

## Interview with Hewson Ryan

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

AMBASSADOR HEWSON RYAN

Interviewed by: Richard Nethercut

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This interviews being conducted with Ambassador Hewson Ryan on April 27, 1988 at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy. The interview is one in a series being conducted under the auspices of the Association for Diplomatic Studies. The interviewer is Richard Nethercut, a retired Foreign Service Officer. The purpose of the interview is to provide background on the careers in the Foreign Service from senior officers who have had extensive background and experience.

*Q: Ambassador Ryan, could you explain how you became involved in foreign affairs?*

RYAN: Well, I started in my studies at Yale. I was interested in a perfunctory sort of way in things Latin American. I had rather vague career goals and I had studied Spanish and Spanish literature among other things and Latin American history. And then in 1942 I was drafted into the U.S. Army and since I wasn't considered physically fit, I couldn't get into any of the officer training programs. I've seen so many of my classmates pass into the other world who were healthy, and I can't quite see how I've survived all this time but I have. After taking basic training in the field artillery, I was pulled out of Camp Breckinridge, Kentucky in the spring of 1943 and sent to Ohio State University where I was given a battery of tests and kept for a month or so, and then shipped to New York City

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College where I joined a group of about 60 other enlisted personnel in what was called an advanced Spanish language training program of the Army Specialized Training. We spent nine months totally immersed in Spanish and Spain. We worked in the language 18 hours a day; we watched Spanish movies; we talked on the telephone in Spanish. We were pretty well under the control of a group of native speakers who had been Republican officials. It was obvious, although no one would tell us directly, that we were being prepared for possible service in Spain.

However, at the end of nine months whatever had motivated the need for Spanish speaking officers and people trained in Spanish language and area, had changed; so we were all sent off to Camp Shelby, Mississippi as replacements in the 69th Infantry Division which was getting ready to head for England and the follow-up to invasion of Normandy. We were lucky in that we did not get to France until considerably later and we were able to survive, ending the war at Eilenberg on the Elbe where we fraternized with the Russians across the river and had rather drunken good times. Thus I had contact with "the other side" from April of 1945. Then I was sent up to Berlin to join the Office of Military Government. That sounds great but actually my job in Berlin was booking a series of dance bands for the generals at their palaces out on the Wannsee, but in my record I can say that I was a member of OMGUS for several months before being demobilized. I went back to Yale to finish my Bachelor's, and because of my strong training in Spanish they asked me to fill in on teaching Spanish, which I did to undergraduates there. And then I started graduate school and Spanish seemed to be the obvious thing because there were fellowships available and opportunities to go to Spain.

I was able to get a Sterling Fellowship to go and study in Spain and went there in the fall of 1949. And it was there that I first came in touch with USIS, because my wife, who had been trained as a librarian, was picked up as a local employee by the Casa Americana, the USIS library in Madrid.

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After I finished my work in Spain, we went back to the campus in New Haven where I was teaching Spanish-American and Spanish literature. But we had obviously got the bug for foreign travel and foreign residence during our time in Spain, and the Korean War was on and they were threatening to draft all the young college students. They were going to apply the draft to everyone. So all of us on the faculty who didn't have tenure were warned that we might not have a job the next year. Therefore I applied for the only USIS opening which I knew of which I seemed to be qualified for which was in the Binational Center Program. I had several interviews in Washington and then I ended up being hired to go to Chile as the Binational Center Director of Courses. In those days the Binational Centers had several Americans but we were not actually employees of the State Department. Rather we were grantees, which meant that we didn't have diplomatic passports, and we had very limited luggage allowances and we didn't have access to the commissaries. I guess that our status was somehow similar to the later organized Peace Corps.

I went to Washington to prepare to go to Chile and, as so often happens in the Foreign Service, by the time I was ready to go to Chile the job had changed and I ended up Bogota, where I was Director of Courses and later the Director of the Binational Center from 1951 to 1953.

By this time I had figured out the angles necessary to get into the Foreign Service so I was able to be considered for an appointment as a Staff Officer in USIA and taken aboard and sent to Bolivia where I believe I was the first person to hold the title of Cultural Attach# in the USIS setup there. That was my first exposure to the inner workings of the embassy, although I had done a great deal of related work in Bogota where in education exchange operations I was Secretary of the Educational Exchange Commission. A good part of my time in Bogota there wasn't any Cultural Attach#, so I did a lot of speaking around the country on various cultural topics and talked to a lot of people who wanted to come to the U.S. to study, and so forth. Then in Bolivia, where I had the title of Cultural Attach#, I was summoned by Ambassador Gerry Drew, a formidable curmudgeon of the old school.

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He said he really didn't know what Cultural Attach#s were supposed to do, but the one thing he wanted to be sure was that I knew all of the standing up and sitting down at te deums, and that I was going to be his liturgical attach#, and I would have to go with him to masses. The Bolivian government at that time was very much given to holding te deums on every occasion. I'd say we went at least once a month and very often twice a month to these interminable masses, and I would accompany the Ambassador and when I stood up and sat down he would stand up and sit down. I remember that as one of my duties there.

But I did a great deal else. We arranged the first visiting professor at the University of San Andres in Bolivia, a man who came from Stanford, a rather distinguished physicist who had Spanish. He came from a Hispanic background, Claudio Alvarez Tostado.

But unfortunately Bolivia then, as is still the case, was in the throes of considerable political unrest, so that for a good part of Professor Alvarez Tostado's time in La Paz the University was on strike. Then finally when the University decided to go back to classes, they found that the water had been turned off in the main building; and in the chemistry laboratories which were built on the seventh or eighth floors—the top floors of the building. There wasn't enough water pressure to bring any water to the laboratories, so Professor Alvarez Tostado had little success in bringing laboratory science to Bolivia. However, he did a fair amount of lecturing, and I think that was one of the accomplishments we had. We opened the first academic exchange between Bolivia and the United States but, of course, it was fraught with all sorts of dangers as is evidenced here. Also, of course, in Bolivia at that time the government of Paz Entensoro—who, by the way is still president of Bolivia, or again president, he hasn't been president all this time—was somewhat populist, and had strong support from the labor unions and the student unions, which meant that the labor unions and the student unions were very often demonstrating and striking, so a good bit of our time there was punctuated with closings of the embassy. Although I must say that the general tenor was not as anti-American as one would find today. It was more directed in general against the oligarchs, against the tin barons and the like. I never really felt threatened personally. I would go out and walk on the streets and there would be

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demonstrating, and signs, and people throwing things; but it was not the same atmosphere of anti-Americanism which I think so characterizes the Service in so many places today.

My farewell party in Bolivia was perhaps an example of this. I was given a farewell party by my colleagues in the embassy, the Diplomatic Corps, and the newspapers and radio there. It took place in the roof garden of a brand new hotel in the center of La Paz. Unfortunately, that was also a day of protest against one of the radio stations which happened to be located right near the hotel—I think it was by one of the unions protesting something which had appeared in the news—and so there was a great hullabaloo outside and a lot of shouting, a few firecrackers and dynamite. The Bolivians, of course, are very adept with dynamite, and dynamite caps were a part of the demonstrations; and they were throwing dynamite against the wall of the hotel; not really directed at us in any way, just getting rid of their frustrations. Then somebody made the mistake of throwing one of the dynamite caps into a transformer nearby, and all the lights in the center of the city went out. And then they called out troops and there was a fair amount of shooting. And there we were on the top floor of this hotel—no emergency lights—and we had to crawl down, sort of sitting step by step to the street, and then we walked a couple of blocks to where cars were available. That was my final day in Bolivia and certainly an interesting one; and I'm afraid it characterizes so much of Bolivian history of these last 35 or 40 years; rather undirected violence which seems to be so close to the surface in that two mile-high capital.

*Q: That was certainly an interesting first assignment in the Foreign Service and you apparently had several assignments in Latin America. I wonder how you would characterize the relations between the Information Office of USIA with the embassy at your several Latin American posts.*

RYAN: Things were much more informal then. USIS was a relative newcomer. As I indicated, Ambassador Drew made it very clear that he didn't know what USIA should do, but he had some very definite ideas of what I should do. For reasons that escape me now, I became the top secret control officer in the embassy. We were cleaning out a lot

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of old files from the '30s and '40s and he had taken a shine to me. Because I was very interested in the history and knew the background of Bolivia, he put me in charge of doing that. So I was doing a lot of embassy things. I would say the relations were really quite close. The Embassy and USIS for a good part of the time I was there were in the same building. Then we did get some offices for USIS a couple of blocks away, but we still had to keep all our classified material there. We had a small office still in the Embassy building and we were certainly an integral part of the Country Team. There was no question about that and we were used for political purposes also, because I can remember being sent to see the Minister of Education, who was being touted as a possible Foreign Minister and whom I knew well. It was a rather intimate and informal relationship. There was not some of the distance which has characterized the relationship among agencies. There weren't that many agencies there at the time.

