

Interview with G. Harvey Summ

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

G. HARVEY SUMM

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy

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Q: Today is March 5, 1993 and this is an interview with G. Harvey Summ on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and I am Charles Stuart Kennedy. To begin with, I wonder if you could tell me a little about yourself—when, where you were born and educated, etc.?

SUMM: I grew up in New York City as a first generation American. My parents were both immigrants. I was working for an export firm dealing with Latin America in New York when World War II broke out.

Q: What was your education?

SUMM: I went to the City College of New York and got my degree in business administration.

Q: What type of export work were you doing before the war?

SUMM: It was an advertising company which solicited advertising from US firms to be placed in Latin American publications. I dealt with several Spanish American countries as well as Brazil. To help me in the job, I decided to learn Spanish and Portuguese, which I

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did. I went to a Berlitz type school located nearby. I reawakened in the process something I had loved back in high school, learning languages. I started to study Latin in high school and was entranced by it.

I am more interested in the speaking and the understanding part of a language than I am in the literature. So I went to this language school and picked up the languages very fast. This was say 1939-41. On Pearl Harbor Day, a Sunday, December 7, I was working for this firm. I took the next day off, Monday, calling in sick and went down to Army, Navy and Air Force Intelligence to see if they would have a place for me. I was 22 years old, single, and eminently draftable. I remember the Navy didn't even have application forms, they were so surprised by Pearl Harbor, and told me to come back in two weeks, which I did. They had mimeographed application forms. I filled one out and about two months later I was accepted.

I was taken into Naval intelligence where, since I had stenographic skills, I worked as a secretary for a couple of years. Then an opportunity came up to go to Lisbon with an assistant Naval Attach# who was stationed at those same intelligence headquarters and was being transferred. I presented my background to him, including my language skills, and he arranged for me to go there. I was a yeoman second class at the time, and eventually became chief yeoman, office manager, of the Office of the Naval Attach#.

Q: What was the Naval Attach# doing in Lisbon? It must have been quite a busy time during the war.

SUMM: It was known as a nest of intrigue, Portugal being a neutral place. In fact I remember going to night clubs and having Germans and Japanese sitting at the next table. I used to walk to work from this boarding house in which I lived. I walked down one side of the street and the people going to the German Legation would be walking down the other side of the street and we would pretend not to notice each other.

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The nature of the work. We kept track of Axis ships with the cooperation of the Portuguese. One of the people in our mission was Theodore Rousseau, who later became a curator at the Metropolitan Museum. I think he was OSS, although I don't know that for sure. It was a nest of intrigue. A lot of fun.

Q: Well then you got out in 1946, is that right?

SUMM: I went back to Lisbon in a civilian capacity.

Q: What were you doing in Lisbon?

SUMM: I was office manager. I was discharged in 1946 and not sure what I wanted to do with my life, I went back and took back the same job as a civilian.

While in the States, in between these two assignments, I took the Foreign Service exam and passed. It was Lisbon that sold me on the idea of joining the Navy and seeing the world. I took the written in a naval hospital in Long Island while recovering from an operation. I took the oral part of the exam with a traveling panel which went through Europe and the Far East.

Q: Yes, I remember they did do that.

SUMM: Well I flew from Lisbon to Paris and waited a month there because they were delayed. That was hard duty. I liked the oral part of the exam but I remember one particular thing that happened. Ambassador Gerald Drew was on the panel. He was stationed in Paris at the time and joined the traveling panel. It was he who asked me at the end of the exam, which went rather well, "Don't you ever get your languages mixed up?" I was presenting French and Spanish as my languages. I remember answering his question half in French and half in Spanish, and the whole panel burst out laughing. But obviously it went well and shortly thereafter I entered the Service.

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Q: You entered in 1948?

SUMM: Today is exactly 45 years.

Q: Today being March 5.

SUMM: Let me interject at this point. Joining the Foreign Service really, as it must be the case with so many other people, was a signal event in my life. As I like to put it, it took me off the lower middle class ladder and put me on the upper middle class ladder.

Q: Did you get any training when you came in? How did they absorb you when you came into the Service?

SUMM: Three months in a course at FSI, basically the same A100 course that is given today.

Q: I suppose most of you were veterans at that time?

SUMM: About half I would say.

Q: Where did you go first and what were you doing?

SUMM: The Dominican Republic was my first assignment. I had a combination of jobs. I was supposed to be administrative officer. Only later did I find out that administration was something that they give to counselors and that I, a brand new FSO, was responsible for the administration of an embassy. I didn't do all that well. I discovered I had to be an expert on roofs, gardens, and as a city boy and an intellectual I didn't have much preparation for this. But the Ambassador's wife demanded that her plants grow even in the dry season.

I remember having a run-in with the head of the Marine detachment there. I was surprised when this sergeant began to bargain with me like a union representative. My reaction was,

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"This is what the Marines are like?" So I don't think I did all that well as an administrative officer.

But I did other things. What I wanted to do was political reporting. I persuaded the DCM to allow me to cover some events going on in town. I remember an American journalist speaking down there.

Q: What was the political situation then? This was at the height of the Trujillo power.

SUMM: That's right. It was very tense. I became friendly with a group of people who were ostensibly favorable to the regime, but in fact, after winning their confidence...what I discovered was that out on the beach they would talk freely in my presence about how much they hated Trujillo. Members of their families had been tortured and killed. That sort of thing.

Q: What was our attitude at the time in the Embassy towards Trujillo and his family?

SUMM: As FDR is reputed to have said, "We knew they were SOB's, but these were people with whom we had to maintain at least some cordiality and went to all the parties." We knew what he was like.

Q: The ambassador then was Ralph Ackerman. Sometimes ambassadors get absorbed into the ruling clique. How did you see it?

SUMM: I can't really tell. I wasn't close enough to Ambassador Ackerman. Just judging from things that he said in staff meetings, I gather that he was somewhat more favorable to the Trujillo outlook than I would have been. But that is merely an impression. Chuck Burrows, who was the DCM there, clearly saw them for what they were.

Q: It wasn't an Embassy that had been absorbed or attracted by the Trujillos?

SUMM: No.

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Q: Did you find that you had Congressmen who were sort of tame members of the Trujillo clique?

SUMM: I know what you mean, but not in my case.

