

Interview with George B. High

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

GEORGE B. HIGH

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy

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Q: Today is August 26, 1993. This is an interview with George B. High being done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies, and I am Charles Stuart Kennedy. George, could you give me a little about your background—where you came from, a little about your family, where you grew up and went to school?

HIGH: Well, the family roots on my father's side were Swedish immigrants in the 1880s who came to the United States and ended up in Nebraska. And on my mother's side, Germans who settled in Chicago at some time in the last century, I've never quite understood those details.

I was born in Chicago in 1931 and grew up in a town named Blue Island, which is on the far south side. I went through high school there — Blue Island Community High School, which is now named Eisenhower High School. Didn't travel at all abroad, but collected stamps and that interested me in geography. And my father taught geography in high school. Both my parents were high school teachers.

One thing that began to interest me in world affairs and travel was Richard Haliburton's writings.

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Q: You are the second person who talked about being influenced by Haliburton.

HIGH: One of the times while in grade school when I had one of those childhood diseases, I was given *The Ten Wonders of the World* or maybe the title was *The Book of Wonders* by Haliburton. It was a collection of several of his travel books, and it opened up to me the world of adventure and travel.

When I was in high school, one of my government teachers noted an interest in world affairs. She encouraged me to read a book describing the experiences of an American diplomat early in the century. I've forgotten the title, but it was written by a blue blood New Englander who as a young man had gone to Turkey to be the private secretary to the American Ambassador. That was the beginning of his extraordinary career and the book described it in inspiring detail. The author was Lloyd C Griscom, who shortly after the turn of the century became ambassador to Persia, Japan, Brazil briefly, and Italy.

So I went off to college, Dartmouth, and majored in economics, while taking a number of government courses, including some international affairs courses. Several of the latter also sparked interest in diplomacy. They were taught by a fellow named John Pelenyi. He was the last Hungarian ambassador to the United States before World War II, at the time that the war broke out. He married an American woman from Cleveland, as I recall. He remained in the U.S. and taught international affairs.

One of the visitors to his class was Ambassador Briggs, Ellis O. Briggs, the father of Ted Briggs. I just thought it was fascinating to hear what Briggs, who you will recall always was outspoken, had to say, and to see how this former Hungarian diplomat sort of bowed and scraped in the grand European manner when Briggs visited the class.

When it became time for me to decide on graduate school, the choice came down to business administration or law. Even with a strong economics background, I decided: why not take law? It might fascinate me and if it didn't, it would be good preparation for

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government. I was already contemplating the Foreign Service. I went to Columbia Law School from 1953 to 1956, and when I could, I took international law courses. The second year in law school, I spent a summer as an intern at the United Nations. Philip Jessup was a professor at Columbia Law, and he wrote a very helpful recommendation for my participation in the intern program.

Substantively, the summer wasn't very stimulating. I worked in the UN's legal division on a couple of papers on subjects that were not demanding. But the environment was exciting. Dag Hammarskjold was the Secretary General and staff officers played up to this group of international students, about 30 of us. That time spent with colleagues there was very broadening. The summer had value.

I applied to the Foreign Service in the spring of 1954 and took the several-day written exam in Chicago that summer. I took the oral exam while I was at the United Nations in the summer of 1955. I passed the oral and could have gone into the Foreign Service that summer, but I said that I really would like to hold off and take my third year in law school and get the degree. There were other international law courses given in the third year that I would find useful. The Department said, "Fine."

On taking the oral exam, one interesting insight came. A law school classmate who took the exam with me. He really was very bright. He had studied international affairs and had taken some international law courses, as well. He could talk a blue streak on international politics. I thought, "Boy, if there was somebody who was well prepared for the Foreign Service and could contribute to it, he had to be the guy." I found out afterwards that his exam had not gone well. For one thing, he walked into the exam room with a copy of the New York Times under his arm. He admitted afterwards that this was a gimmick to impress the examiners that he was well read and reading the right things. One of his first questions out of the hopper was: who is the Times correspondent in Moscow? He couldn't name the fellow; it shot the image of the well-read newspaper reader. As a matter of fact, he did not pass the exam.

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I was asked, as a law school student, what characterized Justice Frankfurter's decisions on the Supreme Court. The examiner was after the Justice's about face while on the court from a number of his earlier, liberal decisions. I admitted that at Columbia we hadn't looked closely at the evolution of judges' opinions. I passed the exam, but I don't suppose it rested heavily on that honest answer.

Despite failing to describe Frankfurter's background, I graduated from law school and came into the Foreign Service in June, 1956. That put me in the A-100, junior officer course at the Foreign Service Institute. The institute was then located in an old brick building on C and 22nd Streets. Several years later, we watched the building collapse as it was destroyed to make way for New State.

Q: How did you find those courses?

HIGH: I thought they were pretty good. I certainly was intrigued by the background of my colleagues in the A-100 course. There was everything from business to journalism to the English major who had tried to write the great American novel and it hadn't worked, to the environmentalist who logged up in Alaska. Joe Montllor was one of the two directors of the course; the other was an Eastern European hand, Jan Nadelman.

Q: I came in in the first one of the new courses and that was July, 1955 and both Montllor and Nadelman were there.

HIGH: At the time our class was a close group socially. My class had Frank Carlucci in it, for example. It had Ed Walters, who started to rise very quickly and I guess just got turned off by the Foreign Service and left. There was something about his inheriting a cattle ranch in Virginia and he decided that ranching was what he wanted to do. Our class was a challenging, interesting group.

We came into the service with a lot of idealism. Foreign relations were very important, and we knew it. We wanted to participate. Interestingly, this came toward the close of the

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McCarthy period at State. That unfortunate phase had not deterred anyone in my class from joining. Several years later, when the Peace Corps was established, we might have been candidates for that program. That's how strongly we felt about our dedication.

Many in my A-100 class remained in Washington for their first assignments. We were all so keyed-up to go abroad that many of us with Department assignments were disappointed at first, but the early introduction to the home base probably served us well in the long-run. Some of us stayed for three or four years in Washington before going abroad. Occasionally, we met as a group for lunch and then celebrated in sending someone off to an overseas post.

Those were career-lasting friendships among individuals, but we did not stick together in later years and have occasional group reunions. The last time I recall a number of us meeting together was for a lunch for 15 or 20 of us to send off Frank Carlucci to Zanzibar. I still run into classmates in Washington — some live in the Washington area. A couple have died. But there hasn't been quite that same class spirit that some of the other A-100 classes have. Maybe that was because our class was partly made up of people who had already been in the Department for a year or so and were just getting ready to go overseas, while the rest of us were destined to begin at home. So it was a bifurcated class.

My first assignment was to the Passport Office. At the time there were indications that the Soviets might allow people with claims to American citizenship to leave Eastern European countries. As a result, the Passport Office had a special project for about six months to review passport records of people in Eastern Europe who might have claims to American citizenship. There must have been a dozen of my classmates who were assigned to the project. It was over in an office building on H Street. I worked with some delightful elderly ladies who had been in passports for decades. They didn't wear tennis shoes, to borrow a phrase, and were very sharp and knowledgeable. It wasn't the most action filled first assignment, but I enjoyed the legal element of the review process. I don't think the Soviets

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let the people we were studying leave, at least at that time, so I'm not sure the work did any good.

Q: Was Frances Knight running it at that time or was it Bruce Shiptet?

HIGH: No. I am not sure which of the two because we were nowhere near the director's office. Who was the great buddy of Hoover at the FBI?

Q: Frances Knight was particularly....

HIGH: Well, I think it was Frances Knight. But we were so far removed from her that all we did was read in the newspapers about that relationship and questions about her leadership.

It must have been winter, early spring of 1957 that that project, for me, came to an end. I was assigned to the African office in the Intelligence and Research Bureau (INR). I remained there about two and a half years.

Q: What were you doing mainly?

HIGH: Well, there would be an occasional briefing paper on some particular issue. I don't think I did many of those. There was the morning briefing of the Director of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, and we took weekly turns reading cables, listening to the morning news, and drafting very brief summaries of developments in Africa. The main task of juniors in that office was to write NISs, sections of the National Intelligence Survey, on African countries. This was an enormous compendium of research on all aspects of foreign countries, from geography to politics, economics, labor, social systems, and so forth. I wrote a couple of sections on the economy of Ethiopia and one on labor in Nigeria. It was good preparation for Africa. Research on that continent was in great demand because knowledge of the region was limited, a number of colonies were gaining their independence, and the United States was raising small consulates to embassy status.

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It was a neat office. The director was Bob Baum, who was a well-recognized African expert. His deputy was Al Disdier, who was subsequently with AID and a mission director in several African countries. Tom Thorn, a civil service officer, was also a principal figure in the office. All of them very knowledgeable of Africa and excellent writers. They were generally the ones to write current intelligence papers on major developments. The rest of us worked on the NISs and learned a lot from them.

Q: Africa was just getting ready to burst on the scene.

HIGH: Yes, that's right. The African Bureau was trying to prove itself, and the European Bureau, covering the colonial powers, still laid claim to knowing what was going on in the colonies. Dudley Withers was just going out to become what would be our last consul general in Nairobi. That was a big African posting in those days. A lot of attention was given to Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana and Ghanaian independence occurred around that time. R. Smith Simpson, an FSO with experience in various African posts, was sending in absolutely unparalleled analysis of developments in African territories.

Increasing attention was being given by the Department to the region even before the Kennedy Administration. It was all new to State Department leadership which was heavily Europe-oriented. There was a struggle by Africanists to assert themselves as experts on the continent. The attitude the Africanists had to counter (and did eventually) was: who after all would know more about British Africa than the British!

But remember, what we did was all in the research mode. Our contacts with the geographic desks, for example, in the regional bureaus, were virtually nil. They lived in a separate world and preferred it that way. Most of the desk officers seemed to think they could get along with little help from INR. I'm not sure those times have changed very much.

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Q: I came in 1960-61 and had the Horn of Africa desk in INR. I don't think I talked more than once or twice on the telephone with a desk officer. There really wasn't much effort to bring them together.

HIGH: Very little. I am trying to remember. I think it was at that stage that there was a visit to Washington, on a Leader Grant, of the fellow who was in charge of civil aviation in Southern Rhodesia. A meeting was held over in the Main State (we were in an annex) of people who were interested in Africa, and particularly Southern Rhodesia, to meet him and have a briefing. I recall that the person who covered Southern Rhodesia was on leave and I was asked to sit in on the meeting and participate. I remember there weren't terribly many people around that table who knew a damn thing about Southern Rhodesia. I knew at least a little bit because I followed it peripherally, reading a Salisbury newspaper, and I did a little bit of research before going to the session. Anyway, I asked a bunch of questions because nobody else was speaking up and the pauses became really rather embarrassing. While I kept the discussion going for awhile, I had the sense that the African Bureau participants didn't really want questions from INR. We were another world apart.

Toward the end of my time in INR, which would have been the fall of 1958, there was the revolution in Iraq when Nuri-el-Said was overthrown.

Q: Yeah. That was July 14, 1958.

HIGH: A special task force was put together in INR to work with the Near Eastern Affairs Bureau and provide quick summaries for Department leaders on fast-moving developments and answer questions. It was a 24-hour operation. I didn't then have an on-going assignment, I was floating. So I was released to the task force. I must have worked there for eight or ten months, something like that.

It was interesting because we saw all the cable traffic to and from the Middle East and there was an awful lot of attention by the administration to the problem. It was a distant,

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peripheral role from the policy makers that was so often part of the basic building blocks of a Foreign Service Officer. But the subject matter was consuming.

Q: What was your impression of how this Iraqi revolution, the killing of King Faisal and Nuri-el-Said and the take over by Qasim, impacted on American interests in the area?

HIGH: It was a very distant one for me. I had no background on the Middle East. But the crisis provided a quick study. I was very much given the sense that here was an established order that the West favored. Nuri-el-Said was looked upon as being a very positive, evolutionary, modernizing force. He was driven from the scene unexpectedly — an indication that the British had underestimated developments in their area of interest. It was part of the turning of the tide in the Middle East where the United States began to step in and replace British influence.

Q: At that time I remember being told that Iraq was the great hope of the Middle East. It was one place that was going to make it due to a small population which was well-educated and there were good resources, not only oil but the Tigris/Euphrates area. But, it has just gone down hill since.

HIGH: For me personally, it was really part of the formative years of observing, learning, participating tangentially on the edge of a crisis and seeing some of the players at a distance. At the time it gave me the feeling, “Gee, wouldn't this be a terrific part of the world to specialize in. It has petroleum. It has all these internal clashes between ancient society and modern society, and personalities and different cliques and intrigues of the Muslim world.” My assignment to the task force was a very brief eight or ten months exposure, but it demonstrated that foreign affairs were fascinating and challenging, especially in the Middle East. It led to a misstep a little later in my career that subsequently required a course correction.

Let me digress at this point. As a typical American, I entered the service as a language probationer. Despite high school and college Spanish, and having a mother who taught

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Spanish, I did not pass the written language exam. For a number of those early years, I trudged over to FSI for Early Morning Spanish. The teachers were great, and especially one, Vicente Arbeliez, who remained at the language school for years. As testing time approached, he would even call me at home in the evening and we'd talk Spanish for 10 or 15 minutes. Thanks to considerate help like that, I passed the exam — finally! At this stage of my career, we were ready for our first assignment overseas

Initially, we were to be assigned to Bogota. Colombia. I have forgotten what I was to be there, probably a consular officer. However, in the course of taking medical exams for clearance to go overseas, we discovered that my young son Mark, age one, had a heart murmur. That wouldn't work out at Bogota's altitude. Actually, I think the ending of the assignment to Colombia may have been what projected me into the Middle East task force. That temporary work carried me to the next assignment cycle.

In late 1958, we discovered suddenly that we were going to Luanda, Angola where I would be the economic officer in a three person consular post. Formally, the consulate came under Embassy Lisbon, in the field; but it worked more closely with the new African Bureau in Washington. In a real sense, the consulate was caught between the European orientation of the embassy and the European Bureau, on the one hand, and the African Bureau in Washington on the other. There were policy differences from time to time that were difficult to bridge or were unbridgeable. As the years went on, in too many instances, the national policy interest came down to protecting our Azores bases (vital parts of NATO) and U.S. support for independence in Africa, peaceful transitions there, and access to African resources.

All of a sudden, after all the language training in Spanish, we were going to a Portuguese-speaking country. There wasn't time for taking any new language class, much less an area studies class. We were in Luanda, Angola in a matter of weeks. I hadn't even had the time to pick up a phrase or two, really, even to say, "Hello? How are you?" in Portuguese. We

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just arrived by way of a nice ship voyage from New York to Naples and a couple of days in Rome to catch our breath, and then on by air to Leopoldville.

In Luanda we had a three man post. On our arrival, it was headed by Dick Fisher, the consul, an old African hand who had served in Ghana and some other territories. My position in the consulate was new. Fisher lasted about a year and was then transferred out and replaced by Bill Gibson, who had not had previous African experience. He was a very good writer. Bill Simmons was the other vice consul; he did the administrative and consular work and reported some. Actually, most of the reporting was done by Bill Simmons and me. Bill Gibson went out and made contacts and did his thing, and left a lot of the reporting work to us. I enjoyed the work because African independence was in full swing and I knew that Washington was dying for information. Independence sentiments were also beginning to reach the Portuguese territories.

We were also beginning to get visitors at this remote post. John Foster Dulles's sister, Eleanor, even visited us. We understood that she was encouraged to make this trip by her brother to give him her views on the continent. She was a renowned German expert. She asked very good questions of us, even if she lacked Africa experience, and she listened.

One of my memories of that visit was Bill Gibson trying to ply her with martinis. He didn't have success with Miss Dulles; the potted palm beside her chair bore the brunt of Bill's cocktails. Bill liked to drink and seemed to feel that a test of friendship and of people was whether or not they drank. He professed not to understand missionaries partly, it seemed, because they didn't drink. That proved to be a double weakness because missionaries were prime observers of what was happening in Angola and some of them were very astute.

Angola was a fascinating country. There were major tribal differences between the north and the center and the south. It is a beautiful country with all kinds of potential, at least it had in 1960 — minerals, including petroleum, agriculture and fisheries. Luanda was

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changing overnight. Modern buildings were going up, trade was developing. There were diamonds up in the northeast. The Portuguese were paying more attention to it finally, after centuries of neglect, thinking mistakenly that Mozambique on the east coast of Africa was the colony that held the real potential. And, of course, the Portuguese were blind to what was happening elsewhere on the continent. In their view, that couldn't happen in Angola because they understood the Africans and knew how to work with them.

Bill Gibson was influenced by some of that wishful thinking, and so was Dick Fisher, his predecessor. The people in the Africa bureau in Washington were very keen to get a sense of what was happening in Angola; they didn't believe they were receiving very perceptive reporting.

It was rather difficult for us to have contact with Africans because the Portuguese police and authorities weren't keen on seeing foreign diplomats talking to them, and there really weren't very many opportunities to do that. For that reason, one of our main sources of information was simply talking to the different missionary groups. The missionaries had many different nationalities — British, Canadian and American, not to mention the Portuguese. Some of the missionaries were politically astute and some of them were very naive and really disinterested in politics. The latter were there to teach religion. But we made good friends with a number of the Methodists and others who did not involve themselves in politics but were knowledgeable.

Q: What was the situation, were there blacks in the government?

HIGH: There were no blacks to speak of in the government. There were a few mulattos and the differences in treatment between blacks and mulattoes (and whites) were very substantial, the mulattoes having had a better chance to get at least some kind of education. The blacks had virtually none. Protestant missionaries sent some of their promising black church goers to Brazil and to Portugal to study. Once in a while one would go to the United States, but language often inhibited that.

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Needless to say, the Portuguese authorities were very suspicious of the foreign missionary groups. The fact that foreigners were involved and religious differences made the missionaries problematical for them. I saw no indication that foreign missionaries were “conspiring” against the Portuguese, but of course they were helping to educate Africans, and the Portuguese saw this as a threat to their integrity.

It was just very difficult under the Portuguese system for blacks to do much of anything beyond menial labor. Out in the countryside the small commercants, traders, were largely Portuguese. They themselves were poor people who didn't have much opportunity in Portugal so they came down to Angola. There were lots of Portuguese businessmen in Angola. Portugal sold a lot of its cheap products to Angola, products they couldn't sell elsewhere. There was a certain amount of talk among the Portuguese, and some fear in Lisbon apparently, that these European Portuguese in Angola and Mozambique might form separatist movements and declare independence for those colonies on their own. They didn't seem as concerned over the prospects of an African revolution, but a European revolution in their colonies.

I got to travel around the country a fair amount. One of our visitors was an agricultural attach#, Steve Stephanides was his name. His office was in Leopoldville in the then-Belgian Congo. His trips to Angola provided us a marvelous opportunity to see settlements, projects, plantation owners and what was going on in the interior. Stops with him included Nova Lisboa in the center, and Sa da Bandeira and Mocamedes in the south. There were significant commerce, agriculture and some industry in the interior, all protected for Portuguese interests.

When we arrived in January 1959, there was little talk about the wave of independence crossing Africa and what this meant for the Portuguese. Later in 1959, a London Times journalist named Holden, I think (not to be confused with the rebel leader Holden Roberto), came to Angola — the first of many journalists we were to see. He talked with us at the American Consulate. Subsequently, his article “Standing Firm on Shifting Sand,” appeared

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in the Times. His basic conclusion was that Portugal was unlikely to be able to avoid what was occurring around it. It simply couldn't resist the tide. Other journalists followed, and we talked with many of them, even traveled with some. One person I traveled with was Joe Stern of the Baltimore Sun. He had a firm grasp of what was going on.

While we were in Angola the Belgian Congo blew up, shortly after it received independence.

Q: You were there 1959-61.

HIGH: At the time of the blowup in the former Belgian Congo in 1960, a lot of the missionary and business and families came across the border to Angola to flee the violence. That included a number of American missionaries who came to Luanda. We helped them, with help from the Methodist mission station in Luanda, to catch their breath and proceed onward.

We received a visit at the time, I think it was simply fortuitous, by Dick Sanger, who was the Director of Research for the Middle East and Africa in the Department. He proved himself more astute than we were at the consulate. He went out to the Luanda airport to interview refugees coming out of the Congo. He talked to Bill Gibson to make sure he had no trouble with him doing this, and I don't think Gibson realized what was going on. In effect, he asked, "Do you mind if I interview these refugees, hear what they have to say, and report?" So, Sanger for a time virtually became a member of the consulate staff and sent out cables reporting what the refugees were telling him about different parts of the Congo. That struck me as probably among the most effective reporting that came out of our post at that particular period of time as far as Washington interests were concerned. We covered the meaning of this to Angola and reactions in Angola. Sanger covered the more relevant Congo developments.

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But again, even with all that going on next door, the Portuguese were saying that it couldn't happen in Angola. They “knew” their Africans.

Well, it did. What started to precipitate things and garner further attention to Angola, at about that same time, was the takeover of the Portuguese ship the Santa Maria, which was traveling between Portugal and Brazil. As I recall, it was led by Henrique Galvao, a dissident Portuguese nationalist opposed to Portuguese Prime Minister Salazar, who called for European independence for the colonies. He took over the passenger ship and sailed around the Atlantic for a while. People didn't know where it was going to alight, but there was a good bit of suspicion that it might go to Angola and Galvao would declare the colony independent.

That brought an enormous number of newspaper people to Luanda, waiting to see if the Santa Maria would arrive there. The incident produced a lot of reporting in the world press on Angola and Angola's prospects, but not much of anything happened. The ship never arrived in Luanda.

The first attack by African nationalists against the Portuguese in Angola that set off the war of independence occurred a couple hundred yards from our house. It was an attack by a nationalist band from what turned out to be the MPLA, the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola, the mulatto-led independence movement which is now in control of Angola. Or was the band from Holden Roberto's Union of the Peoples of Angola (UPA), which also undertook attacks on plantations in the north of Angola? I think it was the latter. The attack in Luanda was against a police station that was near us. The small number of attackers tried to free some of their members who were being held prisoner there. The early morning attack was repulsed. Several policemen and attackers were killed.

It scared us because the police post was only several hundred yards from our house. My wife awakened me to the gunfire, and we heard people running through the neighborhood.

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This happened at the time people were expecting the Santa Maria to arrive in Luanda, and many of the newspaper reporters were still around. A day or two later, a public funeral with procession was held for the several policemen who had been killed. As we neared the cemetery, there were shots fired and some in the procession, made up almost entirely of Europeans, struck out at any African who happened to be nearby. There must have been four or five Africans killed in that spontaneous reaction of fear and hate. I think it doubtful that the persons killed were involved in the shootings, but I never felt I knew how that incident began.

This was my first introduction to fearless journalism. Part of the time I was at the public funeral, I was accompanied by an awfully nice, sharp Life magazine photographer, who went charging off toward the gunfire when he heard the shooting. I think his last name was Burke.

I confess that I had difficulty understanding his reaction. My inclination, on hearing the shots, was to move in the other direction and go back a little later to see what was going on. Sometime later, he sent me a picture he had taken of the participants in the funeral procession — a line of concerned, very short Portuguese colonists looking in one direction, and me — a tall, contrasting figure, looking in the opposite direction. I read years later in Life that he died in India. He leaned out over a precipice while taking a picture and fell to his untimely death. I'm not sure what that tells us, but he had guts.

At that time there was a vote in the United Nations calling for independence for Portuguese Africa. The United States voted in favor of the resolution. The Kennedy Administration was in power. The Portuguese really looked upon our vote as a betrayal by a trusted friend and NATO ally.

Shortly after the vote, someone decided that it was important to react to that betrayal. There was a demonstration by some hundreds of European Portuguese in front of our consulate in Luanda. We were on the third floor of an office building on the water front. A

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delegation came up to the consulate door to talk with us; we didn't know the intent behind the banging on our front door. It didn't sound particularly friendly. We had locked ourselves in the vault with the regional security officer, Jim McKinley, who happened to be visiting us at the time. So there was nobody to talk to them.

Unfortunately, we had overlooked the fact that the official car was parked on the street right outside the consulate. Someone got the idea to turn it over and burn it. Satisfied with that action, the demonstration came to an end. That was our excitement for a day or two.

Much more serious were the major outbreaks of violence in the north of Angola. The war was on. The attacks on a number of isolated plantations, trader stations, and a few towns were led by Holden Roberto's UPA, Union of the Peoples of Angola. It operated from the former Belgian Congo. The results were pretty gruesome — people hacked to death by machetes.

Q: By this time were you having any contact with the Portuguese who were there?

HIGH: We were going about our business as usual and reporting what was going on, and explaining the reason behind our UN vote. Not many people were prepared to accept the latter, but they listened. Our hope was that we could encourage Portugal to undertake a peaceful transfer of power over time so that it would retain constructive relations with an independent Angola. It would be to everybody's advantage. That was the tenor of discussions between American and Portuguese officials in Washington, New York and Lisbon, and it was reflected in our conversations in Luanda.

Q: How was this received?

HIGH: I don't think our Portuguese contacts were listening; they were intent on convincing us of the importance of their continued presence in Africa. Their pitch was, "It still can't happen to us. This is just an outlaw band. Your vote and statements are encouraging them and undermining our position." We were getting the party line, the myth that the

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Portuguese understood the people and that Portugal was unmovable. That myth had sustained Portuguese colonialism through centuries. The myth and the realities of Angola were well described by a book published about that time, James Duffy's Portuguese Africa.