And the same thing happened in Chile. My next assignment was in Chile where, after having been Cultural Attach# in Bolivia, I was sent as Press Attach# or Information Officer. I went on a direct transfer to Santiago and that was an exciting time because Chile was in the full flower of democracy as perhaps the model democracy of Latin America. There was a functioning parliament and thirteen daily newspapers. I think there were about fifteen different political parties represented in the Congress. And a rather exciting time for me to be the Information Officer, because I would do a lot of spade work for the Ambassador and for the Political Section because I had better Spanish than anyone else in the Embassy. I would go to the newspapers and pick up the gossip on what was going on in the parliament and so forth. It was probably bad for my liver because the Chileans are great red wine drinkers, and going around to the newspapers in the evening—most of the newspapers went to bed around 9:00 or 10:00—and then after that the staff would go off to the nearest grog shop and drink red wine and talk politics. So I got to know a good bit about the whole inner workings of the Chilean political system.

As a result of that, when the first group of Chilean parliamentarians were invited under the Group Leader Program—this was, I think, the first Latin American parliamentarian group

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to be invited to the United States in late '56 or early '57—I guess it was early '57—I was tapped to be the escort officer. I traveled with these seven Chilean senators representing the full political spectrum. There was a Socialist there—the Socialist Party of Chile which was to the left of Allende's party—and there was a man from the party of Atilla of the Hun, the extreme right, and several intermediate groups. As a result of this, I had extremely close relations with the Chilean parliament, and when we came back I was the main contact with the political parties because I had spent seven weeks with these people. We traveled all around the United States, a fascinating experience in itself to see your own country through the eyes of six or seven people with very different political and ethnic—well, not really ethnic although one had a Yugoslav background, one was Jewish, the rest were Chilean. One was a Mapuche Indian from the south. So it was a very hybrid group and we got to see a lot of the United States, and I learned a lot about the United States.

When I got back to Chile I was Press Attach#, but I was also doing all these other errands, and then the Public Affairs Officer left—I've forgotten under what circumstances—and the Ambassador, over the objections of the Agency, USIA, insisted I be made the PAO there. That's why I had a very extensive tour there. The Ambassador was a political appointee with considerable leverage in Washington, and although I was a very junior officer, he insisted I be made the PAO. And I was, and that meant I moved up rather rapidly. And I spent three more years in Chile through 1961 as the Public Affairs Officer; and I was very much connected to the Country Team because I'd been there longer and in many ways was more knowledgeable of the Chilean political scene than the political officers.

I did a lot of travelling in Chile and a lot of public speaking. I covered Chile from the frontier with Peru down to Puerto Williams which is about 40 miles west of Cape Horn, so I really knew the country much better than I know my own country and better than most Chileans did. I came to be known as Mr. Chile there.

And then came the change in administration due to the Kennedy victory, in 1961. I had a good number of acquaintances among the New Frontier group and I was pulled out of

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Chile to become the Assistant Director of USIA in charge of the Latin American operations, which meant the Alliance for Progress. I came up in the fall of 1961 to Washington where I became the Assistant Director under Edward R. Murrow. That's when I first met Murrow. He had sent his deputy down to talk to me in Chile.

We had an exciting time trying to put the psychological underpinnings under the Alliance, attempting to do the impossible which was to mobilize public opinion in Latin America in support of a program which was really in many ways imposed on Latin America by the Kennedy Administration. Although the administration was very aware of the need for Latin participation, our efforts suffered from the impatience of the Kennedy brothers, and the political reality of the United States. Kennedy felt the need to show immediate results from the Alliance—results which just weren't in the cards. It can't be done that fast. Social engineering takes time and there was a great deal of frustration in Washington over the information program. We expanded very rapidly. We did a lot of interesting things and we were frustrated in many ways with the pressures from the U.S. political scene. The fact that the election for the House and Senate—the Congressional elections, were coming up in '62 and the Kennedys seemed to feel this strongly. I speak of the Kennedys because Bobby Kennedy had been designated by his brother to keep a very careful eye on Latin America. He used to come to the Latin America Policy Committee meetings. I was also the USIA representative on Operation Mongoose which was the General Lansdale operation designed to get rid of Fidel Castro, and Bobby Kennedy would chair occasional meetings of that group.

*Q: Could you describe how that policy, or that project, fit in with our other Latin American objectives?*

RYAN: A definitive objective study is yet to be written on that. I'm not sure that all the files are fully available yet, and I don't know how far I can go, except what is public knowledge which is the fact that General Ed Lansdale, who had been very successful as an adviser, military and psychological, to Magsaysay in the Philippines, was chosen

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by Bobby Kennedy to head the operation which was designated Mongoose, an inter-agency operation designed to rid Cuba of Castro and his group. Lansdale wore an Air Force uniform, and I think he was legitimately an Air Force officer, but he had spent a great deal of time on detail to CIA. I don't know...I never saw the papers on this, and I've never seen in any of the descriptions exactly his relationship, but he was an Air Force Brigadier General. He had an office in the bowels of the Pentagon. It was right next to the Joint Chiefs' place where he had a war room with maps and overlays of everything going on in Cuba and you had to have very top secret clearance to participate. I had various clearances. At one point, I think I had twelve different clearances to see all the material, because a lot of it were these key code word clearances, and CIA would always have two people come into the room while you read the document and things like that.

It was a very intricate arrangement because he obviously, although he had worked for CIA, Lansdale was not or did not consider himself a CIA representative. Nor did the CIA people look to him as a representative, but rather it was an adversarial relationship. He was putting pressure on the CIA to do things as well as to provide intelligence. They were the operational arm of Mongoose. He also had considerable authority to call on DOD assets, and he did. I don't know whether this has all come out—but there was a miniature submarine, and there were other covert operations, and there were all sorts of things in operation at the time. This used to take at least one afternoon a week of my time, sometimes weekend meetings, and I was also supposed to be working on the Alliance for Progress and the USIA operation, which had burgeoned in Latin America.

I did a lot of travelling during this time. The year '63, I think it was, I kept track, and I was out of Washington approximately six months of the year. I was in Latin America travelling and looking at these various programs. The personnel problems of staffing, budgetary problems, Congressional justifying. It was a very heavy time; I couldn't do it today but I was young and resilient then. It did impact on my family life in that I saw very little of the children at the time because I was away so often. When I was back in Washington, I was in the Agency or over in State, or down at the Pentagon so much of the time. I used to sit

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also on the morning staff meetings of the Assistant Secretary, first of Robert Woodward and later of Ed Martin. I would go over every morning to State about 8:15 or 8:30 and participate there as a member of the Latin American policy group.

So I was privy to a lot of the decision making on such things as the Dominican Republic in 1962, when Ambassador Martin was first there and we were attempting to get rid of the son of Trujillo, Radames, and then the election of Bosch and the decision not to use a military show of force to support Bosch when there was a coup against him. And then I also—continuing on the Dominican Republic trail—in 1965, because of my background—I had visited the Dominican Republic with Arturo Morales Carrion, who was the former Puerto Rican Secretary of State who had been named Deputy Assistant Secretary of State by the Kennedys for Latin American Affairs. We went down, in '62 I guess it was, or early '63— '62 it must have been—to see about supporting the electoral procedures being developed in the Dominican Republic and USIS did some advising there. AID brought in specialists to try to get out the vote, so that there would be a democratic election for the first time after the long, dark years of Trujillo. So that in 1965 when President Johnson decided to send in the 82nd Airborne—actually it was 18th Airborne Corps which included the 82nd Airborne—in May of '65, I was by then Associate Director of USIA. I had been moved up from Latin America to become the Associate Director in charge of Research and Policy Development.

I was pulled out of that one Saturday morning and sent packing to the Dominican Republic, where I became the senior USIA man for about a month together with General Bruce Palmer who was a Lieutenant General in command of the troops; and I even had operational command of the First Psywar Battalion which was sent down to support me. The unfriendly forces held the center of Santo Domingo where the most powerful radio station was and where most of the printing facilities, the newspapers were located. So that we had to have the Psywar Battalion in order to set up a portable radio transmitter and a portable printing establishment, which we did. I took about twelve USIA people I'd gathered from around Latin America and we were flown in, and we did leaflets, and daily

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bulletins, a daily newspaper, and radio broadcasting. We rebroadcast the Voice of America and did some original broadcasting down there during that month. That was an exciting time.