Q: I was going to say that at your level you probably wouldn't have been hit with this type of thing.

SUMM: Well, I might have as admin officer. I made CODEL arrangements, etc., but it just never happened during my time.

Q: Then you moved after a year to where?

SUMM: Bahia, Brazil...Salvador, a consulate.

Q: In Brazil.

SUMM: That is right. Northeast Brazil.

Q: What were you doing there?

SUMM: Everything. It was a two-man consulate.

Q: Now Bahia is where?

SUMM: Just south of the bulge that extends out toward Africa.

Q: It is called Salvador.

SUMM: Interchangeably, yes. Bahia is the way I usually referred to it.

I had consular, administrative, political and USIA duties. I started the USIA program. The idea always attracted me. I ended up being invited to two PAO conferences in Rio

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because of my interest in USIA work and was twice offered USIA jobs in various other countries. But I turned them down because I had my eye on becoming a political officer.

Q: What was the situation, political, economic and all in Bahia at that time? We are talking about 1949-51.

SUMM: The main thing that happened was the presidential elections of 1950. In them Getulio Vargas, who had been dictator of Brazil for 15 years up until World War II, was now running for election in open free elections. So I was trying to provide the Embassy with information on how the elections were going in our consular district.

I remember interviewing the candidate for governor of Bahia. I had an interesting connection in Bahia that ended up playing a great role in my future life. There were a group of anthropologists from Columbia University in Bahia doing community studies. It occurred to me that they would be very useful contacts to tell me what was going on outside the capital city. I used to get together with them. The head of the group was an anthropology professor from Columbia who eventually became my brother-in-law and helped launch me into an academic career. We became very close friends. I was able to predict how the election would go locally. I thought Vargas was going to win. Incidentally my predictions were at odds with those of the Embassy, but I think I was closer to the pulse of things.

Q: That often happens, particularly in a country as big as Brazil which is very hard to cover from the capital. What was your impression of how the government was run at the local level?

SUMM: Not well. Not very efficient. I have become a Brazilianist since then and have written books on the subject. They bear out my experience of over 40 years ago. The approach of local officials was slovenly, that society was driven between a very small

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elite and a large number of very poor and unwashed people. The elites didn't really give a damn for those underneath them...which is still much the case today.

One can attribute this to the tropics or racial background. I don't, I think it is a cultural trait on the part of Brazilians.

Q: One can look at this. It has always been an interesting thing of wondering why so much of Latin America just hasn't been able to put things together. Argentina is a prime example.

SUMM: The most egregious example. But all throughout the hemisphere that is the case. I think it has mainly to do with the Iberian background, it goes back as far as Rome. where patron/client relationships, family ties, personal involvement, sentimental attachments are all more important than efficiency and getting things done.

And there is something to be said for that kind of approach to life, but it does not usually yield positive results in terms of development. Of course, this has been a continuing frustration to Latin American countries, particularly vis-a-vis the US, when they see how much we have been able to achieve in development terms in a much shorter period.

Q: Who was your Ambassador at the time?

SUMM: Herschel Johnson.

Q: Did the hand of the Embassy rest pretty heavy on you or not?

SUMM: In the public affairs realm they were very supportive, as I have indicated. In the political realm, with some of the political reporting I did on local events, there were encouraging notes from people in the Embassy. And, of course, most relevant, is the fact that the Embassy asked to have me transferred there.

Q: You transferred to Rio in 1951. So you served there until 1955. What were you doing in Rio?

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SUMM: I was originally supposed to go as the junior member of the political section. This was at last what I had looked forward to. But, what happened was, the Ambassador's aide had just been unexpectedly transferred and I was drafted for that task.

Q: The Ambassador was Herschel Johnson. Could you tell us how he operated and his view of Brazil?

SUMM: A lovely man. I remember an official-informal letter that he wrote back to somebody in the Department talking about the fact that we would always be able to depend on the Brazilians. This, I think, encapsulated his world view. At the time I read it, my own view was somewhat more reserved. I foresaw that there would come a time when Brazil would no longer be satisfied to be our loyal ally. But at any rate that was his approach. He was well in with society. He knew all the key people. He let his top officials operate effectively. I think the Embassy was reasonably well informed during my period there.

Q: Vargas was again President and this time elected?

SUMM: Yes.

Q: From your vantage point how did you view the Vargas government during that particular period?

SUMM: I ended up being there at the time Vargas committed suicide in 1954, so I was able to follow the wave of corruption that grew there, largely, I think, without his knowledge. I think what happened to Vargas was...let me try to distinguish between the domestic and foreign relations aspects of it. For two reasons he was no longer effective in the fifties as he had been in the forties. One was that he was older and two, he had to operate in a free society and was subject to criticism. This I think got under his skin.

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Previously there had been censorship. So things began to go downhill to the point where he committed suicide. That is in the domestic sense.

In the foreign policy sense, I think he was a pragmatist...we knew he had flirted with the Axis group in World War II, but he saw that his ties with the US were more important to him. Dean Acheson, Secretary of State, visited during the time I was there. The visit went well and was cordial as far as we knew. So, from our point of view Vargas was a reliable ally, whatever his personal views might have been.

Q: What was your impression of the Embassy? How it ran, etc.?

SUMM: Let me divide this into two phases. Under Herschel Johnson I thought it went splendidly. He was a fine Ambassador. Then along came James Kemper.

Q: Who was James Kemper?

SUMM: James Kemper was a rich insurance man from the Midwest, Kemper Insurance, political appointee. This had a particular relationship to me because I was the Ambassador's aide. Now was I going to become Kemper's aide? A fortuitous event occurred. We had an inspection and the inspector...this was in 1953 when the new Eisenhower administration came in and they were looking for ways to cut...

Q: Yeah. We went through a RIF program...reduction in force.

SUMM: I remember the inspector talking to me and asking me how much time I spent on my job as ambassador's aide. Since I was a restless sort of person, I was not all that happy in that job, although I learned a great deal. I spoke honestly to him and said that I felt the job could be eliminated altogether or somebody could do it on a part-time basis. So, his recommendation was that the job be eliminated. This ended up in my being transferred to the consular section as visa officer, just as Kemper came along. I was very happy not to be part of his entourage.