Several months after the outbreak of violence in Angola, we received a visit from a group from the U.S. National War College. In fact, I think there were separate visits from both the American war and the Canadian defense colleges.

The Portuguese were great at taking people out into the countryside to show positive developments. There was a minor game reserve near Luanda and with luck you could see something wild. That, at least was the program for the National War College. For the evening there was a big dinner and some Africans were brought in to dance in a little soccer stadium. The evening we were there the local head of the secret police danced among the Africans and I heard him saying, "These are my people." This was the party line; it was said so often, I'm sure many Portuguese believed it.

Q: What was your impression, particularly as economic officer, of how the Portuguese were using the black population?

HIGH: The Portuguese were long criticized for the practice of contract or forced labor of Africans, requiring hard manual labor on plantations and government projects for little or no pay and certainly with few if any rights. The story was told that in the early years of this century when automobiles first began to arrive in Angola, the governor general would notify a district governor distant from Luanda that he would be making an official visit by car on a certain date. The district governor then used forced labor to build a road for the car so that the visit could take place. That's how the road system was begun. It was built by African labor directed by Europeans.

When we were in Angola, very few Africans were allowed to advance even into very low positions. Even then, they became the show pieces that Africans were assimilating and able to join with Portuguese when they reached the cultural and educational level of the

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Europeans. Of course they weren't. The black Africans were the people to carry bags of grain onto ships, to dig away the dirt in the diamond fields, to uncover the veins of ore, and they were also the purchasers of Portuguese products.

Mulattoes were treated better; they were somewhat higher on the social and work scales, but they weren't treated like the Europeans, either. It was clearly a very colonial, paternalistic society that was supported by all Europeans, even the Church.

At the same time, the life of the unskilled, poor Portuguese colonists wasn't an easy one, either. They provided unskilled labor, one step up. They were the small commercants (traders) and farmers at the colonist settlements, like Cela in Central Angola, named after Salazar's hometown, or living alone in the bush, or the occasional highway maintenance person, living in an isolated house with his family and charged with the upkeep of a section of the roadway.

Q: I take it the role of the Church was in accord with Portuguese policy?

HIGH: Oh, yeah. Across the field from our house was a seminary that had a number of Africans in it. It wasn't a very big seminary, but there were a number of Africans there who would go out as assistants to priests in the bush. But not with much of a chance of rising significantly in the mainstream European society.

The African independent groups were organized largely outside of Angola. Some started in Metropolitan Portugal, where a few Africans, especially mulattoes, got their education. The MPLA's mulatto leadership was educated there. Others, like Holden Roberto's UPA, were up in the Congo organizing themselves and doing things more or less secretly there. Jonas Savimbi, the man who became the leader of the tribes in Central Angola, was schooled in Switzerland, as I recall.

The Angolan nationalists had to organize abroad because the Portuguese informant system was pretty effective and the authorities in Angola were determined to crush

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whatever was going on. The fact that there was an unexpected outbreak of violence in 1961 and that it spread quickly simply said that even though the Portuguese made their best effort to crush independence thought, the police and information systems weren't perfect. Once the rebellion got going in Angola, Mozambique and Portuguese Guinea, the national government of a relatively small, poor European country, unsupported by its natural friends, wasn't able to repress it. Time had caught up with the centuries-old Portuguese system.

Q: You weren't having contact with Africans coming in and asking for your support were you?

HIGH: No. On rare occasion, there might have been rumors of an incident somewhere or that an alleged "trouble maker" had been put in prison. Not much information filtered through to us in Luanda. Our understanding was that "trouble makers" disappeared. No, the nearest contact we would have with Africans would be when we visited a mission station or went to church with them or talked with them with some missionaries. It was hard to grab hold of African views. And there was little political content to the brief discussions, only a sense of deep unhappiness.

The missionary groups were also very careful about how they related to Africans for fear of creating problems for themselves and for the Africans. They were dedicated to the spiritual and educational advancement of Africans. The fact that they were Protestants also placed them in a sensitive role.

Of course, the Portuguese concluded on their own that the Protestant missionaries were conspiratorial. When violence broke out in Angola, some Methodist missionaries we knew very well were expelled and missionary activity in general was severely restricted.

Q: Did you feel any constraints on reporting either from your principal officer or Washington about what you were to report, or were you working on the assumption that

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this place is going to blow and we want to have the record straight that we know it is going to blow?

HIGH: I think there were some informal constraints. The first consul that we had upon arrival by and large bought the colonist view that there might be some trouble but the Portuguese would take care of it and it wasn't that big a challenge. I remember in those youthful years of making a bet with his wife that Angola would be independent in five years. She joshed me and said, "Not on your life," and she took the bet. As a matter of fact my timing was a little off. I had to pay the five dollars. It was six years later that Angola became independent.

Perhaps it was the repressive system, but it seemed to me there were few indicators inside Angola that the place was about to blow up or that large scale violence was at hand. Our first consul wasn't pursuing the situation; the second one wasn't focusing on it, either, and both by and large were influenced by Portuguese views.

There was an interlude between the first and second consuls (principal officers) of about three months. During that time, I was the acting principal officer and I thought at the time, "Boy, here is an opportunity for me to say to Washington what really is going on. There really are problems here and we had better look out." For years, my recollection was that I wrote a long airgram with the message of approaching crisis.

But my memory was gilded by time. Fifteen or so years later, I got the message out of the archives at State and read it. It suggested that problems were coming and waved a warning flag, but it sure didn't unmistakably say, "Hey, it is here and here is all the background on it." It was a pretty timid flag waving.

When the rebellion broke out in 1961, our aim at the consulate was to report things as we saw them. We wanted to be accurate, neither alarmist or Pollyanna. We felt that the African Bureau was "happier" with bad news. We felt that the European Bureau and Embassy Lisbon would be happier with more tranquil reporting. Calling it as we saw it was

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comfortable to us. I'm not sure our analysis was particularly remarkable, but we weren't criticized for it. Washington was hungry for information.

Q: I was in African INR under Bob Baum in 1960-61 and I recall that the folk wisdom of INR was that all of Africa is going to go independent except for South Africa. It looked like South Africa could hang on for a long, long, long time. But that was sort of the folk wisdom. We looked at the Congo as sort of the model because of the way they were treating the Africans, etc.

HIGH: Well, that one analytical airgram I wrote touched on that, but I wish in retrospect that I had been more outspoken. I wasn't quite sure how much I could say authoritatively in a three-month period as the acting principal officer. But I wanted to get something on the record to say that trouble was coming, particularly since post reporting had ignored the subject. My report certainly didn't approach the caliber of analysis that Smith Simpson was providing from East Africa.

After our second principal officer arrived it was anticipated that he could do the political reporting. He didn't do much. For my part, I returned to the economic reporting I was assigned to do. I thought it would be useful if the Department had more basic information on the Angolan economy. That didn't touch on these very major political affairs going on around us.

Another aspect of reporting from Angola was the difficulty of grasping the real political forces that were at work in the territory because a lot was just plain hidden. You could talk to missionaries who were politically astute and they would say how distressed and disturbed the Africans were and how repressive the police were. Lacking an entree into what African national circles were saying or doing, we were bound to miss substantial parts of the picture. Yet if we had tried to make contact with African nationalists, the Portuguese police would have learned of it, and we wouldn't have lasted long in Angola.

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Nor could we have tried to carry on such contacts by visiting Leopoldville, again because the Portuguese were virtually assured of knowing that and such activity by diplomats from Angola would not have been tolerated. The embassy in Leopoldville naturally concentrated on the momentous events in the Congo. I understood that there were some contacts with Holden Roberto there, and there was a report from the CIA of UPA plans for violence before the major outbreak in northern Angola. Washington had a little forewarning of trouble in Angola. I do not recall that we at the consulate were aware of that report prior to the attacks.

Q: You left Angola in the middle of 1961. As you left were you still opting for the five years [for independence]?

HIGH: Oh, yes. I would have even made it three or four. This was the first brush. There were lots of incidents. The Portuguese were still in shock. Several books had come out with some frightful pictures of the victims of the violence, pictures of grotesque bodies strewn across some of the plantations of northern Angola. There were rumors in Luanda that the water supply would be poisoned and everybody would die, and that the dam holding Luanda's water would be attacked — the kind of scare rumors one hears in crisis situations. Luanda really was a city in substantial turmoil with troops all over the place and a lot of fear. It must have been worse further north where most of the attacks occurred.

Before leaving our discussion on Angola, I would like to mention something about my wife Beth's side of living there. We arrived in Angola without my wife knowing a word of Portuguese and with two very young children (Mark, age two years, and Susan, age three months). We had household help who of course didn't understand a word of English.

There was a Foreign Service ethic at the time that when you were invited to go out, you accepted invitations and your family concerns came second. The wife was left to fend for herself, she would cope, and by all means she would do everything I did socially because that was her role. We lived by that code, but it was difficult for Beth because there was

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little support for her from the post, a circumstance of that moment and the small size of the post. We would go out to bridge or cocktail parties for contacts and we would leave our kids at home with the non-English-speaking household servants. We were fortunate, the servants were honest and helpful; but the communications gap during our early months at post was not helpful.

Beth would do the shopping, initially unfamiliar with the system and without the language. We learned that you chased down your turkeys or chickens at a farm outside of town. The turkeys were so grisly that before you killed one you gave it some cheap brandy or vinegar which relaxed those tough tendons and muscles. Then they could be cooked. It's fun to relate that now, but at the time it was very challenging.

Our first guest for dinner was Bill Wight, the Consul General in Mozambique. He experienced our first chicken. (We didn't know the brandy trick at the time.) He got a spare leg and thigh. My wife got the other leg and thigh. I got the carcass, which was skin and bone. Bill understood; it was all in the family.

This was rather primitive living and not necessarily part of Beth's fondest service memories. The first consul's wife wasn't well and wasn't that much help in settling in. The second consul was a bachelor and the third officer, who became a lifelong friend, was a bachelor. So, Beth was the "official" American lady at the post for much of our tour. There was no one to understudy. That did not really start my wife off with the fondest feeling for the Foreign Service, though she coped very well.

She learned the language and quickly picked up shopping at the native market. She was an occupational therapist and did volunteer work at the local TB sanitarium. That professional interest was a major plus for her in this posting. When the missionary refugees came through Angola from the Congo, she helped house and care for them during their passage through the country.

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Q: Then, following your Angola assignment, you came back more or less within the African business.

HIGH: Well, not really, because at that stage of the game I made one of my relatively few career mistakes. My wife and I had learned Portuguese very fast. We had to. There weren't that many Portuguese in Angola who spoke English. The post language program was very helpful. I would say that in about four months my Portuguese was doing just fine, so that I could function effectively and the longer we were there the more comfortable it became. But it gave me a false security that "if Portuguese came so quickly, others like Arabic could be conquered, too." So my transfer preference was the Middle East. And lo and behold, in came a telegram saying, "Congratulations. You have been selected for Arab language training in Beirut."

Off we went to Lebanon to learn Arabic. Fritz Frauchiger was head of the program there. There were 20 of us or so in this 18 or 19 month program. Beirut was fascinating, but it was a terrible place to have a language school. The Lebanese, having been occupied by so many people over the centuries, were very cosmopolitan and had command of so many languages. When you went into virtually any store and perhaps found the salespeople talking Italian to a customer or Arabic among themselves, they sensed you were American and switched to speaking together in English. That didn't give you much chance to practice Arabic in your day-to-day activities.

Some people were doing very well at learning Arabic. Generally most students had had a tour of duty in the Arab world, so the sounds of the language were familiar and they probably knew a little Arabic to begin with. For me, it was another world. The only word in Arabic that sounded the least bit familiar was "influenza," which is the same in both languages. I tried to learn the language but without much success. Some of my classmates weren't really doing much better, but they were toughing it out. I was concerned over the capability I would be likely to have at the end of the course and then

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have to work with it, particularly if I ended up in North Africa where you had a very different dialect.

About nine or ten months into the course I decided that Arabic really wasn't for me and without the language it would be foolish to specialize. I made that point to the deputy chief of mission of the embassy, Evan Wilson. Wilson was an old Arab world hand, but he didn't have a working use of Arabic. He couldn't understand how I felt that you had to have the language to understand the people. His unwillingness to acknowledge the point made me feel all the stronger that there was something lacking here and it was time to do something about it.

I informed the school and the Department that I thought it would be a wise investment to move me elsewhere, and nobody disagreed. My classmates were understanding and supportive of my decision. I stayed on a couple of months in Beirut helping out in the administrative section and then was transferred back to the Department.

One of my former classmates in the A-100 course, Chuck Grover, was finishing up being Portuguese Africa desk officer and the African Bureau was looking for a replacement. I got the job.

Q: You served there from 1962-65?

HIGH: Yes. But before I began to work on Portuguese Africa, I was the acting South African desk officer for some months. Jim Durnan, who was a long-time, very wise, civil service desk officer for South Africa, retired. He had been an "institution" on the desk. The bureau was waiting for Walter Campbell to replace him. Waldo was an FSO with years of experience in the country and was a virtual "institution," as well. I found it very useful to learn more about southern Africa and where Angola and Mozambique fit into the total picture.

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In 1964 and 65, I also was the desk officer for Madagascar, the Malagasy Republic, owing to a reorganization within the bureau. We were courting Madagascar quite a bit because we wanted to put in a NASA space tracking station there. The president of the republic came to Washington on a state visit during that period. It was the first state visit I was ever involved in, and it was exciting. As a policy matter, we were looking for some meaningful AID projects that could be concluded during the visit to firm-up the bilateral relationship and lead to opening a NASA tracking station on the island. It was to be an important link to the Space Program's communications system.

This was my first introduction to AID's reluctance to have its funds used for "political purposes." AID insisted that it didn't do aid projects for political purposes; projects had to be economically justified and the Madagascar proposals just didn't meet the criteria. It was interesting to see those issues work their way through the intransigence and inertia at the desk level up through the bureaucracy to the point where an assistant secretary called the AID Administrator and said, in effect, "You know we have to come up with something that meets your criteria of meaningful development, but we need to have a couple of AID projects that would be helpful to Madagascar so that we can do this other thing." My recollection is that several modest assistance projects were approved.

The president of the Malagasy Republic was taken out to the Goddard Space Center in Maryland and given a briefing there. He made several other stops out of Washington, and the visit was regarded as a success.

That president of the republic was overthrown a few years later and replaced by Marxists. He was a member of the minority highland tribe that had ruled Madagascar for decades. The Marxist government that came in was made up of blacks who were the coastal people of Madagascar.

Anyway, Portuguese Africa, including Angola, Mozambique, Portuguese Guinea and Sao Tome (though virtually no time was given, or needed, for the latter). I was the desk officer

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from 1962 to 1965. I really looked forward to and enjoyed that experience because of my prior service in Angola. There was attention to Portuguese Africa at the White House and in the State Department. The country director at that time was Elbert Mathews, who had been ambassador to Liberia and would later go on to Nigeria. He was a warm, intellectual person, but not to a point of being theoretical. His deputy initially was Bill Wight, the former consul general in Mozambique. Then for much of the time it was Jesse McKnight, who had had experience in Africa and was very much of a political animal. For much of this period, we were in the Office of Southern African Affairs. Later, in a reorganization, Portuguese Africa was moved to the Office of Central African Affairs under Mac Godley. The highest priority of that office was the crisis in the Congo.

Those were really three years of struggling with the White House, the Defense Department and the European Bureau over what we should be doing with Portugal and Portuguese Africa. Soapy Williams, the former Governor of Michigan, was the Assistant Secretary in the African Bureau. He had a high profile in Washington and did a lot of traveling in Africa. Wayne Fredericks, of the Ford Foundation, was the senior deputy assistant secretary.

Q: Soapy Williams was a very important figure in the AF Bureau in those days, wasn't he?

HIGH: Yes, and a very positive one. There were those who felt that Soapy was just a politician and grand standing, doing things for political reasons without any substance. But for whatever peculiarities Soapy brought to the office, he made important political statements about newly independent Africa. He raised the level of attention and concern in Washington over Africa and U.S. interests there. Wayne Fredericks was also very important in the AF front office, because he provided substance and seriousness to the enterprise.

The European Bureau tended to dismiss whatever came out of Africa as being just Soapy politics. It felt that U.S. interests in Africa were generally inconsequential in contrast to

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our overriding national interests in Europe. For its part, the African Bureau attracted many people who were fascinated with the transformation and developments in Africa.

Q: You must have had the Azores thrown in your face. Because when you talk about the European Bureau and NATO, it is all Azores, the transatlantic station there.

HIGH: Time and time again NATO and the Azores bases were raised to counter initiatives proposed for Portuguese Africa. If ever there were war in the Middle East and suddenly we had to move troops and supplies, the Azores would be absolutely essential. There was a study at the time — this was relatively early in the Kennedy Administration — that indicated that there were alternatives to moving supplies to the Middle East other than through the Azores, i.e., that the Azores were not indispensable. But the Defense Department dismissed that conclusion, the European Bureau didn't pay any attention to it. By and large, the Azores argument was very influential in the Department and at the White House, though we won points from time to time.

When I first came into the desk job, Chester Bowles was at the State Department as Under Secretary. He had the reputation of being a very bold thinker, of challenging conventional wisdom, and trying to take new directions. He was very strong on getting the United States behind constructive independence for Portuguese Africa — that is independence that still permitted Portugal to have some influence there.

He proposed very early on that the United States help Portugal and the Africans as an intermediary to reach a peaceful solution. The United States would guarantee to both sides that the Portuguese wouldn't be summarily dismissed and moved out, that they would retain some influence in Angola and a presence there, but that the Angolans were to become independent. He hoped that peace and independence would be compatible, and he recognized that Angola needed the skills the Portuguese and friendly relations with Lisbon would assure. He would have had the United States provide significant economic assistance to the metropole for badly needed development there and to Angola. You know,

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it was a nice idea, but very unrealistic. The Portuguese were very suspicious of what they saw as United States designs on their territories. The Bowles proposal looked to the Portuguese like an effort to buy their colonies.

I did a paper expressing this view at the time; it came to light later out of a Freedom of Information request. The paper was an information memorandum from me to Mathews, the office director, saying, "The Bowles Plan is a great idea but what we are saying is that we want to buy Portuguese Africa from Portugal. The Portuguese would never consider accepting such an offer; they would see it as an American effort to expel them from Africa. It is a nonstarter." The Bowles plan did enter into our dialogue with the Portuguese; nothing came of it.

The dialogue we developed with Portugal provided me another perspective of the professionalism of the Foreign Service. When I was stationed in Angola, Burke Elbrick visited Angola on an orientation trip. He had been Assistant Secretary in the European Bureau. His sympathies for Portugal and concern about what...

Q: He had been Ambassador to Portugal.

HIGH: He was Ambassador to Portugal at the time of his visit. After being Assistant Secretary in EUR in Washington, he was rewarded by being named Ambassador to Portugal. This was early in his period in Portugal and this was a get acquainted trip. He spent a couple of days in Angola and several in Mozambique.

We at the consulate had some very good conversations with him. We felt we could be very frank as a group or individually with him. He was the kind of person who was very decent to his staff, "Come on over (to his guest house, a lovely mansion overlooking the sea) and let's talk." The informality of his invitation was a very effective way to get people to open up. We could sit down with him very easily and say, "This situation is untenable, there are major problems." We were very frank. I believe he understood the difficulties we were describing, but I don't think it changed a principal concern he had — what would happen to

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Angola without the Portuguese. The disaster of the Congo was fresh, and it was next door. And, of course, he was concerned about NATO and the Azores.

The particularly high degree of professionalism he displayed came fairly early in my time on the desk in Washington. Apropos of the Bowles initiative and our desire to persuade Portugal of the soundness of the U.S. view that peaceful change in Africa was in Portugal's interest, we sought bilateral talks on the matter.

Salazar agreed to the dialogue. Elbrick received detailed instructions negotiated minutely in Washington between the African and European bureaus and others. He sent back lengthy cables reporting the content of his conversations with Salazar. The cables reported a forthright presentation of U.S. views by Elbrick that impressed even us in the African Bureau. They also contained strong arguments by Salazar that Angola without Portugal was not viable and he needed U.S. support.

What impressed me about Ambassador Elbrick was that here was a person who by in large was very sympathetic to the European Bureau views, but his handling of that dialogue with Salazar, three or four long meetings anyway, was something that nobody in the African Bureau could criticize. He presented the U.S. case very succinctly, very logically, and persuasively. He didn't get anywhere because the Portuguese didn't want to change anything, but it was an impressive example of someone who wasn't necessarily fully sympathetic to the case but was very professional and doing what he was instructed to do. But, as you pointed out, Stu, the Azores argument came back at us time and time again.

If you want to put it in bureaucratic terms, the African Bureau was trying to say, "Let's limit the impact of the bases and be more involved in forcing the Portuguese to adjust in Africa." The European Bureau stymied that, pleading the Azores case.

One of the interesting figures at that time was Roberto Mondlane, who was a black Mozambican. He was a U.S. university graduate, who was on the staff of the United

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Nations. At the outbreak of the revolution in Angola he visited Angola very briefly and traveled to Mozambique trying unsuccessfully to get the Portuguese to moderate their colonial policies. He left the UN and became very active in organizing the nationalist rebellion that broke out shortly afterwards in Mozambique.

Mondlane claimed after that visit to Angola and Mozambique that he had met an American military officer on the flight to Luanda who described U.S. plans to fly American troops to Angola to fight on the side of the Portuguese. Over several years in conversations with Mondlane in Washington, I tried to convince him that there were no such plans or intentions, but he chose to think otherwise. He raised the matter at convenient points in discussions with high American officials. My feeling was that this was his contrivance to challenge American officials friendly to African causes and to seek from them further evidence of our friendliness toward the Africans. That wasn't easy for us to accomplish because some US arms sold to Portugal for NATO purposes were diverted by Portugal for use in the African provinces.

While I was on the desk, somewhere around 1964, Mondlane, who was working out of Dar-es-Salaam in neighboring Tanzania, came to Washington to seek support. He had sessions with Soapy Williams, with Wayne Fredericks and various other people. I accompanied him to most of them. He also had an appointment with Bobby Kennedy, who was Attorney General. I accompanied him to Kennedy's office at the Justice Department, too. As Kennedy's door opened and Mondlane and I started to walk in, there was a growl from across the enormous room, "Get out." It was obviously directed at me, not at Mondlane. Needless to say, they had their private conversation.

One of the developments in that private conversation, it turned out later, was that Robert Kennedy wrote out a personal check to Mondlane. I don't think it was ever cashed. Mondlane used it in his contacts around the world saying, "Here is an indication of my support from the Kennedys," which probably was the way it was intended in the first place.

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Another incident was indicative of the stalemate of African Bureau efforts in our contest with the European Bureau. I recall one meeting during the presidential campaign, Lyndon Johnson was running for reelection against Barry Goldwater. The European Bureau sought approval of the sale of certain fighter aircraft to Portugal. Portugal was pressing hard for the sale as a NATO ally, and basically it felt that its NATO allies owed it support in Africa.

U.S.-supplied arms for NATO purposes, including fighter aircraft, had been used in Africa against the nationalists. We saw the danger of further diversions. African states had criticized U.S. arms policy at the United Nations because of the diversions. The African Bureau argued that it was important not to sell the planes to Portugal. Of course, the European Bureau was arguing, Azores, Azores, Azores.

The person who ultimately made the decision on this particular matter was Averell Harriman who was at the time, Under Secretary of State. Normally, he was sensitive to U.S. interests in Africa and supportive of applying pressure to Portugal to moderate its stand there. I went into Harriman's office feeling hopeful. The various interested bureaus all made our cases. That day the African Bureau lost. We lost because Harriman said, "I have one overriding purpose at this time of my life, and that is to utterly destroy Barry Goldwater politically. I don't want to make a decision that could give him any kind of ammunition in this election campaign." The Azores argument prevailed and the aircraft sale was made to Portugal.

One of the few things we had going for us, other than UN votes and occasional hortatory statements supporting Africans, was a student exchange program at Lincoln University, a historic black school in Pennsylvania. By this time, cultural exchange money brought a number of blacks from Portuguese Africa to the United States for university training. A strong promoter of that was Bob Stevens, an educator, I believe, who came to the Bureau

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of Cultural Affairs during the Kennedy-Johnson years. Another prime figure in this effort was John Marcum, an educator who headed this exchange program at Lincoln.

Another place the African Bureau generally received support was in the Department's Bureau of International Organizations Affairs. Joe Sisco, Mike Newlin, and others had to deal with African and other criticism of U.S. policy at the United Nations. They supported pressing Portugal to change its policies in Africa.

Toward the end of my time on the Portuguese Africa desk, which would have been in mid-1965, there were new efforts to try to get a solution to this policy standoff between EUR and AF. Neither bureau was satisfied with the way things were going. We argued over language and nuances that had some importance, but really only reflected the stalemate in policymaking. More often than not it seemed like a fight at the OK Corral, but neither side won anything significant. Then there would be another day, a week would pass and we would go through the whole thing again.