I'm getting ahead of myself there, because going back to the Alliance for Progress, this was one of the most frustrating parts of the operation in that there was goodwill on everybody's part, including the Latins. There was a lot of feeling in Washington that the Latins were footdragging. Giving credit to the United States, which was necessary for our Congressional purposes and our own electoral processes, of course was seen by the Latins as putting them in a difficult position of being subservient to Uncle Sam. So that trying to balance the need for acknowledgment of U.S. support with the need of the Latins to somehow demonstrate that they were running their own programs was one of the great frustrations of my tenure during the Alliance for Progress.

*Q: Could you explain a little further about the respective Latin American role of the individual countries and the U.S. and the dimensions; was it primarily economic, primarily political? Was there a Peace Corps element involved?*

RYAN: Well, the Alliance was in the beginning an overall socio-politico-economic attempt to change the direction of Latin development, and to demonstrate the U.S. desire to work with the Latins. There had been a long period after World War II during which time the U.S. was perceived in Latin America as neglecting them and putting all our chips in Europe. Of course, this is true, and the Latins resented this. They felt that because they had sided with us and provided us with raw materials; and, in the case of Brazil and Mexico, troops during World War II, that they deserved a little better break. And yet our attitude at the same time that we were pumping large amounts of capital into the Marshall Plan, and our speeches to them by John Foster Dulles, and Humphrey, who was Secretary of Treasury, pointed to the fact that they had to go out and make their economies attractive for private investment, and that private investment was the route they should take, and

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they shouldn't expect any governmental help from the United States. There was a great deal of resentment of this.

Actually one of the incidents which sparked deep concern in Washington and perhaps began the change of direction was the 1958 stoning and spitting on Vice President Nixon. When he went to Caracas, you may recall, in I think it was 1958, his car was attacked and stoned and he was spit upon by the Venezuelans. And then this caught on and he went from Venezuela to Brazil where there were some demonstrations and I think it was Argentine and Bolivia, Peru. Each one of these places...it was the first time there had been any sort of massive demonstrations against the United States, personified in this case by Nixon. So as early as '58 we started being very concerned.

That's when we changed our tune on private investment and we stopped our long-standing opposition to the establishment of a Development Bank in Latin America. Actually it was done in the last year of the Eisenhower presidency. But it came to full flower in the beginnings of the Kennedy Administration when he convened various task forces of Latin American ex-presidents and economists in Washington to try and draw up a ten year development plan for Latin America, which was to look at the political, the economic, the social and all. And in the first years this was the case. The problem, of course, was that this demands tremendous amounts of money, capital, and it demands great forbearance on the part of the giving power because the very nature of social change is bound to result in popular demonstrations against the status quo. And the status quo was the relationship between our government and the governments in power there. In the United States there was a certain amount of resistance to the U.S. position on democracy. In fact several of the governments down there resented very much the fact that the Alliance, which was embodied in a document signed at Punta del Este, the Charter of Punta del Este of 1961, which pledged all of the countries of Latin America—all the signatories; it included all of the countries at that time in Latin America—to a program which would fight illiteracy, promote public health issues, and would be in favor of land reform. All of which did not sit too well in many governing circles because in Latin America at that time, as unfortunately

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is still the case, the oligarchic classes, the ruling classes, were not anxious to change the basic structure.

Therefore, there was a fair amount of footdragging on this and most of the attitudes involved looking at the Marshall Plan and saying, "Look, you gave all this money to Europe, why don't you give us the money and we'll take care of how we'll work it out." This is grossly oversimplified, but that's the way it became focused. Unfortunately because of this pressure for justification to the U.S. public and to the U.S. Congress, the program became seen more and more as an American program than a joint operation. And, of course, it was American. It was based on President Kennedy's speech of 1961 calling for an Alliance for Progress to change the basic structure. And it became more and more American, particularly after Kennedy's death, when it became an economic aid program, and we left aside the political and the social change which really is necessary if we're going to change things in Latin America.

*Q: Under the Alliance for Progress originally was there an element of trying to encourage social and political change?*

RYAN: Yes, that was the bone in the throat in a lot of the governments down there. They signed, but they looked upon this as intervention on the part of the United States, and most of them signed because they thought they were going to get massive amounts of capital transfer, and they could do lip service to these other elements of this. And, of course, some of them were so overt that they demanded payment in advance. The most flagrant case of this was Papa Doc, the president for life of Haiti, whose delegation indicated they probably wouldn't sign the Charter because they were very anxious to improve their transport facilities; and so because we needed the signature of Haiti—we needed two-thirds of the signatures of the countries in order to make the Charter go—we gave Papa Doc an airfield. The others were a little more subtle and indirect on this matter. I don't want to give the impression that the Alliance didn't do very positive things. It did. The integration part in Central America, for example, was responsible for a very definite

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change in the distribution pattern of goods and services in Central America. It encouraged trade among the countries which previously had not existed. To some extent that was true in South America. A great deal of work was done on cadastral studies and things pointing towards land reform. And, of course, the public health work which had begun in World War II under Nelson Rockefeller as coordinator of inter- American Affairs, also was a very positive aspiration to bettering the life of peoples of the Americas. But it did not accomplish by any means what had been in mind. And then once Kennedy had disappeared there was a very definite change in the U.S. attitude; and we became much more the loaners, the lenders, under a sort of modified aid program, financial aid to the countries in the area—pretty much in the conventional AID pattern rather than attempting to move on the social aspects.

By then, by 1965, I had been taken out of Latin America and made Associate Director of the Agency and except for my time in the Dominican Republic, most of my work—as the work of so many people in our government in that area—was pointed toward Southeast Asia and Vietnam and I made several trips to Vietnam. The model of a joint military-civilian public affairs, which I had started in '65 in the Dominican Republic became the basis for JUSPAO, the Joint United States Public Affairs Office, which was a joint military, USIS and AID—there were three elements—operation in Saigon, which became the largest information operation I think the United States has ever run in a single country. I was the Washington end, Barry Zorthian was the man who put together JUSPAO and ran it for several years out there. He was a very dynamic, aggressive man who had worked for the Voice of America before, who did a very difficult job confronting and working with the military, and with the civilian, and with the AID people in this very large information effort which we mounted in Vietnam. I spent a good bit of time going back and forth to Vietnam. I was also the USIA representative on the Rostow Committee which met every Monday afternoon in the White House situation room to review the week in Vietnam with representatives from State, Defense, CIA, Treasury and the White House staff. So I lost

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my immediacy on the Latin American scene, and I really didn't have any further close ties until I was named Ambassador in Honduras several years later.

I'm just trying to think of what might be of interest in the Vietnam thing. I think most of that has been pretty well covered in the literature, the JUSPAO has been the subject of at least of War College theses, and I think of other research. A book was researched at the Naval War College on JUSPAO and the various elements involved. Just about everything that has been done in the information field was done in Vietnam during that period. We had the Blue Eagle out there—I didn't mention that before. The Blue Eagle was a flying television transmitter. These were the days before satellites were used and we had a Constellation which had a television transmitter in it. I believe it was under Air Force control out of Eglin Air Force Base. At the time of the Cuban missile crisis, in 1962, we had done some experimenting with it. We thought then that we might have to broadcast to Cuba had we been forced to invade. They brought the Blue Eagle up to Washington and I remember one morning at 3:00 a.m. we had to sit up and watch some sample transmissions from the Blue Eagle which was flying over Bethesda at the time. It wasn't used, as I recall, at the time of the Cuban missile crisis. Things calmed down before we were able to crank up a program and do enough testing.

But in the Dominican Republic it was used. We brought it in there. That was the first time it was used tactically. The television station, as I said earlier, was in the hands of the forces of Colonel Camaano. We brought in the Blue Eagle and flew over the capital of Santo Domingo—its was still called Ciudad Trujillo—no, they've changed it back to Santo Domingo by that time, and broadcast a film of Lyndon Johnson telling the people that our aims were peaceful and we wanted to restore order in the Dominican Republic. After those experiments it went out to Vietnam where it actually transmitted material for the Vietnamese—I think from about '66 to '68—and by that time they had built the transmission towers, and they were able to put in a more permanent installation for television.