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He was miserable for the Embassy. He propositioned officers' wives, offering to set them up in apartments. I remember a staff meeting where he invited us to inform on each other. This was the McCarthy period, so if there were disloyal Americans on the Embassy staff he was going to rout them out. This was revolting stuff. Fortunately I was far removed for the most part from his machinations.

He eventually came a-cropper on his own, which is nice. While home on consultation he stopped off in Boston to see a business friend. The price of coffee had gone up and housewives were complaining and an interviewer asked Kemper what he thought was going to happen to the price of coffee. He said that it wasn't going to stay up like that, that it would come down. This was during the 1954 congressional elections and he was trying to help a congressional candidate who was a friend of his. Of course, when the Brazilians saw this...if the Ambassador thinks the price of coffee is going to come down then he must know something. This time the Brazilians protested vigorously and Kemper was moved.

Q: What were you doing in the consular section, visas?

SUMM: Yes, visas.

Q: Were there any particular problems?

SUMM: I guess the only problem then was that there were Brazilians coming up by the carload to buy appliances and take them back. We were overwhelmed by the workload. But after all they were bona fide non-immigrants and there was no reason to interfere with that. It was just a matter of keeping up with them. I enjoyed the work.

Oh, there was one security problem. A prominent Brazilian novelist I had heard was going to apply for a visa and I came up with some derogatory information on him. I went to the public affairs officer and said, "Look, according to the rules we are going to need a waiver for this guy. If not, I am going to have to turn him down." I think because of the McCarthyite atmosphere prevailing there the PAO was unwilling to stick his neck out and make the kind

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of argument that would be necessary for a waiver. So I did have to turn the guy down. We got flak for it. I saw the problem coming, but unfortunately couldn't do anything about it.

Q: So that somebody will understand this in a different era, when you talk about derogatory information, what are you really talking about?

SUMM: Well, the local CIA station had picked up information from confidential sources which, I think in his case said that he had signed the Stockholm Peace Petition and that he had made statements favorable to organizations which were on the Attorney General's Subversive List.

Q: These are mainly communist organizations.

SUMM: Yes, and looked at today seem so ridiculous.

Q: I know, I worked in the same field at the same time.

SUMM: And given McCarthyite allegations against members of the State Department, we had to make sure we were covered. You didn't go out violating instructions because it might be your head. You had to follow the law to the letter.

Q: You left there I take it after a very happy period. You got married there too. Was there a problem marrying a Brazilian?

SUMM: I used to say the Department of State believed in long engagements. It took a year to get permission to marry her. Not that she was any problem, but again because of the McCarthy era, there were all kinds of investigations going on and hers was at the bottom of the pile. But the Ambassador, Herschel Johnson, while on a trip to the States inquired about the investigation, and I think that helped move things along.

Q: Then you came back to Washington where you served from 1955-58. What were you doing?

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SUMM: I was called an international administration officer, part of the Bureau of IO, International Organizations. But in fact I was delegated to work with the US delegation to the OAS and it was partially like a foreign assignment even while being in Washington because on the average I guess I would go twice a week down to the OAS...walk from my office down to 17th and Constitution ...and sit on committees there with other Latin Americans, dealing primarily with budget matters. I was on the budget committee of the OAS. It was a very interesting experience during which I got to know more about that organization.

I also served as budget officer on US delegations to other international organizations, and as such went to international conferences...Caracas, Mexico, others.

Q: What was your impression of the OAS during this period, 1955-58?

SUMM: Let me give you a dual impression. It was not a very efficient organization. There were a lot of time servers there..people who were employed because of pressure from their home governments. Castoffs or some who had been involved in unsuccessful coups who had to be gotten out of the country.

On the other hand, I formed a view there that I have maintained ever since. No matter how inefficient or ineffective the organization was, it was worthwhile having on a residual basis as a peacekeeping organization. The amounts involved...I think the total budget was \$30 million at the time, of which the US contribution was two-thirds ...were a pittance really for us to spend, to keep available a peacekeeping organization that could function in case of outbreaks between Latin American countries. I still maintain that.

Q: Were you there during the Arbenz business in Guatemala?

SUMM: No, that was mid 1954. I came in the beginning of 1955.

Q: How did the OAS people look upon the United States?

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SUMM: Again in terms of our relationships there, it was an atypical period, because the OAS was an extremely effective organization in settling disputes in Central America. It was about a week after I got there that Nicaraguan exiles crossed the border into Costa Rica. Costa Rica, depended on the OAS as its shield, having disbanded its army, and came to the OAS. Under the leadership of our Ambassador, John Dreier, an outstanding man, we acted as a fire brigade. He would put on an old baseball cap and get on a plane together with Latin American colleagues the day after and get down to the scene. And then they would start to cool heads off. This kind of behavior continued during the time I was there and afterwards.

It seemed to me that I got a very rosy view of how international organization could operate. It was, admittedly, a special time, operating only in a limited sphere, but when one can find opportunities for peaceful settlement of disputes, no matter where they are, you have to applaud that.

There was another thing at work there. There were several Latin Americans, a Mexican, a Uruguayan, notably, who worked in very close concert with Ambassador Dreier and his staff. The way we did things was, we persuaded Latins who shared our viewpoint to take the lead. We would stay in the background. It was a very effective way to get US foreign policy objectives accomplished. You might say the very reverse of the Kemper group. If the US tries to thrust itself to the fore in dealing with Latins, we inevitably come a-cropper.

So it was a good period.

Q: Was Argentina, Peron, sort of an odd person out at that time or not?

SUMM: They were, but it didn't really affect us in terms of the OAS.

Q: You left in 1958 and finally got yourself a political officer job.

SUMM: In Quito, Ecuador.

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Q: You served there for a couple of years. What was the situation in Ecuador when you got there?

SUMM: There was a democratically-elected government in, a conservative regime. Ponce was president.

You have asked me my impressions about various ambassadors. Ambassador Ravndal was at the airport to meet me.

Q: Christian Ravndal, my God!

SUMM: I never expected that. He was a marvelous man. His wife, who was Austrian, took my Brazilian wife in hand and was a great help to her. His views were rather conservative, mine were rather liberal. But he was extremely fair in letting me call shots the way I wanted to...

Q: What was your position in the political section?

SUMM: Chief. It was a two-man political section.