Efforts to reach accord on policy were taken up by an interagency effort led by the State Department to draft overall policy papers. They were intended to focus attention on hard decisions that needed to be made. A Brigadier General from the Air Force was placed in charge of the effort. He was assigned either to the Department's Policy Planning Council or somewhere or other up in that neck of the woods. Bob Ginsberg was his name. He was a very attractive, dynamic young Air Force officer who had a background in international affairs. He engineered over time, with inputs from the European Bureau and the African Bureau, a draft overall policy on Portuguese Africa.

As part of that exercise, Ginsberg took an advisory team to Portugal and to Africa. In Lisbon, we had discussions with Elbrick. Then we flew to Leopoldville, where we met briefly with Ambassador Godley, and on down to Luanda to see what it was like and to mix with the Portuguese there. After that we went over to Mozambique.

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I went on that trip, as did Bob Funseth, the Portugal Desk Officer. No wild insights from that trip. The Portuguese displayed their own intransigence. You could see in Angola and Mozambique how militarized the situation was. We got back to Washington and there were further drafts of the policy paper. It was one of those projects where the hope was to clarify issues, raise them out of the bureaucratic morass, and to facilitate decisions. But the issues raised have to be ripe for decision, with differences ready for bridging. Political leaders were not ready to stick out their necks in this case. And the U.S. approach to the problems of Portuguese Africa continued to fester.

About this time the African Bureau bolstered its personnel to deal with Portuguese Africa. Matt Loram, a recent graduate of the Canadian Defense College, was assigned to the African Bureau. He became my boss as a second deputy office director who would focus strictly on the Portuguese territories. The other deputy worked on the Congo. Matt added insights and stature to our treatment of the issues, and that was important since most of the high level personnel in the office were preoccupied with the Congo.

Q: So when you left there in 1965 nothing was really resolved?

HIGH: No. The wars were getting worse. There were brutalities on both sides. The consulate in Luanda had by now been elevated to consulate general status; it remained an important listening post. Harry Reed was the first consul general. He was masterful in maintaining contacts with the Portuguese in Angola, while providing thoughtful, skillful reports on developments there. Completing his duty there, he next became consul general in Mozambique and continued his impressive reporting from there.

Again, what happened throughout my period on the desk was like the play out of a chess match. The European Bureau had its Azores bases and it effectively protected them. The African Bureau had the winning side of nationalist conflicts, but we were unable to capitalize with the Africans because of the standoff in Washington. Angola slipped into a prolonged war, a pawn of the cold war, that is still with us today.

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There was another side to the picture, which I saw or was aware of only occasionally. Holden Roberto had been close to the CIA, but he lost out to the other nationalist leaders. There was also contact with Jonas Savimbi, leader of the nationalist group in Central Angola. Subsequently the press disclosed the supply of funds and arms to his movement from the United States. During my work on the territories, diplomats were largely precluded from open relations with them.

Q: I have you going to Guayaquil from 1965-68.

HIGH: Yes. Careerwise, for my own perspective, I didn't see much happening in Portuguese Africa over the long-run, except stalemate. I had this sense, as you mentioned earlier on, that the struggle in South Africa was going to be prolonged and indecisive for many years. Did I want to devote so much to a very limited region of Africa with few prospects for movement?

My background in language was Hispanic. Fidel Castro made Latin America very challenging work. So I asked for assignment in the hemisphere. The openings at the time were something like the commercial officer in Bolivia, which didn't sound very exciting, consular officer in Venezuela or deputy principal officer in Guayaquil. I went out to Guayaquil.

Q: What was the situation in Guayaquil, Ecuador in 1965-68?

HIGH: Well, geographically and historically, Ecuador presented a division between the highland and the coast. The capital, Quito, is up in the mountains and is largely influenced by people who have lived and been raised there. Guayaquil, the port city and commercial center of the country, is the main center of the coastal area. It generally contends for power with Quito. Ecuador had had a very strong leftist government under Carlos Julio Arosemena, who was very anti-U.S. Arosemena had embarrassed us in the hemisphere affairs a number of times, and finally was overthrown by a military junta.

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I got to Guayaquil, I suppose, about mid-term of the junta. They were beginning to make mistakes and to become unpopular. The country was very much involved in economic development, and our AID program under the Alliance for Progress was large. There wasn't a lot of effective political life because the military wasn't allowing political meetings. Political life at the time was left to private meetings in homes and restaurants.

Q: What were you doing then?

HIGH: I was the deputy principal officer of a sizeable consulate general. I had some reporting responsibilities, mainly political reporting and contact work. I was supportive of the consul general, who was a career USIA officer, Dick Salvatierra, and assisted in the running of the consulate. My position played a sort of all-purpose role.

The ambassador at the time was Wymberley Coerr, who previously had been ambassador to Uruguay. Coerr was very interested in encouraging the military to begin to think of moving on. He was very supportive of the AID program, which was led by a very dynamic AID director. Coerr was trying to get the Ecuadorian government to be more supportive of the AID program.

Ecuadorian officials and politicians were strong advocates of the Latin American view that the United States, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank were entirely too dictatorial, setting difficult loan conditions and telling them what they had to do. They didn't like it; it was a matter of sovereignty. They were rather quick to find fault with programs and sensitive to questions about their debt management. However, they still wanted money for their own projects rather than the projects being pushed by the World Bank, AID and others.

When Ambassador Coerr visited us in Guayaquil, shortly after I arrived, he and I were driving together and he commented to me, "George, you do know what the purpose and role of the deputy is?" I sort of said, "Sure," but left it open for him to define what a deputy

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ought to be doing. His advice to me was, “What you should be looking for is ways of being supportive of the consul general and others and making sure that things function well administratively and managerially, and in reporting, as well.”

The relationship between the consulate general and the embassy was always a little touchy, sensitive. The embassy had its economic section, its commercial section, its political section and all its relationships with the central government. Embassy officers traveled in the country. The consulate general had a large staff and a substantial USIA office, besides a Peace Corps office and a branch of the military mission located outside the building. The deputy principal officer was supposed to do some political reporting, develop contacts, and perform managerial functions. A Peace Corps office in Guayaquil, headed by a deputy director of the country program, had a project to encourage development of a bridge between the municipal government and the poor urban communities. We in the consulate tried to be supportive of that mission.

When it came to our political reporting, the basic question we addressed was what did political activity in our region mean to the United States interests, what was really going on. Guayaquil traditionally was a major center of opposition politics. We had a vantage point on those politics. For its part, the embassy had countrywide responsibility and clearly felt it alone had a national view. Naturally enough, we occasionally differed on emphasis.

This period came at the time when countries did CAPS papers — Country Analysis and Program Systems, I believe they were called. When it came time to drafting those papers they were written and analyzed in the embassy. Not even the consul general was invited to go to Quito to participate in the discussions, which seemed to me to be a little bit foolish.

We had some awfully good people at the embassy in Quito. The Ambassador was very sharp. The DCM was Jack Crowley, who was very knowledgeable and very supportive of us. He came down to visit Guayaquil from time to time. Being filled with localitis and

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convinced that the coast and not the sierra drove the country, we were convinced that the embassy people didn't come down to see us often enough. Jack was the exception.

But what was happening, and we could report on this, was that the military was beginning to come into public disfavor. They weren't solving the problems of the country. The labor organizations, Free Labor and the Communist- controlled Federation of Labor, were becoming increasingly active. The political parties were beginning to stir. Some of the politicians who were run out of the country at the time of the military takeover perceived that the climate was improving and came back. There were street rallies which we reported on. It was easy enough to meet with people who were significant political figures in the past and were likely to be significant in the future. We could report on those conversations.

While we were there, the president who had been overthrown earlier, Jose Velasco Ibarra, came back to Ecuador and started to politic. He had his first mass political demonstration in Guayaquil with many thousands of people there. So you could report on things like that. You could analyze what this implied to the military's ability to hold on, the military's ability to deal with the process.

While we were there, Ambassador Coerr made what turned out to be a major mistake. When the military left government, it turned over power to Otto Arosemena, a cousin of Carlos Julio. Otto Arosemena didn't have the same leftist politics as the overthrown president, but he had a strong nationalist bent himself and liked to exploit situations for his own personal gain. He was there as a transitional president until national elections could be called.

While he was still in office there was a major inter-American conference of presidents in Montevideo. It brought the leaders of the hemisphere together. President Johnson was there and all the chiefs of state. Otto Arosemena chose this occasion to berate the United States for its assistance programs and the conditions imposed on loans, and in the

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process to make a name for himself as an inter-American leader. His main speech was very critical of the USAID program and the Alliance for Progress. This naturally annoyed the Johnson Administration, it was taken as cheap politics.

Because of that and because of other Arosemena statements at home, Ambassador Coerr decided to make a speech trying to answer the questions raised and to get a dialogue back on track. He came down to Guayaquil and gave the graduation speech at the American School there. The American School was one of those international schools that got financial support from the US government and the business community. It offered bilingual education to Ecuadorians and American schooling with strong Spanish courses for Americans. A lot of the students were Ecuadorians, mainly from the middle and upper classes.

My wife and I went with the Ambassador to the school, not knowing what he was going to say. He had talked over his speech with his staff in the embassy and possibly had given Washington an idea of its content. His theme was: To make economic development work we have to go at it like a team. If you have two or three players going off and doing their own things, a football team is not as effective as one that really pulls together and cooperates. The image was that Otto Arosemena was one of those divisive players. Well, the transitional president took umbrage at what Coerr was saying. He charged that the Ambassador was trying to make him look stupid, a "pendejo," was the term Arosemena used, and two days later Coerr was declared persona non grata.

The impression left with us in Guayaquil was that Washington would acquiesce, but it would be some time before Ecuador received a new ambassador. But I don't think that Washington felt very comfortable that Coerr necessarily handled the situation as well as he might, though many in government and the media in the U.S. came to his defense. There was a long period when Jack Crowley, the DCM, was Charg#.

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And that is about the time that I left Guayaquil. The country was moving closer to open elections which would return Velasco Ibarra to office once again. Later, Velasco would be overthrown one last time. When we left the military was drawing back. Ecuador was doing pretty well economically. Much more petroleum had been discovered, this time in the jungles of the oriente. That spawned some nationalist sentiment.

One night, when the Petroleum Minister was visiting Guayaquil and after some kind of reception, I went to dinner with him and his entourage. The one point he made to me was his determination that Ecuador's petroleum would be exported through a petroleum pipeline that went to an Ecuadorian port. Petroleum was an Ecuadorian resource and, even if it was cheaper, as the United States and the bankers were saying, to connect Ecuadorian production to pipelines running through Colombia, that just wouldn't be appropriate. And Ecuador constructed its petroleum port. The Ecuadorians were feeling pretty good about oil when I left.

Q: Were tuna wars much of a problem then?

HIGH: Tuna "wars" were very much a problem and our commercial officer in Guayaquil, Charles Prindeville, was very much involved in reporting those incidents and helping to free the fishermen detained by Ecuadorian patrol boats. American tuna boats would be picked up by the Ecuadorian ships and usually taken into Salinas, a small port which was in the consular district about two hours away from us. Prindeville generally went to Salinas to meet the boat captains and the port authorities, while the embassy in Quito was in touch with officials in the capital and the fishing companies to work out payment of the fines. Nobody was shot, though there was always concern that something might get out of hand.

We were at the executing end, if you will, of encouraging the Ecuadorians to treat the fishermen decently, to free them and to get them out to sea as quickly as possible. The fishermen were losing money while on shore. Several years earlier the military government had entered into an agreement quietly with the United States to turn their heads in the

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other direction while the boats fished. When the military was replaced by Otto Arosemena, that private agreement became public knowledge and all hell broke loose. That was the end of the agreement, and patrol boats again began to pick up boats fishing in waters claimed by Ecuador.

Another phenomenon we experienced in Guayaquil was the anniversary every January 28th of the treaty that settled the war between Ecuador and Peru in 1941.

Q: The United States was one of the guarantors.

HIGH: Yes, along with Brazil and Chile, though in Ecuador the United States was seen as the principal guarantor. Each year at that time the Ecuadorian government reiterated its position that the treaty was invalid and that the territory taken by Peru ought to be returned. Its national motto was "Ecuador is an Amazonian country." January 28th was a school holiday and in Guayaquil inevitably the high school students took to the streets and started throwing rocks at the consulate general building. The police kept them away at a short distance.

Q: You wanted to say something about the Peace Corps.

HIGH: Ecuador was one of the first countries to receive the Peace Corps when it was established by President Kennedy. Because of that, it received very special attention from the Peace Corps organization. When we arrived in Guayaquil, a fellow by the name of Bill Gerschwind, with a social worker background, was the Peace Corps representative there. His special project was to relate his volunteers to the poor sections of Guayaquil and help them build bridges to the municipal government to secure help for the authorities. Politicians were famous for making promises to the poor neighborhoods at election time and then ignoring them once they were in office.

Gerschwind became engaged with the poor barrios in a number of ways. He assigned some volunteers to assist AID projects. For example, when AID sent two Hispanic

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accountants to Guayaquil to help the city develop a better tax system by reassessing its valuation base for property, Gerschwind had volunteers work with them and assist them in the barrios suburbanos. He got volunteers into other projects that were related one way or another to social services from the city. He was instrumental in having a whole group of volunteers, something like 20-25 of them, specially trained in the United States, to be assigned to Guayaquil. The idea was that they would live out in the barrios suburbanos, the poor sections, at night and on the weekends. In the daytime they generally would have some kind of responsibility in the city government. It was hoped that this would encourage contact between the poor sections and the city government, and that barrio leaders would come to have experience and trust in the municipal authorities and secure greater benefits from them.

It was a nice concept and while Gerschwind was there it showed promise. But he left on transfer and his replacement wasn't as experienced or dedicated to that program. The replacement hadn't been in on the creation, and his major previous experience was local politics back home. He was a decent fellow but not really married to the project.

Next, down come these 20-25 volunteers, a mixed bag, many of whom had been targeted for this special project. Some of them had been on peace marches down in Alabama. Others had gotten into political activism by working with the problems of the poor or the disadvantaged in the United States. They came to Ecuador with a determination to use their U.S. experience in an Ecuadorian environment.

What they found upon arrival was that the wealthy in Guayaquil, who previously had been very supportive of the Peace Corps program and were interested in what it was doing, invited them to their homes. They saw them simply as another group of volunteers, but suddenly discovered that these people had a different orientation. The wealthy weren't as keen on what these volunteers had in mind. So that kind of contact, which may not have been ideal anyway, was broken off very quickly.

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These volunteers tried to bring social activism to Guayaquil, and it didn't really work. It was resisted quickly. There was resistance and disinterest among government workers, and many of the volunteers were not all that keen on living right out in the middle of the barrios suburbanos.

Another part of the problem was that the municipal government in Guayaquil under military government, or any other of government, for that matter, was traditionally very unstable. The mayor who had approved the original Peace Corps project and was very supportive of it subsequently was thrown out of office (for other reasons). The new mayor wasn't quite that keen on it and had his own program priorities. Moreover, the re-evaluation of property for tax purposes was not welcomed by politically influential property owners. So that initially promising Peace Corps project imploded.

But then you had 20-25 volunteers, many of whom were political activists, suddenly cast loose on the Peace Corps program in Ecuador. What to do with them? Some of them were sent out into the countryside and got involved there. Some of those worked out and some didn't. Some were sent up to Quito where there were other volunteers. Some would encourage Indians in Quito to strike and demonstrate in front of grocery stores that only served Indians out of the back door. It was a very conflictive period, not all of which was really bad. Maybe it was just as well for the Ecuadorians to be reminded that that wasn't the way you deal with Indians.

My sense was that there was a lot of unrest in the Peace Corps programs after the specially trained newcomers lost their project. This led some volunteers to turn their attention inward — to how the Peace Corps was run. One account was recorded in a rather distorted book by Paul Cowan. It recounted his experiences there as a volunteer.

Certainly the original project in Guayaquil was a failure. Some of the displaced volunteers grabbed hold of something that was useful. One fellow who was an architect designed a model house, cheap construction, for the barrios suburbanos of Guayaquil. But the

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soul-searching that followed that project didn't seem to carry the Ecuadorian program very far. One point raised, however, was the desirability to have host nation personnel participate more closely in Peace Corps programs, and that suggestion was expressed by volunteers in other countries, as well.

A final point to be made is that during our tour in Guayaquil: my wife pursued her occupational therapy interests very effectively. Dr. Emiliano Crespo, a prominent, community-minded physician, was influential in Guayaquil and very interested in medical rehabilitation. Supported by friends in the Lions Club, he established a small rehabilitation center for the handicapped, and Beth set up an occupational therapy department there.

She was also instrumental in encouraging a young Ecuadorian woman to go to the United States for training in occupational therapy. That lady returned to Guayaquil, helped bring occupational therapy to Ecuador, and established her own vocational rehabilitation program with a sheltered workshop in Guayaquil. We still visit her impressive work on trips we make to see our son and his family, who live in the city.

Q: Then you left Ecuador in 1968 and were directly transferred?

HIGH: I came back for home leave and then went to Argentina.

Q: Where you served from 1968-72?

HIGH: Right.

Q: What were you doing there?

HIGH: I was the deputy chief of the political section. That was my first embassy assignment and exposure to its operations from the inside. The head of the political section when I first arrived was Herb Thompson, who had had previous experience in the Department's Secretariat before coming to Argentina. He was replaced after about a year by Bill Sowash. Herb had lots of contacts in the Foreign Ministry, which was a very

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professional ministry. He also had some important contacts in the military, and Argentina had a military government.

The civilian government of Dr. Arturo Illia had been overthrown in 1966. The military felt he was entirely too leftist, the golpe brought political activity to a stop. The new president was Juan Carlos Onganía, a general. His government undertook a number of economic reforms to make the country more productive, less corrupt, etc. The economic minister was Krieger Vasena. He was the architect of a major turn around in the Argentine economy and was very much admired by foreign governments, the International Monetary Fund, and foreign businessmen. A lot of American investors and businessmen who had left during the Peronist years began to come back and invest. They were very happy. The universities were intervened and run by appointees of the government. There was very little political activity. Politicians spoke nostalgically of the efforts made by the previous American Ambassador, Edwin Martin, to avert the military takeover.

My predecessor in following political affairs in the embassy initially had a very exciting period of work while the Illia government was in power and the aftermath of the overthrow. His activity was reduced to handholding, with the military in power, but it was an important function looking to the future.

Q: Who was our Ambassador?

HIGH: Initially, the Ambassador was Carter Burgess, a businessman who had been a director of the Ford Motor Company and was independently wealthy. He was a Republican appointed by a Democratic President, Lyndon Johnson. Following the return of the Republicans to power in 1970, he hoped that President Nixon would continue him in this position, and he lobbied for it.

Our policy toward Argentina was particularly economically oriented. We wanted to help the economic transformation. The government was doing all the right things in its early years. Nevertheless, there were some frictions. The United States imposed new restrictions

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on beef imports, and, of course, meat was a terribly important export for the Argentines. They had long faced a ban on Argentine beef in Britain. The British feared foot and mouth disease. But the US did permit beef imports from Argentina, though some sanitary controls served as a discouragement.

The Argentine meat industry and government were very annoyed by this. Our ambassador, Carter Burgess, was annoyed with it, too, because he saw this a festering sore on the relationship and wanted to remove it if he could. He really felt that U.S. industry was using the new restrictions to put down Argentine competition. He said, "If some guy is hauling a carcass from his delivery truck into a restaurant in the U.S. and it falls in the street, hell, he picks it up, puts it back on his shoulder and walks it into the restaurant. And that is all they are talking about in Argentina."

Carter Burgess concentrated very heavily on the Argentine and the American business communities. They were natural for him, and much of our bilateral discussion was on trade and investment. He was very socially oriented. He had the embassy organized to a fare-thee-well to support major dinners that he would give at his official residence, a lovely, palatial mansion built in the 1920s by an Argentine who had presidential ambitions. Henry Ford, the chairman of the Ford Motor Company, came for a visit. The ambassador had people in the car pool go to all the toy stores around Buenos Aires to buy up little models of Ford Model T's and then assemble them when they weren't driving people around. A grand dinner was given for the Fords at the residence and each table was graced by a Model T car model. Pretty creative, but a lot of work.

The ambassador organized the wives — which you couldn't do these days; the revolution was about to begin in the late 70s — to serve as volunteers to support the dinners, set up tables and keep things going. He even had me draft guidelines on the support tasks we were to perform at the grand dinners. He was pleased the way I had overseen a dinner he gave early in his posting for the newly appointed Argentine ambassador to Washington. So there was a heavy emphasis on entertaining.

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His great fear, approaching paranoia, was the moments of transition in a formal dinner between getting up from the table, having drinks, and the entertainment that followed. He worried that busy guests left on their own might depart at that time and the entertainment would fall flat.

For that brief transition period at a dinner, with the help of USIS, he got some clever movie shorts to show the guests in the ballroom. In one, a modern artist painted in Maine by pouring cans of paint over boards below the dock at low tide. The result was a signature modern painting. Another clever one showed a man and woman sitting beside each other on the early morning commuter train from Long Island to New York City. The man got on board impeccably dressed, ready for work, perhaps at Merrill Lynch. The woman looked a mess. The train ride provided her opportunity clean up, powder and paint. She left Grand Central Station looking like a fashion model. Her seat companion wore the debris of her paint and powder, and looked like he had been in a fight. Those clever moments were designed to hold the guests' attention. This practice tested USIS's ingenuity at discovering ever more clever shorts. Guests seemed impressed with his fastidiousness as a host. We in the embassy felt it was excessive, but we went along. Our wives weren't happy.

My own work in the political section was to keep in touch with the various politicians, reporting the conversations in memoranda or an occasional telegram. Out of office for over two years, politicians were beginning to be active. We remained close to the major groups, the Peronist party, because that still was the largest party, the Radical party because they were the ones who had been in power and were overthrown, and a number of smaller ones. Most of the party contacts were managed by me. On occasion Herb Thompson would participate.

Herb Thompson specialized on the Foreign Ministry and other government offices. A special effort was made to gain Argentine support for U.S. initiatives in international organizations. We very much wanted to get the Argentines to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, but they were very resistant. They were concerned over what they

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perceived as Brazilian ambitions. Herb also had several inroads into the military, getting their views on major issues and on politics.

While all this was going on and the embassy placed such a heavy emphasis on economic matters and how positive the Argentina economic program was, there really was only one person in the embassy who had his ear to the ground. That was the labor attaché, Jim Shea. Jim, a wonderful, gregarious Irish-American, had been in Argentina several years and knew virtually everybody in the labor movement leadership. The labor movement in Argentina, even with the military government, was quite influential. Workers were increasingly restive over the economic sacrifices they were required to make to support the military's economic stabilization programs.

Jim Shea was saying in his reporting, briefings to the country team, etc., “Folks, there are lots of unhappiness and unrest out there and something is going to happen. Things are beginning to get serious.”

Nobody much, except maybe in the political section, was listening to him. All of a sudden, I guess this must have been about October, 1969, came the famous Cordobazo, the insurrection against the government largely instigated by labor in Cordoba. Cordoba was one of the major provincial capitals and a major industrial center. Workers simply took to the streets and caused a lot of destruction. There were also many deaths in this protest against the government's wage policy, the conditions of labor, and so on.

The event was called the Cordobazo to mirror the even bigger worker explosion in Colombia, the Bogotazo, sometime in the late 1940s, as I recall.

The Cordobazo was the turning point for the Argentina military government. The decline of the Onganía government began at that moment. More mistakes were made. The unhappiness of labor and the public generally became increasingly pronounced. This led to Onganía's departure; he was followed by another military government, an interim

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one led by General Roberto Levingston, who had been the Argentina military attach# in Washington.

Levingston did not last long before he was overthrown. It was interesting at the time. It must have been 1970. Except for Jim Shea, the embassy had no foresight of the Cordobazo, but we all saw the Levingston government getting into deeper and deeper trouble. It was abundantly clear to all agencies, the political section, the economic section, and the Ambassador that the government was in danger of being overthrown. It was easier in this circumstance to clear cables reflecting that analysis, and in a matter of weeks we were proven correct. The result led to yet another military government led by General Alejandro Lanusse. But in this case, Lanusse understood what was happening. His government began to move the country to a return to civil rule. Not far behind that would be the eventual return of ex-President Juan Peron to Argentina, which came in about 1974, after I left. Lanusse seemed to recognize that, as well.

I had lots of contacts with different Peronist groups of very different political persuasions. Peron, living in Madrid and orchestrating his influence from there, was a master of playing off one segment of his movement against the others and making them all think that their view of Peronism was prevailing. He seemed to have more power and influence at a distance, where he did not have to take stands or make and implement government decisions. But in 1968-72, despite the incantations of his followers, Peron's return to Argentina did not seem to be a good bet.

While I was there, the exciting rediscovery of Eva Peron's body was announced. Initially it had been hidden in an undisclosed grave in Argentina. Then, as I recall, it was spirited out to a cemetery in Italy, where it remained for years. Finally, after this discovery, it was taken to Spain and displayed at Peron's residence until he returned to Argentina and brought the body back with him. The body had been embalmed with chemicals, much like the corpse of Lenin in Moscow, and there was controversy as to just how effective the embalming process had been. The Argentine press was fixated on Peron and on matters such as that.