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*Q: One of the things I'd be interested in hearing you discuss is your experience in USIA with respect to the Cultural Exchange Program and how that related to the State Department and the various administrative relationships in the field and in Washington.*

RYAN: That is one of the favorite bureaucratic topics even today among USIA officers. I recall when I first went into the Information Service in 1951, although we were not Foreign Service Officers, we were grantees under the International Information Administration, which was a part of the State Department and we were cleared by State. All of this was under the Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs, at that time a man by the name of Edward Barrett (who had been editor of Newsweek for some time). And this continued until at the beginning of the Eisenhower administration a study was made to determine how best to conduct the international information and educational operations. Secretary of State Dulles was adamant in that he did not want to be operating, he wanted to be at the policy level and he didn't want this operational organization which was the USIA or the information and cultural programs. And the study, which was done in 1952 or '53 by the new Eisenhower Administration, had recommended the establishment of a separate agency to handle this—an executive agency—an agency responsible to the president.

But in the negotiations on the Hill, Senator Fulbright, you may recall after World War II he originated the Fulbright Exchange Program based on the monies realized from the sale of surplus war materials, and which was just getting into high gear in Europe and South Asia in 1951, '52 and '53, was the chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee. He opposed putting his exchange programs under a new and separate propaganda agency. So after considerable negotiation it was worked out that the educational programs would stay in the State Department, originally under the Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs; and the rest of the information operations—the press, radio, libraries, English teaching, Voice of America—would be constituted into a new agency, an executive agency outside the State Department.

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But because of the nature of the beast, the number of officers involved, budgetary restrictions and all, it was agreed that in the field the Educational Exchange Program would be operated by USIA officers under what was really a contractual arrangement with State. So it was. And I recall hearing that when Ed Murrow became Director of USIA in 1961 he asked for a briefing on this, and after listening to a long briefing and seeing several charts, he turned around and said, "It can't work." But, of course, it did and it still continues to work. But, this meant that there was always considerable debate both in the field and particularly in Washington about the role of the Cultural Program.

The accusation was made that Cultural Officers were not as liable to be promoted as the information people; that culture was starved at the expense of information. I was called upon to sit on several Task Forces because I was the example of the opposite, since I'd started as a Cultural Officer and had become an Assistant Director and Associate Director, Deputy Director of USIA. I've forgotten all of them but I know that when Charles Frankel, a rather eminent philosopher, was named Assistant Secretary of State for Education and Cultural Affairs in 1965, he was very concerned. He felt that somehow culture had to be separated from information and that the contagion of the information people working with culture abroad put us at risk in the purity of our cultural operations. So he convened a task force and he did it under the aegis of the Smithsonian Institution. A Smithsonian Task Force on international cultural relations which held innumerable hearings pro and con, came up with large numbers of schemes and organization charts. And finally he was able to get an International Education Act through the Congress which established a new category of Foreign Service personnel— Foreign Service Educational Officers. But in the bureaucratic fighting in Washington he was no match for the then Director of USIA, Leonard Marks, and although the bill was passed and the officers were established, they were never funded. So this continued as it had been and USIA continued to administer in the field the educational exchange, somewhat to the consternation of some members of the academic community and of some people in Washington. I don't think there was much concern about this among people who had seen the operation overseas. It was the theory.

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It reminds me of the old story of the Oxford professors who after hearing description of some sort of scientific experiment said, "Well, it may work in practice, but it will never work in theory." That was essentially the problem and it still continues.

There's a great deal of talk now again this year of possibly holding hearings on the cultural program. But I think it is best described by this fact that today I've been actively involved in one way or another in USIA operations as an AMPART and visiting lecturer. I've just come from Brazil where I was an American participant, so I've seen a lot of USIA operations and I still continue to see them. And I think it is a pretty smooth-running operation overseas. And I would hate to see any tearing apart of this operation in the name of constructing a better theory whereas the practice works. And really that's what has happened.

We did make some changes in the recruitment of cultural officers. In 1965 we were able to get into the budget some super-cultural officers for some of the large posts, in other words, putting a cultural figure in as an adviser and Cultural Attach# in the embassies. We sent Robin Winks from Yale, a rather distinguished historian, to England. We sent Margaret Clapp the former president of Wellesley to India as the super- Cultural Officer. And I think we had two or three others around the world. And that was a bone to those who were objecting. But in general the program stayed despite all these various Task Forces. There were others later on which I did not participate in. Perhaps other people can tell more about that. Frank Stanton, the former president of NBC headed a task force which reviewed the operation, and I believe there was still another one after that. Now there are a couple of books out on the issue.

But this problem of how do you put together the need for getting money from the U.S. Congress to conduct overseas operations in the cultural and information field...with the practical operations overseas the need for some congruence between U.S. policy and every type of U.S. Government operation overseas, whether it be cultural, agricultural or whatever; and I think that the present pragmatic solution is operable. It is not ideal but it does work. But this is a constant point of friction in information operations overseas.

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And, of course, there are always examples which are probably legitimate; e.g. that of a hardboiled newsman who as a PAO may very well not want to listen to his Cultural Attach#. Or a Cultural Officer may not want to listen to the fact that the American public is paying his salary, and he better be careful about how far he goes in opposing U.S. policy overseas and demonstrating to other people the existence of dissent in our society. The problem is, of course, people don't see this fine distinction between a cultural operation, which might be separate, and the State Department operations. USIS must be an integral part of the embassy overseas although its budget is separate from State's. I'm sure someone else will talk about the International Communication Agency which was in the Carter Administration. It was an attempt to give a more cultural and less informational aura to our operations.

*Q: Now, that was renaming the USIA...*

RYAN: ...the USIA and bringing out of the State Department the cultural operations into USIA where they are today. But there is now the attempt to either take them back into State or to put them into an independent cultural operation. But I would venture to guess that if we had an independent international cultural operation it would be starved for funds within a very short period of time, because there is great pressure within the Congress to show immediate effectiveness. If you can't show effectiveness, you can show immediate impact through the fast media—press briefings and radio, but the slow media, the Cultural Attach#, speeches and educational exchanges—are very slow. This has been the case with the British Council. The British Council is an independent operation projecting British culture abroad through lectures, exchanges and book publication and things like that, and they've taken very severe cuts in recent years since World War II particularly.

*Q: Well, you're in an excellent position, having those various positions overseas as both Cultural Affairs Officer and as an Ambassador and then assignments in USIA and the State Department to comment on the impact, which may be somewhat intangible,*

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*of cultural exchange on U.S. foreign policy objectives. Is it something that can be demonstrated or is it more of an intangible gut feeling as to its impact?*

RYAN: I'm afraid it is more intangible. It is very hard. The problem always is how do you go up to the Congress and ask for continuing funds for a program that doesn't give you an obvious bang for a buck. The cultural program is, I think, a positive one, but I can't give you statistics on the number of people who change their mind about the United States. I think it was Ed Murrow who said that no computer clicks when a man changes his mind, and he isn't always necessarily going to take action in support of his mind change. All of these [are] very subtle aspects and nuances in the cultural exchange program. The best we can say is that there are more and more people who have a better insight into what makes the United States tick as a result of their experience in the United States. And I think a lot of Americans have a better appreciation of the complexity of international relations because of their service either in the Peace Corps, or as Fulbright students, or as USIA grantees going overseas. But how you can prove this is very difficult.

I know we went through exercises when Theodore Streibert was Director of USIA. He came out of advertising, then later had been president of WOR Mutual Broadcasting System, but he was very advertising minded. He required every month, every post to define a short-term objective, and at the end of the month report on how much progress they had made towards this short-term objective. This is a rather futile exercise. It meant that we spent an awful lot of time inventing things that we knew could be accomplished in a month, but whether they were significant or not I often wondered. Therefore we probably did neglect the cultural program in certain ways. I was in Bolivia at that time and I had some objectives that were forced on me about making the carabineros (the National Police) aware of the Communist threat. I had to go out and make some speeches to the school of carabineros. And we put out little pamphlets, and then we tried to do some rather informal surveying but it didn't come through very well. But we made a report on it anyway. I for one feel that the need for people to be aware of other people is fundamental to the human condition if we're to live together on this ever more crowded earth. But that you

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can guarantee this is a doubtful proposition. I think it has to be accepted on faith, and we have to keep working towards it. We have to realize that in order to maintain equilibrium, to prevent disaster—that's the main job of a diplomat after all, it is not necessarily to change but to minimize the damage. If you do have a modicum of understanding, of empathy, built up through these exchange experiences, you have a little better chance to keep things from reaching the explosion point.

*Q: You mentioned that your last assignment in USIA was as Deputy Director. Could you characterize that and what that meant in terms of your involvement at a senior level with other agencies, with the White House, and particularly with the State Department?*

RYAN: Yes, well, USIA at that time had two Deputy Directors, a political deputy and a career deputy. I was the senior career person in the Agency. I had the title of Deputy Director for Policy & Plans, and I spent a great deal of time on interagency committees of one sort or another. The other Deputy Director was a newspaper editor, from Texas, who had supported Lyndon Johnson from the beginning of Lyndon's career; a very, very pleasant old gentleman but who was not particularly concerned with things international so that I was the outside man at many meetings. And that's how I got involved in the White House Task Force on Vietnam, how I was involved in the clean-up operation after the CIA exposures in '66, and I was also involved in—well, that was in the Kennedy Administration earlier—the counter-insurgency planning for the counter-insurgency forces. That was early when I was still Associate Director of the Agency.