Q: In your reporting how could you handle the two views? What were you seeing and what was he seeing?

SUMM: I remember Ambassador Ravndal calling me into his office one morning. He had been at a dinner party the night before and some of the people in Ecuadorian society had complained to him that the US by supporting agrarian reform was doing something extremely radical, if not communistic. This was not directed towards me personally, but I also had labor union connections and the Ambassador wanted to know if this was a problem. I frankly said to him, "Mr. Ambassador, it is not so much that we are supporting this, it is that this country badly needs agrarian reform, it hasn't had it. Those Ecuadorians

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I know who support it are by no means radicals. These are reformers.” And that was it. He accepted my viewpoint.

There was a mayoral election in Quito and much to the surprise of the Embassy a populist was elected. Again the Ambassador called me into the office and asked what it meant to us. I said, “Mr. Ambassador, I don't really know this fellow too well, but I know some people around him. I think he really sounds more radical then he in fact is going to be.” Then Chris said to me, “Well, get to know him.” So, again I admired this detachment of his...whatever his personal views it behooves the United States to know what is going on. He encouraged me and I did get to know these people.

Q: At that time what did you see as American interests in Ecuador?

SUMM: Not very great. Again Ambassador Ravndal used the term “to make this a showcase for democracy.” Ecuador had practically never had democracy. Here was the third straight time a president had been elected. The idea would be that through our AID program we would try to make them a showcase. I was very dubious about this because their institutions were such that they did not indicate any such thing would be possible. But I tried working with the AID mission to encourage health, education, agriculture at the grass roots level.

I was also labor reporting officer there. I enjoyed that. I remember getting drunk with a bunch of labor leaders. I don't like to drink. We sat up in the stands in an arena and they passed a whisky bottle back and forth and I took a swig out of it. I remember driving home that night, fortunately without accident. But it helped me gain their confidence more easily. They, too, were not radical. They just wanted improvement in their lives.

Q: Were we having problems with fishing in those days?

SUMM: No. That was before the 200 mile limit issue.

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Q: How about the Peruvian boundary?

SUMM: There was a dustup during my period there. Our Embassy in Rio was the one that had primary responsibility for this. We merely reported some of the reactions of the Ecuadorian officials.

Q: Were there any major developments, problems while you were there?

SUMM: No.

Q: Well you went from a fairly tranquil place to a not so tranquil place. From 1959-60 you went to Santiago de Cuba. What were you doing there?

SUMM: I have the most vivid memories of my whole Foreign Service career from there.

Q: How come you were pulled out so early and what was the purpose?

SUMM: It was at the end of a two-year assignment and that was all it was expected to be. It was a so-called hardship post. I came back here for the mid-career course and went on to Cuba in mid-July.

The period I spent in Cuba, July 19, 1960-January, 1961 was the period of the highest tension between the United States and Cuba. The month that I arrived at my post was the month in which US refineries were nationalized by Castro.

Q: Had Castro come into power when you were there?

SUMM: He had already been in power for a year and a half. All the action during the revolution had taken place in Oriente Province, where Santiago was. Unfortunately I missed it. The parade had passed me by. My predecessors had gone up into the hills to try to negotiate the release of some Marines who had been kidnaped by Raul Castro. But I was just there to observe really.

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Q: Well, what was the situation?

SUMM: In that month of July when I arrived, the US terminated Cuba's sugar quota and Cuba nationalized two US refineries. There began to be almost daily insults uttered by the US and Cuban governments at each other. It was a period during which Castro went to the UN General Assembly...the most exciting session it has ever had, where Khrushchev banged his shoe on the table.

Q: Castro had held court in a hotel in Harlem.

SUMM: Yes, that is right. Later on they renamed a motel in Santiago the Harlem Motel because of that.

I guess the most exciting event I recall was...I had driven my wife back in September to Havana to evacuate her to the States. Dependents were being evacuated. We spent the night with Ambassador Bonsal and his wife in the Embassy residence. That was the day that Fidel returned from his trip to the UN and we were watching him report to the Cuban people on television. There were five of us in the Bonsal living room after dinner...the Bonsals, my wife and myself, and Ambassador Bonsal's secretary. I remember that all four of us, except the Ambassador, were furious at some of the lies that Castro was uttering, but not a muscle moved in Ambassador Bonsal's face.

I went back to my post the following day after putting my wife on the plane to the States and spent another three months in Santiago during which relationships continued to deteriorate.

Q: How did you deal with the local authorities?

SUMM: We had very little to do with them.

Q: Well, before that our post had been mainly one because of American interests there?

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SUMM: Yes, and the Guantanamo Naval Base which was 40 miles away as the crow flies and 80 miles by road. I went over there several times.

Then, of course, the last part of my stay was when relations were broken. Now I was in my residence on a Sunday night at home and I remember hearing a voice..."Mr. Consul, Mr. Consul." This was my next door neighbor. When I went to the fence she said, "Castro has just told the US to reduce its Embassy to eleven people. What does this mean?" I tried to calm her, but I realized immediately that the US would not accept this and that this meant that deteriorating circumstances were now going to come to a head and relations were going to be broken.

I called the whole American staff of the Consulate, there was a total of six, and we all went down to the office. I called the Embassy by CB and said that we were going to start preparing to destroy documents, and would await word from them. Of course they were just as surprised as we were. We secured things for the night and the next morning, Monday morning, which was a holiday...it was the second anniversary of Castro's coming to power...we came and started to burn documents and get ready for evacuation.

We sent out telegrams to all the American residents in our consular district saying that we were going to lead a motorcade to Guantanamo Base for evacuation and they were welcome to join us. About 40 automobiles joined us. On January 2 we did lead such an evacuation. We were then prepared to close up the Consulate.

Then what happened was the Embassy told me, "No, no, no, that wouldn't work, I had to come back and wait for the Swiss as protecting power to come down and take inventory." So what I did was, we led this group out to the base and then, all by myself drove back in the Consulate station wagon and remained there for another ten days with nothing to do. Fortunately the landlord of our residence was a Puerto Rican businessman with a Cuban wife and they had invited me to stay with them, which I did. I used to play dominoes with the kids every afternoon. I would drive to the Consulate, which wasn't far from there,

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twice every day to listen to the radio and find out if anything was happening. There were no duties to perform because relations had been broken. There was a militiaman outside who guarded the place. We had a splendid local employee who, when the militiaman tried to stop me from going in once, inserted himself between us and said, "This is the American Consul and you have to allow him to go in." Fortunately that worked.

