be grateful

that he was chosen rather than some other counselor-rank officer in the career service. Meanwhile, neither the Foreign Service nor the American public has any reason to applaud our preposterous political-payoff method of choosing an ever-growing number of ambassadors.

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