CUBA

COUNTRY READER
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William T. Pryce	1960-1961	Special assistant to the Assistant Secretary for Inter-American Affairs, Washington, DC
Jordan Thomas Rogers	1961-1963	Reports Officer, Staff Secretariat, Washington, DC
Leonard Meeker	1962	Deputy Legal Advisor, Department of State, Washington, DC
Thomas L. Hughes	1963-1969	Director, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Washington, DC
Ronald D. Godard	1970-1972	Deputy Director, Office of the Coordinator of Human Affairs, Miami, FL
	1972-1973	Desk Officer, Cuban Affairs, Washington, DC
John A. Bushnell	1977-1982	Deputy Assistant Secretary, ARA, Washington, DC
Rudolf V. Perina	1979-1981	Political Officer, Moscow, Soviet Union
Jon David Glassman	1979-1981	Deputy- US Interests Section, Swiss Embassy, Havana
Stephen Bosworth	1981-1983	Principal Deputy assistant Secretary, Western Hemisphere Affairs, Washington, DC
Edward L. Lee II	1982-1985	Regional Security Officer, Panama City, Panama
John A. Ferch	1982-1985	Chief - US Interests Section, Havana
Stanley Zuckerman	1983-1986	Counselor for Public Affairs, USIS, Ottawa, Canada
Harriet C. Babbitt	1986-1992	Private Law Practice, Phoenix, AZ
	1993-1997	Representative, Organization of American States, Washington, DC
John J. (Jay) Taylor	1987-1990	Chief - US Interests Section, Havana
Alan H. Flanigan	1990-1993	Chief - US Interests Section, Havana

Dennis Hays	1990-1993	Coordinator for Cuban Affairs, Washington, DC
Stanley Zuckerman	1989-1992	Director, Latin American and Caribbean Affairs, USIA, Washington, DC
Sally Grooms Cowal	1989-1991	Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Latin America, Washington, DC
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Sarah Horsey-Barr	1992-1995	Deputy Chief of Mission, Organization of American States, Washington, DC
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Leslie M. Alexander	2000	Diplomat in Residence, Miami FL

CECIL B. LYON
Consular Officer
Havana (1931)

Cecil B. Lyon was born in New York in 1903. He graduated from Harvard University in 1927. He joined the Foreign Service in 1930, serving in Cuba, Hong Kong, Japan, China, Chile, Egypt, Poland, Germany, France, and Ceylon. Mr. Lyon was interviewed in 1988 by John Bovey.

Q: Okay. Do you want to talk about Cuba a little bit? When you went to Cuba--well, of course, it was your first post--but did you sense any time there that things were not on a very solid foundation and that there would be plenty of trouble in the future?

LYON: Of course I did, and my father some years later, when all the troubles arose in Cuba, got out a letter which I'd written to him--rather unlike me because in those days I was not too serious, I enjoyed life, I wasn't too worried about the problems of the world or the downtrodden--but I'd written Daddy that Cuba was an extraordinary place; it was a beautiful place, but that the rich people weren't terribly interested in their own country; that the moment they'd make some money which they did, of course, when sugar was high, they'd dash off to Paris which was to them their spiritual home. And I felt there were far too many poor and the differences were too great. While I was there, a revolution broke out, led by former President--I want to say Monocal but that isn't quite right, I'll give you that correct name later--and the militants got nearer and nearer to Havana; a lot of students got involved in it and they were causing riots and troubles. Tom Crane, who was a fellow Vice Consul, and I got in our

car and tried to go out and see the fighting, which was a foolish thing to do of course, but we were young and full of adventure. We didn't get very far, we were turned back. Then the government troops captured the leaders of this revolution and they marched them into Havana, rather like Roman prisoners, through the streets chained together. It was really rather sad to see.

Yes, you could feel that things were stirring and that things weren't right. Of course I wasn't intelligent enough or farseeing enough to see how far it would go.

Q: I hadn't realized there was trouble as early as that. What happened to the revolution?

LYON: Of course it was suppressed. The government got control, as I say, they captured the leaders and paraded them through the streets.

I had a funny job, I mean unusual, it was my first post and so I was thrilled with everything. The first night there I was staying at a place called the Ingleterra, a big hotel in Havana, and my Spanish was distinctly lacking, so when the menu was handed to me I closed my eyes and I pointed my finger to the menu and I ordered what my finger hit. It turned out to be sea squid. I almost felt ill, and I remember how gloomy I felt that first night. It all seemed so marvelous when I got as a Christmas present the announcement that I was being made Vice Consul in Havana. I got the notice the 24th of December. But then I seemed far away from home and I sort of said to myself, "Why have I got into this? Why did I leave all the things I know and like?" And then I walked out, because I couldn't eat the squid; I walked out into the street and people were happy in those days, and they were singing, and the stars were out, and I was immediately lifted up and I felt like a million dollars. I had a boss called Consul General F.T. Frelinghuysen Dumont, and he was quite a martinet, and the Ambassador then was a man called Guggenheim. Harry Guggenheim was the one who helped finance Lindbergh. And he'd married a Mrs. Potter from New York and I knew Mrs. Potter's two daughters, I used to go dancing with them in New York. They very frequently invited me to the Embassy, quite naturally because we were all friends. Dumont didn't like it. He said, "You're sucking up to the Embassy. I don't want any of my staff to be chasing after the Embassy." So I had my problems.

Q: No Vice Consuls in my house!

LYON: No Vice Consuls in the Embassy. But anyway I was doing consular work--I don't know whether you want me to go into a little bit of this? Visas and...oh, I had one lovely experience. I was sitting at my desk one day, and a most ravishingly beautiful young lady was shown in. Her name was Blanche Satchel. She was English--no, she was Australian, and she'd gone to New York on a temporary visitor's visa which allowed her to stay six months and she'd been there two years acting in the Ziegfeld Follies and she came to Cuba on a visit--on a tour--and then of course didn't have any visa to go back. So I explained to her that we couldn't possibly give her another visitor's visa because she had abused that, or rather overstayed her last stay. But I did

say I'd try and get her an immigration visa. So we telegraphed Australia. No, the quota was full. And finally I went in to Mr. Dumont and I said, "What can I do about this beautiful creature." And he said, "Lyon, just 'cause a pretty girl looks at you, don't all go to pieces." And I said, "Will you talk to her, sir?" He said, "Certainly. Bring her in." So we went in and he said, "I hear you're having trouble with your visa." "Yes, yes sir, I am. Jimmy Walker didn't know I couldn't do this. How was I supposed to know?" Dumont said, "Aha, well Lyon tells me he has done all he can for you. I don't know, we'll have to see about this." And he said, "Lyon, give her a visa." He too immediately wilted in her hands. And he said, "Give her a temporary visa anyhow. I know about it, so give it to her." So I gave it to her. She went off and to my horror 60 days later I got a telegram saying, "Dear Mr. Lyon. You were so kind to me last time I'm coming back tomorrow to get another visa." And for my sins she came back and I have to confess I gave her another.

I'd like to add, John, a little bit about the troubles that President Machado was having. They were primarily financial as is usually the case. I think Cuba had in its till about $140,000 which seems very little nowadays, and the government expenses were $600,000 due at the end of the month. They also had a $20 million debt to, I think it was either the National City Bank or some other bank, coming due at the end of the month. So the students took things into their own hands as they tend to do in Latin American countries--it was former President Menocal who headed the insurgency--but they were put down by the government.

One other memory of Cuba was my friendship with George Andrews, who, you remember, was in the Foreign Service and he was there with me. He was a very fervid fisherman and I liked him very much, and I'm not a fisherman, but to please him I used to go fishing with him. It would mean going down and staying in a wretched little town overnight, drinking quantities of rum, and going out in a boat and sweltering all day in the sun. But I did it because I liked George. He later turned up and succeeded me in Tokyo when I left there to go to Peking.