I waited a total of ten days until the Swiss representative came after finishing the inventory of the Embassy. I don't know how many times I took inventory, I had nothing else to do. I remember the representative arrived, German Swiss and very proper, he said, "No, no, no. This isn't done the way it is supposed to be done." I think I had done it room by room and according to him it had to be done item by item by item. I said, "Okay, if you want us to redo it we will, but I don't know how long it will take us." I knew he wanted to get back to Havana that night. He finally said, "Okay, give me the inventory the way you have done it, and I will sign it." He left that night.

The next morning, I, with this Cuban employee, drove to Guantanamo Base where the orders were the vehicle was to be left there and shipped back to the States and I was to stay on the base. When you pass the city of Guantanamo on your way to the Base you come to a fork in the road and there at this checkpoint was a militiaman...he must have been about seventeen years old...who asked for our documents. I hadn't received my Cuban identity card yet. All I had was my American passport. Miguel, the employee, passed our documents over to him. You could see this fellow reading my passport in English and not understanding it or what we were saying. He finally asked Miguel what it said. He said, "This is the American Consul who is leaving and going onto Guantanamo." He looked dubious for a while but finally gave us back our documents and said, "Okay, you can go ahead. Sorry for the trouble I posed."

Now this stands out in my mind because of the so-called strong antipathy of Cubans for the United States. Here was a member of the militia talking to a representative of the hated US government who was polite enough to say he was sorry. In fact, during my whole

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period there, even when I no longer had duties to perform, I found nothing but courtesy and kindness.

Q: You didn't have mobs demonstrating in front of the Embassy? It is interesting because during, I think in the 1870s we had to send in a Naval ship to yank a Consul off from Santiago...Were you aware of preparations for the flight of the middle class from Cuba?

SUMM: It was well under way when I got there. Among us, the consular officers, we used to comment that the very fact that all these people were fleeing was going to make it impossible for there to arise leadership that would overthrow Castro. That leadership was displacing itself.

But, of course, because of the overwhelming US role in everything involving Cuba throughout the 19th century, they always looked to the north to resolve their problems. This was the way Cubans had always dealt with us. Both those who liked us and those who hated us looked to us for solutions.

I had a vice consul at the time who wanted to deny visas to people because these were the ones who could lead the resistance to Castro. I said that we couldn't do that. There were no grounds in US law for doing that.

I used to have the rumor mill. One morning I had half a dozen anti-Castro Cubans come in and tell me a certain rumor which had no foundation in fact. The fact that I heard it from half a dozen people didn't make it any more reliable. They just thought the American Consul ought to know about this.

Yes, about the Bay of Pigs. I didn't know where and when it was going to take place, but my wife had told me she had seen pictures on TV in the US of Cuban exiles training somewhere to overthrow Castro. It was common knowledge in Cuba that such efforts were underway, they thought helped by the United States clandestinely.

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I want to jump to the US 1961. Adolf Berle was advisor to Kennedy in the early months of 1961. Through a mutual acquaintance I went to see him and I said, "I gather from what I hear that the US is planning some kind of action to try to dislodge Castro from Cuba through invasion."

Q: This was...?

SUMM: I was coming back to the Department and will explain this in a moment, but let me relate this.

I said, "I don't know about the rest of Cuba, but as far as my part of the island is concerned, if we think that there is sufficient opposition to Castro to try and overthrow him, we are mistaken." The particular event that had happened was at a Christmas party in 1960, almost at the end of my tour, at the binational center and this conversation stands out in my mind. It was a young man who had been to the United States and said, "Mr. Summ, I love the United States, but I am with Fidel all the way." This was pretty much the view of the people in Cuba who might be anti-Castro but who were also anti-US and surely would not risk their lives to back something unless they knew the outcome with certainty.

Q: What was Berle's reaction?

SUMM: He said, "Well, write me a memo," which I did. It had no effect. All the rest of the US role subsequently came out at the Bay of Pigs.

Q: Yes. Well, you left Guantanamo when and what did you do then?

SUMM: It would be January 14, 1961. I was flown by Navy plane to Miami and then by commercial airline up to New York, where my wife was staying. After a week's leave I came down here for an assignment.

Q: What were you doing?

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SUMM: Well, I was to go to Nicaragua as head of the political section and I didn't like the idea at all. It was a backwater and I felt that having been in Ecuador and in Cuba, Nicaragua was a comedown.

Then happened a career changing move that was entirely unexpected. My wife came down to the Department for her physical and we had lunch. I said, "Listen, Bob Stevenson, who was the Cuban Desk officer at the time, and with whom you have talked on the phone often trying to find out how I was in Cuba, would you like to meet him?" So I took her up to Bob's office and introduced her. Bob had very nice words to say about what I had done and then much to my surprise my wife piped up and said, "I am surprised at you people. How can you do this to a man who has done the kind of work that my husband has that you have been so complimentary about? You are going to send him to Nicaragua?"

I was so embarrassed at her speaking up for me I could have fallen through the floor. But interestingly enough, unknown to me, Bob knew about an opening coming up in ARA and he opened his eyes wide and said, "Well, I never thought about that, Mrs. Summ. I have to think about that." Sure enough my assignment got changed. I was put into the public affairs staff of ARA. I took the place of somebody who they knew was leaving. And that, of course, changed the whole course of my career.

Q: What were you doing with public affairs? This was from when to when?

SUMM: A year, the beginning of 1961 to the beginning of 1962. I was responsible for the Caribbean. This meant dealing with press inquiries, preparing responses for the Department at the noon briefing for questions related to what was going on in the Caribbean. There were two things going on there—Cuba and the Dominican Republic. In the Dominican Republic we were conspiring with opposition elements to try to eliminate Trujillo. I liked the job. I have always had a yen for public affairs. It was a fast-moving job. I dealt with the press a good deal.

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Then the following year there was an opening as the Cuban Desk Officer and I moved into that.

Q: Being Cuban Desk Officer at the very pits of our relations with Cuba, was there anything much going on?

SUMM: In 1962? The missile crisis.