But I spent a great deal of time working with the State Department. I was also the eyes and ears on the Paris negotiations, and I had to go over and read the cable traffic in the State Department during those years. It was fascinating and frustrating in a way. The Agency didn't have that much input but I was at least kept advised. All this had come out of Ed Murrow's reputed temper tantrum after the Bay of Pigs, when he went into the Kennedys and threatened to resign and demanded that USIA be brought in on the take-offs as well as the crash landings, so at least they kept us advised of what was going on

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and occasionally we could make a contribution on the psychological aspects. We were trying to do a fair amount of polling on Vietnam—pollings overseas, polling within Vietnam—and we used to prepare regular briefings for the White House on that aspect. Also on the foreign press we did weekly roundups on the major newspapers in the world and what they were saying about Vietnam and that would be our input into a lot of these interagency meetings of one sort or another. I was also put on the Board of the Foreign Service later on, and I was involved in some of the struggles over the examination process.

Going back I want to make clear, when I was talking about Paris and the negotiations, I was talking about the Vietnam negotiations in Paris and all of the problems which began, of course, with the shape of the table and that sort of thing.

Now as far as the USIA and the National Security Council goes, there again we go back to the Eisenhower years where I understand that the Operations Coordination Board, which was a subsidiary of the National Security Council, included USIA in planning from a psychological point of view on long-range foreign policy issues. At the beginning of the Kennedy Administration Murrow was invited, he was not formally made a member, but after the Bay of Pigs he was invited to many of the meetings of the National Security Council.

And then, of course, at the time of the Cuban missile crisis, Murrow was already quite sick from the effects of the cancer which ultimately killed him, and Donald Wilson, who was then the Political Deputy under Murrow, was a full member of the Executive Committee, EXCOM, which met every day with Kennedy during that period. I used to meet regularly with Wilson who came back from the White House and would brief me and Henry Loomis who was the Director of the Voice of America at the time, because we had quite a bit of operational involvement. The Agency was broadcasting into Cuba. We had made an arrangement to have I think there was something like ten or twelve medium range radio stations which had a signal audible in Cuba form a network and broadcast the Latin American Service of the Voice of America. Henry Loomis was the technical man on this,

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and I was the content man and my Deputy, a man named Kermit Brown, sat down at the Voice as the policy guidance person for our broadcasts into Cuba. All of this came from Don Wilson's participation in EXCOM.

Also, an interesting anecdote of that time was the fact that we were preparing the contingency for an invasion of Cuba and USIA was involved in that. We had senior USIA officers positioned at Fort Bragg, Miami and Trinidad in the Caribbean to go in with the first invasion wave because it was hoped that we could find broadcasting facilities in Cuba. We knew where they all were from the debriefing of refugees and the like and we planned to begin retransmitting the Voice of America as soon as possible. Also, we were the source of leaflets for possible use in the case of an invasion or bombardment, which we designed and then printed at Fort Bragg. The Director of the USIA Press Service, Ray MacKland, was flown in a military jet to Ft. Bragg with the pasteups, the proofs, of the leaflets for printing because we didn't want them done commercially where anybody could possibly get hold of them. He was taken out to Andrews Air Force Base and put in a P-47 or something, a two-engine plane, and flown down to Fort Bragg where they were able to use the Psychological Warfare printing plant and printed about a million of these leaflets. Unfortunately they've all disappeared, I should have kept some, and I know Don Wilson wanted to keep some. He has been in touch with Ft. Bragg seeking a copy but the Army alleges that they have none, so there is no documentary proof. But I know they were there. They were in Spanish. They showed the photographs, which everybody saw on TV at the time, of the Russian missile sites and all this explained with a message from President Kennedy that we came in peace and we had nothing against the people of Cuba. I know that General Krulak, a Marine 3-star general I think he was at the time, was the action man on the Pentagon side, and some months later he called me about what to do with them and I said, "Destroy them." He must have been very thorough, since they were printed down there, and none were brought out, I guess really have disappeared. That is one example of how close we were to an invasion of Cuba at that time. USIA was prepared to go right along and Argentina had sent three destroyers, I think it was, to Trinidad where

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we had a USIA man ready to go with them, a Spanish-speaking officer named Byron Winstead. At Miami we had positioned a Latin hand, Taylor Peck; and Aldo D'Alessandro was with a sequestered group ready to go from the 18th Airborne Corps in Fort Bragg. I don't think those preparations have ever been documented or recounted. I have never been able to find the orders for these operations but I know they existed.

*Q: Well, Ambassador Ryan, this has been fascinating and it leads into many possible avenues of further discussion. I want to thank you very much for your comments today and hope that maybe it will be possible to have a second follow-on interview with you.*

RYAN: Sure. We can talk about Honduras and ARA if you want to sometime.

*Q: This is the second part of an interview with Ambassador Hewson Ryan being conducted on May 4 at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy in Medford. The interview is one in a series being conducted under the auspices of The Association for Diplomatic Studies. The interviewer is Richard Nethercut, a retired Foreign Service Officer.*

Ambassador Ryan, previously we talked about a number of your different assignments both in the field and back in Washington for USIA. Would you care to describe your last period before assuming your ambassadorial appointment?

RYAN: Well, at the end of the Johnson administration, I think it was the day after elections, Leonard Marks, who had been Director from 1966 to November of 1968, resigned, and the following week the political deputy, Robert Ackers, also resigned so I was left as the Acting Director of USIA for the transition period from November through, I think it was March, before a Director was approved by the Senate. This was an interesting and revealing period to me, in that I had to deal with the outgoing administration. Lyndon Johnson and his group at the White House were very, very active in collecting every bit of material about the administration and shipping it off to Texas. We had to provide copies of every mention of Lyndon Johnson in our output over the five years of his presidency. This was not easy

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and [I also] had to deal with a number of the political appointees in the agency who were anxious to suddenly seek Civil Service or Foreign Service cover so that they might stay on.

This was also a period in which the new administration, people whose names later came up in the Watergate hearing, were attempting to find spots for the largest number of political appointees possible. At that time, however, there were very limited possibilities. The potential for outside jobs, for Schedule C, or other political appointments in the agency was very, very constrained. I think we had something under 50 positions possible, and yet I had pressure and telephone calls from everybody and his brother looking for GS-12 to GS-15 jobs for political appointees. But we were protected by the Civil Service Act. I gather that that has since changed, that now there are possibilities of putting 300 or 400 people into the agency because of the reforms to the Civil Service Act of the Jimmy Carter period. But we were able to resist that, and really there were very few political appointees put into the middle levels or the upper middle career levels at the Agency at the beginning of the Nixon Administration.

My greatest shock and problem was the designation of Frank Shakespeare as Director of USIA. I had worked in the Foreign Service, by that time, for a good number of years, and I had worked for political appointees of both Democratic and Republican Parties without any problems or difficulties. But for the first time in Frank Shakespeare I encountered a total zealot, a man who was convinced that the previous administration had been a tool of Soviet foreign policy, that obviously people who were active in that administration, witting or not, must have been cooperating against the United States. He had no trust in me and made very clear from the very beginning that he saw me as someone who represented all that was evil in the Johnson Administration, even though I was a career officer and I attempted to be as open and as helpful as possible. So it was very obvious that my tenure at USIA headquarters would be brief.

I was the formal director of the Agency, Acting Director of the Agency, for the next couple of months. It took some time for Frank to be cleared and then even more time for him

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to arrange to be sworn in since he wanted to do it in the Rose Garden and with the President. So these were very uncomfortable months for me in that sense. However, I was fortunate in that fairly soon in this period the Political Deputy Director of the Agency was designated, and it turned out to be a man with very strong Republican credentials but who was a pragmatist and almost a career civil servant, that was Henry Loomis, who had been Director of the Voice of America during the Republican administration of Eisenhower and during the first couple of years of the Murrow tenure. He and I got along fairly well and we were able to keep the place afloat while Frank Shakespeare, who was personally, zealously dedicated to the overthrow of the Soviet system, was working and beginning to build his own team in this direction. I always recall the fact that the first day Frank came into the office, he asked me to arrange a briefing by the CIA on their plans to overthrow Fidel Castro. This was somewhat of a surprise and a shock to the people at CIA, since they had pretty well resigned themselves to the fact that we weren't going to be overthrowing Castro that soon. But Frank was very discouraged and disgusted by their briefing since they did not seem to have an activist plan. Also, that first day he came in, he had a copy of a book by a Cuban refugee, *Dagger in the Heart* I think it was called, and he insisted that I buy copies and send them to every USIS post in the area so that they could know the evils of the Castro system.