WILLIAM BELTON
Consular Officer
Havana (1938)

William Belton was born in Portland, Oregon on May 22, 1914. He received his BA from Stanford University and entered the Foreign Service in 1938. His career has included positions in Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Canada, Chile, Australia, and Brazil. Mr. Belton was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on November 19, 1992.

Q: So you went to Havana in 1938?

BELTON: Yes, in 1938.

Q: What were you doing in Havana?

BELTON: In those days our first assignment was always as a student vice-consul, so I went to the Consulate General in Havana. As a student vice-consul I was rotated around and given a taste of each of the functions of the office. The principal thing in those days was visa work, because Havana was flooded with European refugees. This was just before the outbreak of the war.

Q: Were there a lot of Jews there?

BELTON: The city was just full of German Jews who had been unable to get US visas while they were still in Europe, so had come to Havana to wait until their numbers came up on the quota system for the United States. So we had a really big and extremely active, busy visa mill going there. That was my principal duty.

Q: The foreign service has been castigated from time to time about how it treated refugees, particularly the Jewish refugees from Europe in the late 1930's; charged with not being very sympathetic or responsible. Of course we did have a law. Could you give us a feel about how it was for a young man dealing with this problem? Cuba was certainly not under the gun at all--what was the attitude of the more senior officers and what were the instructions from Washington?

BELTON: I really never thought of this in that sense, because I never felt there was anything but sympathy for this tremendous problem and the people involved in it. There was a difference between our attitude toward these people, how we handled them, and what the laws enabled us to do for them. Thousands of people were eventually going to get into the United States, one way or another.

Q: You knew that?

BELTON: We knew that. It was a tragedy that we had to keep them sitting there on the benches in the parks of Havana for years on end sometimes, before they could come. When they walked into the office, we did the very best we could under extremely difficult circumstances. Understandably, the visa applicants themselves weren't always models of patience. I remember on one occasion we received a complaint from the United States about how somebody was treated at the reception desk. The Consul General, Coert duBois, was a very imaginative and gung-ho officer; when he got this complaint he had a photographer come and take a picture of the receptionist at work. It was a very dramatic picture. There was this young woman at her desk surrounded by at least twenty people, all with their arms out, shouting at her, trying to get her attention, trying to get in. The poor woman was trying to cope with this great crowd of people. Well, you could say we needed more people to take care of this, but from the point of view of the receptionist, she was doing the very best she could. She was well disposed toward these people, but sometimes somebody would get rambunctious and she would have to put them down. I honestly don't feel that there was anything untoward about the way we handled the people in

general under the circumstances that existed at the time, which were extremely difficult for everybody, on our side and theirs as well.

Q: Were we making representations to the Cuban authorities not to expel these people?

BELTON: This was up at another level than I worked at, but I have no recollection of there ever being a particular problem in that regard. The people were swarming into Cuba, not only from Germany but from many other countries. We had people from thirty or forty nations, it seemed, all lined up there waiting for their visas. As far as I can recall, Cuba was a very hospitable place for them. It was comfortable, warm; of course they had to have some means and I am sure a lot of them were in difficult economic circumstances, but I don't think the Cubans were giving them any particular problem. Most of them were real lucky to be there rather than some of the other places they might have been at that stage.

Q: Did you as a student vice-consul--you had already been a clerk which had obviously prepared you better than the normal student vice-consul--do anything to prepare yourself for the foreign service other than just doing your job?

BELTON: At that stage of one's career it was hard to know what one's future was going to be. Every assignment, of whatever kind, was something that you dedicated yourself pretty fully to. I remember I had some time in the commercial section--the consulate general not only had the visa section, which was the big thing, but it had a commercial section. And in those days we had invoices and shipping; there was a lot of shipping and a lot of documentation that we don't have to worry about anymore in regard to ships. So there was time spent there as well. Those were the three sections that I...oh, there was another section: protection; a big tourist center, such as Havana was in those days, had a lot of protection activity. There were always Americans getting into trouble, getting into jail.

Q: This was a big gambling and prostitution area, wasn't it?

BELTON: Yes, it had everything a big tourist resort had in those days. I have never thought of it in these terms, but I suspect it might have been considered the Las Vegas of that time. Las Vegas at that time didn't exist, practically speaking. There were lots and lots of Americans there and the protection business was quite active. Then Coert duBois had the idea that he wanted to do something that would be good propaganda for the Foreign Service, so he arranged that every time a big tourist ship came into port--and this was sometimes two or three a day, sometimes one every three or four days--one of the vice-consuls would go down to meet the ship. He would go aboard, introduce himself to the purser, and say, "I'm here to see if there is anybody who needs our help." He would ask whether there were any problems, or if any prominent Americans were on board that we should greet in the name of the Ambassador or the Consul General. We did a lot of meeting and greeting that way.

Offhand, I don't remember anyone I met in this fashion except on one particular occasion when a purser said, "Well there is a fellow here that perhaps you ought to meet. He's been doing quite a bit traveling, seems to be important and has impressive documentation." There was something strange about the way he approached this. Anyway the man finally appeared and turned out to be

a friend and classmate of mine from Stanford. He had made a trip rather like my own through Central America, but he had loaded himself up with every kind of document that he could get. One was a signed letter of introduction from Herbert Hoover, who was living on the Stanford campus in those days; he had fixed all this documentation with big seals and ribbons so it looked very, very official, and using it, he had talked his way into a number of events and situations along the road and had persuaded the tourist ship captain to give him a work-away passage from Jamaica to Havana.

Q: Work-away being the way we sent Americans back home who ran out of money.

BELTON: Exactly. He was the only "prominent" American on board.

Q: How about getting people out of jails; was this a problem or were the Cubans pretty tolerant?

BELTON: It would depend entirely upon what the fellow was in for. I recall one time going around--it was one of my earliest experiences and was of lasting value to me. I presented myself as the American Vice-Consul--spreading my chest a bit--and talked to this Cuban official, I can't remember his position, about an American who was in jail. I hadn't gone very far before he let me know that he was in charge around there and this guy was going to stay in jail as long as he wanted him to stay in jail. I don't remember what the fellow was in for. I think, in general, we got along pretty well and we had reasonably good relations, but not necessarily on the basis of student vice-consuls who didn't yet know how to approach Cuban officials.

Q: When you finished this assignment did you go back to Washington for training?

BELTON: Yes, then I went back to the Foreign Service School. All of us who had passed the 1937-38 exams were sent to the school after our initial student assignment. Only one person, so far as I know, didn't go. That was Phil Bonsal, who was several years senior to most of the rest of us and had already had extensive experience with a telephone company abroad. He served briefly in the Consulate General in Havana, but when I came along to replace him, he moved over to the Embassy and continued there without attending the school.

JAMES N. CORTADA
Importer
Havana (1938-1948)

James N. Cortada was born in New York in 1914. He grew up in New York, but spent his high school years in Havana, Cuba. He attended college in New York five years, until 1932. Mr. Cortada joined the Foreign Service in 1942. His career included posts in Cuba, Spain, Iraq, Egypt, Yemen, and Washington, DC. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1992.

CORDATA: When I landed in Havana, representing those various firms, I had 50 cents in my pocket and I felt, well, if I'm going to start a business from scratch, I'm not going to start it with 50 cents. So I took the half dollar and flung it into the harbor of Havana so I could say someday that I started a business literally from nothing. It was between 1938 and 1942 that my import business developed.