Q: Oh, yes. Cuba was more or less the possessor of the property, but the tenant, the Soviet Union, was doing the...

SUMM: Well, my own role in this. I was really relegated to a back seat. President Kennedy became Cuban Desk Officer. In the missile crisis, itself, I was just an errand boy, in effect, which was fine. Even the people over me in the Office of Caribbean Affairs had various duties like that to carry out. My main duty continued to be with briefing the press, briefing foreign diplomats who wanted to be current.

I used to take chances, as a matter of fact, in telling people things on a non-attribution or non-publication basis and I never slipped. Nobody ever used information that I gave them improperly. It was a matter of establishing trust between the foreign diplomat or press representative with whom I dealt.

I also drafted messages. A lot of what we were doing then was trying to deny economic benefits to Cuba which meant participating in countless meetings where we were pushing an unwilling EUR to try to get rough with its clients. They would say, "Is it worth disturbing our European relationships just for this useless attempt to make life difficult for Cuba?" But these were our marching orders.

Q: What was your impression of the information we were getting from Cuba at that time?

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SUMM: The Bay of Pigs. All I knew about the Bay of Pigs was what I saw in the newspaper. Later on in 1962 the question of Soviet missiles in Cuba came up.

Q: Surface to Air Missiles.

SUMM: Which were relatively very small missiles.

Why would the Soviets risk a standoff with the United States for what seemed like a relatively unimportant client who we were not threatening to invade.

But, of course, later on I found out about Operation Mongoose where the Kennedys, who were trying to get revenge for the Bay of Pigs, mounted a large operation.

Castro, because he was afraid of what Mongoose might do, was calling upon the Soviets for providing ICBMs.

He wanted an opportunity to try and play catch-up in the nuclear game.

Q: Was there much of a Cuban lobby at that time?

SUMM: I dealt with Cuban exile officials here and later in Miami, who were very much in our debt. They really had to beseech us to pay any attention to them.

Q: What was your impression during the Bay of Pigs thing? Granted Kennedy became the Cuban Desk Officer and all, and it moved up way above, but there was a certain point when we were all aware that we were reaching a standoff and all, what was your impression down below? Did you see the Cubans as being sort of brushed aside by both the Soviets and the Americans?

SUMM: I am not basing this on any particular information I have in my official capacity, but rather just a general evaluation of the situation. Yes, the US and Russia tried to deal and

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ignore Cuba, but Castro just wouldn't permit that to happen. So Khrushchev had to send Mikoyan to hold Castro's hand for a couple of weeks.

Q: He was vice president or something.

SUMM: Yes, an Armenian. A pretty close colleague of Khrushchev's who had been to Cuba before and knew Castro. While the US-USSR negotiated, Mikoyan tried to convince Castro that he would not be ignored in this whole thing. Actually, much as I tend to detest much of what Castro stands for, I can't help but look upon him as one of the marvels of the age. Here is this guy 30 years later still around. All of his contemporaries have departed the scene and Cuba which is intrinsically an island of no importance, he has been able to keep at the center of the world stage all this time.

Q: Were you aware or was it obvious as things went, that there had been a deal that the United States would not invade Cuba?

SUMM: I don't think it was that secret. We recognized that Cuba was part of the Soviet Bloc and that as long as they kept to themselves and did not engage in subversive activities in the hemisphere, we would not try and dislodge him.

Q: What was our feeling at the time? You were dealing with Cuban affairs from when to when?

SUMM: Right up through 1965 and this leads me right into my next assignment because in early 1963...let's see, a year in public affairs, a year as Cuban Desk Officer, then I went to Miami to be Coordinator of Cuban Affairs. My main function there was to prevent Cuban exiles on their own from trying to mount operations which might try to bring down Castro by air or by sea. All of this was based in south Florida. What we found was that in Washington we just didn't know enough about what was going on down there, that the US agencies, Customs, Immigration and Coast Guard, just had not experience with foreign affairs at all and they were at sea as how to deal with these things. We saw how

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dangerous an incident like this could become, so my function down there was to prevent anything like this from happening. So I am answering your question by saying that we recognized the existence of Communist Cuba and we were not going to allow any change unless we were the ones to change that situation. We were not going to allow third parties to change it.

Q: Well, weren't you running across the CIA efforts supported by the Kennedys? Here you were down there to quiet things down but at the same time through the CIA they were trying to do just the opposite.

SUMM: I knew what the CIA people were doing. They had an enormous station in Miami. I went down there a couple of times and was briefed by their head of station. I had three people working for me, while he had hundreds working for him. But he was very nice about it. So the idea was that if anybody was going to engage in activities to overthrow Castro, it was going to be us, or people who we supported. Others, free lancers, who wanted to do this on their own had to be stopped. So that was my function.

It was arranged that I would not have operational control over the CIA operation in Florida. That would be handled in Washington. This was done partly to give me deniability, that I knew nothing about what was going on. Although no such charges came up while I was there.

Q: How did you deal with the Cubans? You must have had people coming in saying, "Come on Mr. Summ. What are you trying to do to me?"

SUMM: All the time. One of the things that happened as the result of Kennedy's assassination in 1963 was that a lot of the pressure was removed. In particular, shortly after Johnson became President, there was an incident off Key West, in which I was involved where Cuban fishing boats were caught in US waters. I flew down to Key West to deal with this problem. One of the consequences of this was...Fidel said he would shut off the water to Guantanamo and Johnson downplayed the whole thing and ordered the

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construction of a desalination plant for sea water. He wanted to avoid confrontation. He did not have the personal involvement in this like the Kennedys did.

So in Miami my effort essentially was to coordinate the activities of various local US agencies to prevent non-US related Cubans from doing things we did not want them to do. I flew with the Coast Guard Admiral over to Nassau. We had lunch with the Governor General, discussing the relative roles of the US and the British Air Force in patrolling the waters there to prevent Cuban exile vessels from getting started. So what I am saying is that for that period, after Kennedy's assassination, late 1963 on, the whole Cuban issue was off front and center as Johnson increasingly became involved in Vietnam.

Q: Well you were following in the footsteps of other government officials in the 1850s, 1870s, 1890s, who were also trying to stop filibusters from doing the same thing.