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In any event, there were all kinds of political bickering and maneuvering among the different Peronist groups. The labor leaders were largely Peronists, too, and they became increasingly active politically, claiming to be at the heart of Peronism. The Radicals were seeking to reaffirm their role in politics and to remake the image of the party that was overthrown. And so there were lots of contacts to be made with these people. The new DCM, Max Krebs, was very much involved in it, so was the new political counselor, Bill Sowash. Milton Barall, the previous DCM, was also keen on meeting Peronists.

We had to deal with an ambassador who wasn't very perceptive on politics. The replacement of Carter Burgess was John Davis Lodge, a Republican politician. He was a one-time governor of Connecticut who served a first term almost everywhere except when he became an ambassador. He was a member of the Republican freshman Congressional team with Richard Nixon. He had been Ambassador to Spain in the Eisenhower administration. Now, under President Nixon, Burgess' Republican credentials didn't carry him across the threshold. Lodge came in, he was a "professional anti-communist." He was inclined to interpret everything that he saw politically in terms of a communist threat. He seemed unable to understand and deal with Peronist influences in Argentina because he saw the Peronists as opening opportunities for communism. His mind also seemed set on the excesses of the Peron government of the 1940s. While we tried to explain the Peronism phenomenon, we didn't expose the ambassador very often to Peronists. We were trying to build bridges to them for the future and we didn't want to put them off.

Q: I always find this interesting that you judge one of your colleagues, even your superior, and then decide what you will let them deal with and what you won't. There is much more manipulation than one might think. It is done for the best of purposes.

HIGH: Well, it usually is, or you hope it is. I suppose there are some circumstances when that may not be the case. But that very much was the situation in Argentina. Lodge did have some contact with Argentine labor, but the kinds of questions he asked and remarks

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made to such contacts weren't likely to let that Peronists conclude that Lodge was friendly or understood them.

Argentina was the kind of place where there were lots of visitors, influential visitors, coming down from the States. Nelson Rockefeller came through while I was there, and I as the control officer for the visit. He was going around the hemisphere to seek out policy initiatives for the new Nixon Administration. He was chosen for this task because of his leadership role in Latin American affairs in the State Department during World War II, and his friendship with leaders throughout the hemisphere.

His mission was extremely interesting in the sense of the kinds of people brought together to meet him and his advisors as they traveled from country to country. He had a cultural member of his American team, a labor member of his team, a political member, etc.; separate meetings would be held for them with representative counterparts. The Latin Americans hoped that what he learned and his prestige at home would prove influential in policy making. I don't think the visit produced much that was concrete, but it showed, in our case, attention to Argentina by a leading American.

That was important because we were still in that post-"Braden or Peron" period in our bilateral relations. The Argentines still resented what they saw as Braden's interference in domestic Argentine politics, when he encouraged Argentines to vote against Peron. The United States needed to show that times had changed and it listened to Argentina and responded to Argentine concerns.

Q: Yes, Spruille Braden, the American Ambassador. Peron used our ambassador as a wonderful foil.

HIGH: Argentines generally swallowed that hook, line and sinker and lived by it. What we were trying to do in our contacts was to underscore the relevance of the United States to

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Argentina. To show that many of our interests were interests in common. We were trying to do something positive with a country that was having a difficult time governing itself.

Q: Did the Falklands/Malvinas issue come up at all?

HIGH: Well, it was always there. When we were in Argentina a right wing nationalist of really no significance, except as a wild card, got into a biplane, flew to the Malvinas, crash landed and said, "I am here to claim the Malvinas for Argentina." Of course he was sent back to Argentina and enjoyed a brief notoriety among his friends.

Some talks about the islands also opened up between the British and the Argentines. For the first time in many years, direct shipping was permitted between Argentina and the Falklands. Previously you had to go over to Uruguay to make infrequent sea connections to the islands.

Q: Did you get any impression of how the CIA was operating? Did you get anything from them or were they just doing their thing?

HIGH: They were active and interested. There were some differences in understanding and interpretation between the political section and the agency on what really was happening in Argentine politics. Some people on their staff had a pretty clear picture of what was going on and were accurate in their reporting. There were others who lacked that understanding and were rather disingenuous in interpreting events. One of the blind spots, shared in other corners of the embassy, was labor discontent. The Cordobazo caught them by surprise. But, as the military began to make important mistakes we had an ongoing discussion, usually constructive, over the meaning of those developments.

When there are basic differences in understanding between the agency and a political section, one can be tempted to ask if you are better off letting the agency just go ahead and let events prove it wrong. Or do you work with them, help them improve their product so that their analysis is sounder and not lost off in left field somewhere? Our political

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section approach was to talk with them about our differences. The interesting point on the overthrow of the Levingston government was that the agency's assessment was the same as everybody else's. Looking at the situation from different vantage points, we were all together on it.

Q: Well, you left Argentina in?

HIGH: In 1972. Terrorism had begun before I left. It began in 1971 and was very much a part of life and of public concern. People disappeared, people were killed. And so much of it was meaningless.

I remember the labor attach# at the time, John Doherty, very effective in his ties with labor and reporting, commented on one of the early incidents. A terrorist from the Montoneros or some other guerrilla group simply walked up to a guard at the presidential residence in Olivos, pulled a gun, and shot and killed the guard. Here was a poor, under-paid army private, who had a family with four or five kids. The murder was senseless. What kind of a revolution is it that does that kind of thing? These incidents got a lot worse after we left and, of course, and the Argentine military began to take law into their own hands, responding to violence with their own violence.

Two other points before leaving Argentina. One of my wife's activities here, besides raising two children and participating in the life of the embassy, was to work as a volunteer at a rehabilitation institute run by the Argentines. She found that a very rewarding experience because her Argentine associates were very professional.

The second point is that we joined an Argentine Anglican church in Martinez, the suburb of Buenos Aires where we lived. The great majority of the congregation was Anglo-Argentine, there were only a few foreigners. Lacking an Argentine pastor, they had brought in a Spanish speaking American to be their minister, Ron Maitland. They were intent on developing a Spanish-speaking church, while hopefully some Argentines could be trained, because they were convinced that the future of the church depended on speaking

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Spanish. We thought that was very enlightened, and we enjoyed becoming close to a number of families there.

Q: Okay, let's call it off for a while.

Today is November 2, 1993 and this is a second interview with George High. George, we finished off Argentina and then you went to the War College in 1973-73. How was Vietnam playing there? Here you were a State Department type with the military, was Vietnam an issue or not?

HIGH: Not really. In their conversations, my classmates seemed to say that we were in over our necks in Vietnam because of political decisions. It was sort of a damage limitation on the institution. The military didn't want to see that happen again. I didn't hear lengthy discussions of Vietnam, nor was I singled out as one of those State Department folks that helped to get us into this. There really wasn't any of that. This was a year set aside for training. The military students were told in the grand auditorium to look at the guy on the right and at the guy on the left; one of the three was likely to earn a star or two or three. This training was preparation for further advancement; you took it to advance your career.

The military was very good at understanding that training was a major part of career development and advancement. The contrast between that attitude among the military and our own attitude toward training at the State Department was stark. At State we felt that if we weren't on the front line of major issues, the train was passing us by.

Q: Then you went to ARA and Caribbean Affairs where you were from 1973-75. What were the main issues?

HIGH: At the outset, the Inter-American Affairs Bureau was particularly involved in a new exercise in long-term policy planning. We tried to put down on paper what was U.S. policy toward the Caribbean, or North Central America or South Central America, etc. Our particular aim in the Caribbean office was to sort out policy for that region.

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We discovered that it was extremely difficult to put the Caribbean in a package because of the multitude of islands and countries and the great differences in our interests in them. They didn't really match very well. You could generalize briefly, but it quickly became a jumble when we dealt with such diversity as the Dominican Republic, Guyana, Jamaica, and the Dutch Antilles. The architects of this exercise weren't particularly pleased with us; we were not successful in coming up with a succinct, meaningful program for the region. Rather, our work focused on how to deal with Balaguer in the Dominican Republic, with Forbes Burnham in Guyana, the bauxite issue in Jamaica, and so on.

Q: Who was the government in Jamaica?

HIGH: The Prime Minister was Michael Manley. He was doing things that the foreign-owned bauxite companies didn't like. He wanted to take over the industry in Jamaica. At this point, his representatives were engaged in talks with the industry and we were in talks with the Jamaican government.

Q: As far as the State Department's concern, was it your impression that we were letting the companies and Manley work this out and to stay out of it?

HIGH: There was pressure within the Department to work out a settlement that was satisfactory to the companies because this was a Republican administration and the thought of expropriation without just compensation was anathema to the policy makers. Yet, Jamaica wasn't about to provide sufficient financial remuneration to the companies to satisfy them. It was pretty much of a standoff.

Jamaica wasn't the only place with expropriation problems. We even had visits from an American who had invested in Haiti. He had talked the Haitian government into giving him a concession, virtual control, over an island off the mainland where he would develop industry and tourism, a sort of free port, as I recall. He reached agreement for that concession with people previously in important positions in the Haitian government. But

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subsequently they were thrown out of office in one of those periodic purges that happened in the Duvalier years, and the investor was left with nothing. He came running to the State Department with a suitcase full of paper saying that the Haitian government owed him millions of dollars. Wouldn't we help him collect?, for example by threatening to cut down the AID program.

Nobody was willing to tell him to go fly a kite because of his foolishness in investing under such tenuous circumstances. Yet our policy opposed expropriation without just compensation, and this gave pause to an outright rejection of his claims. Nor was anyone willing to take action with the Haitians. Our embassy in Port-au-Prince thought his claims were absolutely outrageous.

There were protracted discussions with this fellow. It became a standoff that wouldn't go away but also wasn't resolved. It wasn't a matter of this fellow not having the political influence of the bauxite companies in Jamaica to generate U.S. government action. His claim was more a question of the bona fides of his claimed agreement with some former sleazy officials in Haiti.

Q: Cuba was just off to one side?

HIGH: Cuba was pretty much off to one side, and there was another office in the bureau that dealt exclusively with that country. There certainly was some concern about the relationship between Michael Manley and the Cubans. This was in the period when Manley was making his name by causing trouble for the U.S. government, for example, saying friendly things to the Cubans and occasionally sending a delegation there. So there were some concerns. Manley was not seen at that time as being a friend we could work with. And yet Jamaica was important to us, it had bauxite, some American companies were in difficulty there, and those negotiations were important as possible precedent setters.

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Q: From your position, how were we treating that?

HIGH: The threat to nationalize was one of those black marks that was put up against Manley. People were hopeful that a new government would come in eventually and discussions would turn in a different direction. Negotiations continued, there wasn't anything particularly decisive at that time.

Apart from bauxite, we had gone through a period where we had had an absolutely horrendous political-appointee ambassador who argued with the staff, mistreated his staff, and didn't do terribly well in his own relationships with the Jamaicans...

Q: Was he the one who refused to let them use the toilets in the consular waiting room or something like that?

HIGH: I am not sure whether he was or not, it would be in keeping with his style.

Q: This was Vincent de Roulet.

HIGH: Yes, Vincent de Roulet. He, to the annoyance of his staff, didn't seem to remember names well, or care to use them in memos and papers that he sent to his staff. He had stamps made with different animal figures on them which were designated for each person on his staff. For example, a section chief might have been a giraffe and the head of an agency an elephant, some one else was a snake or whatever. All those depersonalizing things must have irritated people. There was a beautiful article written about him in The New Yorker and it had to be taken largely from people who had been there at the time. That would have been late in 1973 or early 1974. The article described his peculiar stewardship of the embassy in great, scandalous detail.

Ken Rogers had been in the political section or head of the political section in Jamaica at about that time. When Michael Manley was in the opposition, Rogers developed a very

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warm, personal relationship with him. John Burke, who was the Caribbean office director, had Ken Rogers assigned to the Jamaica desk in his office.

My perception was that the United States wanted to improve relations with Manley, but he may not at that point have cared to be close to us.

Q: Did you get any feeling about Kissinger and ARA, particularly in the Caribbean, at this time?

HIGH: It is Kissinger time. No. You know, Kissinger went through his early period at the Department when Latin America was basically outside his frame of reference. Then suddenly he seemed to discover it when he attended chiefs of state conferences. He had Bill Rogers as his Assistant Secretary for Inter-American Affairs, I think, and then Rogers went up to become Under Secretary of State for Economic Affairs, still under Kissinger.

Thus, after awhile, Kissinger developed personal relationships with a number of Latin American leaders and spent more time on this part of the world. But the Caribbean was still very much of a stepchild. Nobody really paid much attention to it unless there happened to be a crisis. The Dominican intervention was far enough behind us so that it was perceived as ancient history. It was hard to get people's attention.

There was some concern that some of the small, newly independent islands would be taken over by gangsters and drug traffickers, because they were so small and their institutions so fragile. It really wouldn't take a lot of money to buy people out and cause difficulties. That was mentioned from time to time as a reason for paying attention to the region, but nobody took it seriously. It was just hard to get people's attention.

One of the areas we focused on, which has been a occasional frustration for the Caribbean affairs office, was Puerto Rico. It was an American territory (commonwealth), not a foreign land. Yet it was a factor in the Caribbean and from time to time it sought to play its own role there. It projects itself as something distinctive from the United States.

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It occasionally sought separate representation at regional meetings. It participated, as it does today, in international games as Puerto Rico, not as part of the United States.

I was informally the designated-person in the office to deal with Puerto Rican issues. At one point I spent three or four days there meeting with some Puerto Rican officials to discuss regional matters and to listen to Puerto Rican views. I was our contact person with the Commonwealth Office here in Washington.

The government in Puerto Rico was led at the time by the Commonwealth Party. Governor Fernandes Colon featured Puerto Rico as a doorway for the United States to go out into the Caribbean and down into Latin America because it was Spanish speaking. So the Puerto Rican government had relationships with some of the Central American countries, with Venezuela, with others in the Caribbean, to project its self-image and the interests of Puerto Rico. In a way, it had its own foreign policy. I know that at times actions by the government in Washington annoyed Puerto Ricans; at times the shoe was on the other foot.

It was an interesting relationship. Mexico, for example, has always questioned what it saw as a colonial relationship between the United States and Puerto Rico. It had some of its own ties with the island. I don't think this had any ulterior motive particularly, but simply to say, "This is a depressed Hispanic community living under American colonialism. We ought to feel close and akin to the island." Yet, Mexico, Venezuela, none of these other countries would think of using Puerto Rico as an avenue to the government in Washington. They had their own direct relationships with Washington and weren't about to disrupt them. What Puerto Rico seemed to be after, a special status as an intermediary, was probably unattainable. Yet clearly it was important to the Puerto Ricans to have positive relations with their neighbors, and they had some success in this.

There were lots of lesser regional issues at the time. There were political and racial differences and divisions in Trinidad and Tobago that caused us occasional concern. Eric

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Williams, the first president of the country, was still alive and in power. He would tweak Uncle Sam's beard every so often, but generally that relationship was positive.

In sum, rather than having a regional policy and regional plans for the Caribbean, I found our work focused pretty much on island to island diplomacy. We were encouraging the new nations to concentrate on development, but our resources to support that policy were very scarce.

Q: There was no effort to raise the level, sort of a Caribbean Base Initiative as came up later on?

HIGH: I'd say the seeds of the Caribbean Basin Initiative were barely in the ground; there was ready recognition of the needs of the region but little will on our part to respond. Economies were declining, we put limitations on importing important products of the region, governments were beginning to founder. Major difficulties were ahead. But there weren't many who were prepared to listen. We were a voice crying in the wilderness.

Q: I take it even within the Bureau of ARA you were sort of the stepchild?

HIGH: Oh, very much the stepchild, yes. The bureau's concentration was on what was going on in Venezuela, or further south, or perhaps Mexico. It was very hard to get their attention.

Q: Well, then you kind of had what the Italians would call a parenthesis in your career by being an inspector from 1975-78.

HIGH: Yes, although I suppose in a way that was one of the most satisfying experiences I have had in the Foreign Service. It also set the stage for the rest of my career, I think.

Let me go back to the Caribbean for one half second. This was the conclusion of a period in which many of the islands had become independent and they were very much struggling for expression within the hemisphere. They were trying, in the OAS for example, to

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make themselves equal members with other Latin American countries in the hemisphere organization.

The difficulty they had, of course, was that most of the hemisphere countries, the major ones particularly, weren't all that keen in having these new states gain much influence. They were the people who had been there before and were the big guys. When they were together, Hispanics from the mainland and people from the Caribbean would say positive things about each other. But when you got the Caribbean leaders or representatives separately they would talk about their frustrations to make an impact, to have a role. The Hispanics would say, "Why should we be paying any particular attention to them? They don't really carry any weight."

Now, back to the Inspector Corps. It certainly was a kind of detour. Before accepting the assignment, the kinds of questions I asked myself and others were: "Do I really want to go into the Inspector Corps? Isn't that a dead end? What can I usefully do? What can I learn, how can I contribute?" I was persuaded enough by some senior friends and colleagues that the assignment provided excellent training for the future. There was a lot to learn, especially about management. It came to sound attractive.

What I found very early on was that it was indeed useful training in management and leadership. I quickly recognized, looking at what others were doing, that I had been making all kinds of management mistakes as a deputy director of this or that. Nor was it a matter of committed mistakes. I became much more clearly aware of the concerns a manager should have in dealing with resources, leading people, providing support and training for subordinates.

The Inspection Corp introduced me to a much broader framework of what is the Foreign Service all about, what we are supposed to be doing yet frequently ignore. An inspector certainly sees all kinds of examples of people who are doing imaginative and creative things in a sensible way. But an inspector also sees many examples of what not to do and

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of opportunities lost. I saw examples of many people focused so heavily on the substance of our foreign policy and our relationship with a foreign country or region that they failed to manage their offices and posts and use their personnel effectively. A management approach was really very lacking and why not?

In the Foreign Service, we concentrate almost entirely on substance. At some point as we get toward mid-career we become supervisors and then move up the scale in management. If we are successful, we can become a supervisor of much larger things rather rapidly. Yet how many of us are prepared for management responsibilities? We have an image in the Foreign Service that we walk in the door and suddenly become a political expert on the particular country or function. We assume we all have the ability to assimilate knowledge and acquire necessary expertise quickly. But it isn't like turning on a light switch and suddenly the light goes on in the room — or in this case, management skills suddenly bursts forth upon us. Nor do we necessarily learn good skills by watching our superiors.

My sense is that there certainly are a few people who are “born” managers and they hardly seem to need training. However, there are very many more who do need training, who do need to be shown how to avoid the pitfalls that Foreign Service officers face. For example, common problems I saw were inattention to the administration of the embassy or the bureau, of not paying adequate attention to consular affairs except when a crisis explodes, of not working effectively and well with other agencies. As an inspector, I saw too many “train wrecks.” Our inspection reports were replete with them.

I was fortunate to be in the Inspection Corps when Bob Sayre became the Inspector General. As a senior inspector, he led an inspection team that I was to examine training and the Foreign Service Institute. I became schooled in inspection by Robert M. Sayre, who was very management oriented.

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The system was clear enough — goals were established in the policy making process, this was communicated to the offices and posts, the policy was carried out. The inspectors' role was to determine how meaningful and clearly stated policy was, how well it was communicated to the implementers, and how well it was being carried out. An important element of this process was to determine how well offices and posts were run, whether people understood their duties and performed them well, how functions interrelated, and how the Department and posts handled their responsibilities with other agencies. This was summed up in the name of the inspection process — the inspection of the conduct of relations. It meant, though, not only how the substance of the work was handled, but also how well organized we were to conduct it and how well we functioned. It got down to people.

Very early on we had a course given for the inspectors by two management consultants who were inclined to use the good cop/bad cop teaching method. It was an adaptation of the course they developed for Deputy Chiefs of Mission. The DCM course had been established because so many younger officers were sent to Africa without adequate preparation or experience to play their roles, relating to the ambassador and to the staff. The consultants visited a number of posts in several geographic areas and conducted their own management inspections. They came back with case studies of “train wrecks” that were used in the DCM course. The approach was to get people to discuss how particular problems developed, how they were resolved, and how could they have been avoided or resolved more effectively. These cases were turned on the inspectors. It was a real eye opener to me on the kinds of weaknesses in management the Foreign Service needed to address. The inspectors enjoyed the course and profited from it.

I took part in inspections the first year I was in the Inspection Corps. Several were inspections in the Department and one was the inspection of posts in France. Then I became coordinator of the inspection program. I was the one on the staff who oversaw the inspections, preparing the teams to go into the field, reviewing their draft reports to be sure

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that recommendations were well supported and meaningful, and encouraging inspectors to focus on the principal problems they identified, and assuring that recommendations were enforceable.

It was intriguing because there is something in the Foreign Service mentality that caused inspectors to resist biting the bullet to make the specific recommendations that could be accounted for. Professionally, we diplomats like flexibility, it gives us room to maneuver. But it also can discourage accountability. We inspectors seemed inclined to beat around the bush and to come up with recommendations that were so general they became unenforceable. We encouraged inspection teams to be more specific.

Following an inspection, we would communicate with the bureaus and posts to see what efforts they made to fulfill recommendations. This was an opportunity to raise issues in the Department if there were major differences between the inspection report and the inspected bureau or post. As we prepared for those meetings, we came to recognize the recommendations that were worth pursuing against bureau or post opposition, and those that were unenforceable. While we did fight over important recommendations that weren't followed, the Foreign Service ethic was such that unless we could persuade the person being inspected or the supervisor that our recommendation was valid and meaningful, our chances of getting it fulfilled were slim. It was too easy to delay, ignore or do half measures.

I found this process a very intriguing proposition. The people on the staff that Bob Sayre attracted were accomplished professionals who for one reason or another were between postings. They were taken seriously by the people they were inspecting, and the support Larry Eagleburger, the Under Secretary for Management, gave to Bob Sayre strengthened the inspection process. The inspectors were a very dedicated group in an intellectually challenging situation. They recognized the importance of their mission and they warmed to it.

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My tour in the corp showed to me the importance of management, but it also showed me that generally the route to the top of the Foreign Service was through substance and not management.

Q: I take it there is almost an earth change between the way it was done then and as I recall when it came out. It was looking at you as being help. It has now become almost an adversarial function where much of it is going out and trying to play, I've got you. At least that is my impression. I haven't served under that.

HIGH: The Inspection Corps had undergone a variety of course changes. Prior to the time that I was there, Bill Schaufele and some others had gone very strongly in the direction of management by objective, creating the conduct of relations inspections that I described earlier.

To respond to your question, if you were alerted to a problem by someone in Washington and discovered at the post that it was indeed a problem, then I could see why the person or persons at post could defensively interpret it as a “got cha” game. And on occasion inspectors have human failings and make bad recommendations. Occasionally, failings were found among the service's top performers, and one defense for that wounded dignity was a challenge to the inspector's intentions or credentials.

Turning again to Bob Sayre as inspector general. He further perfected the conduct of relations approach and raised it to an even higher level than it had been. Later, Jesse Helms, Senator from North Carolina, got into the act. He kept asking how could the foxes (the Foreign Service) be counted on to inspect functions when they themselves were part of the chicken coop? When inspectors had to return to the system and work with people they have inspected and seek postings and advancement, how candid could they be inspecting their peers? The response was to question the ability of an outsider to understand a well-established system, and a belief that we professionals could assure change more effectively than outsiders. Ultimately, Helms forced the State Department

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to appointed an outsider as inspector general, just as all the other departments in the government did.

The new system put an even higher priority on waste, fraud and mismanagement than the old one. Inspectors became cops on the beat. While my impression is that inspectors still look at the conduct of relations, the policing role and perhaps the “got cha” game have taken on a higher priority and received very considerable additional resources. In my day, inspectors hoped to be regarded by their colleagues as consultants and helpers, not policemen. It's harder to project that image today. You are right that people look on it as an adversarial affair, even more than before.

During my period, when a team was about half way through the inspection a supervising deputy inspector general or the inspector general himself would join the team in the field. One of the purposes of the deputy inspector general's visit was to check with the team to see: what critical problems were being uncovered; and to act as an intermediary between the team and the ambassador to prepare the ambassador to accept and work with, rather than ignore, critical recommendations. An objective was also to assure that the team didn't get in over its head, which, of course, could happen.

The overseas inspection team that I was on went to France. Ray Garthoff was the head of the team. The inspectors had just gone through the management course I mentioned earlier. We all felt that it was important for the team to be candid. In our experience, all too often inspectors went to a post or to a bureau, learned of very critical problems from the officers and staff, but when the inspection report was read by bureau or post personnel, they wouldn't see any reference to the matters that bothered them most and that they had the courage to raise.

Now, there were always separate memoranda between the team leader and the ambassador or the inspector general and the assistant secretary in Washington. They assessed management in broad terms and raised sensitive matters, if there were any.

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They provided a thumb nail sketch of the inspection and served as a report card. Some very sensitive matters might be handled orally and even more discreetly. But the readers of the inspection reports didn't understand that; there was no way to confirm that their willingness to express themselves candidly and be at risk had any impact. They had reason to question the process and the inspectors. Our team went off to Paris very keen to see and tell it as it was. Ray Garthoff was accepting of that, we all were. Kenneth Rush, who had been the Deputy Secretary of State under Kissinger (not a terribly effective one, I think) was the ambassador. His reward after being Deputy Secretary was to be named Ambassador to France. I don't suppose anybody will really credit him with being one of the great ambassadors from the United States to France. We found an embassy where morale was bad, apparently a fairly typical assessment of the Paris post at most any time. People had a way of idealizing a Paris that was difficult to find in reality. Personnel at lower levels felt that they were ignored by persons higher up in the system. The administrative section certainly tended to every whim and wish that the ambassador had, but not very many of the whims and wishes of people further down the line.