My father was 20 odd years older than my mother and I had been concerned about looking after the family. My mother was an invalid. It so happened that my father wound up burying my mother! But the experience that I obtained by working with him was enormous, because he was a crackerjack expert in foreign trade marketing. I also became involved in different things. I always had a knack for education, for teaching, so I helped establish an American type college in Havana, owned by a Frenchman who had established a chain of business academies. I did quite a bit of teaching in the main academy, marketing and English. I enjoyed it. Since I had been at CCNY for 5 years, I knew how to set it up. The college was eventually recognized by the Cuban government and registered in Washington among international colleges.

The upshot of all this was that I also got experience in different fields, because that's what happens when you have your own business. You can do different things, particularly since I was associated with my father. He could look after one thing while I did something else. So, I wound up running a mining operation in the eastern part of Cuba, for manganese mining. I spent six months deep, deep in the jungle, sleeping in a thatched roofed hut, in a hammock slung between two poles, taking a bath in a river near by. And when I would start working in the mine, with the miners that I hired, I also hammered away at the spikes that we would put in to place dynamite. From a practical point of view, I learned a great deal about geology and mining techniques. Eventually, the American firm that was backing me decided to bow out because it was going to be very costly to continue. So I returned to Havana.

This caught me, 1939, still in business. We had found that a Spanish lawyer had an important well in the Motembo oil field in Cuba. This is a field where you went down only a couple of thousand feet and the product came out refined almost ready to put in a car. We had years earlier obtained the representation of a German wire rope firm. I beat out the competition in the Motembo area which came out of Texas. So, we did a very nice business.

In connection with the lawyer who had the well, we found out that he had inherited from his father about $25,000 worth of gold marks, which he could not get out of Germany, because of exchange controls. But we did find out through the German firm, that those gold marks could be used to ship us wire rope, some mining and oil drilling equipment. We worked out a deal whereby we would import $25,000 worth of wire rope and drilling equipment which for us meant a very substantial commission. We received notice from the German firm that the shipment would go forth on the 1st of September, 1939. Well, my sympathies were so strongly pro-British and pro-French, and so anti-Nazi and anti-phalangist, that when the German firm came back in response to a telegram I sent them saying "forget it, we'll talk things over when the war is over," they came back, saying: "Well, now look, we can ship this through Japan and from Japan, across the Pacific from the Panama canal to Havana." Well I didn't want any part of that. So I wrote them explaining that we deeply appreciated their interest, that our commercial relationships had been very satisfactory, but that there were other considerations that had a

bearing on my decision and my father's. We simply wanted to sever the connection till the war was over. And that was it.

Well time went by and when we went to war in 1941, I began to liquidate my affairs, because I wanted to get into the conflict. My ambition was to go into the navy. But it would take 5 or 6 months to do that. So that I was in Havana still in June of 42.

To show you how, personally, history works out, my wife was born in Havana of American parents. She had been valedictorian of her class, and since 1939 had worked in the American Embassy in Havana. By the time that I'm referring to in June, she had been part of a 2 or 3 person intelligence unit which collected data cards on possible subversives. I had known Shirley for a period of 3 or 4 years, but there was no romance, we were just good friends. It happened that in June, my sister then a teenager was going out on a date at the Sans Souci nightclub. Those were still chaperon days, and asked me to take her there. Well, I didn't want to go alone, so I called up Shirley and said "Look, I got to chaperon my sister, would you mind coming along with me. We're going to Sans Souci." Well, she agreed, and we went. She asked me: "Well, what are you up to," and I explained, because I hadn't seen her in about a year. I said: "Well, I'm getting ready to go to Miami, because I want to volunteer for the navy. I think sometime in the next few weeks, I'll wrap it up." Well, when she went to the Embassy that Monday, they had received a telegram from Washington to go on and hire somebody who had certain characteristics to do investigative work for the Proclaimed List of Certain Blocked Nationals and get into the economic warfare part of it.

Q: *The Blocked listing and ...?*

CORTADA: The Blocked listing and all of that, and there was no time there to train anybody so, there was a question of bicultural background...and a certain amount of undercover work that went into it. And the other job they wanted filled called for a certain amount of commodity control for which a good friend of mine, Dolphie Horne, manager of the P&O steamship company in Havana, was very well qualified. Dolphie was about 32 years old and I, by this time was around 28 or 29. The result was that Vice Consul (FSO) John Hoover who later became a very close friend, and who was the officer in charge of that unit turned to Shirley and said: "Shirley, you have been here all your life, is there anybody here that we can get who can qualify for the job. You know, parents should be American, he should be bicultural and all that kind of thing and know every merchant in the place." Shirley replied: "Well, I went out on a date with Jimmy Cortada a few days ago, and he said he was going off to Miami to join the navy. I don't know whether he's still here." John wrote me a letter - I was still in Havana - that he would like to discuss a matter of possible mutual interest, that kind of thing. Well, I was interviewed by John. I was very leery about getting into this. I wanted to go off to war. I had no desire to get into any Embassy or Consulate, or anything like that. But John pointed out to me that one had the obligation to serve one's country where one was best suited. In this particular situation, he indicated I was the candidate for it. Well I agreed provided that I would be given the opportunity to go to Miami to volunteer for the navy, at least, say, the following year. That's how it happened. So I wound up in the Embassy chasing down phalangists and black money transfers and all that kind of business.

About a year later I went to Miami and took the exams for a Navy commission. I know damn well I passed them. The commander of the recruiting office was an American businessman from Havana who was an old friend. Well in time I got back a letter from the Navy, ambiguous, I still have it, which said in effect, "Get lost." Turned down by the Navy and having become deeply interested in our work, I opted to stay in the foreign service. Also, Shirley and I became romantically engaged after my turn down and were married. Still are! Harold Tewell as Consul General in the Embassy and learning about my F.S. aspiration, told me: "You've got all the experience that's necessary, but one day somebody's going to say: "Jimmy Cortada never got a degree and so and so has one." And the responsibility is going to go to the fellow who has it because yours was an unfinished business. Well, the president of the Havana Business College, which I had helped found and organize had remained a very close friend. We used to play golf at the Havana Country Club every weekend. I told him that I wanted to register in the college night sessions and get my degree. He turned around to me and said: "I'll let you do that only under one condition." I asked: "What is that?" "It's that you teach each course that you're gonna take and so that there's no question about its legitimacy, the instructor will sit in these as a student instead of you." So frankly, I taught my last 30 credit hours, at night already married, and with a child. So, that's how I got my bachelor's degree.

Q: *I'd just like to get a little feeling for the two Ambassadors when you were in Havana. Spruille Braden and R. Henry Norweb.*

CORTADA: Actually, there was a third one but unfortunately I left after he'd been there only a week, but I forget his name.

Q: *These were two men who were quite well known. What was your impression of them?*

CORTADA: Both extraordinary. Each in his own way. Spruille Braden was a mining engineer who had made a substantial fortune in Chile. He married a Chilean lady, an absolutely splendid lady, a lady to her fingertips. The best that you can find in that Spanish culture. He had had a lot of experience in South America. He had been the key figure in settling that Chaco war. He was a dynamic individual. He was the motion picture image of a certain kind of Ambassador, very florid-faced, reddish-haired type, bulky, squared-jaw, originally from New York, dynamic, he was perpetual motion, very astute.

He understood the Cuban mentality very well because of his experience in Latin America, and being married to a Latin American woman. Very easy to get along with. There was no abuse there of any kind. And as I said, his wife was a delight. He was very outgoing, massive entertainment. Very talented.