SUMM: Except in this case it was a weird process. We would have Customs agents who had infiltrated the Cuban exile movement. They would watch them until they were about to take off and just as they were about to take off in a plane or a boat, they would nab them and take them down to the Court House where our offices were. They would be booked and then orders would come to release them the next day. This is rather a strange way to deal...we couldn't be too rough on them, you see.

Q: But you dampened it.

SUMM: And it would take some months for them to get everything started again.

By the way, I found out...it was a very useful assignment. It was almost like being a consul in a foreign country. What I found out was the way to deal with political, terrorist activities, criminal activities ...intelligence is the only answer. Just thinking what happened in New York this past week.

Q: You are talking about an explosion in the World Trade Building...

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SUMM: One has to penetrate these operations more.

Q: You left there in 1965. What did you do then?

SUMM: Transferred to Luanda.

Q: This is quite a career change wasn't it?

SUMM: I didn't want to go to Africa. The idea of being Consul General had its appeals, but I knew that Africa, in general, was not where all the action was going to be and that I, at an independent post, unless something unusual happened, would be forgotten and would not help me career-wise.

Q: Angola at that time was a Portuguese colony.

SUMM: There was an insurgency going on there.

Q: You were there from 1965-69. What was the situation in Angola at that time?

SUMM: There were two insurgencies going on when I arrived and a third developed while I was there. So the Portuguese were having to deal with these in various parts of the province. It became clear quickly that there was going to be no early solution to this. That the insurgents operated from privileged sanctuaries, countries on Angola's borders, Zaire and Zambia. So the Portuguese could keep them from advancing, but could not eliminate them. Therefore, among those of us in the consular corps, who watched this, it became clear that the solution would have to come from Lisbon. Sooner or later when the Portuguese tired of this, that much as in the case of Vietnam, the solution came here in Washington rather than on the ground. Life in Angola, perhaps surprisingly, was very pleasant, in Luanda, at least. My wife and I, when we didn't have anything social on, used to walk our dogs out in the park or near the fortress where the Portuguese command headquarters was, because the Portuguese had urban terrorism under control. None of

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that happened there. However, in order to inform myself, I traveled constantly and was all over the province going to all 15 districts. I was in convoys, flew in small planes, right down to places where a lot of the fighting took place in the recent civil war. I was familiar with all these places.

Q: You were technically reporting to our Embassy in Lisbon. To whom did you belong?

SUMM: My efficiency reports were written by AF, Bureau of African Affairs. But I was also instructed to keep Lisbon informed of everything I was doing. So in effect I had two bosses. I don't mind this. I am a sort of agile sort of person. I like dealing with complicated situations. Ambassador Tapley Bennett came down and spent two weeks in Angola and we traveled the province together, found that we shared views about many things. Let me put it to you this way, my brief, in terms of what I was to accomplish, was to try to persuade the Portuguese to allow Africans more of a say in how things were run. And I attempted to carry that out to the best of my ability, even knowing it was impossible.

Q: How does one do this?

SUMM: Well, you talk to officials or you try and make contacts with blacks who seem to be loyal to the Portuguese. You try to encourage activities that are aimed at improving the welfare of the blacks. When the Portuguese tell you that, "We have been here for 500 years and we, unlike the other European powers, will never abandon Africa," you look at them very seriously when they talk, but when you have gained their confidence you find that they didn't believe this either.

My wife was an enormous help to me, by the way, with her Brazilian background. I used to describe her as a ping-pong ball, which the Portuguese and I used to get at each other. They didn't trust us. The Portuguese thought we were after their colonies, as ridiculous as it may seem. Giving up their colonies has turned out to be the best thing that has ever happened to them. But they didn't think this.

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Q: One hears that the Portuguese had not made much effort to meld the Africans into their government there.

SUMM: Hardly anything. They had this myth, which many of them believed themselves, that the Portuguese have a unique multiracial skill that no other Europeans have. And that Brazil, they say, is the best example. And that the blacks were really loyal to them, but that just wasn't so. And the intelligence officials there knew it wasn't so. I am dubious how successful they have been in multiracial terms, even in Brazil. But in Angola they had an African society which was intact with its tribal arrangements, which just rejected them, in contrast to Brazil, where the Africans themselves were uprooted.

And, in fact, looking at their own census activities, the numbers of Portuguese who had actually come to Angola was pitifully small. I think by 1940 there were only 50,000 Portuguese in the colony of 5 million people. So it was only from the forties on that Portuguese immigration began in large numbers. So their claim that they had been there for 500 years was largely specious.

And the Portuguese had done very little to prepare the Africans. One has to look at Portuguese resources themselves. They had very little with which to do it. They were a poor country. So there was a lot less than meets the eye in terms of their ability to prepare for independence.

Q: Did you have any contact with the various rebel groups at all?

SUMM: No, we couldn't have. Their representatives outside Angola, whether in African countries or in the US, were in touch with US officials. But I couldn't.

Q: What were American interests there?

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SUMM: Toward the end of my stay, Gulf Oil Company discovered offshore oil. Other than that, nothing really. So, the objective was to prevent an African colony of the Portuguese from going communist afterwards.

Q: Did the Soviets have representation there?

SUMM: No.

Q: How about you? You were saying they viewed you with suspicion?

SUMM: Yes, at the beginning. The Portuguese wondered why the US was not supporting them wholeheartedly. Their conclusion was that we wanted these colonies for ourselves. This gradually dissipated as I made it clear that my job was really to keep informed about what was going on. I was not making representations to them for any change in their policy...that was being done by my Embassy in Lisbon. So what I found was that I was able to travel rather freely, got a lot of cooperation from people. When we had visiting delegations...War College, etc...we were able to be briefed by their officials. That suspicion dissipated and we had good relationships and, as I indicated to you, good enough so that we got to the point where they confided to us their own apprehensions about the likely longevity of their stay.

Q: Did you feel in talking to people back in the African Bureau that Angola was pretty far down the line, that Africa was not on the front burner of American foreign policy anyway and that Angola was pretty far down on the African Bureau's agenda?

SUMM: As you recall, in 1961 when Kennedy came in, Soapy Williams was made Assistant Secretary for Africa. This was to give it high prominence. This was the period of decolonization. The US was going to make common cause with these countries. But as time went by, again once Kennedy was no longer on the scene, Africa did assume

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that...and Angola was less important than others. Perhaps, if any importance only because of its proximity to South Africa. Even there, Mozambique was much closer to South Africa.