Fortunately, Henry Loomis was a moderating force in all of this and my own future was more or less assured by his presence there, because I had been nominated for Career Minister in 1968 together with a fairly substantial group of Foreign Service Officers from State, and our nominations had been held up in the Senate because of some sort of feud between Senator Fulbright and Lyndon Johnson. So for a year we were unconfirmed and had to be resubmitted to the new Congress in the beginning of 1969. Although Frank Shakespeare's initial reaction was to remove my name from the list, Henry prevailed on him to keep it on so that I was then confirmed as Career Minister, I think, in about March of 1969.

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Then Henry also had been in conversations with the State Department, and the perennial problem of USIA officers being considered for ambassadors had come up again. There had been an agreement early in the Murrow administration that at least one principal officer position in each area of the world would be held for a USIA officer. And at the beginning of the Murrow period this took place. There was one ambassador in Africa, a DCM in Europe, a Consul General in Latin America and a DCM in the Far East. But then there had been no further USIA ambassadorial appointments until 1965 when the second USIA officer, Bill Weathersby, was sent to the Sudan. However, he was only there, a few months when the '67 war led to the breaking of relations and he left the Sudan and went on, to become DCM in New Delhi.

The pressure which Henry Loomis put on State to honor these agreements resulted in their agreeing to see that I was to be given a Chief of Mission assignment. I was offered the embassy in Ecuador, but it was impossible for me to go because my daughter's health would not permit her to go to the altitude so it looked for a while as though nothing would happen. In the meantime I had ended my tenure as Deputy Director and I'd been replaced by Bill Weathersby, the other career minister in USIA, who came from [New] Delhi to take over. He, by the way, lasted only four months with Frank Shakespeare, and he retired because of the political views of Mr. Shakespeare. Bill went on to become Vice President of Princeton where he spent about ten years.

In my case Henry Loomis was able to keep up the pressure on State, and along about June I was told that I was going to go to Malawi in Africa, so I spent some time boning up on African history and culture and background on Dr. Banda. But then, fortunately for me, things in Honduras came unstuck. The man who had been chosen to be ambassador to Honduras was found not to be acceptable to the Honduran government. Although they did not formally say this, they sent word through American companies in New York and Boston that they would prefer someone else. The Assistant Secretary was an old friend, Charles Meyer, with whom I'd been in Colombia in the early '50s when he was the

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manager of Sears Roebuck. He managed to prevail on the Department and I was named for Honduras.

Honduras at that time was an interesting assignment. It was certainly off the beaten track, but there had been a war with Salvador, a rather bloody short war, in July of 1969, so that when I went there in, I guess it was about September, pieces were still being put together. Feelings were very, very deep. Both Salvador and Honduras were extremely resentful of the United States. I suppose it is a tribute to the fact that we were even-handed, the fact that both countries said we had sided with their opponents. Feelings were particularly bitter in Honduras. There had been some demonstrations, they had broken a few windows in the embassy complaining about our support for the Salvadorans and rather similar happenings had taken place in El Salvador. My job was to try to calm things down and to see if some sort of peaceful resolution could be found for the Honduran-Salvadoran conflict which was mixed up with demography. The Hondurans had expelled a large number of illegal immigrants who had come—in fact, a couple hundred thousand illegal immigrants—from Salvador into Honduras. There were festering border disputes. The entire border is poorly marked and has been a subject of border incursions on both sides for close to a century.

When my confirmation hearings came up I was very fortunate in being able to arrange to have Senator Fulbright, the Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, ask me what were the major problems with Honduras and I mentioned the war and I also mentioned the Swan Islands. These latter are two small islands off the coast of Honduras which were discovered by Columbus apparently, but were claimed by the United States under the provisions of the Guano Act of 1846. The Guano Act was another one of those phenomena of American imperialism. The Guano Act said that any uninhabited island in which guano was found could be claimed as American territory by registering this claim with the nearest American consul. This happened in the 1850's, I guess it was. Although there was nobody living on these two little islands, they were registered as U.S. and exploited by a couple of guano companies for a few years and then later used by the United Fruit Company where they established their first radio station. In fact, the first use

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of maritime radio was by United Fruit back in the very early years of this century when they controlled their banana boats from a radio station on the Swan Islands from about 1910 or '11 through the '20s. They also grew coconuts there, and did some experimental work with oranges and a few other citrus fruits, but it was not much.

And then during the time of the Bay of Pigs preparation, the CIA had established a medium-wave radio transmitter on the islands. Radio Swan was part of the plan to lead to an uprising within Cuba, and during the difficult days of the invasion—the Bay of Pigs invasion—Radio Swan was on the air 24 hours, calling on the people of Cuba to rise up, and so forth. After all of that the station was liquidated and actually the broadcasting towers were dynamited and tossed into the sea so that there wasn't anything on the islands except a couple of small U.S. installations. One was a radio beacon which operated independently, and the other was a weather station which was operated by a small team of five or six meteorologists and maintenance personnel. Then there were occasional fishermen who would come in for a few days. There were shacks and very few people, perhaps 10 or 15 people on these islands. But they were a constant source of irritation. The Hondurans, when they had nothing better to do, would demonstrate in downtown Tegucigalpa and paint the walls of our information center, or Embassy, demanding the return of their sovereign territory.

I explained this to Senator Fulbright at my hearings and he pointed his finger at me and went on the record saying, “Go down there and solve this problem.” So that gave me something to do and I was fortunate during my period in Honduras. I was able to negotiate an agreement with the Honduran government whereby United States recognized the sovereignty of Honduras over these islands, and they agreed to allow us to maintain our weather station and our radio beacon there for an indefinite period. We then had a great ceremony and went out and the President of Honduras raised the Honduran flag and I had a destroyer come to provide an honor guard and saluting. This was really a very positive accomplishment, and we were able to get the Senate to ratify it rather rapidly. I think that if it had taken place a few years later during the Panama Canal discussions, or certainly

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today, we'd have a very, very difficult time convincing the U.S. Congress to support this action. But, anyway, that was one accomplishment in Honduras.

I also was able to, I think, bring in the AID program to support some of the very necessary social changes in Honduras. The extension of agricultural credit, the building of feeder roads, trying to make Honduras a viable economic unit was one of the factors contributing to the fact that Honduras did not have the tremendous social tensions of the other countries of Central America. Also there was a considerable amount of movement towards land reform, and the peasant groups acted more or less responsibly. The AFL-CIO had been working for many years in Honduras in the fruit areas, and the labor movement there was much more responsible than in other parts of the area of Central America.

I spent a good bit of time travelling in Honduras. There wasn't a great deal of bilateral pressure of any kind so I was able to visit something like 60 different airports, believe it or not. The airports were very often cow pastures where we had to make a pass first to run the cows off the field and then land. But I did cover a good bit of Honduras. In that way I got to know the country very well, and a lot of the people. It was a very small country with rather friendly, simple people, very pro-American in general. Of course, always in Latin America there's the resentment of the "rich uncle" but in general the people in Honduras, I think, felt rather positively towards the United States. And despite all of the leftist propaganda about the United Fruit, the so-called "octopus", in general most people where the United Fruit operated had a rather favorable view of the company. It paid higher wages than anyone else, had better health care, and schools, and so forth. There was also a great deal of social mobility within the company. There were very few Americans, as I recall there were only two or three in Honduras. There were Hondurans at all levels: the technical level, the managerial level, as well as the fruit workers. So that it was not an unpleasant situation as far as relations with American companies went.

Otherwise, my time there was fairly uneventful. Dealing with a small country and a military government in the traditional Latin sense was somewhat different than dealing with other

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countries. An interesting anecdote was the fact that, as is so often the case in Latin America, family ties are extremely important in the adjudication of government positions. I remember one of my jobs very often was to go in and see the Foreign Minister and talk to him about Honduran positions at the UN on which we would seek Honduran support. But one of the problems there was that the man who held the representative's job in New York, the Ambassador to the UN, was married to some relative of the General—the General being the Chief of State—General Lopez. This man in New York had his own ideas on certain things and he would vote sometimes totally contrary to the posture which the Foreign Ministry had assured us they had sent him instructions about. And I went in a couple of times to the Foreign Minister and he would shrug his shoulders and say, “You know, I sent him instructions but he's the General's nephew-in-law, he does what he pleases.” I think this is something which the people in Washington find a little hard to understand. The fact that there are these other ties very often and the autonomy of the representatives of the government, particularly in international organizations, sometimes is based on family ties rather than on political discipline and things of that nature.