R. Henry Norweb was also a fascinating character, but a completely different cut of cloth. R. Henry Norweb was married to a lady who I believe was the principal at interest at the Cleveland Plain Dealer. Very wealthy. Norweb had been born in England, and in his physical appearance was a prototype of a Sir Anthony Eden. Same kind of personality, quiet, very dignified. He was well off in his own right, had substantial holdings in General Motors, as I seem to recall, and also was a pleasure to work with. He was also very astute. And one thing I learned from him, was the dignity with which an Ambassador can really function, because, while Spruille Braden was a

gentleman, he was really a gentleman in the 1890 American sense of the word. Whereas R. Henry Norweb was very quiet, very dignified, believed in very quiet diplomacy, no fanfare. His entertainment was modest. I remember he was an expert in dry martinis. He prepared his dry martinis months in advance and let them gel, so that when he served them, they were really exquisite. And none of this ice business. They had to be the real McCoy. His drafting ability, his ability to write English was excellent. Now, his wife was what we used to refer to in the Foreign Service as a tiger.

Q: *One of the dragons, yeah.*

CORTADA: She was one of the dragons. But, we never had any problems with her. As a matter of fact, my wife had been under Spruille Braden, his social secretary. Her family was very prominent in Havana. Her uncle, Johnny Duys, had been president of the Chamber of Commerce. They knew the ropes. So that she and my wife, despite the fact that she could have been my wife's grandmother, got along very, very well. But she was a dragon lady.

Q: *What was the political situation. We've gotta sort of move on. But, before we do that, I am wondering...in Cuba, I mean...*

CORTADA: The political situation in Cuba, at that time? The Machado Revolution had taken place around 1932. That is President Machado and his whole government were thrown out and Batista came in. That was known as the Sergeant's Revolt. Batista was a sergeant who lived in a small town outside of Havana, where he was friends with the family of a boy one or two years older than me and with whom I used to spend weekends in that town. His father was the local doctor and Elisa, Batista's wife, was laundress for the area. So I got to know about them at the time. He was self-taught. He taught himself shorthand and wound up in the Chief of Staff's office as a secretary. As such he had under his control all of the records of the army. He knew exactly where everybody was.

Well, he spawned a revolt. A good deal about that has been written up. But by the time that these two men came into the picture, he had been elected President of Cuba and while Spruille Braden was there, he opened the process for a genuine free election. Therefore the president that followed Batista was legitimately elected. Unfortunately, the new President had weird scruples and didn't hesitate to abuse his position, but it was a legitimate election. I would say it was the high point of promise for Cuba's future.

In 1947, I wrote a dispatch entitled "Component Elements of Cuban Character and Economic Future." The gist of it was that within about ten years there would be no foreign interests in Cuba. There was some debate in the Embassy whether to let that dispatch go through, because in those days they were just beginning to put drafter's initials on it. R. Henry Norweb was wondering about: "This is a daring thing."

It was a cross between a cultural-anthropological survey and economic thinking because I had done some work in cultural-anthropology with an American professor who had spent some months in Cuba. I had learned some of the techniques and worked it into this study. It eventually was made required reading for about ten years. The Ambassador's deputy who eventually signed

it, whose name I forget now although he's still alive, up in his '90s I think, eventually became Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Latin America. Castro came in. I had just about finished the Senior Seminar in Foreign Policy at FSI when he, the Deputy Latin American Assistant Secretary, pulled me out of that in agreement with the Assistant Secretary for the Near East. I and the late Hank Hoyt, who eventually became Ambassador to Uruguay and who had served in Havana after I had left, reviewed the Cuban picture. Well, the two of us covered about 20 years of Cuban history. So we wrote the White Paper that eventually went to the Organization of American States and set American policy. The paper was kept up to date until presentation at the OAS by John Hoover, so it was really in John Hoover's time that it went to the OAS, but we did it.

NILES W. BOND
Consular Officer
Havana (1939-1940)

Niles W. Bond was born in Massachusetts in 1916. He received a BA from the University of North Carolina and graduated from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy in 1938. His postings abroad include Havana, Yokohama, Madrid, Bern, Tokyo, Seoul, Rome, Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo. In 1998 Charles Stuart Kennedy interviewed Mr. Bond.

BOND: March of '39. I went to my first post, yes.

Q: Could you explain the procedure? Now, you come in and you have a training course and all of that. But in those days it was a different procedure, wasn't it?

BOND: Yes, that's right. We were all sent out absolutely unprepared. We were told not to proceed to our post by way of Washington. We were left so ignorant and I must have been the most ignorant of all. There was no mention made of getting a passport or anything like that. So I went off to my first post with no passport. (*Gales of laughter)* Havana was my first post. I took the train from Boston to Miami and then took an overnight ferry across. I'd had a Cuban friend in Cambridge when I was doing all this studying in the summer. He was back in Cuba. He was the only one in Cuba, as it turned out, who knew I was coming. The post didn't even know I was coming. (*Laughter)* I'd been thinking about how great it would be. I was sure the consul general would be down at the pier to meet me with half of his staff. There might be a band playing and all that sort of thing. (*Laughter)* So, when we anchored, the aviso came out to the ship; they looked at the documentation and all that sort of thing. My Cuban friend was on board. Now this was very early in the morning, about 6:30. I wasn't up. He knocked on my door and I was very happy to see him. He said, "Let me have your passport because my uncle is the head of the passport office here." And I said, "I don't have a passport." He thought I was kidding. He said, "You have to have a passport. How did you get this far without a passport?" Then he said, "Give me something that identifies you." So I gave him a copy of my travel orders and I didn't see him again until we got in. Then he came back on board and said, "I persuaded my uncle to let you

enter as a tourist because tourists don't require passports, so you are now a tourist here. You have no standing as a diplomat without a passport, except for the travel orders. Anyway, I have reserved a room for you in a hotel that's near the office of the consulate." And that was that I went in later in the day to present myself. At that time, there were approximately 25,000 visa applicants waiting to get American visas in Havana. They were mainly European Jews.

Q: Oh, yes.

BOND: People who were fleeing from Germany. At least 25,000. And about 20,000 of those would be outside the door every day trying to get information. The quota system was so overbooked. For example, if somebody was Hungarian-born, and therefore trying to get a visa under the Hungarian quota, there was a waiting period of 30 years! Anyway, on my first day there, I went up on the elevator and I got off and I had to fight my way through the crowd of visa applicants to get to the receptionist. She was not at all welcoming. She said, "What do <u>you</u> want?" I said, "Well, I'm assigned here." She said, "We have no information about anyone being assigned here. Let me see your passport." And I said, "I don't have a passport." And she said, "Oh my God!" And then "You must have travel orders. Let me see your travel orders." I didn't have them. I'd left them on the dresser in my hotel room. So then she said, "Look, I'm too busy. Get out of my way so I can wait on these other people." At that moment, a non-career vice-consul, a wonderful man named Tubby Marvin, who'd been there for donkeys years, saw that I was in some sort of trouble. He came over, took me by the arm, and said, "Come into my office." So I went in and I explained the situation, my predicament, to him. And he laughed and he laughed and he laughed. He thought that was the funniest thing he'd ever heard. He said, "Well, you know, we were informed months ago by the Department that we were getting another vice-consul, but they didn't say who it would be, and they didn't say when he was coming and so forth. So this comes as a surprise." Then he took me in to meet my boss, who took a fatherly interest in his junior officers.

Q: Oh, yes. Tell me something… I think it's a very important slice of American history to understand, because in the late '30's and even into the '40's dealing with Jewish and other immigrants from what was happening in Germany. This was before the war started, just before, and nobody had any idea of the holocaust and what was going to happen, but our treatment of people coming in was quite restricted. I wonder if you could talk about what your orders were and how you dealt with it, not just you but how the office dealt with it?