The political section chief, Hank Cohen, was doing a very effective job in a difficult position. He was seen by some Europeanists as an outsider because he had advanced through posts in Africa. Some Europeanists could not credit him with understanding what "really" was going on in France. There was contention in the embassy. At the time, Mitterrand was in the opposition. There were those in the embassy who thought that Mitterrand was the future of politics in France, as indeed he became. But others felt that he was antagonistic to the United States and an obstructionist to American interests in the world, and we certainly should not encourage him.

Bob Yost, the deputy inspector general who supervised us, came out mid-way in our inspection and was made aware of a number of the management weaknesses that we had discovered. Our team had one of the most intriguing discussions with him that I can recall during this assignment. The inspection team sat virtually on one side of the table at dinner

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one night and Bob Yost on the other. The question was how frank to be in describing the serious problems we felt we had found.

The inspection team was saying, "We have to tell it the way it is or the staff, among others, isn't going to believe us or the inspection process. They will feel betrayed. We will not have any effect in encouraging change in management style and substance if we are not candid and support our findings."

Bob Yost argued vehemently on the other side. In effect, he said, "If you tell it as candidly as you want to tell it, you are going to turn off the Ambassador and his deputy and the administrative counselor. Instead of gaining cooperation in getting some kind of forward action, you are going to be stiff armed and you are not going to have any effect at all." We went back and forth. It was one of those nights when you really couldn't feel that one side or the other won. There certainly wasn't a meeting of the minds.

The truth of the matter, and in retrospect, was that it was a no win situation. Write candidly and you were likely to anger the managers and cause them to resist change. Be less candid and you got little change and you lost the respect and cooperation of the staff. It seemed to me that if a situation were really bad, it had to be confronted; otherwise, some middle ground had to be found if change was to be encouraged and respect for the process secured. I was talking about really serious differences, but my recipe for success sounded like carrying water on both shoulders. Often enough the officers and staff being inspected welcomed constructive suggestions.

There really was a vibrancy in the inspection corps during my assignment there. It made me much more alert to management and personnel responsibilities. But I do not believe a management ethic took hold of the service during my career. One was successful in the State Department not by being a great manager and accomplishing significant tasks with those you managed. One was successful because of the way the substance of policy was handled. I am not sure that the emphasis that I gave to management was that great a help

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to my own career. But I certainly had an interesting and satisfying one nevertheless and I wouldn't change it (my career, that is).

The reality was that you can have an s.o.b. for an ambassador or an assistant secretary, but if that person accomplishes what the United States wants and its interests are advanced, who should "care" whether that person was nasty and disagreeable to deal with, a tyrant over his staff or impossible to work with? Until the Department places more emphasis on grooming people for leadership (not just the select few) by sensitizing them to good management and personnel practices, we'll continue to have our dragons, and they'll be hell to live with.

I don't want to suggest that the Inspection Corps even then walked away from difficult problems. When an ambassador or other high official was accused of improper conduct, the matter was dealt with quietly from the Inspector General to the Under Secretary of Management and to the Ambassador. I think that is the way the Department has done things all along. But, when linen is washed in private, sometimes it doesn't get fully cleaned.

Q: You left there and got a very interesting job as deputy chief of mission in Brasilia. I take it this stems from your connection with Bob Sayre?

HIGH: Yes.

Q: You were there from 1978-82, so you had two ambassadors?

HIGH: Yes.

Q: What was the situation in Brazil during this period?

HIGH: Brazil was still under a military government. Ernesto Geisel was the chief of state and head of government. They were having some major economic problems because the economic miracle of the years prior to 1978 was beginning to fade. Brazil had just

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grown like Topsy after the military took over, but the steam was petering out and people were blaming the military for their difficulties. The politicians were becoming restive, the students were becoming some active once again, and Brazil was becoming increasingly independent and critical of the United States.

The United States was also coming out from under the impact of the early years of the Carter Administration's foreign policy. Carter had started off his administration being extremely critical of Brazil's human rights record and also of its effort to get nuclear reprocessing facilities from the West Germans. There was a contract with the Germans and nuclear plants were going up in Brazil. There was concern, which I think was confirmed later on, that Brazil was moving toward gaining a nuclear war capacity.

The initial steps the Carter Administration had made very public and were extremely damning of the Brazilian government, and the Brazilians had taken deep offense at this. This followed decades of very warm, very personal relations with the United States. Brazil had fought with the United States in World War II. Vernon Walters served with the Brazilian troops in Italy. He was the attach# in Brazil at the time of the military golpe. He was friends with Brazil's military leaders. Brazil was also a big recipient of assistance under the Alliance for Progress. Many of the Brazilian leaders in the private sector and the government studied in the United States under AID grants, and this had gone on for years.

There had been this awfully close relationship, virtually going back to Brazilian independence, and then all of a sudden, out of the blue, came these two very public slaps on human rights and nuclear reprocessing. It was a total surprise to the Brazilians and naturally, from their side, they were hurt and angered, whatever the American viewpoint.

The previous ambassador, John Crimmins, had borne much of the brunt of that reaction. When Bob Sayre went to Brazil, the Carter Administration had had time to think more about this and to conclude that it needed to work on these issues in a more harmonious way. And so, as I understood it, our objective was to rebuild the relationship, certainly

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to pursue those subjects as well, but in a less public and contentious way. In effect, we should treat Brazil as a close associate and somebody who was worth our attention. That was our agenda in Brazil.

There were increasing Congressional visits to Brazil while we were there. Early on they were very positive. There were visits by American military officials to develop a dialogue with the Brazilians, to put life into what had been a very close relationship between the two military establishments. There was also an effort to encourage further American business interest in Brazil.

The head of the State Department's Policy Planning Council came to Brasilia and held policy discussions with the Brazilians for the first time, just as U.S. policy planning experts met annually with our major allies. The Brazilians had their own policy planning unit in the Foreign Ministry, modeled after ours. It was a natural partner to benefit from the opportunity to talk over world and regional problems.

The Brazilians seemed at first apprehensive about this. They felt that perhaps we were there to co-opt them. Antonio da Silveira, the Foreign Minister, had the reputation of being an ardent nationalist and of almost looking for ways to frustrate the United States, to show that Brazil was independent and had its own interests to look after. I saw no indication among any of us working on Brazilian affairs at the time of any idea that our object was to co-opt the Brazilians in any way. We wanted them to realize that we had many things in common, matters we could talk about and discuss, and that it paid both countries to try to resolve some of the problems that were existing between us so that we could work more cooperatively on matters of mutual concern.

Remember, in years past, we had encouraged Brazil to provide the general who led the inter-American force that intervened in the Dominican Republic. Years later they weren't very pleased with that role. The Brazilians might have some preoccupation of what we were trying to sell them this time. We needed to overcome that reluctance; we didn't

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have anything to sell them except mutual interest. That really was a lot of what the whole relationship was about at this period of time.

Bill Bowdler became Assistant Secretary for Inter-American Affairs toward the end of the Carter administration. He visited us in Brazil. One of his comments to Bob Sayre was that he hoped that he could clear his desk enough so that he could give more time to Brazil than Brazil had gotten from the bureau over recent years. To his way of thinking, Brazil and Mexico were the keys to the American relations in the hemisphere. We needed to become more closely associated with both countries.

The truth of the matter was that that really never happened on our watch. We got a little more time, a little more attention, but we were always second fiddle to those larger, more immediate problems that were overwhelming to anyone who was in the bureau at the time. There was the Mariel boat lift, difficulties with Mexico and Central America, and other crises that commanded attention.

There were some limitations to our diplomacy in Brazil, too. One element was the number of Congressional visits we had. Delegations came down to learn and to listen to the Brazilians. Initially that was helpful, it was new. But eventually there was backlash. These delegations, whether made up of one or two persons or usually more, would fly into Rio on Day One. They would go out and spend the night in Rio and maybe into the next day.

On Day Two or Three came their visit to Brasilia, about an hour and a half away by air. They would get into an airplane around 8 or so in the morning, fly up to Brasilia, arriving about 10:00 or 10:30. They would be taken to the embassy for a half hour or forty-five minute briefing, a real quick one. Then they would go over to the Brazilian Congress building, and for an hour and a half maximum they would call on one or two leaders of the Brazilian Congress. With luck maybe it would be separate meetings with two people.

Next, the Brazilians would hold a luncheon for them. Spread around a big u-shaped table, there would be scads of people. There might be a little bit of talk around the table,

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more social than substantive. Someone would get up from the Brazilian side and say something substantive. Someone on the American side would get up and very briefly say, "We appreciate your hospitality, we like this dialogue and we need to do more of it." Then the delegation would hurry back to its plane so that they could get back to Rio before the afternoon traffic jams and have one last night in Rio. Next day they would be off to their next country.

Too often the visits were redundant and didn't get much beyond initial exchanges between well-intentioned strangers, "We are in a hurry, give it to us fast, boys, and let us move on," was the message conveyed. That happened so often that I think the positive contributions of the visits began to deteriorate. There were a couple of Congressmen and others who were serious. One was Rubin Askew, who I think was in Congress and had been Governor of Florida. He had us take him out to one of the shopping centers in Brasilia, not to buy tourist things, but to see what the prices were in the supermarkets and in a department store to get some sense of how people lived. Occasionally, somebody who would stay long enough so that we could drive out of the capital into one of the satellite cities, where most of the workers lived, to see what those places looked like.

Q: How did you find the embassy working, first with Sayre and then with Motley?

HIGH: There was a difference in personality there. Bob Sayre was very much of a person who stuck to business. He did do some small talk, but most of his time was focused on getting information he needed and doing his job. He was concerned about the welfare of his people, the morale of his people, but he didn't get into chit chat as easily as others. Some people felt that he was a bit distant and I thought one of my roles was try to warm that up and show that there was a personal interest.

Bob Sayre had a very good team. Initially he had Alfonso Arenales as head of the political section. Al was a one-man political section. He had served in Brazil a number of times during his career and was thoroughly familiar with Brazilian politics and personalities.

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He wrote very well. George Kenney was his economic section chief, and George was very able with a strong European background and Third World experience. Science was an important area, not only because of the nuclear issue but because we wanted to encourage scientific exchanges between the two countries. For much of the time we had Bob Goeckermann as the science attach#. Some time later, possibly about the time that Tony Motley arrived, the attach# was Dan Serwer, who is now DCM in Italy. The dialogue on science was pursued strongly by both attach#s. Our administrative support was very goal-minded, first with Sam Lupo and then with Mac Gerlach. Bob Sayre also had a very strong Counselor of Public Affairs in McKinney Russell.

At the constituent posts, we had some excellent leaders in Terry Arnold at Sao Paulo, John DeWitt at Rio, Stu Lippe in Porto Alegre and Doug Hartley in Salvador de Bahia. Guido Fenzi covered Recife. The exchanges at periodic mission conferences in Brasilia were animated and helpful.

Morale in Brasilia had always been a problem, and it was a concern of ours, as well. I think it is partly because of the community there. Brasilia was one of those new cities, designed by a communist, interestingly, where the rich people lived in the center in apartment buildings, and the workers were all out in satellite cities that weren't necessarily nearby. Individual housing units were well started across the lake where wealthy people could have their own houses and didn't have to live in apartments. Brasilia really wasn't an outpost at the edge of a desert or the edge of the plain or jungle. It was on a grassy plateau, but it didn't provide the kind of city life most people were accustomed to.

Most of the embassy personnel lived together in one or two adjoining, US government-owned apartment buildings. Initially, the buildings were purchased to provide American personnel with pleasant, well-cared for apartments; tenants wouldn't be subject to the eccentricities of different landlords in a pioneer city. But, the ghetto-like housing was bound to create frictions and unpleasantness. The embassy and embassy residence had swimming pools. The embassy had tennis courts, a club house, and very active programs

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to try to provide constructive outlets for individuals and families. The Brazilian ministries did the same thing, constructing sports clubs for their personnel around the lake.

Returning to the substance of our bilateral relations, the United States was concerned for decades over the stability of Brazil and the growth of leftist or communist influence in Brazil and the hemisphere. That was the stimulus for the Alliance for Progress. Our analysis in Brazil concentrated on what was developing among political parties, what was the military doing, how were the peasant leagues faring in the poor northeast. Extensive reporting over the years following World War II analyzed the political currents throughout Brazil.

Bob Sayre came to the conclusion that Brazil was more stable than that, and our preoccupation with developments throughout the country was overdrawn. Brazil no longer required that microscopic attention to internal politics. Our resources ought to be doing more critical work. Our interest was in getting Brazil to recognize its regional and indeed a worldwide leadership potential. We ought to be encouraging that.

He reclassified a position in the political section to carry out a dialogue with the Brazilians on international issues. There was some initial resistance on our staff to the change, but the ambassador won out. The Brazilians, when the initial fellow came down to take over the job, were skeptical that there was anything to talk about. In a short time, they found the discussions beneficial to us all. Over the years the redirection of that position was a decision that paid dividends. It was an important part of the successful effort to get the Brazilians to talk with us about larger problems that were of mutual concern.

Q: The Reagan Administration was elected in November 1980 and Tony Motley was named as ambassador. He had been born in Brazil of American parents?

HIGH: Of an American father who had been in the military or business there and a Brazilian mother. His mother lived in Rio while he was ambassador.

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Q: How did this hit the embassy when you heard about this? I know there was a lot of talk in the United States by those who were interested in political affairs.

HIGH: My recollection is that it didn't have much of an impact at all on us in the embassy. Tony Motley had made a private visit to Brazil beforehand and had called on the Air Force Attach#. He had been in the US Air Force. I guess as a candidate for the job he was looking around to see what the place looked like.

Everybody was anticipating that there would be a change but had no idea what direction it would take. There was the sense that more often than not the ambassador had been a political appointee rather than a career person, or at least there was a fair chance it would be a political appointment. People by in large took it in stride and were just curious to see what the new person was going to be like.

The Brazilians, of course, were also curious. Here was this fellow who previously had lived among them and gone to school in Rio. What did he portend? There was an initial issue that Tony had to renounce his Brazilian citizenship to become the American ambassador. He was a dual national at the time of his appointment. So he had to specifically take that step and then the Brazilian government had to act on it. It took them a while to put the final crossed t's and dotted i's to achieve that.

Q: How did he arrive and how did he operate?

HIGH: Tony Motley was a very open person. He was very quick to relate to people, very keen to get their personal input into what he wanted to do. He asked for advice, sought out people. At times he walked the halls of his embassy, stopping in to see people, sometimes with a purpose, sometimes to chat. He was very concerned with people's morale and how they were getting on. His modus operandi was "I can't perform effectively unless I have good support and advice from my people." He didn't always do what he heard from us. In

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fact, there were a number of times when he didn't do what his staff recommended. Often as not, he was right and his staff was wrong.

I thought he was really quite tolerant of all of us. I'm not quite saying that right. Let me give you an example. When he had been there only for a couple weeks and I was still very fresh as his DCM, we were trying to get the Brazilians to agree to an appointment for an official visitor who was coming down shortly. I don't recall, but the appointment was probably with the foreign minister. The Brazilians were dragging their feet on giving us any kind of an answer. This led to pressure from Washington asking what was going on and why couldn't we get the appointment. I learned about the acceptance of the request late one afternoon. In my role as his deputy, I should have picked up that telephone and called Tony, who was at home, to let him know. While that information was very important to us, other matters distracted my attention and I didn't call.

Lo and behold, that night we were both with our wives at the National Theater in Brasilia talking to another Brazilian official between acts. The Brazilian remarked about the acceptance of the proposed visit. Tony looked at me and said, "Oh, you knew this?" And I had to admit that I had been made aware of it about four hours earlier and had not gotten the word to him. I thought he took that kind of nicely.

No one in our business likes to be caught by surprise, and this was a surprise, even if a nice one. Tony could have told me about it then or the next day. A look was enough to say, "You left me high and dry, fellow." In the service, one generally remembers subtleties.

People working for Tony Motley felt relaxed with him, but not to the tune of being complacent. You felt part of his team; you depended on him, and he on you. You wanted to do well by him and you wanted him to do well. He was very concerned about people and his staff. He went around and visited the consulates, made himself known there. Bob Sayre did, too. Both were very good about getting out to the consulates and had twice a

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year, mission meetings that included the principal officers. So our officers were as drawn in by Sayre as they were by Motley through visits and meetings.

Motley went very quickly about developing personal relationships with the top military people and the top people in government. I guess there is a mixed picture there, particularly in the contrast you are suggesting with your question in terms of Sayre and Motley. Bob Sayre was much more traditional, if you want to use that term, in developing his relationships at the presidency and the foreign and other ministries. It was professional-to-professional.

When a border war nearly broke out between Ecuador and Peru, it was the United States, Chile and Brazil who were the guarantor powers. This all came in about 1981. Brazil played the central role in pulling the two warring countries apart. Joao Clemente Baena Soares, the deputy Brazilian foreign minister, who now heads the Organization of American States, was the coordinator. Bob Sayre worked very closely with him and with the Department in Washington. Baena was very professional. There were long hours of meetings between Sayre and Baena and reports of their exchanges in the long-distance negotiations. After agreements were reached and the fighting stopped, Bob Sayre gave a dinner for Baena to recognize his work in keeping the peace. Sayre gave Baena a fancy telephone with a plaque commemorating long-distance peacekeeping. In his remarks, Sayre observed that Baena often had a telephone at each ear as he talked to both parties. So, Sayre had very much of a highly polished, professional relationship with the foreign ministry leadership and with the economics ministry as well. He had strong interests and background in economics and the issues dealt with were important.

Tony Motley came in as the new boy on the block. Every now and then he would do something that really was spontaneous and not necessarily diplomatic. He won very close relationships at the Foreign Ministry, as well, and certainly in other ministries of the government while I was there, based on his warm personality, hard work, and command

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of the language. He simply had to start running from a different vantage point because he wasn't a diplomat.

A final point I would make is that some political appointees are able to relate quickly and well to the Foreign Service as professionals, because they understand that we are there to serve and support them. Tony Motley was part of that school. Other political appointees are by nature suspicious and mistrustful of the Foreign Service for a variety of reasons. Maybe it is because we career officers serve both political parties, whichever is in office, or because of their lack, in some cases, of experience in diplomacy, or because of insecurity that they won't measure up. Mistrust by the political appointees can breed mistrust from the Foreign Service side, and when it does, it is as unfortunate as it is counterproductive. Diplomats and politicians in those circumstances will never be the sum of our parts.

Q: Was there any particular change in American policy towards Brazil with the new administration?

HIGH: Relations with Brazil during the latter years of the Carter administration were substantially improved. For example, the embassy sought to have assigned to the mission an American brigadier general to head the defense attach#s office. The objective was to reestablish the warmth of professional relations with the Brazilian military that had existed in earlier years. The Brazilians were unhappy that the defense attach# office was headed at the colonel rank. The Brazilians really wanted an Army man and a general officer.

That change was secured, but the first incumbent was an admiral. Later, he was succeeded by a general with impressive credentials and the language capability to further the dialogue between the services.

The Congressional visits continued. Economic nationalism and restraints placed on some of the U.S. companies in Brazil were issues beginning to enter the bilateral discussion.

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Motley had to deal with some of those issues in his period of time in Brasilia. I was there for roughly the first year of his ambassadorship.

One interesting event during that period was the visit to Brasilia of Henry Kissinger. The U.S.-trained president of the University of Brasilia had a program to invite prominent foreigners to the campus to speak. Kissinger came to Brazil to speak there and at several events in Sao Paulo and perhaps Rio.

I accompanied Kissinger to his talk at the university in Brasilia. It went well for awhile, and then there were loud noises outside. It proved to be a demonstration by students against his visit. A large number of students participated, and one of their tactics was to bang on the air-conditioning vents that were decorative and went up the outside wall of the auditorium. Kissinger handled the interruption with aplomb, but the noise became so loud that he had to draw his remarks to a close.

Police reinforcements arrived, but the crowd kept Kissinger and his party in the auditorium building. We waited some time in an office, hoping the protesters would leave. They didn't.

Finally, Kissinger was placed in a police carryall parked in an inside passageway. He was to be driven out through the crowd. The carryall was filled with police and Kissinger sat in the back seat. At the last minute I jumped in the front seat on a policeman's lap. I didn't think it was such a hot idea for me to stay behind should anything happen to Kissinger in the vehicle. We zoomed out of the passageway. The students shouted, but didn't throw anything. And Kissinger was deposited at his luncheon site on time.

The anger of the students apparently was as much against the university administration run by a military appointee, as it was against anything Kissinger or the United States represented. The students were also annoyed that they were excluded from the conference hall and couldn't participate. The audience was made up of prominent figures at the university and in the government.

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Several years later, Kissinger's security guard assured me that he was not worried that anything untoward would happen to the former secretary at the demonstration. I'm not sure my adrenalin told me the same thing at the time.

Q: Was the Falklands crisis at that time or did that come after your time?

HIGH: Yes, it took place while I was there. We had some communications from the Department and we were reporting positions taken by Brazil. But Brazil didn't become a large factor in the conflict. There was a British bomber which landed in Rio and the pilots were interned. Surely the British wanted Brazil to remain on the sidelines and provide moderating counsel to the Argentines. That was my perspective from Brasilia.

One more aspect of my assignment to Brazil related to my wife. Beth had the customary functions of being supportive of the ambassador and his wife and of the wives and staff of the embassy. We had a heavy social life.

Beth's greatest satisfaction came from working first as a volunteer occupational therapist and then as a paid staff member at the Sarah Kubitschek Rehabilitation Hospital in Brasilia. The hospital was new and had been founded by Dr. Campos de Paz, a leader in rehabilitation medicine in Brazil. Beth thoroughly enjoyed working with the doctors and other professionals at the hospital. The outreach this provided us among working Brazilians was also rewarding personally. Beth made a lot of friends for us and won the respect of her professional colleagues.

At this time the State Department was becoming very aware of the frustrations of Foreign Service spouses who wanted to work and pursue professional activity at overseas posts. The United States was mostly indifferent to the working spouses of foreign diplomats assigned to Washington. However, foreign countries generally had laws or policies prohibiting or severely limiting such opportunities for us. Because of this situation, the

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State Department began to negotiate reciprocal agreements with foreign governments to enable spouses of diplomats to work.

In Brazil, we decided to use Beth's situation as a trial case. Not long after she began her volunteer work in Brasilia, she was offered employment by the rehabilitation hospital. We sought permission for this from the Brazilian government, but there was resistance from the labor and foreign ministries. We worked on this for over two years. Finally, when it got down to the point of our willingness to have Beth sign a waiver of her diplomatic immunity insofar as her work was concerned, Beth signed and the Brazilians granted the desired work permit.

The last five months we were in Brazil, Beth was paid a salary for her work at the hospital. We hoped that would set a precedent for other spouses in the embassy. I'm not sure that hope became a reality after we left. But the wives of other nations' diplomats were watching Beth's progress closely.

Q: Well then, let's move to Mexico. How did you luck out and get this Mexican appointment?

HIGH: I don't know whether it was a luck out or not. When I was in the Inspection Corps there was a senior inspector with us who in 1978 was offered assignment to Mexico City as Deputy Chief of Mission. At the time the ambassador to Mexico was former governor of Wisconsin Patrick Lucey.

Q: His wife was considered to be hell on wheels.

HIGH: I don't know about the wife, but another complication was that Lucey had brought to Mexico City with him a young staffer who had been in charge of the governor's office in Madison. This fellow became his right arm while he was ambassador to Mexico, as well. The question for anybody considering going there as DCM was: what would be the relationship between the DCM, the ambassador, and the very special, special assistant.

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You know, anybody in his right mind would lust for the job of DCM in Mexico City. The senior inspector offered the job was a very sharp Foreign Service officer, but he did not lust. In fact, he was quite concerned about what he could accomplish when there obviously was this right arm special assistant to complicate front office relationships, somebody who already had a deep relationship with the ambassador and who might be turned to for advice more often than the DCM. Can a DCM operate effectively in that kind of environment? His conclusion was negative, and he turned down the assignment. At the time, I thought he was mad.

I came up to Washington for an interview with Ambassador John Gavin in the spring of 1982. I talked with various people about the embassy. I had a pretty good conversation with Gavin, talking a lot about management. I saw the DCM position in Mexico as having some substantive responsibility, particularly as an alter ego to the ambassador. But in a big mission like Mexico City, I saw the DCM management role as being his central focus.

Gavin had gone to Mexico City about a year earlier. The DCM, John Ferch, had been at post for four years (he had survived the Lucey period), and had remained on for Gavin's first year there. He was very well established before John Gavin arrived.

I would be arriving brand new but enthusiastic because I had always wanted a Mexico assignment. I also sensed that there was a need for stronger management in the embassy and this would give special purpose to the posting.

But there wasn't just one very special assistant, there were two, whom I later discovered from a staffer in the embassy were referred to by many as the "temple dogs." One was an able, ambitious young Foreign Service officer who had planned to leave the service but had impressed Gavin. Gavin induced him to go to Mexico City as his special assistant. He had to complete his resignation from the service before going to post as a political appointee.