*Q: While you were in Honduras, having a background in USIA and serving in a number of Latin American posts, you had a good idea of how operations occurred in the mission. How did you find the relationship with the State Department, or possibly other elements of the U.S. government?*

RYAN: Well Honduras, in fact Latin America in general during the Nixon administration, was hardly in a position of priority. The outside observers have said that the goal of the Nixon administration in Latin America was benign neglect, to keep down the noise level and really concentrate on other areas of the world. And this was pretty obvious in my dealings with the State Department, and with the Assistant Secretary, and with the desk officers. That really nobody was following Honduras very closely is certainly a contrast with today where the micro- management from Washington, I gather, reaches unbelievable proportions. I could almost believe what it said on my visiting card about

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being Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, because I could do pretty much what I pleased down there and Washington would usually go along.

The Swan Islands was a good example. The Department could have cared less, or the U.S. Government, about this, and since it was my goal to try and get this scab off our relationships, I accomplished it. The same thing was true with daily business. I had very able AID directors there, both Walter Stoneman, who was there for my first year, and Ed Marasciulo for the last three years, were extremely dedicated, highly qualified AID people who understood the goals of development and, I think, built the programs, very modest in size, but very positive in accomplishment. I had a very good working relationship with both of them. The USIS program was a small one and the PAOs generally worked pretty well with the educators and the other target groups in the area. We had a rather active Binational Center in Tegucigalpa and another one in San Pedro Sula, both of which supported U.S. long-range cultural programs pretty well. We had a few visiting professors who came down and helped with the development of the universities and normal schools.

The Peace Corps was particularly active there at the time, and the change which I saw in the Peace Corps from the early days was a very dramatic and a very positive one. Most of the volunteers in Honduras, and there were about 90 to 100 of them during my period, were professionals or semi-professionals, people who worked in planning, and health education, and development in its various aspects; and the great majority of them were highly dedicated and very positive in their actions.

The military mission was very small but worked pretty closely with the Honduran military. We had no major problems. It was a very small mission. Most of the officers were instructing in the various schools of the Honduran military, or the Honduran Military Academy. We had no major operations at the time. There was still this resentment in the military forces against the United States for what they saw as our failure to [help] them against El Salvador, but that was gradually easing during my period there.

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However, I should point out, that the Honduran military—and I think it is still true today—looked upon Salvador as the real threat to Honduras, and all of their thinking and long-range planning was towards somehow avenging the invasion and the initial defeat of the Honduran armed forces in the war of '69. I think we fail to realize that even today, the Honduran military are thinking about Salvador as the danger and not Nicaragua, and their resentment at the huge amount of military aid, which they see going to El Salvador, is in part a product of their fear that should Salvador succeed in putting down the uprisings—the Forabundo Marti and the other rebel groups in Salvador—that then they would turn and try to get back at Honduras. This was one of the problems which the military command in Panama failed to take into account when they tried to establish a training base for Salvadoran troops in Honduras. This really was more than the Hondurans could take. This was in 1982 and '83, and it led to the fall of General Alvarez for having agreed to this and, of course, the expulsion of the Salvadoran troops, because the Honduran troops could not countenance the idea of the training of enemy number one in their territory.

*Q: Could I pursue that a little more, having in mind the recent Arias plan where he got the Chiefs of State of the five Central American countries together to agree to something in Guatemala. During your period there as Ambassador to Honduras, did you see possibilities of a Central American sphere of cooperation? Could you comment on that?*

RYAN: This is a strange paradox. Central America was a single country just after the break with Spain, back in the 1830s and through about 1841 or '42, and this is still an ideal, a goal toward which all of the countries give at least lip service. The Honduran constitution, and I think the constitutions of all of the countries of Central America, talk about the greater fatherland. The fact that they feel a commitment to Central America, as well as to their individual nationalism. At the same time there is exacerbated nationalism which coexists with this feeling. It's often said that fratricidal or civil wars are the most bitter and this is the case which happened with Salvador and Honduras in their war. They're all related. The families inter-marry; you have to know genealogy to know anything about

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Central America. Everybody is related to everybody else or to everybody else's enemies and so forth. But the idea of Central American unity is always adduced—they celebrate a common independence day, the 15th of September, when all five countries always observe their day of freedom from Spain. And speeches are always made about Central American unity but the practical problems of the strong feelings of each state about its autonomy and sovereignty are still there as they were during the brief period of Central American unity. It broke up because of the jealousies and rivalries of the five countries. They have, of course, during the '50s and '60s the Central American Common Market, the integration movement was very positive. It made some very, very definite, positive impacts on the organization of the industrial base and the farming base in Central America. Some of the institutions have survived and done very well. The Central American Bank is still a major instrument of development in the area. Another instrument, the Central American Military Organization, ODECA, which was seen by Somoza as his tool, has fallen apart, or fell apart very early. An idea of reactivating it in the mid- '80s came to naught when the United States tried to bring the generals together. When they were meeting they actually had very little to accomplish. The one accomplishment of the Organization of Central American Military Organizations in the '60s, I believe, was an agreement on common insignia for the officer corps. Not exactly earth shaking.

But the ideal is there. There have been attempts to combine economic representation in Europe in a Central American organization— one of the economic organizations. I think that in the long run there will be more and more cooperation, but it will be in terms of the European integration, very slow and probably beginning in the economic level.

*Q: Are there other aspects of your tour as Ambassador in Honduras that you consider to be particularly significant that you would like to elaborate on, or should we move to some other topic?*

RYAN: Significant, no, but anecdotal interesting might be the fact that we had a skyjacking during my tenure and it was an interesting plan. A man who had been born in one of the

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banana camps in Honduras and had been educated partly there, although he was an American citizen, who then went into engineering and had served in the DEW Line, and in Ascension Island and places like that, had apparently been planning for many years on skyjacking a plane and parachuting into Honduras with the ransom. He carried this out in 1971 when he skyjacked a plane out of New Orleans, got them to refuel it, and then fly over the northern coast of Honduras where he parachuted out the back of the plane with three hundred and three thousand dollars in cash in a sack. He landed in Honduras, walked out to the road, got a bus and went into town with his little package of money.

We couldn't find him, nobody could find him for the longest time. They had FBI people down there, but then Eastern Airlines put out a call and a reward for information about his whereabouts and suddenly, four or five months later, I guess one of his relatives—I never found out exactly who was the informant—went to Miami, talked to Eastern, gave his name, and we were able to zero in on him. We had photographs of him and were putting out reward posters when one night he walked into the embassy and asked for asylum because he was afraid the Hondurans would get him. Their methods of interrogation were not exactly gentle, and he knew that if they ever got him they would get the money out of him and he might not survive. So he walked in and surrendered without the money.

I got in touch with the FBI, and Eastern, and the FBI sent some agents down. Eastern sent a special jet and we were able to spirit him out of the country. I called the General, the man who ran the country, and told him about this and he said, "You know, you just take him. We have enough people like that here." This caused some consternation and has certain parallels with certain of the problems we've had recently in Honduras in that the Hondurans, particularly the opposition parties, were upset that we had taken this man who possibly could have claimed Honduran citizenship, or whom they might have claimed as a Honduran because he'd been born on Honduran soil. But he'd been born in the days when—I think it was 1928 or '29—our laws said anyone born of American parents overseas

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could be registered as an American citizen at the nearest consulate. He'd been registered as an American citizen.

But anyway, there were certain things paralleling the recent kidnapping of Mate Ballesteros although this fellow went voluntarily, in fact, he asked specifically to be extradited. We didn't extradite him. We just put him on a plane and took him up to the States and he was arrested and went to jail. We eventually got the money back too. He couldn't resist talking to his cellmate who must have been a stooly, and the FBI sent down some people and they found the \$303,000 untouched in his grandmother's attic or some place like that. I had the pleasure of certifying the counting and banding of \$303,000 on my office coffee table in Honduras before we sent it back to Eastern Airlines.

But the other thing about Honduras at the time was the neglect of the United States. When Honduras, in 1971, had its first, honest, open elections for president in about fifteen years, a civilian was elected and there was really a minimum of coercion, fraud, or anything of that nature. It was an open election, agreed to by all participants that the election had been fair. I tried to get Washington to send down to the inauguration an appropriate official as a representative of the White House, or a representative from the Congress—we tried hard to get a Congressman or Senator. We were unable to find anyone in authority in the U.S. Government who would even bother to come to Honduras to celebrate this and to participate. Only the Assistant Secretary, Charles Meyer, came down representing the United States Government. This, I think, exemplifies the lack of attention at the time which was general to the Central American area. Our own military, at the time were quite anxious to diminish the size of the missions there. The CIA was closing out stations, and I think by 1973 had decided they were only going to have two or three stations in Central America because they didn't feel that there was anything of importance there. Their budgetary constraints were such that they couldn't afford to keep operations going.