BOND: The theory of a probationary vice-consul first assignment was that the new Foreign Service Officer would do a bit of everything in his first year. He moved from one section to another doing everything. But, in this case, 90 percent of the work was visa work and so I spent most of my time doing just that. We were very good with these people. I remember we had one unaccompanied Jewish woman. She was about 50 and had a relative in the States who had vouched for her and that sort of thing. But when it came to the literacy test, she couldn't read the cards in either Yiddish or Hebrew. That was a compulsory turn-down. But she said to my secretary, who was Irish but, for some reason, spoke Yiddish. "I <u>can</u> read. I can't read these, but if you can give me a Yiddish Jewish newspaper, I'll show you I can read." At that time, there was a Jewish newspaper being published in Havana. My secretary went out and got a copy of it and brought it back. She read and spoke Hebrew well, so she gave it to the woman and said,

"Read." And the woman read everything and got it right. So I gave her a visa and explained that she was literate, although she had not been able to read the reading cards. She got to Miami and was turned down by Immigration for being illiterate.

The Department sent a very snotty telegram to the post saying, "Don't you know what you're doing? Don't you know what illiteracy is?" So, I drafted an answer back for my boss to sign saying that, "The meaning of literacy in this case does not mean the ability to read the reading cards." I'd looked at them and they were all either biblical or Shakespeare. "She is literate because she can read newspapers." The Department got it reversed and they let her in. So, I spent most of my time doing visa work and it was very instructive.

Another convenience we had in the office was a Cuban clerk, a very nice man in his 60s, I guess, whose name was Walter Washington. If I had a visa applicant who was arguing about something and said, "Ask the State Department about this," I would say, "All right," and then get on the phone and say to my secretary, "Let me speak with Washington." My secretary knew when I said that, she was to put me through to Walter Washington. And I'd have a little chat with Walter, and come back with the answer that I'd already given, and that I knew was right in the first place. Then, I'd say, "I have to accept that because that's from Washington." (*Laughter)*

Q: Did you get any feel for the attitude, because one of the charges that has been made against the State Department, Foreign Service, U.S. Government was that it was not welcoming, particularly to the Jewish refugees? This was in the '30s.

BOND: We had none of that in Havana when I was there. As a matter of fact, some of them used to apologize for being Jewish and I would give them a little lecture saying "You should be proud of being Jewish," and that sort of thing. No. They got the opposite of what you describe from those of us who were working the visa desk.

Q: Looking at Cuba at that time, how were the Jews who were coming? We had a very small quota and those that didn't have relatives…

BOND: Yes.

Q: How were the others living? Were they settling-in in Cuba?

BOND: Some of them were. A lot of them became residents and probably citizens of Cuba because they couldn't get in anywhere else, at least for the duration of the war. A colony had grown up with these people. They had taken over one of the low cost parts of town. Some of them were very wealthy. I had visa applicants whose relatives were millionaires. They were the least polite of all. They demanded to be given a gold-framed visa right away. But I never saw any anti-Semitism in our operation.

Q: What was your impression of the Cuban government and life in Cuba in those days?

BOND: I was there just a year and was the junior officer in the consulate, so I didn't have much of a social life. Unless you count the summer Sundays fishing for marlin with Ernest Hemingway,

when my main job was mixing martinis. I met very few, if any, high-ranking Cuban officials. There was a period when I was taken off visas and put into the Protection of American Citizens section. I was kept very busy in that job for two months, during which 12 Americans died.

Q: Good heavens!

BOND: They hadn't had an American death for several years. All of a sudden, when I got the job, 12 people died! (*Laughter)* Two of them were suicides. One was a seaman who drank himself to death. There were others who just died of natural causes. They were Americans who'd been living there for years and years.

Q: I take it the consulate was in a different place from the embassy. Was there any real contact?

BOND: Very little contact between them. The embassy was a good distance away. We had a good career ambassador, Butler Wright, who died while I was there, and an excellent counselor (No. 2) named Willard Beaulac. Also, I joined the American Club in Havana, as was the custom, where I met people from the embassy. Some of them looked down on consular people, but most of them were all right, and occasionally invited bachelor officers to dinner. My boss, the consul general, was a first class officer. He had been consul general in Naples before he came to Havana. He brought a sailboat that he'd had built in Naples and a Neapolitan sailor to maintain and operate it.

Q: Who was the consul general?

BOND: Court Dubois. A wonderful man. He and his wife had just suffered a terrible tragedy. They had two daughters and, just months before I got there, sometime in '38, these two girls were flying in a plane across the English Channel. They opened the door and jumped out, holding hands.

Q: Oh! Oh!

BOND: A terrible thing.

Q: The war broke out the 1st of September 1939 in Europe. Did that have any effect on what you all were doing?

BOND: Well, the most immediate effect and the one that caused the most indignation was that the price of Scotch whisky went up rather drastically.

Q: Such are the horrors of war.

BOND: Such are the horrors of war, exactly.

Q: You left actually, going back to the Department, in early 1940. Is that right?

BOND: March of '40, yes.

LARUE R. LUTKINS
Vice Consul
Havana (1942-1944)

LaRue R. Lutkins was born in 1919 and raised in New York. His career with the State Department included assignments in Cuba, China, Malaysia, Japan, Hong Kong, Ceylon (Sri Lanka), and South Africa. Mr. Lutkins was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on October 18, 1990.

Q: *You were sent to Cuba in '42?*

LUTKINS: Yes, Havana, Cuba.

Q: *And you served there for about two years?*

LUTKINS: A little over two years.

Q: *Where were you serving and what were you doing?*

LUTKINS: I was initially posted to Havana, the capital. For a year, during the two years I was there, I was put in charge of a one-man listening post at a place called the Isle of Pines. I'll get to that later.

In Havana, it was primarily a training experience. There were quite a few other younger officers there at that time--Bob McBride, who has since died, I'm afraid, and Bill Crawford was there and others. They rotated us around. Did work in the economic and commercial section, writing up the traditional reports on business opportunities and that sort of thing.

Then quite a bit of time in the consular section, which was quite busy at that time. Because of the war, there were a large number of European refugees, who couldn't get directly into the United States from Europe, who made Cuba their transitional stopping place. They applied for American visas there, which made that section fairly busy and active. And then, it being wartime, there was a certain amount of economic warfare work.

Q: *Could you explain what economic warfare work was?*

LUTKINS: Well, as I recall it, I was not in it very long, but the basic outlines are very simple. We were trying to deny the flow of certain products to the Axis powers. And that involved, wherever one might be stationed, working with the local government to try and prevent business contacts and commercial contacts involving the shipment of scarce materials, metals and that type of thing to the Axis powers.

Cuba was not a particularly difficult post in that regard, in that in those days Cuba was really an economic colony of the United States. It was overwhelmingly dominated by the United States' financial and industrial interests, so that we never had much trouble persuading the Cubans to cooperate with us. I think we may have had more problems elsewhere in Latin America, where the Germans were a little more firmly entrenched, but in Cuba that wasn't a major problem. Spain was another example, being a neutral country, which was extremely important in that regard.

Q: *Well then, you say you were a one-man post on the Isle of Pines. I'm always interested in some of these wartime experiences, because the Foreign Service is doing odd things in places.*

LUTKINS: Yes. Well, it's one of those things that is done in wartime that in retrospect seemed rather unnecessary and unimportant. But I guess in the heat of war, precautionary steps are taken that seemed advisable at the time. I think the reason was that there were a number of Axis nationals-- Germans, Japanese, some Italians--who lived in Cuba when war broke out in December of '41. The Cubans, at our request, locked them all up, and they happened to put them in a federal penitentiary which was located on the Isle of Pines.