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The other special assistant, a young Hispanic American out of Colorado Republican politics, had been a staffer on the Department's transition team following the election. His reward was to go to Mexico City in this position. One of the special assistants dealt with the ambassador's ties with relations with agencies in Washington, the ambassador's program and substantive matters the ambassador wanted to pursue. The other had rather ambiguous duties, one of which was to keep track of the narcotics program and contacts with the U.S. Justice Department.

I thought that I could make a contribution to the management of the mission and I always wanted to serve there. Here was the opportunity; why turn it down? This was an ambassador who looked like he needed support, particularly in management, and I had something to offer.

Gavin had had his own frustrations with the Department in his appointment to Mexico. The American Foreign Service Association, which in those days rarely commented on ambassadorial nominations, raised with Congress questions about Gavin's credentials for this post. It questioned his background (in Hollywood) and his ability to handle this appointment. Gavin felt that was particularly gratuitous. He had a Mexican mother and had lived in Mexico for part of his life. He spoke Spanish fluently. He had done business in Mexico. He had gone to private schools in California with Mexicans who had become very prominent in their country. AFSA's opposition to the nomination did not start our his relationship with the Foreign Service on a positive note. Gavin seemed mistrustful of the service, though I did not feel that personally.

I arrived in Mexico City in September 1982 as DCM. There was agreement that I would play a major role in management of the staff and posts. I became a buffer between the ambassador and the other sections of the embassy that were not in his favor, a natural role for the DCM to play in those circumstances.

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The ambassador certainly had frustrations from time to time with different elements of the embassy. I sought to encourage the sections to meet the ambassador's expectations, particularly when they were justified. When that wasn't the case, I tried to find a compromise and went back to the ambassador to talk about it.

It was a very challenging and interesting time in Mexico. The economy hit bottom with the financial crisis of the summer and fall of 1982. The Mexican peso was devalued several times during the year, and this was Jose Lopez Portillo's last of six years as president. Lopez Portillo just had nationalized the banking system to court favor with nationalists. The U.S. wisely, even in these circumstances, provided loan guarantees and supported loans from foreign governments and international institutions to support the peso. (We had hope and assurances of more responsible leadership and policies when the new government would come into power in December.)

John Gavin was a major supporter of those policy decisions. It was rather remarkable that we showed such good sense, particularly when Lopez Portillo was not well liked or respected in Washington. The U.S. government made its decisions looking at the larger picture of Mexican stability and the impact a collapse would have on the country and on us.

As Mexico enjoyed the oil boom of the 1970s, it got deeper and deeper into difficulty with profligate use of those profits and the borrowing oil money permitted. In 1982 with large service payments on its debt, Mexico faced the results of a steep decline in the world price for petroleum. It faced insolvency and the end of its "economic miracle."

Gavin and the U.S. government recognized that it didn't make sense to see Mexico economically prostrate. Gavin worked well with Treasury and the Federal Reserve in Washington and with the Mexican government to help keep Mexico afloat. I'm sure the principal negotiations and the deals were the responsibility of Treasury and the Federal

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Reserve, and apparently some other agencies brought into the act, but John Gavin's positive influence with the White House was important to security the settlement.

John Gavin was certainly very bright and knowledgeable about Mexico, but he also had a few hangups. He was not about to sit quietly by while Mexican leaders or politicians played the “game” of U.S. bashing, blaming us for everything that was going wrong in Mexico. He refused to turn the other cheek. He said we had been doing that for decades and it hadn't done any good. So he was going to speak up. And he did, much to the annoyance of many Mexicans, and the pleasure of a few.

He regarded his ambassadorship as the central position to determine and coordinate U.S. policy toward Mexico. In general terms, it had the blessing of President Reagan, with whom he had a special relationship from Hollywood days and Republican politics. He also had a special relationship with Bill Clark, the head of the national security council at the time. They played football together in prep school, as I understood it. He made heavy use of the phone to major figures at the State Department and the other agencies, as well. (To a degree, that would be true for any ambassador in Mexico City, but I doubt that his predecessors had such an entree or used these connections nearly as much. He really played the telephone as a symphony director would use his baton.)

U.S. policy toward Mexico was coordinated out of the ambassador's office in Mexico City. It wasn't coordinated by the State Department, which was more often concerned with crises elsewhere and which didn't have or use a comparable opening to front offices throughout Washington. The White House didn't have the capability or the day-to-day interest in it, either. But because of Gavin's special relationships in the White House and being able to turn to key officials and use his own influence to get their support, he could, if he had to, brow beat or threaten departments and agencies to get his way. He had control of the communications and had the interest and desire to use it. It took a lot of work on his part, a lot of support from one of his special assistants. They worked hard.

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Gavin was unhappy whenever he discovered that somebody in Washington had spoken out on Mexico without Gavin being aware before hand. He wanted to be the spokesperson whenever possible, or at least to orchestrate an announcement. He wanted to inform Mexican principals the same time statements were released or made in Washington. He also wanted to be sure that what was said was consistent with what he was saying and doing, a natural preoccupation of any ambassador. Most agencies learned that, both directly in Washington and through their representatives in the embassy, and to a remarkable extent the diverse agencies in Washington fell into line.

The only place where there was occasional frustration was the Treasury Department which necessarily prided itself in the privacy of its communications on very sensitive matters. It maintained the integrity of its own communications. Even then, the ambassador's strong influence was generally felt and heeded.

That is the way the embassy functioned. Gavin took great pride in claiming to know everything that went on under the roof of the embassy. That wasn't always the case if only because of the enormous size of the embassy. But by force of personality, style and energy he exercised an impressive amount of influence over his staff and with Washington. It wasn't always easy to live with, either in Mexico City or Washington. But professionally we owed him our support and he received it.

Q: What were you doing? Was he letting you manage?

HIGH: It was more of a matter of letting me try to put out fires and there were fires to put out. And to try to give support and encouragement both to the ambassador and to the staff. When Gavin became mistrustful of what he perceived a section or agency was doing, I would go over and talk to the section leader to determine what was happening, to try to correct misperceptions, and at least to pass on the ambassador's concerns. I believe that narrowed the range of misperceptions and bad feelings.

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Most sections, for example the political and economic sections, did their work as they perceived they had to. I didn't sense they shaded their reporting in any way. Moreover, the front office was generally consumed with coordinating policy with Washington agencies, the time it could devote to micro manage did have its limits.

But if there was a misunderstanding with the ambassador, it tended to become personal and a matter of loyalty and trust. The ambassador and his special assistants were inclined to marginalize the misbehaving party. His special assistants were very astute in playing one organization off against another and bringing dirty tales back to the ambassador of this not being done right or that being an unforgivable mistake.

I remember the case of one of our section leaders, an experienced officer... . We went to lunch with some people from the American Chamber of Commerce and at one point the embassy officer was perhaps a little bit more candid than judicious in saying what it was like to work for John Gavin. I think he was saying it a little bit tongue in cheek, trying to get a smile. One of the special assistants brought back the account to the ambassador, describing the comment as an indication of disrespect and disloyalty. That blew the incident well out of proportion. It took some explaining and a certain amount of abject apology by the officer to begin to get back into the good graces of the ambassador so that he could return to his work.

The ambassador and his assistants were often critical of the administrative support he received. It seemed that nothing was done right. Fault was almost sought after. Eventually that took its toll and necessitated an early transfer of a key officer.

Another of my tasks was to coordinate the operations of the constituent posts. The consular work of those posts was coordinated by the consul general in Mexico City. The posts we supervised were large consulates general in Monterrey, Guadalajara, Ciudad Juarez, and Tijuana, consulates in Hermosillo, Matamoros, Nuevo Laredo, Mazatlan, and

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Merida, and consular agents in Acapulco and Oaxaca. You can see it was an enormous mission.

During my period in Mexico, I visited all of the consulates and consulates general and the agent in Acapulco. Later, from the Mexican affairs office, I visited Oaxaca. Those were familiarization visits. I also wanted to hold at least yearly mission meetings in Mexico City, with the principal officers from the posts and the office and agency heads in Mexico City. This needed to include the ambassador, both so that he could exercise his leadership of the mission and so that he and the country team could learn from the constituent posts. That meeting never took place. The ambassador was out of Mexico City often, frequently visiting the United States to hold meetings or give speeches. We could not get a firm commitment of his time, and without the ambassador's presence unfortunate messages would be sent to the staff.

One incident during those consulate visits is worth recounting. In early 1983, I visited our small consulate at Hermosillo in northern Mexico. The program worked out by the consul was similar to my visits to other posts. We paid calls on government and community leaders, political party representatives, business leaders. In Hermosillo, we met with the governor and some of his principal deputies. These often were the leaders of the governing PRI party, and I was interested in their views. One evening the consul also arranged a dinner with a few of the leaders of the main opposition party — the Party of National Action (PAN), and the city's archbishop.

The conversation at dinner that night was similar to the conversations I had had earlier with the government and PRI leaders. The PAN representatives briefly stated that they were hopeful with honest elections of winning the gubernatorial contest in Chihuahua state. The party leader stated his plan to walk throughout the state to carry his message to the voters. But by far the main subject of discussion was U.S. policy toward Mexico and suggestions of how the United States could be more helpful to Mexico in these difficult times. The archbishop didn't have much to contribute, as I recall.

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Imagine our surprise several days later when the Hermosillo press reported that a high American government official had held a conspiratorial meeting at the American consul's residence with the political opposition and the archbishop, another case of American interference in Mexican internal politics.

Subsequently, the press report sparked further imaginative reporting of the dinner and this appeared throughout Mexico, enlivened by condemnatory statements from the PRI national leadership. We were not happy, and this cheap political gimmick to embarrass us and the PAN encouraged Ambassador Gavin to initiate his own public relations campaign to clarify the record and condemn cheap politics in statements to the press and government and PRI party leaders. (As a matter of fact, he visited Hermosillo the next year at the time of the elections and took pains to meet with opposition and church officials.)

I discovered in the process that there was a sizeable volume of Mexican literature allegedly exposing decades of American intervention in the north of Mexico. Names, real or imagined, are named, the Central Intelligence Agency is a particular target of disclosure, the literature was extensive as well as misintended. The thesis was that the United States has long had ambitions to takeover Mexico's northern states, and these conspiratorial activities with the opposition and the Church were part of that campaign.

The involvement of the archbishop in the dinner was well intentioned, to get the Church's perspective of the society, but probably unfortunate. The difficulty was that Church-State relations in Mexico have always been very sensitive, wars have been fought over the role and power of the Church, and the modern Mexican government has been very secular.

The ambassador had another problem. The country director in the State Department, who held that position for several years, had some of his own ideas of what needed to be done in Mexico and how to go about doing them. He was interviewed by Mexican journalists stationed in Washington, and quoted from time to time in the Mexican press. Too often, the Ambassador, not aware of those interviews beforehand, was not pleased by what he read

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in the press. At one point the ambassador simply called the Department and demanded the removal of the country director. That matter went back and forth for a few days and then the director moved on. (Fortunately, his career flourished in other areas.) But after that transfer, it became difficult to attract a replacement office director. It was filled on an interim basis for some time.

This was back in the spring of 1983. We were planning the annual meeting between the country presidents. At one point Gavin came into my office and said something like, "George, I know you have only been here nine or ten months, but would you consider going back to Washington and heading the Mexican office?"

I thought about it for a few days. What it came down to was a feeling that there were very severe limitations on what a DCM could do in Mexico City; perhaps more could be accomplished with the embassy at a distance. Gavin certainly needed support from the Department, the bureau needed support with him, and I knew him. We had a fairly good personal relationship, I think.

My wife had found it difficult to make the transition from Brasilia, where she loved it and found satisfying professional work, to Mexico City where she was still engaged in switching her Portuguese to Spanish and hadn't yet developed enough contacts to get into professional circles in Mexico City — those contacts take time abroad. Moreover, she prospered in her professional life in Washington.

By that time Tony Motley had been appointed assistant secretary for ARA to replace Tom Enders. And with all those things put together, I said, "Sure."

We came back to Washington in July 1983. I was DCM for about ten months. At the end of my time in Mexico City, I was in charge of the embassy team that was working with the White House in setting that up in Mexico. In Washington, I worked on the sending end of the visit, particularly the preparation of papers for the meeting.

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Q: Okay, you returned to Washington where you served as Country Director from 1983-85. How did you find ARA at that time? This was still high Reagan and ARA was still a bit of a playpen of Jesse Helms and the right wing, at least that was sort of the impression one had, or had that begun to change?

HIGH: I am not sure it was. It seemed to me that that came more into being with Elliott Abrams as the assistant secretary. I came into ARA just as Tom Eiders was leaving and my understanding of Tom's departure was that he had stepped on toes in the White House and had been a little bit too outspoken as far as people in the White House were concerned.

He was replaced with Tony Motley, who had been my boss in Brasilia. Tony was very solid, composed, and collected. He was very much of a person's person. He walked through the Bureau. When he had time, he had lunch downstairs in the main cafeteria; that's pretty rare for an assistant secretary.

In terms of your question, he wasn't really ideological although he was a good Republican. He wasn't, at least in 1983, hung up over Jesse Helms and the right wing. I'm sure he had difficulty with them as most people did with foreign policy, whether Democrat or Republican. My perspective from Mexican affairs may have been skewed. There was discussion of Central America in weekly bureau staff meetings that Motley led, but important policy matters on that region were reserved to front office discussion.

Bureau meeting were not wrapped up in ideology. Central America was tangential for most of our work on Mexico except when we were preparing for Presidential or Secretarial meetings with counterparts. Then, talking points on unhappiness with Mexico's policy were generally drafted by the Central America office, and if and how those points were used was generally held to the meeting room. We didn't get much feedback.

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Now it is true that the principal quandary on Tony Motley's plate was Central America, and that had all kinds of White House and Congressional aspects to it. But that was rather distant from me in Mexican Affairs.

Q: When you came there what did you see as your main task?

HIGH: My main task was trying to keep John Gavin in Mexico City well supported and informed, with a good dialogue between him and the bureau leadership, as needed. The ARA leadership was by in large up to its neck in Central America. John Gavin wanted to be the one who was running Mexican affairs, and the ARA front office was so taken up with its responsibilities in Central America that, except for an occasional need for a Presidential or Secretarial meeting with the Mexicans or a particular substantive problem that demanded the time, they were basically content to have Gavin do his thing. ARA wanted to know what he was doing as best we could provide it.

My main role was also to be supportive of Tony Motley in the ARA front office, and if possible to avoid the kind of confrontations that had developed between the embassy and our office in the past. That put a crimp on the initiatives the desk might take, but simply helping to orchestrate action, to keep the parties informed and to make suggestions when possible was a necessary role. Gavin wanted to be the person who spoke out. Gavin wanted to be the one taking the initiatives and he didn't like the idea of somebody in Washington potentially undercutting him or competing with him. One of my aims was to restore and keep a constructive relationship between the bureau and the embassy. It certainly wasn't the kind of role that leads to grand initiatives.

Q: How did you do it? Were you on the phone daily with Gavin?

HIGH: Not daily, but often; not so much with Gavin as with his chief special assistant, the section chiefs, and, after his arrival, with the new DCM; certainly with Gavin from time to time. If it was sensitive, a classified matter, I was on the scrambler phone, particularly so

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my first five or six months while I was getting a feel for doing business this way. The longer I was in the job the more I felt that there was some leeway in what could be done without consultation and what needed coordination with the embassy.

In that first year back in Washington when we were working on major position papers for the Secretary, I used the scrambler phone to go over critical passages if I had any doubts. If I had doubts about where Mexico City stood, where Gavin stood, I would use the scrambler phone.

Now, at that time the scrambler phone was still in somewhat of a primitive state; there were lots of times that you would speak at your end and not be heard at the other and vice versus. After about six months of fiddling around with that I began to conclude that this procedure was ridiculous, and so I used it less and less.

Q: I would think, albeit the ambassador is an important player, that Mexico, like Canada, has so many ties with the United States that in many ways Washington is much more important because of Congress and all the various departments and all that. How did you work in this atmosphere, this very complicated relationship?

HIGH: Well, as I think we suggested in our earlier conversation, Gavin managed a lot of what different agencies did through the agency representatives on his embassy staff. They were his messengers. When he wanted something out of Treasury, or he was unhappy with something that went on in Commerce, he used his financial attach# or his commercial counselor to straighten that out. He was not above saying, "I will talk to Dick Clark over at the NSC," or, heavens, go higher, if your agency was not playing the ball game the way he wanted it.

He came back to Washington often enough and certainly in those visits spent most of his time not in the State Department but visiting the Federal Reserve, Treasury and other

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agencies. Also, much of that influence and control really came down to Gavin's front office activity in Mexico City and the telephone.

You know, the point you make about complexity is a very valid one in our relationships with Canada and Mexico. I am sure that the person who has been office director of Mexican affairs the last 20 or 30 years has usually experienced frustrations over coordinating overall U.S. policy. How could it be otherwise when Commerce feels perfectly happy to have its direct contacts with the Commerce Secretary in Mexico City and does it on its own. That applied to other agencies, as well.

I've heard Mexican officials in their embassy in Washington make similar remarks about their difficulties to lead their government agencies in Mexico City, even with many of their agencies and programs represented on the staff of the embassy. There probably is a parallel, but during my time on Mexican affairs, my sense was that the Mexican Foreign Secretariat usually pulled more weight in inter-agency relations in Mexico City than did the State Department in Washington. For our side, I would guess that on the scale of one to ten, Gavin was pretty close to ten, far closer than many of his predecessors or successors, in bringing all our singers around to his score of music.

Q: I imagine those dealing with Mexican Affairs realized that Gavin had a pretty big stick and could get things done and also had a lot of clout with the White House. Could you take the equivalent of a little stick and go over to Agriculture or Commerce and say, "Look, let's work this out rather than get the ambassador in on this?"

HIGH: Oh, you could use that image, sure, to a degree. I don't know that I would call it a little stick, it was more simply talking this out and laying it on the line. Most people learned what the ball game was very quickly.

Sometimes it didn't work. Toward the end of my period there really was a major difference between the Secretary of State and Gavin over how the drug enforcement agency was handling a particular matter. That was during the time of kidnappings of several American

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visitors and the kidnap/death of a DEA agent at the hands of drug traffickers. There was a lot of pressure on everybody. We in the State Department felt that Gavin, being on the scene and close to his DEA chief in Mexico City, was in a better position than we were in Washington to influence what was happening on that issue. Our efforts to rectify the matter in Washington would be tied up with complex inter-agency procedures that could frustrate the action we felt needed. Evidently the ambassador was reluctant to take the lead in that situation. So there was some friction. That was one time I couldn't help close the gap.

Once a year there would be a meeting of the U.S.-Mexico Bilateral Commission, which was the two Secretaries of State, to go over major matters of concern to both governments. Included in commission meetings would be such other cabinet and sub-cabinet members as would join them to discuss bilateral issues with their counterparts. It was a major effort by both governments to coordinate and advance the agendas of both countries. Because of the importance of a number of finance and trade issues and our desire to build bridges with de la Madrid government, a growing number of participants began to join those meetings.

Each year there was also a meeting of the two presidents, sometimes coinciding with the Binational Commission meeting. If the Binational Commission meetings pressed both sides to develop concrete agendas and actions that could be agreed upon, you can imagine the higher level of pressure to assure agreement on still more important matters when the presidents were in the picture.

These meetings improved in scope and breadth of participation during my years in Mexican affairs. This was interesting and positive because bilateral relations were strained during Lopez Portillo's presidency. These binational meetings were not functioning all that well at that time. But under de la Madrid and Reagan they began to prosper and both Mexico and the U.S. gave more substance and leadership to them.

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My deputy for most of my time in the office was Jim Landberg. He had a beautiful way of drafting, of putting together explanations of all sorts of esoteric matters in position papers that went to Secretary Shultz. You know, when the Secretary met with European leaders or Asian leaders, this occurred so often that he was well accustomed to the agenda items they had worked on for years. But when it came to the once or twice yearly meetings he had with the Mexicans, the long list of agenda items were on subjects he was not that familiar with. All the issues were very substantive and very important to Mexico. Most of them, at least initially, were brand new to the Secretary of State. His staff would ask, "Does he really have to touch on this subject?," or "Does he really have to deal with this environmental issue that seems rather distant?," or "Does he really have to talk about such and such?"

The background papers really became quite a stack. But Jim Landberg's drafts put difficult issues into clear, concise English and won him acclaim from the Secretary's staff, which quickly discovered that the Secretary did need to be conversant on the distinctive matters relevant to our relations with Mexico. By the time that we were into my second year in the office, the Secretary caught on to a lot of those issues and those talks became almost...

Q: You are talking about George Shultz.

HIGH: Yes, George Shultz. ...so it wasn't quite the strange language that it started out being for him. That was one of our successes in the bureau, of drawing him into those meetings more effectively. And it was important to the bilateral relationships because the Secretary's demonstration of knowledge and enthusiastic participation in the dialogue were critical to our ability to convince the Mexicans of our attention and concern.

I have forgotten now whether in our previous session we talked about the annual Congressional visit.

Q: Why don't you tell us about it.

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HIGH: There was a long-standing practice that our Congress and the Mexican Congress met once a year to discuss matters of mutual concern. On the Mexican side the Foreign Secretariat briefed their delegation. Besides, their Congressmen came to the meetings with intimate knowledge of and interest in the issues, anyway. They were well prepared on the range of issues that were vital to Mexico.

The sessions alternated year to year between the two countries. In the United States, the meeting would last half a day or the better part of a day. It was likely to be longer in Mexico. The United States delegation was not as steeped in the issues, often not as interested in the issues as their counterparts, but its members were still willing to participate.

The U.S. delegation one of my years was headed by Phil Graham of Texas. He lived next door to Mexico and at least had ideas, even prejudices on a number of the issues. Another year the delegation was headed by Nancy Kassebaum of Kansas. She was fabulous, showing interest and familiarity with many of the issues, even if she were further from the border. And she persuaded a fair number of senators and congressmen to participate with her. Her leadership was exceptional.

As the date of the meeting approached, our office would go over to the Capitol and spend several hours briefing mainly staffers and perhaps a Congressman or two, in an attempt to bring them up to speed. The U.S. representatives who participated in the meetings were usually ill-informed on the range of issues to be discussed and not very interested. They probably had more pressing things on their minds.

The discussions at the meetings, I felt, were a mixed blessing. The dialogue, as I've suggested, was uneven. Occasionally a U.S. senator or congressman had a favorite hobby horse, such as drugs or trade or immigration. Their comments could easily be outspoken and undiplomatic. The benefit at times was that the Mexicans heard

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genuine concerns unembellished with diplomatic niceties. Of course, at other times, the expressions could antagonize and be counter-productive.

Still, Congressmen could at times say things diplomats shunned, and we were all better off with the understanding that produced. I would have liked to see more genuine camaraderie carried on outside the meetings, but in Washington, after the morning meeting and lunch at the Capitol, the Americans went home and the Mexicans became simple tourists.

Q: Can we talk about immigration? This is one of the major issues. During this period, 1983- 85, what were the main issues of immigration?

HIGH: The illegal immigrants probably featured largely in that. This was a period when Diego Asencio was the Assistant Secretary for Consular Affairs in the State Department. He has always had a particular shine for and interest in Mexico. He came to Mexico at least once, maybe twice, while I was there to meet with his Mexican counterparts to talk about immigration.

You see, there was a lot going on in Congress, and it eventually led up to the Simpson-Rodino bill which sought to legalize a large number of Mexicans who were illegally in the country and sought to sanction American employers who knowingly hired illegal immigrants. This legislation was very fiercely debated in 1982-85 and finally passed as the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986. Diego explained to the Mexicans what was going on in Congress and heard out their concerns.

In this period, Al Nelson was the commissioner of the Immigration and Naturalization Service. He also visited Mexico a couple of times. These visits encouraged an ongoing dialogue with Mexican officials on immigration. The Mexicans were greatly concerned that the U.S. might be about to close the doors to worker immigrants, particularly at a time when the Mexican economy was flat and there was very high inflation and unemployment. Aside from the many workers losing jobs and others in tight circumstances, around

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900,000 to a million workers were coming into the Mexican work force every year. There were no jobs for many of them.

Q: Were you having problems with the Immigration Service in certain sectors, almost shutting down the border?

HIGH: Not really, as I recall. Certainly the flow of legal and illegal migration was rising. There was also a side matter when I was on the Mexican Desk. The Los Angeles Olympics were coming up. Some people in the law enforcement agencies and the press feared that terrorists might enter Mexico and cross the border to try to disrupt the Olympics. There were contacts between U.S. officials and Mexicans on the police side to try to look into that. It never developed into much of anything.

Q: How about the drug problem? This was particularly bad during this period, wasn't it?

HIGH: I followed Mexican affairs on drugs at a transitional period. During the seventies there had been increasing concerns in the United States over the growing drug traffic through Mexico and production of marijuana in Mexico. This produced significant agreements between U.S. and Mexican authorities. DEA had a large presence in Mexico. The narcotics office in the State Department had developed major control programs with the Mexicans. There were contracts with firms to maintain a helicopter and fixed wing aircraft fleet to conduct the crop eradication program. The pilots were Mexicans, though once trained they often left the program for better paid jobs with the airlines and other employers.

When I arrived in 1982, this cooperation was looked upon as a great success — a model. The statistics were encouraging. There were periodic meetings between officials of the Ministry of Justice in Mexico and our own DEA officials. I remember attending such a meeting in Acapulco, probably in late 1983. This was the great high point. It was perceived

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that our mutual efforts were becoming increasingly effective and we were working well together.