Q: So you didn't have the feeling the South Africa was looming over you, or anything like that?

SUMM: No. The South Africans I knew there maintained a very low profile. They cooperated with the Portuguese in a military sense.

Q: So you left there in 1969. Then what did you do?

SUMM: I came back to become Director of Research for Latin America in INR.

Q: You did that for how long?

SUMM: For seven years. Two years of that time I was also head of research for Africa. This was an economy move. INR had to cut spots. My superior knew that I was well informed on Africa so I...as one of my subordinates used to describe it, I was trying to reverse continental drift.

It was an intellectual challenge. I liked doing it just for the fun of it, but after a couple of years I said it was enough. I groomed a deputy.

It was during this last tour that I had my single best achievement in the Foreign Service, I would say. Why would I make a claim like that? I just finished talking to you about all the interesting times I had in the field. But in effect in terms of accomplishing anything, events sort of passed me by. I always came in too late or too early. I am pleased and proud about what I did for my country, but what I did was to conduct foreign relations and that is fine.

Q: That's your job.

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SUMM: Exactly. But the hopes I had had to become a hero or somebody really special, etc. just never prospered. In this job, as Director of Research for American Republics, what I found was that the quality of the analysts that were coming to us, Foreign Service people, were not what I wanted. These people were not interested enough in their jobs. And particularly, what was happening was that as the US was taking a lower profile toward Latin America, as we did in the Nixon era, there was less opportunity for activism. INR has never been regarded as a stepping stone to a career. People who I knew and who I thought would be good for the job and I tried to recruit for analyst spots would turn me down. Then I heard, this was in 1973, of openings that Administration was creating so that we could recruit academics from the outside for analyst positions. I was able to recruit five people. Through my academic contacts I was able to find out likely candidates and went out and interviewed them. Here it is, twenty years later, and all these people are still in the Foreign Service. Two of them are the backbone of that office in INR.

Q: That is very important, I think. What were some of the issues, particularly in South America, which you dealt with?

SUMM: Mainly with Chile. Salvador Allende came to power in 1970 and this was the Nixon-Kissinger period and the two-track policy toward Chile which I will not elaborate on here. But as part of the intelligence apparatus, we were involved in this because what we were doing was analyzing and commenting on reports we were getting from overt and covert sources on what was going on in Chile. We put several analysts to work on this. I sent two of them to scour the biographic archives at CIA for a week. They had enormous files on Allende, trying to determine which way he would jump. And they couldn't. There just wasn't enough in the files to get inside the guy's mind. I don't think he himself knew.

Q: I gather from people I have interviewed that he was more a prisoner of events than people might think.

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SUMM: Probably. But from our point of view I guess the most notable incident was when a political ambassador, John Davis Lodge in Argentina, who received a copy of our intelligence analysis...these were distributed laterally to all interested embassies...wrote to Ray Cline, then the Director of INR, saying that he thought there were communist line people in the Intelligence Bureau misleading US policy-makers. Shades of McCarthyism. Well, my boss, the Deputy Director of INR, was incensed enough about this that he wrote an official-informal for Ray Cline's signature saying that he had full confidence in his analysts and in their objective ability to see things as they were and that in effect he rejected comments of that sort.

But there has been this recurring pattern. It came up in Brazil in the fifties, and then it came up here again in the seventies. I am not sure that the Department of State ever rid itself of McCarthyism.

I retired in the mid-seventies, but at least up until then I always used to think that people both here and in the field had to make sure that they burnished their anti-communist credentials, lest somebody accuse them of not being strong enough anti-communists. Perhaps some of them did it unconsciously.

Q: What was your impression about how things worked in Chile? I gather we really didn't know how Allende was going to go and did we know...?

SUMM: Well the kind of analysis that our office was doing made the point that democratic institutions in Chile, such as congress, the courts, the labor unions, the media, the army, were alive and well. Chile was one of the better examples of successful democratic institutions in South America. And left to their own devices, given no more than moral support from us, they could deal with the Allende problem. We couldn't make recommendations in our intelligence analysis, but the objective always was...you present your case and the policy-maker would then say, "Well then, I should do so and so." We wouldn't recommend what he should do, but it would flow from the analysis presented.

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Therefore, my conclusion would be that the US ought to keep its cotton-picking hands off Chile, especially since it was a long distance away. It was not in this Caribbean basin where the US had always been involved since the 19th century, and this represented no serious threat to us.

Unfortunately, Nixon and Kissinger had other ideas. And in fact, looking back on it, I think our assessment of the situation was correct. That these institutions were strong in Chile, so that when the army did step in it was, as far as I know, it was not the US aid to the Chilean Army that prompted the overthrow of Allende. In fact Pinochet even kept a lot of his plans to himself, did not tell us because he did not want us involved in these things.

So from all this, domestically and in foreign policy terms in our European relations, we reaped the reputation for snuffing out democratically-elected liberal movements just because we found them unpalatable to us, when if we had kept our hands off the same result would have happened anyhow and the US would not have been tarred with the brush.

Q: In INR, what was your impression of CIA reporting versus State Department reporting?

SUMM: I think they each had their role. The State Department's came from overt sources. CIA was tasked with picking things up from clandestine sources. I used to wonder sometimes if those clandestine sources picked up all that much useful information. But then again, harking back to my OAS experience, it is good to have something on the ground just in case you might be able to use it. After Jimmy Byrnes at the end of World War II abolished INR's predecessor, George Marshall and Dean Acheson reconstituted it, because they felt that policy-makers ought to have more than one source of information. Institutional biases creep in and therefore the more available intelligence you have the better.

Q: So you retired when?

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SUMM: In 1976.

Q: What did you do then?

SUMM: I made my easiest Foreign Service move. I packed four cartons of books and moved them up here to Georgetown where I remained for 12 years. I came as Director in the Masters program of Latin American Studies. Then I began to teach courses in US-Latin American relations and discovered I loved teaching.

In 1983 I was invited back by FSI as a contract employee to run their Brazil course, which I have been doing ever since. As of last year I started doing the same thing for CIA. And I have been writing.

Q: Well, excellent. Thank you very much.

End of interview