Q: *Which is now notorious under Castro, isn't it?*

LUTKINS: Right. The Isle of Pines is now known as the Isle of Youth, if I'm not mistaken. The penitentiary was a modern, up-to-date facility that had been built by a fairly enterprising Cuban military man a few years before, for other reasons. But in terms of penal institutions, it was modern and clean, well run. But in addition to that, there were a few Japanese farmers throughout Cuba, and some perhaps on the Isle of Pines itself, and they also were locked up and put in this penitentiary.

The idea was that they just wanted somebody on the spot, to make sure that the Cubans were doing what they were supposed to be doing in keeping these people locked up and not engaging in any hanky- panky. I guess some of the Germans and the Italians were fairly well heeled, and perhaps had money that they conceivably could have used to get special privileges. In addition to that, in the early days of the war, this was at the height of the submarine scare. There were numerous reports of German submarines appearing, and they just wanted to have somebody around to keep an eye on that particular area.

Q: *Particularly in '42, '43, there were really tremendous losses.*

LUTKINS: Oh, very much. That was a bad spring, yes.

Q: *I guess there's a book out right now called* Operation Drumroll *isn't it, or something like that.*

LUTKINS: Yes, it was mostly further north along the eastern seaboard, but I guess the Caribbean also had a certain amount, too.

This brings up an amusing anecdote.

You asked me various things I did at the embassy at Havana. (I'm sorry I'm getting a little out of order here.) It was only six months after I arrived in Havana that they sent me over to the Isle of Pines, where I stayed for a year and then came back to Havana and finished my tour. The reason they picked me to go to the Isle of Pines was because the young vice consul from Canada, who was coming down supposedly to do this, had already been in the service a year, and for some reason or other they weren't very happy with his performance in Canada, so they decided to keep him in Havana and send me down there.

When I came back to Havana after the year on the Isle of Pines, one of the jobs I did was to serve as the ambassador's sort of private secretary, scheduling appointments and so forth. In that capacity, I sat in on some of the staff meetings. One of them was attended by a very famous American who was a resident in Cuba, Ernest Hemingway, who had a home there for many years and whom I got to know reasonably well. You'll recall he was a great fisherman, and he had, I guess for those days, a fairly big, expensive fishing craft that he used to go out in. During the war, of course, gasoline fuel was rationed and it was very difficult for the layman to get hold of. But anyway, one of the items addressed in the staff meeting, which Ernest Hemingway sat in on, was to explain his proposal. In return for getting fuel for his fishing boat, he would go out and be a decoy to spot any possible submarine surfacings. This was taken very seriously, and the embassy actually went along with it and gave him the fuel, which I thought was a bit of a scam.

Q: *In another interview that I had, one of our top Foreign Service colleagues spent a good part of the war out in the Gulf Stream in a sailing vessel, in the Navy, and they were just looking for submarines. They just sailed back and forth--sailing because they could do it cheaper and they didn't have to come in. And there they sat out there.*

LUTKINS: We also had an airbase, Army airbase in those days, on the western tip of Cuba, in what is called Pinar del Río Province. I became quite friendly with some of the officers at that base. Their primary mission was to go out on daily reconnaissance flights, to keep an eye out for submarines and so forth.

Q: *Did you have any problems sitting on the Isle of Pines? Sounds like you just went over and looked at the wall once a day and then...*

LUTKINS: It was very hard to keep myself busy; I think I did a lot of reading that year. It was a very interesting little place. This is a historical sidelight, but at the end of the Spanish-American War (for some reason that is a little hazy in my memory now), there was some reason to believe that this little island might be acquired by the United States.

There was, for those days, a sizable flow of American farmers, mostly from the upper Middle West, who went down there and started a citrus industry, growing grapefruit primarily, also limes, and winter vegetables like cucumbers to supply the American market. And it was a rather thriving little American community for awhile.

After awhile the bubble burst, in that the United States made it clear that they were not planning to try to acquire the island. Most of the settlers went back, but there remained a reasonably

sizable little community of a hundred Americans or so, with their families, engaged primarily in agriculture.

It was like being in a typical midwestern agricultural area. Real salt-of-the-earth Americans; it was wonderful. Of course, they didn't get along terribly well with the Cubans, whom they regarded, with some merit, as a little bit backward and corrupt and so forth. But they were, of course, delighted to have an American official on hand, and I became good friends with many of them.

CLARENCE S. BOONSTRA
Assistant Agricultural Attaché
Havana (1943-1945)

Economic Counselor, Acting Deputy Chief of Mission
Havana (1955-1958)

Clarence A. Boonstra was born in Grand Rapids, Michigan on January 5, 1914. He attended Michigan State University and proceeded to obtain a Ph. D. in Agricultural Economics from Louisiana State University. He began work in the USDA but moved to the Foreign Service in 1946. He has since served in Havana, Manila, Lima, Buenos Aires, Rio de Janeiro, Washington, Mexico City and was Ambassador to Costa Rica. He retired in 1974. Mr. Boonstra was interviewed in 1989 by Mr. Donald Barnes.

BOONSTRA: I left the university and went to work for the Department of Agriculture as an editor of agricultural publications. Shortly thereafter, when the Department of Agriculture learned of my specialization in sugar and rice, I transferred to the Commodity Credit Corporation, which at that time was taking over the responsibility for procurement of all the Cuban sugar crop. At that time we were importing two-thirds of our sugar and supply was linked to wartime transportation availability. After some time in those jobs with Commodity Credit Corporation, there was a requirement for another agricultural specialist on these matters in Embassy Havana in Cuba. I was asked by the Foreign Service Auxiliary whether I would be interested in such employment. I already knew Cuba from a number of trips in the sugar and rice business when I was in Louisiana. Also I thought I'd be happier abroad since most of my friends were off in the Armed Forces. So I arrived in early 1943 in Cuba as Assistant Agricultural Attaché with particular responsibilities in procurement areas. I stayed there until 1945 when I was transferred to a not yet organized consulate in the Philippines, after the Japanese surrender, for similar procurement with the title of Agricultural Attaché. In 1946 I entered the Foreign Service on the basis of an oral exam and was one of the first Wristonees.

Q: You went to the Philippines just as the Japanese were leaving. The following years have been considered by some people familiar with the Foreign Service as the years in which the United States had, perhaps, it's greatest impact in foreign affairs, because it came out of the war

relatively unscathed, relatively wealthy, and willing to use it's wealth and it's power. Could you talk to us a little bit about what it was like?

BOONSTRA: Well, it was a heady experience representing a country then the dominant power in the world, influencing and often controlling economic and political happenings everywhere. In Cuba we were the sole buyers of Cuban sugar and their supplies of rice and other foods depended directly on the United States.
BOONSTRA: After Brazil I went back to Cuba. That was an interesting era also because arriving in Cuba as Economic Counselor in 1955, Arthur Gardner was Ambassador--a political appointee--and the situation was obviously growing worse very rapidly there. In December 1956, I was the Chargé at the time that Fidel Castro landed. Fidel Castro and my wife came from close-by areas in Oriente Province in Cuba. We had met Fidel years before. Also, I had a brother-in-law who was president of the large US-owned nickel company there. None of my wife's Cuban family had pro-Castro sympathies. They were not pro-Batista. Personally, my wife and I were not pro-anybody except American interests. However, there was a good bit of agitation later done by certain congressmen in Washington and by the columnist Drew Pearson that the US had a sympathizer in the Embassy in a top position who was not pro-Batista, which was certainly true. I wasn't pro-Batista, nor was my wife's family, but certainly not pro-Castro. In any case, this agitation reached a point that I had a call from the Assistant Secretary of State, after Castro had been in Sierra Maestra mountains for about six months, saying that I should be prepared to depart very soon because of pressures against my remaining there.