John Thomas, a very sharp political appointee, was the narcotics office director in the State Department (INM). He and his people came to question the validity of the statistics and the effectiveness of our mutual efforts, i.e., the model was called into question. I think DEA shared that assessment. But it was always a sensitive subject. How do you get the Mexicans' attention without offending them and continue to assure their cooperation? The need to challenge some of their statistics and conclusions became necessary.

There was a major bust of marijuana operations in Chihuahua. It was discovered that marijuana was being grown on a very large hacienda there and that operation had gone on for years. Enrique Camarena, a DEA agent operating out of an office in our consulate general in Guadalajara, evidently had played an important role in that bust. Shortly after the bust, he was kidnapped by the traffickers. Awhile later his body was discovered; he had been tortured before he was killed.

This led to an enormous investigation to determine what went wrong and who was responsible for Camarena's murder. It became clear that some Mexican authorities were involved with the traffickers and that they had let some of the kidnappers escape.

That episode certainly demonstrated weaknesses in the program, corruption in the Mexican authorities, and the magnitude of the task before us. DEA, of course, was determined to bring to justice the people who were responsible for Camarena's kidnap and murder, but they also didn't want to burn all bridges with Mexico.

Q: You were getting reports from the embassy, DEA and all, was the problem in Mexico ineffectiveness, corruption or what?

HIGH: From the U.S. side it was corruption. But there was also the technical difficulty of determining the accuracy of statistics and analyzing the effectiveness of our efforts. U.S.

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and Mexican views weren't always the same. Moreover, Mexico initially was very leery of using overflights or satellites to evaluate the effectiveness of aerial spraying. Just as we pointed to the problem caused by police corruption, the Mexicans would respond noting that hundreds of their police had been killed by traffickers and that the problem wasn't simply interdiction, but the demand for illegal drugs in the United States. We needed to clean up our act, too.

Q: Why were they leery?

HIGH: I think they were worried that these checks might show they were less effective than they were claiming to be. In some instances it had been shown that the defoliant sprays were watered down or sprayed purposely on the wrong fields so that crops survived.

There was a full review of programs in Mexico, because both State and DEA had been hurt by the discoveries. The narcotics bureau at State had its programs brought into questions, and DEA had lost an agent.

Q: At this time there had not been our counter kidnapping of people involved?

HIGH: That came much later.

Q: How about the environmental issue?

HIGH: This was a developing program and a major interest of John Gavin. As we looked around Mexico City there was abundant evidence of pollution — old buses and trucks spewing out black exhaust, old trees along La Reforma Avenue dying from the exhaust. There were fairly steady visits to Mexico City from people from the Environmental Protection Agency to talk to the Mexicans about their programs, offering advice and assistance. At one point they gave Gavin a hand held device that measured air pollution.

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One of his favorite activities for a time was watching that little device as he drove to and from work from his residence to see what it registered.

The science advisor in the embassy was a major architect and contributor to the dialogue. And it really took several forms. One was trying to develop cooperative programs with Mexican authorities. Particular attention was given to pollution at the border, also in Mexico City and some other parts of the country. I worked on environmental issues much more while I was in the Office of Mexican Affairs than while I was in Mexico City. The basic accord on environmental cooperation between the two countries — the Environmental Protection Agreement of 1983 — was signed during the two presidents' meeting at La Paz, Baja California.

Tijuana was a point of major concern. There had been a lot of spills from the Tijuana sewerage system that had either flowed across the border into the U.S. or out into the ocean, with currents then carrying it up toward Coronado and San Diego beaches. Duncan Hunter, the Congressman from that district, was often up in arms over this situation, and he lobbied effectively for federal government action.

Much of our activity was carried out through the U.S.-Mexico International Boundary and Water Commission (IBWC), a binational institution created in 1889. I worked very closely with Joe Friedkin, who had been the U.S. Commissioner of the IBWC since the Kennedy administration. He worked very effectively with his Mexican Commissioner counterpart, and Paul Storing represented him very well in my office in Washington.

We had long discussions on Tijuana because the Mexicans wanted to build a system to more effectively control and dissipate the sewage from Tijuana. They needed Inter-American Development Bank funding to construct the project. Long, long talks. What a lot of it came down to was a question of how effective the Mexican proposal was.

The Mexican representative to the Inter-American Development Bank at the time was a young, bright, articulate man who talked an awful good game of how much Mexico was

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intent on mastering this situation and could do it. At one point he told us quite directly that the Americans' difficulty was that they didn't think that Mexicans could rub their tummies and pat their heads at the same time. He assured us that they could and that they were serious about the project.

One of the difficulties that Joe Friedkin had in evaluating the proposal from an engineering standpoint, and he was an engineer, was that they were going to build a canal on hillsides to take the sewage south from Tijuana to a treatment plant above the beach. The canal was not to be dug out of the hillsides; it was to be constructed on fill on the hillsides. Without expensive reinforcement, the work was in danger of washing away by the force of gravity.

Well, in the end, there were a lot of meetings in Tijuana and Mexico City, and the Mexicans got their grant. Now, eight years later, there are still environmental problems there, still problems with the sewage flow from Tijuana. The canal has been reinforced and is working, but the volume of sewage has grown and there is need for yet another treatment plant.

There were criticisms from Mexico, as well, that air flows brought airborne pollutants from San Diego on south to Tijuana. That, too, was discussed, but the more serious problems came from Mexico and the screams from southern California were justified.

There were concerns at many of the other border cities. Sometimes it was the flow of raw sewage from Mexican cities and towns into the boundary river, sometimes it was complaints about air pollution from industry on the Mexican side. Sometimes it was Mexico complaining about air pollutants flowing south to Mexico.

One of the major difficulties in getting Mexico's attention to these problems was the cost of constructing facilities to resolve them. Another consideration was that while we might complain about pollution along the border, those kinds of problems existed all over Mexico. It was hard politically for the Mexicans to put scarce money to work at the border to benefit

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American neighbors when they faced similar needs for their countrymen all over their own the nation.

Q: Another problem which I think would be particularly sensitive with the Reagan Administration and Mexico, would be our stand on population, which under the Reagan Administration was opposed to most birth control. Population control wasn't very comfortable with this.

HIGH: When I was in Mexico the UN Conference on Population was held in Mexico City. It was tragic timing because for years the United States had vigorously encouraged Mexico to do something about its burgeoning population. Mexico went into family planning programs in a big way. There were some questions about program effectiveness and opposition from the Catholic Church, which in Mexico was not necessarily an impediment to government planning. Overall, Mexico's programs were very effective. Many private family planning groups, encouraged and supported by the government, existed throughout the country.

One of the most interesting days I spent in Mexico was during a visit to Ciudad Juarez. It was arranged by Sam Taylor, the very effective AID representative in the embassy. The leader of the effort in Ciudad Juarez was a woman named Mrs. Lopez de la Vega, as I recall. Her husband ran a major brewery there. She received assistance from international and national funds. She had a number of neighborhood health clinics, especially in the poor areas of Ciudad Juarez.

We drove around the city the whole day, from one clinic and neighborhood to another, even to the garbage dump, meeting local leaders and visiting clinics. Her organization provided health care to the people who were in need and who, by the way, also got a lecture and support in family planning. It was a system of local block captains who were in charge of family planning efforts and made sure women had pills and were taking them and were having health check ups and all. It was really very impressive.

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Because Mexico put so much effort into family planning and the demonstration of its widely recognized successes, Mexico City was selected for the site of this world conference on population. Unfortunately, the United States, which earlier had encouraged Mexico's impressive efforts, had changed political administration, and the Reagan administration was substantially less enthusiastic about this worldwide effort. We no longer gave Mexico the support and boost it so well deserved. We were spoilers, and unfortunately the conference was not the success its planners had hoped. The United States position at the conference was a disappointment and an embarrassment.

Q: Wasn't Maureen Reagan, the President's daughter, the head of our delegation?

HIGH: Yes, she was.

Q: Did you get involved in either briefing her or someone on your staff?

HIGH: No, at the time I was in Mexico as DCM. She simply arrived at the time of the conference. I don't recall a briefing. As DCM I was distant from conference activities.

Q: What about when you were up on the Desk, was this on your plate?

HIGH: This was something that AID worked on. That agency had an absolutely fabulous representative in Mexico, Sam Taylor. His two principal programs were family planning and developing links between American universities and other research and social agencies with similar institutions in Mexico that dealt with health and other social programs. Sam had contacts all over the Mexican government and all over the country. His area of responsibility sounded modest, but he was a ball of fire and energized a lot of cooperative efforts between American and Mexican counterparts.

Q: This was a time of great attention to Nicaragua and El Salvador. The Sandinistas were raising hell both in El Salvador and Nicaragua and we were raising hell and doing thing

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throughout all of Central America and the Cubans were doing things. How did this impact on your work?

HIGH: It was generally recognized in Washington that "Mexico was Mexico" and we weren't going to get much out of putting pressure on Mexico on the Central American issues. There certainly was unhappiness over at the White House. There certainly was some in the State Department, as well. The subject came up in presidential meetings between de la Madrid and Reagan.

Though Reagan had before this period of time talked about foot people coming across our southern borders in great droves if Central America couldn't be pacified, that argument never seemed to bother the Mexicans. The Mexicans' reply was that you Americans were the ones who were stirring it up. They professed to know Central Americas better than we did, and they could deal with the rebels in Central America far better than we could.

There was an office of the Salvadoran rebels in Mexico City. Of course, the Cubans were there, too. Whenever there was a high level U.S.-Mexico meeting, it was usually suggested in Washington that we press the Mexicans to be more forthcoming on Central America. My sense was that both the U.S. and Mexican sides in our meetings understood our opposed positions well. Disagreement did not destroy the good feelings I saw on both sides during the high level meetings.

At one point, the Mexicans offered to facilitate a meeting between American and Sandinista representatives (if my memory serves me) in Mexico, and several meetings were held there. The aim was to pursue a dialogue. I don't recall that those talks got very far, but the Mexicans certainly were forthcoming in making them possible and this was appreciated in Washington.

One of the brief episodes during my period in the Mexican affairs office related to a proposal on Central America by one of the White House advisers. He suggested that the United States go over the head of the Mexican government to the Mexican people

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explaining the soundness of U.S. policy. We would launch a major public information campaign to convince the Mexican elite and opinions leaders that Mexico in its own best interest should cease being supportive of the Sandinistas and other rebel groups in Central America. Those leaders in the society would be encouraged to pressure the Mexican government and secure a change Mexican policy on the region.

Early in the Reagan administration the author of this proposal, Constantine Menges, a political appointee, was assigned to the Central Intelligence Agency, and even then he was talking about his idea. His analysis over many years led him to the conclusion that the Achilles heel of the United States was Mexico, a country in his view that was inherently unstable. Political upheaval in Central America would destabilize Mexico, which in turn would pose a serious threat to United States stability — something of a Central and North American dominoes theory. Whenever Mexico had a periodic financial and economic crisis, he had more potential listeners; as Mexico recovered its footing, his listeners were likely to be less receptive.

Through a massive information campaign in the media and personal approaches to win over the views of influential people and the public, Mexico's political leadership would have to change course. Influential Americans in all sectors — government, labor, business, academia — would make personal contacts with their Mexican counterparts to persuade them of the sense of U.S. views on Central America, and they in turn would pressure their government's decision makers.

I don't know of anyone in the State Department privy to this proposal who thought it would work. Rather, there was concern that it would surely backfire, be ineffective, and seriously harm U.S. interests in Mexico. Fortunately, the proposal didn't gain serious attention. Subsequently, Menges wrote a book about his experiences in the Reagan administration; it lamented the dismissal of his pet idea.

Q: Are there any other issues that we might talk about before moving on to your next job?

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HIGH: One point I would mention is just a curiosity. When Ronald Reagan first ran for President in 1980 he called for a common market between Canada, Mexico and the United States. It was mentioned in just one talk and didn't become a discussion piece in the campaign, much less an issue. But it was interesting because at the time virtually no one would take such an idea seriously. The differences in size and development between the countries were so great, it was beyond contemplation in either country.

Now, we have the North American Free Trade Agreement. Who would have thought! My understanding is that the initial proposal for NAFTA was made by President Salinas de Gortari of Mexico, presumably after some homework of his own and perhaps a quiet sounding of Washington. The proposal had to come from Mexico to have political support there, and Salinas deserved the credit for turning on the light. But it has struck me that surely Reagan deserves some credit for starting a glimmer of that light.

Another point I'd like to make comes from the bilateral dialogues between de la Madrid and Reagan. One of de la Madrid's principal themes was that the major physical border between Third World and First World lay between Mexico and the United States. If the U.S. and Mexico couldn't work together constructively and resolve their problems, nothing could be done elsewhere in the world to bring the First and Third Worlds together. He repeated this often. The implication for this to become a reality was that concessions had to come from the north, from us. But his remarks were those of a statesman, and I believe Washington was unusually willing to listen.

Q: You have another thing on Mexico?

HIGH: I should mention the Kissinger Commission sometime in 1984-85. It was established by President Reagan to review the situation in Central American and to make policy recommendations. Henry Kissinger was the chair, and other prestigious persons from Congress and the public were on it. The former president of Notre Dame University, Father Theodore Hesburgh, was a member; so was San Antonio Mayor Henry Cisneros,

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though he wasn't so well-known nationally at the time. Harry Shlaudeman, a leading Latin Americanist in the State Department, was in charge of the staff.

The commission held hearings in Washington and various places in the United States. It also made several trips abroad. One was to Venezuela to talk with the Venezuelan government and individuals there about Central America. Another trip they made was to Mexico City. I helped set that trip up while I was in Mexican affairs, and I accompanied them on the visit.

The commission was in Mexico City for several days. The embassy arranged for individual commission members to meet with appropriate officials in the government and with groups of private sector leaders who had views to offer them.

As the coordinator of the visit from the Washington end, I was the interface with the embassy staff and with Kissinger and his immediate advisors. Kissinger didn't mind embassy representatives sitting in on groups meetings. But his approach and preference very much was for commission members to meet privately with leading Mexican officials. He felt they might be more open and willing to discuss sensitive matters if embassy representatives were not present. As you might anticipate from any US ambassador, John Gavin resisted that saying that as the embassy had set up the meetings and wanted to learn a few things out of this visit, as well. Embassy reps had a need and right to be present. He was also concerned that exclusion of embassy officers from meetings gave to the Mexican government a message that Gavin and the embassy did not count. That was something that would concern any sitting ambassador, and especially John Gavin.

There was a standoff with regard to Kissinger's meeting with de la Madrid. In the end, assistant secretary Tony Motley got into the act from Washington and talked to the ambassador and to Kissinger. Kissinger relented and Gavin participated in the meeting. That kind of conflict between high Washington officials and a resident ambassador was not unusual. Not every ambassador was able to stand off such an intrusion.

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Q: Well, then in 1985 you left ARA and did what?

HIGH: I became the senior deputy assistant secretary for public affairs. The assistant secretary at the time was Bernie Kalb, who was looking for a manager. Tony Motley was in the process of being replaced as assistant secretary in the Inter-American Affairs Bureau and was looking around for places where his advisors could alight; strong loyalty to his staff was always one of his virtues and it was appreciated by all of us.

There wasn't much for me in ARA at the time or out in the field. Tony had heard Bernie Kalb say that he wanted a manager and so he recommended me. I had an interview and got the job.

Kalb was the assistant secretary of the Public Affairs Bureau (PA). Shortly after my arrival, Chuck Redman came into the bureau as assistant spokesman. Bernie Kalb was spokesman and provided public affairs support to Secretary Shultz. Chuck was his partner on the press side. I was the one in the front office responsible for the PA speaker, publications and historical programs. Another deputy assistant secretary, Bob Smalley, a political appointee, was particularly interested in European issues.

Q: By the way, you were there from 1985-89.

HIGH: Right. There were several issues that would be of interest to the oral history program.

One was the activity of the Office of the Historian. This is the office that publishes the official record of United States foreign relations, and it conducts special studies requested by Department officials. It has been headed for a number of years by Bill Slany, who is very much management oriented.

In his effort to produce the volumes on U.S. diplomatic history, Slany was under very heavy pressure from the historians out in the private sector, mainly university professors

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and researchers, to produce more timely publications on U.S. diplomatic history. Their interest was not only in the printed declassified papers that appeared, for example, in a volume on U.S.-European relations, 1950-55. Many of the unpublished official papers that were reviewed for such a volume became available to researchers through the U.S. Achieves at the time the official volume was published by the State Department. The declassification of papers for the published volumes and also for public scrutiny at the Archives required close cooperation between the Department's Freedom of Information Office (the declassifiers), the Historian's Office, the regional bureaus in the State Department, and often the White House. It also generally required cooperation from the CIA, the Defense Department and other agencies when their papers were involved in the review process.

Q: And the National Security Council.

HIGH: Yes, it was the office that provided White House clearance. Needless to say, it had most of its people working on priority, day-to-day crises rather than worrying about what happened 35 years ago.

The Historian's Office had a goal of publishing its volumes about 20 years after the events covered in the volumes; it was an acceptable one to historians. But because of the enormous increase in paper that the federal government produced in modern times, the office was getting further and further behind. This led the researchers and historians to become increasingly critical of the Department's performance — not only with regard to the growing delay in publication but also increasing concern that critical papers were being left out of the printed history.

The Historian's Office had an advisory commission which it established as a vehicle to get advice from historians as to the quality of work we were doing and the procedures we followed. The commission became more and more critical of the delays and the size of the volumes. The relative size of the volumes shrank in response to budget limitations and the

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number of papers it drew from. The implicit assumption among historians was that some exciting stuff must be missing from the books. Was there some censorship going on?

We had a lot of resistance from the Freedom of Information office, the declassifiers, to being more open with the historian community. I believe the declassifiers were trying their best at times to explain the procedures it used. We encouraged them to be forthcoming and welcomed their briefings of the commission. But there was an enormous gap, a lack of confidence, to cross. The declassifiers were being too restrictive for the political climate the government was in, and at times the historians demanded too much. Neither side had confidence in the other.

We held periodic meetings with the advisory commission, and representatives of the declassification office participated at an appropriate point in those meetings. The declassifiers tried to explain the criteria used for inclusion or exclusion, i.e., declassifying or protecting the classification of documents. Their explanations, not always well presented, did not satisfy the historians. The commission members suspected that decisions were arbitrary and they sought further clarification.

Some of the individual declassifiers gave absolutely brilliant summaries of what went on in a particular period in the Middle East, for example. These were really forthcoming and talked about sensitive materials they couldn't put in the volumes. One instance involved the unusual sex life of a ruler that might peak people's curiosity but had little or no effect on policy or events. That wasn't the kind of document you needed to publish. Or in another instance, a certain leader, still in power, thought we ought to nuke North Korea back to the Middle Ages.

Some of the other declassifiers, on the other hand, were gratuitous in their presentations to the advisory committee. One told them that the declassifiers were historians, just as the commission members, and they were interested in getting out information. You simply had to trust the declassifiers, he concluded. Of course, in this was a day and age with

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scandals and coverups in government going on over decades. What right-minded historian was going to accept that assurance from a bureaucrat?, and I said so at a commission meeting.

On occasion a representative of the historian offices at the CIA and the Department of Defense explained to the advisory commission what their policies and work were. Those weren't terribly satisfying to the historians because those agencies were far more restrictive than State, but at least it gave the commission further perspective on why our diplomatic history volumes were limited in material relating to other agency activities.

At one point, around 1988, the declassification office agreed to have declassifiers brief the commission on several volumes that had been published recently. Two or three persons from the office described how the papers were declassified. They went into substantial detail over events and reports, and described the nature of papers that were excluded from release.

The historians found the briefing very interesting, but not fully satisfying. The dialogue was maintained but confidence was still lacking. Pressures continued to build. Finally we arranged a meeting between the chairman of the commission and Ron Spiers, the Under Secretary for Management. Spiers had a brother, I believe, who was an historian. Initially, he was forthcoming in his attempt to understanding what the commission wanted. He brokered an agreement that we would share even more of the papers on a particular volume of diplomatic history. This would bring the historians even closer to the decision making process.

But as part of that briefing the commission learned that the declassification office gave guidelines to the National Archives to help it decide which of the unpublished papers could be released to researchers and historians, and the kinds of papers to be withheld. This peaked the interest of the historians. They wanted to see the guidelines.

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As a matter of fact, based on the agreement with Spiers, the guidelines for a particular study on Europe were shared. That took quite a bit of doing because the declassifiers viewed the advisory commission as a public affairs bureau entity, not their own. Guidelines were the business of the declassifiers alone; the advisory commission had no right to see them, as far as they were concerned.

The briefing was held, as I said, and I believe it contained the guidelines for the Archives. It satisfied the commission for about two months and then, of course, it came back and wanted more. By this time the Under Secretary had lost patience. And that, for the moment, was the end of the process.

For a good three years out of my four years in public affairs, with total cooperation from Bill Slany, the Historian, I tried to build some kind of understanding between the declassifiers and the private sector historians that would work. There was some, but not much, flexibility on the part of the declassification office. Unfortunately, the steps secured were unsatisfactory to the private community. We argued from the Historian's Office and the Public Affairs Bureau that it was important to the Department that its diplomatic history series have credibility. This required confidence among the public users, the historians and researchers. We had to be more forthcoming to secure that confidence.

I'm afraid the declassifiers felt this crossed the boundary of their charter to protect "national security." There was always the question of what happened if one of these people went public with information received in one of the private briefings. Ron Spiers would say, "That makes you historians subject to the National Secrets Act and if you leak classified information you could be thrown in jail."

Even with that prospect — and one of the commission members did release a paper that contained information from one of the briefings — without the confidence of the historians in our professionalism and honesty, the Department's accounts of diplomatic history would

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be of questionable value. Politically, in our age of lack of confidence, the historians were on solid ground. The Department's leadership failed to recognize its weakness.

When I left the bureau, this dispute was still festering, and it wasn't long until the whole thing seemed to fall apart. A new head of the advisory commission felt he had further commitments from the Department to see classified materials, and he charged that the Department wshed on its commitment. I understand that he resigned in high dudgeon.

The whole matter when to Congress. The historians' demands were passed into legislation, and so the Department got the worst of all worlds. Now it is required by law to release information it sought to withhold. And I'm afraid that my three year effort to reach a compromise failed. I felt we received considerable cooperation from the advisory commission, whose members were naturally suspicious of what was going on. What came from the Department was too little and well too late.

Q: How did you find the Historian's Office? Were they playing what you considered a positive role in this?

HIGH: They were playing a very positive role. There was a lot of ill will toward the Historian's Office from the declassifiers. The latter seemed to feel that our historians would say one thing to one group and something else to them. I never found that. The declassifiers felt that we ought to lay down the law to the commission and stand by it. They made accusations about our uncooperativeness, too, but a lot of that was just frustration over the continuing demands of the advisory commission. We in the Public Affairs Bureau did not express to the declassifiers our anger at times when their blindness and inflexibility were patent. When you are looking for a solution, you don't win points throwing brick bats.

It was curious: at one point the declassifiers would be absolutely brilliant in briefing the historians on events and their work; then, at another point, they were intransigent and absolutely uncompromising. They represented a point of view and philosophy reflecting what American values were back in the 1950s, not the realities of the late 1980s. The two

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just didn't mix. Congress took it over and that was the end of that ball game. It gave the advisory commission the legislation it wanted, and the role of the Department was just too bad.

Q: What else did you do?

HIGH: Another development of public affairs while I was in the bureau was the Reagan Administration's conduct of public diplomacy, much of it focused on Central America. Public diplomacy is one of those words that becomes overused and distorted. The term, as I understand it, was coined by USIA to describe the kind of information work it did overseas to explain America to the world. The Reagan Administration came to office and, especially in regard to Central America, felt it was important to have an aggressive, effective outreach effort to explain U.S. policy. Public diplomacy was coordinated from the White House and used the agencies that were involved in executing policy. Very quickly some White House officials came to the conclusion that people in the State Department were entirely too cautious, not aggressive, and too limited in their willingness to go out and sell. A separate office of public diplomacy was established in the State Department under Otto Reich, a political appointee. Reich's staff was located adjacent to the Inter-American Affairs Bureau (ARA). It worked with ARA and with the White House, but technically it came under Secretary Shultz's office.

The office was to aggressively tell the government's view of what was going on in Central America and the why of American policy. It had a small but very hard working staff, and received support from other offices. It was in touch with journalists, especially friendly ones who were supportive of the policy, giving them ideas that would be helpful to the national debate.

We understood that if Otto Reich saw what he considered an egregious article in the New York Times or the Los Angeles Times, or some other paper, he would not hesitate to pick up the phone and call the offending writer to explain the error of his or her ways.

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When they saw an intelligence community report with information that would be useful to demonstrate a point in the debate, the office would make efforts with CIA to declassify the information for use with the media. They came up with strategies for newspaper articles, meetings and speeches — of a Presidential speech or something the Secretary could do — to emphasize particular points of the administration's case. They prepared testimony for the Hill, and then carry the information beyond the confines of a hearing room to the public. It really was a highly organized, integrated public relations effort.