And I think some of our problems there today are reflected in this, this neglect of Central America at that time. We had a great deal of difficulty in getting any attention to Central

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America in the Washington bureaucracy. It was fine for me in a personal way in that nobody bothered me, and I could run my own show working together with the AID people, both in Honduras and the regional AID people out of Guatemala. I think we made a lot of small but significant advances in helping Honduras to confront its situation as the poorest country on the continental land mass of the Americas.

*Q: Moving on then to the period after Honduras when you were back in Washington with the State Department as a Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Latin American Bureau, did you have any responsibilities towards Central America, and did you see any evolution or change in our policy toward Central America?*

RYAN: Really, I can't say that I saw much in the positive sense. I went back to Washington in 1975 and at that time Latin America was still pretty far down the list of priorities, and Central America even more so. My responsibilities as the Senior Deputy included Central America because I had served there, and I did become involved at the time of the Guatemala earthquake in 1975, and our relief efforts there. I went down to Guatemala which was, as it still is, a rather tense situation with the military exercising considerable force and really controlling the government. There was still a military president at that time. Today we have a civilian president but he's hardly able to do very much; the military is still the predominant power there.

In Honduras there was a tremendous scandal in 1974 and '75 when it was discovered that General Lopez, who had been Chief of State and then president, was receiving a considerable amount of money in the millions of dollars, from the United Fruit Company in order to keep down the taxes on bananas. And the Honduran government tried to cleanse itself, the military establishment retired General Lopez. It was finally resolved by their holding an open trial of one of Lopez's ministers who had been the bag man in all of this and who had received the money and put it into Swiss bank accounts. He was condemned to national ignominy and fined the maximum fine, which I think was something like \$75.00. He served maybe 30 days in jail. But the United States cooperated with this

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and, of course, this led to revival of a lot of the old accusations against United Fruit. It led too to the suicide of the president of United Fruit, Eli Black, who in New York jumped out the window of the Pan American Building during all of this, because he'd been doing this illegally. They'd been laundering money somehow in order to pay off people in Honduras.

This, of course, goes way back to O. Henry. To really understand Honduras and its relationship with the United States you have to read O. Henry's novel—his first successful novel—Cabbages and Kings. It was written while he himself was on the lam from a bad check charge in Texas and went down to Central America. In those days we didn't have a very formal clearance procedure, and he managed to get a job as a vice consul in Trujillo where he spent a year or so observing the scene, and where he wrote this novel which is about a banana producing country which he calls Anchuria—Honduras in Spanish means depths, Anchuria means widths— and about a president who was on the take, and a president of the Central Bank who runs off with the government's treasury, and the banana company which installs its own president, and so forth. I would recommend it to anyone who wants to understand Honduras, because I'm afraid some of it is still very relevant to the situation there.

Now, as far as the other things that I did in the ARA Bureau, I also handled South America, and in this I was very much involved in the human rights problems. The pressures from human rights organizations in the United States on the U.S. Government to intervene in Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil and Chile, were very strong. Secretary Kissinger was adamant in that we would do this by quiet diplomacy and not public statements or public diplomacy. Therefore, we did a great deal, some of which is slowly coming out into the public domain, in bringing pressure on the governments of Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay to some extent, and certainly Chile, by calling in ambassadors, by sending private groups down and sending officials to talk to these governments about their miserable human rights image in the United States. I personally went to Argentine and Uruguay, Brazil, on this. We were able to successfully arrange the release of a good number of intellectuals and scientists during this period. Usually when we would get word from an American group we would

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immediately go to the post and ask them to go in and talk privately to the people. But I think that we were remiss in some ways.

I know of one case, which has never come to public attention, of the fact that we knew fairly early on that the governments of the Southern Cone countries were planning, or at least talking about, some assassinations abroad in the summer of 1976. I was Acting Assistant Secretary at the time and I tried to get a cable cleared with the 7th Floor instructing our ambassadors to go in to the Chiefs of State, or the highest possible level in these governments to let them know that we were aware of these conversations and to warn them that this was a violation of the very basic fundamentals of civilized society. Unfortunately that cable never got out and about a month later former Chilean Ambassador Letelier was assassinated on the streets of Washington. Whether there was a direct relationship or not, I don't know. Whether if we had gone in, we might have prevented this, I don't know. But we didn't. We were extremely reticent about taking a strong forward public posture, and even a private posture in certain cases, as was this case in the Chilean assassination.

I also worked on Panama at the time. General Noriega, who at that time was the G-2 of the Panamanian National Guard as the Defense Force was called at that time. There was no question that he was already a sinister figure known for his desire to make money out of everything he was involved in. I don't recall the details but we had problems with American shrimp boats fishing in Panamanian waters, and he was somehow involved in holding up these people for bribes, or fines, and so forth. He was a very unsavory character. But, of course, he was, I guess, another one of these final relics of the old "our son of a bitch" syndrome. When Franklin Roosevelt asked about Somoza and our support for Somoza back in 1936, he said, "Somoza is a son of a bitch, but he's our son of a bitch."

*Q: Your background was not as typical as many ambassadors in that you had a career in USIA and then became an ambassador and subsequently served in the State Department*

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*after having the bulk of your career in USIA. Drawing on those experiences, would you have some observations to make about the relationship between the two agencies?*

RYAN: Well, I am a proponent of the integration of the Foreign Service. I believe that public affairs are very important, in fact, a growing important part of the diplomatic career and that ambassadors and other Foreign Service Officers serving overseas as often the only representatives of the United States and its policies overseas, should have training in public affairs and a familiarity with the media of communication, the technologies of communication. The techniques of inter-personal communication are extremely important. I feel that it is valuable for a Foreign Service Officer to serve some time in this aspect of foreign policy. On the other hand, there is, of course, the traditional separation into cones within the State Department. There is still, I gather, a great premium put on service in the political cone as opposed to others in regard to becoming a Chief of Mission or a DCM and, of course, that applies also to USIA. In my own career, I was very fortunate in that I found no major opprobrium attached to being a USIA officer as some of my colleagues tell me is so often the case. I was always welcomed in the company of my peers in the embassies and in the State Department. However, that does not mean that there was not always a feeling of being somewhat different, somewhat outside, and not being "one of the boys." I don't know how you break this down. I gather now that the commission given to USIA officers is as a Foreign Service Officer. I had a commission as a Foreign Service Information Officer after the career legislation of 1968, or '67. And prior to that, of course, we were staff officers of the Foreign Service. We were not considered Foreign Service Officers.

I hope that this new commission means that there will be more cross-fertilization. I think that service in USIA, which is seen now, unfortunately, as a less than positive addition to one's Foreign Service career in State, would be gradually erased and that the USIA officers should be considered for service in State since they bring rather unique experience and talents—very often necessary talents to particularly the area officers—and to the post of DCM. The DCM is after all essentially an executive officer, a manager,

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and USIA officers usually have much more administrative and management responsibility and authority than people at equivalent levels in State. I know when I first went in, I was running a binational center and I had some 35 people working for me, local employees, including professionals and teachers of English, and art critics, and things like that, all this when I was at the very bottom of the scale. On the other hand, USIA officers don't have the reporting experience that many people in the political cone and the commercial cone have. I think that it would be very good for a USIA officer to go in as an assistant political officer in part of his career to learn a little bit about political analysis and what's necessary to communicate to Washington and what isn't necessary, and how to write objectively and not necessarily persuasively.

I really have no very strong feelings on it but would like to see a greater amalgamation. I think it will come. It has come, but it is slow in moving on, and particularly today with the change in the Civil Service and the Foreign Service laws. These changes have allowed large numbers of political appointees to come in at the middle and upper- middle levels both in the Foreign Service and particularly in Washington. This makes it very hard for Foreign Service Officers to find suitable jobs and therefore any possible way of discriminating against someone by pointing out that he is from a different agency is often used to try to reduce the number of candidates for positions. I understand it, but I don't know what the answer is. I think that in the long run we can look forward to an amalgamated Foreign Service which is what I think we should have.

*Q: Ambassador Ryan, I wish to thank you very much for your very illuminating comments on your experience in the Foreign Service and this will conclude the interview.*

RYAN: Okay, fine.

End of interview