Q: That's also very interesting, too. There are those apologists for Castro who say that we drove him into the arms of communism. That he originally set out to be a democratic reformer. Do you attach any credence to that?

BOONSTRA: I had some contact with Castro, although I never dealt with him personally in negotiations. You may recall, you may have been there when he came to Washington in April 1959. I believe it was to speak at Princeton University.

Q: Right.

BOONSTRA: Because I was the only person in the State Department who had apparently ever met Fidel Castro, I was included in functions and assisted with arranging things and so forth. You may have been there.

Q: No, I wasn't.

BOONSTRA: Well, State Department arranged a meeting with Vice President Nixon because President Eisenhower would not receive him. Many of Castro's first cabinet had been friends of mine, particularly Felipe Pazos and Lopez Fresquet, in positions such as Minister of Finance, Head of Central Bank, etc. They were up in Washington with him and saw a great deal of them while they were in the United States. I was then in charge of East Coast Affairs, thus I had nothing technically to do with Cuba. I did see Castro enough to have a number of personal conversations with him. Also, of course, I had observed him during my time in Cuba during the six months after he landed in the Sierra Maestra and heard a great deal about him from his

friends as well as from the opposition. My own belief is that Fidel Castro displayed a considerable amount of Marxist influence. I don't consider that he necessarily felt terribly deeply about it but his outlook on the world was clearly marked by Marxist influence as we know from his presence in Bogota and so forth. But in the limited contact that I had with him, and in the opinions of people like Felipe Pazos and Lopez Fresquet and other first members of the cabinet, it was more their feeling and it's my feeling that he looked over the world and made a conscious choice that his prospects for attaining and holding power in Cuba were better through the Soviet approach. Also, the one point which Castro made to me and which he made to Felipe Pazos and to Rufo Lopez Fresquet and others was that he would not be dissuaded from expropriation of American property. He was willing to consider partial compensation only in bonds having no real cash payoff, highly prejudicial to US investors. While Castro was in the Sierra Maestra (Felipe Pazos was with him there) Felipe sent me a long letter wanting to know just what the American views were on this. After consultation with the State Department, we replied saying that we would insist absolutely on adequate, proper, and just compensation. Later I learned that Castro then told Felipe, that's one point we can never compromise and never will. Thus, there was no way of really working closely if we couldn't get past that point. This was more important to us in those days than were the political aspects of Castro's alliance with the Soviet Union. The important thing to me from my perspective is that here was no compromise possible, either between Fidel Castro and the United States. Thus, he probably had no route to go other than to the Soviet Union. I think it was really more a practical choice than a strong sense of ideology. I don't really believe that Fidel had too much ideology other than gaining and holding power.

Q: Well he had skated around in his youth trying to find an ideology which would be a vehicle for him. I know people who went to the university with him and he used to walk around with a copy of Mein Kampf under his arm. And later he toyed with the idea of Justicialismo, the so-called Peronist doctrine which was so vague. And then left that and finally settled on this as a good vehicle to obtain and keep power.

BOONSTRA: That is the interpretation, as I say, of the people in his first cabinet and also the interpretation of my wife's family who knew Fidel as a youth. He had been hungry for power. He was an activist. He always had been an activist and he had to choose at some point. I think he explored many routes and selected the Soviet approach. If you look at events today he's probably a better communist than Gorbachev.

Q: Yes, and he apparently was not moved by Gorbachev's pleas to change direction and approach.

BOONSTRA: On the other hand, if the United States had ever chosen a different policy toward Cuba, then Fidel, in spite of all of his firm, strong positions in communism, might have found it to his advantage to move into a closer position with the United States.

Q: Well, he gives the impression now of total inflexibility in his statements.

BOONSTRA: I think it's obvious to him at his present age that he couldn't make the switch any longer. He'd go down if he made the switch.

CARL F. NORDEN
Commercial Officer
Havana (1945-1947)

Carl F. Norden entered the Foreign Service in 1938. In addition to serving in Chile, Mr. Norden served in Germany, Poland, Suriname, Cuba, Santiago, Yugoslavia, Argentina, Spain, Iran, France, and Venezuela. He was interviewed by Horace G. Torbert in 1991.

Q: *You were telling me that the Chief of Personnel wanted to send you to his old post of Havana and that occurred right after you came back.*

NORDEN: What I did was learn about Cubans. I might say that it was a hell of comedown. I did not have all the support I had in Bari. When there if I wanted a plane to see Tito the British supplied me with one. What was I put to work at in Havana, some commercial and trade work. But it so happened that we had a first rate Commerce man in Cuba.

Q: *The ambassador at that time was Norweb who was not one of the most subtle diplomats to come down the pike.*

NORDEN: Lighthorse Harry Norweb, we called him.

Q: *Who really ran the place?*

NORDEN: His wife. It was quite an experience too.

Q: *You were there a couple of years, did you get to like it after the glamour of military war?*

NORDEN: Oh yes. I liked Cuba - it was a super-fun country. It was the playground of the United States. You never knew what time you were going to go to bed.

Q: *Were you married at this time?*

NORDEN: No, I will have to give you a little bit of background. I took a lot of criticism because I was always finagling to spend some time in the Department. That was because I was not married and I felt it was about time I was.

Q: *There were a lot of officers like that at that time.*

NORDEN: I made a resolution quite early in the game that I was not going to marry somebody who was a clerk in the field since you never knew what they were going to be like; were they running away from something? I decided that I would marry somebody from a real place.

Q: *With your kind of background?*

NORDEN: I did meet a girl whom I later married when I was in Bari and she was in OSS. She was very good in the Foreign Service.

WILLIAM B. COBB, JR.
Consular Officer
Havana (1945-1947)

William B. Cobb was born in North Carolina in 1923. He received a B.A. from the University of North Carolina and an M.S. from George Washington University. His postings abroad included Managua, Havana, Manila, La Paz, Martinique, Stockholm, and Mexico City. Mr. Cobb was interviewed by Horace G. Torbert in 1990.

COBB: I stayed around until I was told there was a vacancy in Havana and I was assigned there. I went to Havana on the 31st of January 1945.

Q: *This really then was the official beginning of your Foreign Service career. Now this was another visa assignment, but this time you were an expert after having done it for two weeks in Managua.*

COBB: This time I was in the immigration visa section in Havana. This was a very interesting position. There was a large number of European refugees in Havana who had gotten there before we entered World War II and who were awaiting an opportunity to come to the United States. They had regarded Havana as a staging area and did everything they possibly could to influence the prompt issuing of visas to enable them to come to the States.

Q: *These were to a large measure Jewish refugees?*

COBB: Yes.

Q: *They had been there long enough to be pretty sick of it all.*

COBB: Many of them had finally gotten jobs in Cuba. They had not intended to when they came, but they finally did and were working as shopkeepers, clerks or commission agents, things like that. They were making a fairly good living. They did not have a lot of resources and this was one of the things that troubled the Department at the time. We had an unspoken rule that either the applicant or his sponsor had to have at least $5,000 in the bank in the United States in order to avoid becoming a public charge. This was very much on peoples' minds at the time because of the return of the GIs from Europe, the uncertainty of the economic situation in the States, whether there would be adequate employment opportunities for our own people as well as for the refugees. It was a major factor in determining eligibility under the immigration laws.

There were the other usual factors such as to swear you were not a member of the Communist Party, you were ruined if you had tuberculosis in those days.

Q: *It is amazing how things have changed, the health thing, particularly tuberculosis. One tends to forget, it could almost like AIDS today.*

COBB: It was a "loathsome and infectious disease", I think that was definition we were using.