This effort mirrored outreach programs of earlier years to support the ratification of the Panama Canal Treaties. Another model was the work of Paul Nitze and others who early in the Reagan Administration sought to overcome opposition in Europe to the Salt Treaty and to deal with other controversial cold war issues.

My sense was that this kind of intense public affairs work was the kind of programming and planning that political activists undertook on both sides of major issues. If you liked what was being done, you spoke of it in positive terms. If you didn't, then you called the process nefarious. Indeed, the public diplomacy of the Reagan years had its supporters and detractors. The problem was that when your arguments or tactics are questionable, public diplomacy practices can become regarded as nefarious and improper. Moreover, the heat surrounding issues like Nicaragua and El Salvador America could encourage excesses and raise genuine questions about the conduct of public diplomacy. Generically, the term comprises the good and the bad. You have to judge by the content.

Q: Did Reich's office fall under you at all?

HIGH: His line of responsibility was to the Secretary. His was a totally independent operation. He did work closely with the ARA Bureau, and it was a positive relationship, I think, in general terms, but it wasn't as if he was working for that bureau. Technically, he was an adjunct to the Secretary of State's Office.

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For us in public affairs, it was simply a matter of when we could be of help to him, we were. Otto Reich's operations were controversial because outside people, also some in the Department, who were critical of our Central American policy, felt that he blew things out of proportion, did not provide responsible information on what was going on in Central America. They saw his work as a propaganda affair.

There were people in the White House who worked very closely with him. They saw themselves as overall coordinators of public diplomacy. At one point there was a capture of large quantities of arms in El Salvador. It was shown that the arms had come from Nicaragua. There was a big display of the arms at the White House. A lot was made of that, and Otto's office did the work.

As I got into my job in public affairs, in mid-1985, my understanding was that the administration and the White House didn't feel the State Department, including our bureau, had picked up the ball on public diplomacy. I believed that a principal function of PA was to respond, if at all possible, to requests from Reich's office and the White House wanted. We owed them support and team playing on these and other foreign affairs issue. But, if they proposed things that were unsound or improper, then we should say so and not provide that kind of support.

For example, we frequently got for clearance the draft texts of pamphlets and other materials that the Inter-American Affairs Bureau and Otto Reich's office wanted to release. We had some excellent editors on our staff who were very familiar with Central America. They examined the drafts and made recommendations to correct errors of fact and logic, drawing attention to questionable arguments.

I believe we gave the ARA Bureau and Reich's office good, constructive reactions to those materials, and the suggestions were generally used. The discussions of the editing made the materials more responsible. That, in fact, is the result people hope for in the clearance process.

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In one instance, the ARA Bureau was working on a video they wanted to release on Central America. The proposed text talked about the threat the Sandinistas posed to the region and the danger that it could spill over through Mexico and across our border, as well. The text spent most of its time lambasting communist excesses in Nicaragua.

We went back to the ARA bureau and said, "You know, you are aiming at the wrong audience. All this is going to do is stir up further the strong conservative groups that don't like Nicaragua anyway. It is Nicaragua bashing. Americans are torn between what the right is saying and what the left is saying. You need to appeal to the middle ground, the people who have doubts and uncertainties. That's the audience this video ought to address." We made a number of suggestions to turn the video in that direction. As I recall, the suggestions were accepted. The irony was, we learned later, that the persons who wanted the video actually weren't intending it to influence the undecided middle ground. They wanted it to get more support from the right, from people who responded to Nicaragua bashing. I don't believe the film was ever made.

It seemed to me that the White House did have a right to call on the State Department and the Public Affairs Bureau to be aggressive in getting out its views, but those views had to be responsible and effective. What I tried to do in my four years in the bureau under the Reagan administration was to get a reputation for us for doing responsible, imaginative work.

In late 1985, another public diplomacy project arose. The administration set up another separate public diplomacy group on South Africa. Great debates were going on in Congress and in the media over whether American business should be active in South Africa. Again, the White House set up a separate public diplomacy group in the State Department. It was a separate entity, as I recall, but it worked very closely with the African Bureau. The head of this group was a bright, thoughtful, former political ambassador who had been in Zimbabwe. His name was David Miller. He did great work. We seconded to his staff several people from our bureau to provide support and expertise in public affairs.

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One of our best program officers helped him set up his operation and get it going. And one of our best reviewing officers was also assigned to the group for a period of time. These officers provided the South Africa team with important skills; they also returned to us with a practical knowledge of how public diplomacy teams worked and how we could be more supportive of them. This also placed us in a mainstream program with a geographic bureau. We were deeply involved with the South Africa public diplomacy group for several years, until its functions came to an end.

Those were two of my particular areas of interest in the Public Affairs Bureau. There were other public diplomacy issues that came up while I was there. One of them was simply the State Department budget. Secretary Shultz and the leadership saw threats of major cuts in our budget in Congress that would harm our ability to carry out diplomacy. The Public Affairs Bureau developed speaking materials, produced an excellent video talking about the Department's role and needs, sent speakers around the country and worked very closely with the Secretary's Office and the budget people in the State Department. We sought to make the case that money was needed, was well spent, and was vital to American interests.

Once again, a separate staff was set up for that under the Deputy AID Administrator, at the time a political appointee. This staff reported to the Deputy Secretary of State. This time it was the Department that wanted a noisy, strong outreach to the public to shake the trees and say, "By God, we need money to operate; it's important." There was some apprehension among us that the kind of the things they were saying and doing stretched reality and were likely to fall back on us and cause more harm than good.

That was one of the reasons we liked to get in on the ground floor of these special efforts, to moderate some of the materials and programs that were produced. Even though we felt we participated wholeheartedly, there was, I believe, a feeling of the Deputy Secretary that the Public Affairs Bureau was dragging its feet. When any administration concludes that

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it faces a major public relations problem, the nature of the beast is to pull out all stops, do everything, say everything loudly, and thereby influence public opinion.

There was a tendency among the professionals in the Public Affairs Bureau, which over my four years I came to accept, that we could work effectively and honestly with those teams, but part of our role was to counsel wisdom when the aim of the chiefs was to do something with excessive flourishes. A certain amount of tension was bound to exist in the relationship, and usually it was constructive. We were determined not to be painted into a corner as being zealots who twisted truth and reality. We avoided that and gave good service to the administration. I can't begin to say how impressed I was with the professionalism of the permanent staff in the Public Affairs Bureau.

One of the last programs I was involved in before I left the Bureau, was the ratification of SALT II.

Q: Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty.

HIGH: Right. Through months and months of negotiations, and blood, sweat and toil, agreement was finally reached in Helsinki on strategic arms limitation and it was time to deal with ratification. Advisers in the White House were counseling a full press on Congress and the public to convince the nation that the treaty was in our best interest. They were encouraging us to get everybody out on the street, speak everywhere, cover every conceivable base.

We had an office at the time, I believe it was subsequently disbanded by the Baker administration at State, that did a lot of work interpreting public opinion polls. That analysis showed that there was general public support for the SALT II treaty, but that there were two or three major questions in the public's mind. One was whether the United States really had enough strength militarily to defend ourselves properly if the treaty were

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breached. A related issue, of course, was whether or not the Soviet Union would honor the treaty — verification. The third issue escapes my mind now.

Strategy meetings were held in the Department with a number of people very experienced in this public diplomacy business. We pointed out that based on the polls there really was no need to have people running around everywhere, talking at every Rotary Club, every foreign policy association, and blanketing TV to get support for treaty ratification. In fact, we said, if we tried that approach, we would likely raise more issues that could cause needless confusion and harm the ratification process. We said that we needed to address the three principal issues shown by polling to be of concern to the public.

Helpfully, there were others who recognized the good sense of our position. The strategy in the end was a more limited one of targeting public concerns and audiences, not just blanketing the country blindly. It worked very well. There was very good cooperation in the Department. There was very good cooperation from the White House. It was an impressive operations. And the treaty was ratified.

Q: Influencing public opinion is one thing, but Congress is where it gets done. How did the Congressional Relations Bureau fit into all this?

HIGH: That has always been a problematic bureau in the State Department. When we had our strategy sessions with the Deputy Secretary on the budget, the Congressional Relations Bureau participated in them. We didn't have cause to deal with the bureau on most matters. The Secretary briefed people repeatedly on the Hill on important foreign affairs concerns. He was extremely good in those briefing and had an excellent reputation there. Our bureau wasn't in that picture.

The Public Affairs Bureau and the Department were under legal injunction not to encourage or plead for the public to lobby Congress. That was a matter between the public

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and Congress alone. State Department was to provide information to Congress, officials were asked to testify. But we were not to encourage others to lobby Congress.

We provided the public and interest groups with speakers and papers aimed at informing them of significant foreign affairs matters. If the public and interest groups didn't like what was going on, they could get in touch with Congress, as indeed they did from time to time. Occasionally, through an excess of zeal, I guess, some of the people on the sixth and seventh floor of the State Department did a little more than they should have, and encouraged listeners to weigh in with Congress. The Deputy Secretary on the budget issue would end some of his briefing of outsiders by saying something like, "Get hold of your congressman and encourage him to support the foreign affairs budget." That wasn't quite what the law of the land suggested, but I suspect it is a thought conveyed in many presentations by public officials, whatever the administration.

You know, another thing that Public Affairs did on the budget, South Africa and similar key issues, was to bring together interest groups to meet with the Secretary. A limited number of influential leaders — perhaps 15 to 25 of them, would meet privately with the Secretary to talk about those issues. We set them up and helped select the participants. Secretary Shultz was very willing to participate in that kind of meeting. He handled them exceedingly well, and the visitors appreciated hearing him out and having his ear for a period of time. There was dialogue.

Q: I realize you weren't working on the spokesman side, but did you get an impression of the press corps that was attached to the State Department?

HIGH: No. There was a clear division of functions in the bureau when I was there, and that probably has prevailed over a long time — the leadership of press from program functions. Occasionally our functions would interrelate. For example, once a year the Secretary, or more likely the Deputy Secretary, would brief the media on the State Department's budget request to Congress. Since we would carry that message to the public through

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information and speaking programs, we participated in planning sessions for the briefing and we listened to the presentation.

This combination of functions or their separation is a perennial question for the Department. It operates a little bit like a pendulum. It can be triggered by an inspection or the appointment of a new assistant secretary. In fact, there was an inspection just before I arrived in the bureau. The Inspector General's office recommended dividing PA into two bureaus. One would cover the press function, the other would be responsible for programs, publications and the Historian's Office. It was opposed by the bureau and was not fulfilled.

One argument for dividing the bureau was that usually the assistant secretary was all wrapped up in the Secretary's activities and press and never had time to focus on management or our other programs. That may be something you can pursue with Hodding Carter [a previous assistant secretary] when you talk with him. Bernie Kalb, for example, had total concentration on the press and on the Secretary's public activities. It was a full-time job. Occasionally I would go in to see Bernie Kalb to make a suggestion or if I needed to make him aware of something that we were doing. He was supportive of our programs and he offered occasional suggestions that were helpful, but he didn't have the time to give us much attention.

When he left the bureau, he was replaced by Chuck Redman, a career FSO. Chuck had the kind of mind that could take on these added matters and he wanted to play a role in them. He was a very effective leader of the bureau because he did take into account these other programs and problems we faced, including the concerns of the Historian's Office which I mentioned earlier.

More often than not, assistant secretaries have not had the interest or the time to lead both functions. However, the perception of many of the experienced hands in the bureau was that better coordination was secured by keeping both the press and program functions

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in one bureau. Public affairs programming was better integrated with the policy makers, because the assistant secretary or the spokesman or both attended the meetings were major decisions were made by Department leadership.

Bureau personnel recognized that press was the lead function and that public affairs programming was the step-child, so to speak. If the two functions were in a separate bureau (as had happened occasionally in the past), programming and the historian functions and other elements became lost and wandering in the wilderness of the Department. That assistant secretary did not have the ready access to major decision making meetings that the assistant secretary for press had.

Bureau personnel strongly believed it was better to be on the coattails of the press work than to be isolated from top leadership. For myself, out of four years of experiences in PA, I believed it was far better to keep the two functions together.

Q: The Bush Administration came in. How did this effect you?

HIGH: I had been in the PA Bureau for four years and I felt that it was time personally and professionally to move on. If the Department had something for me, fine, and if it didn't, then maybe there was some life to discover elsewhere. Margaret Tutwiler was named the assistant secretary. She had been a very close advisor to Secretary Baker for years and would be playing a very special role with him.

I became the transition person in the bureau's front office. Chuck Redman left shortly after the change of administration. The other deputy assistant secretary had been a political appointee, and he had gone.

I stayed on for about almost six months into the new administration; most transfers and assignments at high levels came slowly. I was with the new bureau leadership for about a month and told them that it was time for me to move on. What they had done in any

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event was to name a friend and close associate of Margaret Tutwiler to my position as the principal deputy.

Perhaps I could have stayed on longer in the other deputy position. However, it was quite clear that our programs were going to be changed very substantially. I would have been undoing programs that I worked very hard to establish. I thought: (1) that would be awfully hard for me to do personally, and (2) the changes would probably make my leadership position with colleagues in the Bureau untenable.

It also became increasingly clear that a few people on the Baker team would be on the front line of the Department's public affairs efforts; the rest of the bureau would be in an anomalous situation, dealing with whatever survived. After my showing what and how we were doing our activities, the new leaders needed support to do their own thing.

I made an effort to get back to the Latin American Affairs Bureau, but that bureau's leaders had to meet their perceived obligations to persons closer at hand. So I ended up working on political asylum affairs for a couple of years before I retired.

Q: One question about this transition. One had the feeling that the Baker administration came in with a very tight coterie around Baker and the tightest of the tight was Margaret Tutwiler. What was your view of her management style and what they were going to do?

HIGH: Well, she didn't have any management style except to distance herself from most of the bureau. She had been Baker's chief assistant and confidante. They naturally continued in that relationship; she did very important work for him. She was also the department's spokesman, holding up the bureau's press function. I saw her maybe three or four times while I remained in the bureau.

My replacement as senior deputy was Kim Hoggard, a close, personal associate of Margaret Tutwiler. I did work fairly closely with her on bureau business, but Kim also went off on frequent trips as the Secretary of State, as part of his personal entourage. Clearly,

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there were going to be these three or four key people in the bureau who would support Baker in his public affairs role, and that would be it.

In fact, while there continued to be a senior deputy in the bureau, a USIA officer was found who came over and basically took over what I was doing to run the public affairs programs. That freed Kim to work more closely with Margaret Tutwiler and the Secretary. The rest of the bureau would carry on and be supportive, but its role would be very secondary, substantially less than under the previous administration.

Q: Well, then on asylum affairs you were doing that from 1989-91?

HIGH: Yes.

Q: What were you concerned with?

HIGH: The asylum office was largely made up of retirees. Applications for asylum in the United States were made to the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) and that service made the decision to grant or withhold asylum. The claimants' papers were sent to the asylum office in the State Department. Our office examined the claims and provided advisory opinions on them to INS. Those opinions could be either personalized to the facts of a case or generalized to the conditions prevailing in the particular country.

The opinions offered more information to the asylum officers in INS and to judges on the Board of Immigration Appeals, an appellate body within the Justice Department. An immigration officer, after meeting with the applicant, generally with his or her attorney, or the BIA after a hearing, would determine if the person was entitled to asylum or not.

Our office wrote the advisory opinions. We had Foreign Service officers or retired FSOs who had years of experience with the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, Africa, Asia, and Latin America. I was one of three working on Latin America cases, and there were a lot of them.

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I found the office's work interesting in many ways. It certainly made me much more familiar with developments in Central America and with people who were claiming asylum out of the Caribbean. And, in the end, when I retired from the Department, this experience became my entree to become executive director of a small think tank on immigration. While in the asylum office, I certainly saw applications from persons who clearly deserved asylum. But I saw many more claims from persons using asylum as a gimmick to remain here for economic reasons or to rejoin their families. I found this exploitation of our asylum system very troubling.

Q: Was there much pressure on you to make political judgments?

HIGH: No, there wasn't and that is one of the curiosities of the job. While I didn't feel that I or any of my colleagues was under pressure to come up with "correct" decisions, the asylum system itself was highly political.

Asylum advocates were very critical of the Department when Elliott Abrams was assistant secretary for Inter-American affairs and, earlier, for Human Rights. These advocates were critical of our Central American policy and their posture on asylum was an element of that stance. During this period, the asylum office made recommendations to INS on whether or not asylum should be granted, providing reasons for those recommendations. I understood that INS pretty much followed those recommendations. As time went on, INS came under increasing criticism that it had become an instrument of the State Department's policies and was not exercising independent judgment. The Department was also criticized for playing an "advocacy" role.

By the time I joined the asylum office, it was cutting back on outright recommendations for individual cases and increasingly limiting opinions to comments on conditions in the countries. The leaders of the Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs Bureau, who oversaw the work of the asylum office, clearly were content with our reduced role in the evaluation process. It must have been awkward for them to talk with human rights interest

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groups about expanding the State Department's and the U.S. government's role in this matter world-wide, while those groups were outspokenly critical of the rate of denials for asylum applicants and the asylum office's role in the process.

In any event, as this change in focus took place, the INS began receiving more information on alleged persecution abroad from the private advocacy groups. It established its own, woefully small and under-experienced, advisory staff to weigh the information it received, and the INS began to take on greater responsibility for the asylum decisions it was making. From my vantage point, while the State Department's role in decision making was diminished, we still had a positive and useful contribution to make. It was time for the INS to shoulder more fully its responsibilities.

From another perspective on the politization of asylum policy, it was easy to see how political decisions by the executive branch and the Congress could create the criticism from various points of view that there was too much politics in the application of the law.

Even as repression lessened in the Soviet (and then former Soviet) Union, applicants from there continued to receive asylum almost automatically. Few questions were raised about applicants from Vietnam, though repression there was greatly reduced and we clearly were moving toward recognition of that government.

By law and policy, persons leaving Cuba were determined to have fled persecution and were routinely offered asylum and assisted in resettlement. Yet increasingly, people were leaving Cuba because of adverse economic conditions, not because they were suffering from political repression. Domestic American politics determined those procedures.

People who were interested in the Haitian boat people were critical because they saw how favorable Cubans were treated, while the Haitians were generally refused asylum and returned to Haiti. The difference between these situations was the Cuban Refugee Act. The Haitians were fleeing generalized unrest, political instability, and very difficult economic conditions. They didn't merit asylum status any more than others around the

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world merited it under those conditions. However, their supporters wanted them treated the same as Cubans. The reality was, save for the Cuban Refugee Act and the influence in Congress of the Florida delegation, most Cubans claimants should probably receive the same evaluation as the Haitians.

Another contrast pitted the asylum treatment of Nicaraguans as against that received by Salvadorans and Guatemalans. People in the office who were working on Nicaragua concluded, quite rightly in my view, that under the Sandinista regime businessmen, labor leaders, and opposition members fled the country for political reasons. They were targeted for persecution by the Sandinistas. Under these circumstances, the Asylum Office's opinions supported claims to asylum. On the other hand, the number of opinions supporting asylum claims for Guatemalans and Salvadorans was low.

What was the difference between Nicaragua and El Salvador or Guatemala? The motives of most of the Salvadoran and Guatemalan were flight from generalized political unrest and a difficult economic situation. By contrast, persecution in Nicaragua tended to be very targeted because of a person's political views and activity.

A parallel point was raised in Panama, and I was responsible for the advisory opinions in those cases. As popular pressure built up to the overthrow of Manuel Noriega, massive popular marches were held by political, economic and civic organizations to denounce Noriega. In response, the government used its police forces to lob tear gas at the demonstrators, to beat and shoot protestors. People were detained in large and small numbers under very unpleasant conditions. They were interrogated and humiliated, and released perhaps days later.

Our advisory opinions did not encourage granting asylum to many of the participants in these activities, and in fact few were accorded asylum by the INS. If applicants were able to show that indeed they were politically active and threatened or harmed, that they did

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more than participate in general protests, there was the prospect of a favorable advisory opinion.

In particular, there was one group of military officers who tried to overthrow Noriega and failed. They and their family members, if they got out of the country, were accorded political asylum. But overall, in the Panama case, many people protested and stuck out their necks, and yet were not determined to come within the terms of our law.

So there was a political element in asylum decisions. Inconsistencies in the application of the law, as with Cubans, Russians, and Vietnamese, inevitably undermined the rationale for our law and give rise to criticism.

Q: Okay...

HIGH: I would like to bring up one more Foreign Service activity, if I may. There is one other function I had toward the end of my time in the State Department that I ought to comment on. It was with an organization that was established around 1980 called the Senior Foreign Service Association.

When the 1980 Foreign Service Act was passed, a number of senior officers were concerned that what it really added up to was the establishment of procedures to push people up through the ranks of the Foreign Service and then push them out early, seriously reducing the amount of time that they might have for careers. The reasoning behind it, I guess, aside from the youth culture of our society — that young, aggressive and active are better than the older and experienced — was that the Department was overstaffed in senior officers. What should be done with them? There may also have been concern that our “up or out” system taken from the military had not been adequately enforced over the years.

What concerned the senior officers who established the Senior Foreign Service Association was that the new policy meant losing many officers who still had much to

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offer the service. It wasn't just a matter of old, stodgy types that were slowing down the institution. This senior organization was established initially by people like Hank Cohen. He was its first president. It was very active in the 1981-82 period. It sought to repeat the efforts of an earlier time when the Foreign Service Association established committees to look at all aspects of the service and made recommendations for improvements.

Q: I think it was "The Diplomacy for the 70s." The Young Turks.

HIGH: Precisely. Well, this "Diplomacy for the 70s" was sort of replicated, but on a much smaller scale. The seniors had four or five committees looking at different aspects of the law and what they meant to the profession and our ability to serve the Department. But as the years went on, the organization shrank and the committee structure disappeared. After Hank Cohen, it was headed for a time by Frank Crigler and then by David Simcox.

When I came back from Mexico in 1983, Dave Simcox was in charge. A meeting would have about 20 to 25 participants, not always the same persons. There may have been a few among them who, if you really thought about it, you might think should be close to retirement. But the majority were excellent officers concerned that they and others seemed to be in danger of being cast aside. They resisted the idea that the Foreign Service was no more than a brief passage of life.

I have believed throughout my career that the Foreign Service was a profession that required a life-long commitment. Certainly there should be some weeding out along the way, and that hadn't always happened. But I was concerned over the real danger of losing excellent officers who still were relatively young and had much to offer. This was particularly true of very promising officers who rose rapidly at one point in their careers and then slowed down, often through no shortcoming of their own. It was almost inevitable that as they slowed down at some point in their careers, the new system of short tics (time in class before removal or retirement) would be deadly to their careers.

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David Simcox was in the process of retiring, so I took over as head of the Senior Foreign Service Association. We continued to put out a newsletter for distribution three or four times a year to senior officers in the Department and in the field. A principal theme of our publication was the threat to professionalism. The new 1980 Foreign Service Act was not an act that implemented the “up or out” system that had been with the Foreign Service for decades. It was really “up and out” because of these time limits and the way they were being enforced.

I believe that the newsletter over the years was helpful in keeping people's attention to this concern about the Service and where it was going. It certainly didn't have any real effect on the Under Secretary for Management or the Director General. They were determined to forge ahead and try out the new system. I saw no indication they ever resisted it or fought it in Congress. And so larger and larger numbers of officers were being forced out and there were very good people among them.

Our association sought to keep the issue active. I don't think we had much effect on the Department's managers. They could bring together five career assistant secretaries and feel that these senior officers were more representative of the seniors than our “so-called” Senior Foreign Service Association. That would have been a faulty test. We constantly received supportive comments from people around the Department and certainly from the field: thanks for what you are doing to help us to keep us alert to the issues.

One breakpoint came about 1988-89, when we and Personnel discussed the time in class issue. The Foreign Service Association also gave us good support at this point. The result was management's recognition that officers promoted quickly from counselor to minister counselor rank could end up simply having something like five to seven years as minister counselor and then be forced to retire. The fact was that the quick promotion was likely to be in recognition of exceptional capabilities. So management agreed that there would be a combined tic between the counselor and minister counselor.

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Several independent studies done for the Department at that time, including a very helpful one by Paul Bremer, also advocated easing the time in class requirements for seniors, and I'm sure they were influential in the Department's decision. I also believe that our association's continued efforts to inform our colleagues kept the issues alive until the merits of our position were recognized.

I keep hoping that some day the State Department may realize the error of its ways. It certainly had a problem of an excessive number of senior officers, though there is room to question what is excessive and what is not. The problem is also more recently a function of the pay raises that have made people want to stay in and continue to receive high pay as long as they can.

I want to end on this point of truncated careers because it is clear that the Foreign Service as a profession has been severely damaged by these near-sighted personnel policies. No longer can an able officer anticipate a reasonable opportunity to have a full career as a diplomat, retiring at age 60 to 65. In candor, the Department provides new FSOs with this message from the very beginning of their careers. What an awful message! What kind of loyalty and career dedication does that create in the corps? Our work does not become a lifelong dedication. It becomes simply a stepping stone to a second career later in life, actually at a time when many officers are financially vulnerable, meeting mortgages and children's educational expenses. What folly has our leadership taken us into?

I only hope that with another of life's turns of the pendulum, that full careers again become part of the landscape, and that the Foreign Service remains a profession of commitment and not simply a line item in resumes.

Q: Well, thank you very much.

HIGH: Thank you.

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End of interview