Q: *What was Havana like economically in those days, had it prospered from the war?*

COBB: Yes, Havana had prospered during the war. The price of sugar had been good during the war. Cuba lived off sugar and tobacco, then as now. Havana was in its best days, people spoke of the Vaca Gorda (fat cow) as being the good old days in Cuba, and this was almost the Vaca Gorda again. The US gambling interests were just coming into the casinos in Havana. They slowly began to infiltrate in 1945 and the American tourists overwhelmed the gambling industry coming down on the boats overnight from Key West to Havana. They carried hundreds of people and fifty to seventy-five automobiles, and they ran every day. The tourist business was extremely good to the Cubans. It was an interesting time.

Q: *I imagine the protection business in the embassy was considerable?*

COBB: It was. I was in the visa section for a year under John Cope who was in charge of the section. He replaced Bill Walker, who died a few weeks ago. I don't know what has become of Cope, but he was a good officer. The DCM at the time was Bob Woodward and the economic counselor was Al Nufer; they made a very good team.

Q: *Later Al died in the Philippines.*

COBB: He died in the Philippines, but he served with distinction in Argentina. He was a very talented officer who had little educational background other than the hard-knocks of this world. He never went to college. He had gone to a German commercial high school and had become a clerk in the consulate in Bremen, right after the war, World War I. He had a sister named Helen, who was also a clerk in the consulate. Both had long Foreign Service careers. Subsequently I remember Al Nufer saying that despite the instructions from the Department we caught a lot more flies with sugar than with vinegar. He was always trying to protect US interests in the Cuban context and at the same time not unnecessarily offend the Cubans. His wife was a Cuban from Cienfuegos. So far as I know she is still living in Florida. One of Al's daughters had married a rancher in Cuba which at the time was seeking to avoid dependence on sugar and tobacco, the Cuban government was encouraging the introduction of livestock and ranching. The other one married the son of the ambassador, Henry Norweb.

Q: *Norweb was sort of a legendary figure in the Foreign Service, do you have any stories about him?*

COBB: Yes. Not Norweb as such. There was a story in Havana at the time that Bob Woodward was trying to help Norweb understand more completely than he did what was going on in the

embassy. He took him on a tour of the embassy one day. Norweb came into the visa section, stood at the head of the stairs, looked out at the mass of about 400 people waiting for word on their visas. He said, "Hmm, it looks like Macy's basement" turned around and walked away. Bob's efforts did not come to much.

After a year I was transferred to the Citizenship and Protection section on a rotational basis just to get more experience. That was completely different. There I issued identifications cards to Americans who were born in Cuba but who wanted identification as Americans but who did not want to travel so we did not give them passports. We gave them identity cards. In the past five years I have seen one of the identity cards I issued in 1946.

Q: *This did not require much in the way of procedure?*

COBB: Yes it did, the same as getting a passport. The application had to be sent to Washington for approval.

Q: *Why do something different?*

COBB: Why not issue the passport? It was just that the card was a cheaper document. At the time there was a lot of passport theft and tampering with passports and the Department did not want to have as many American passports available to the American public as it does now.

I had very close relations with the funeral industry in Havana. On six successive Saturday nights, after midnight, I was called because of deaths of American citizens. Most of them were having too good a time for their age. The crowds would come over on the ferries, they would drink all the way over to Cuba, they would drink the whole time they were in Cuba and they would have a heart attack and have to be shipped back on the ferry, so to speak. Because of the history during the Prohibition era when caskets were used to ship liquor from Cuba to the United States instead of bodies, the vice consul was required to check the contents of the casket and to certify that to his knowledge that it contained only the body of the individual and then to put the US Government seal over eight counter-sunk screws on the top of the shipping box to insure it was not tampered with between the time it was closed and the time it arrived in the States. That was my job and I did it.

We also had other problems in Cuba. Once I was called by the police to say that they had a crazy man in jail and that he was beating against the bars and they did not know what to do with him. Could I come to see if I could quiet him down? So I went to the city jail and there was a man jumping on the bars as if he were an orangutan, clad only in his shorts. I asked what happened? They explained they had picked him up - he had gone berserk in his hotel room, he had destroyed everything in the room. The manager of the hotel had called the police to take him away. They had done so and put him the jail temporally. They said, "Now we turn him over to you." I said, "I don't know what to do with him". I called the office and said I have an American on my hands who seems to be crazy, I don't know what to do with him. Chuck Hutchinson, who was the consul and my boss, said, "Put him in a straitjacket and take him to the insane asylum." I asked if there were a psychiatric hospital we could take him to first? They said yes, so he was put in a straitjacket and the police drove me and the man to a psychiatric hospital on the edge of

town. When we got there the patient tried to make a run for it and escape but fell into some bushes so they were able to catch him and restrain him. I went back to ask the police what kind of personal effects he had; he had a couple of hundred dollars in his wallet and I took this into custody. The next morning I got a telephone call from the psychiatric hospital say, "you can come and get him now". He is sober and ready to go back to the States. It was purely an alcoholic thing. I went and got him, brought him down to the office, went out with him and bought some clean clothes with the money he had and got him a ticket on an airplane, took him to the airline terminal, put him on the bus to the airport and he thanked me very much. I never heard from him since.

While I was in Havana I took the written Foreign Service exams, I think in November or September 1946, after the passage of the Foreign Service Act of 1946. Three of us in Havana took the exams there, Jimmy Cortada, George Warrelman and I. I was the only one who passed. I did not pass by a very good grade, I got a 72. I had done so well in the reading comprehension portion of the exam, I had gotten a 95 or 99 or something like this, and that carried me. This brought up the rest of my grades so that I got a passing grade on the written. The question was, what was going to happen on the orals. About that time Bob Woodward, who was DCM, was driving back to Washington from Havana and he came up through North Carolina and stopped off in my hometown and visited with my parents, introducing himself to them. They were, of course, enchanted. He got to know them and to know where I came from. Bob has said that he recalls even now how gregarious and hospitable a person my father was.

I took the bus up from Key West to Washington to take the orals. You paid your own way and this was the cheapest way of doing it. I took the oral exam and was told I had a passing grade and that I would be commissioned as a Foreign Service officer. I went back to Havana and found that my social life had changed immensely. I had never been invited into the home of any Foreign Service officer when I was in Havana and suddenly I was on the list as the junior eligible bachelor. I went everywhere, was asked everywhere and enjoyed going everywhere. It was a fact of life in those days that there was a distinct separation in the office and in the community between people who were Foreign Service officers and people who weren't.

Q: *I think that began to change fairly soon thereafter.*

COBB: A number of us worked on changing it because we had experienced it at the time. And finally in May I received a transfer to Manila.

Q: *Was Nufer already there?*

COBB: No, Nufer did not got for three years, he had just left to go to El Salvador as ambassador and was replaced by Les Mallory. I was in Havana with an unusually interesting group of officers, Prescott Childs, whom you may remember. Prescott and his wife and two boys were good friends. Maury Hughes was also a consul general. This was time when the first administrative officers were sent out to replace the consuls general who were the administrators of the mission.

Q: *Many were recruited from the Department of Agriculture.*

COBB: Some were recruited from the Social Security Administration, others from the Civil Service Commission. I remember the tension that was caused when Roy Little was assigned as administrative officer in Havana and Prescott Childs just could not understand why there was to be an administrative officer, he had been running the administration in every post he had been in, and why should the put someone in to do this specialized job? Roy Little fitted into the job very well and tensions evaporated when we saw the usefulness of having an administrative officer.

ROBERT F. WOODWARD
Deputy Chief of Mission
Havana (1946-1947)

Ambassador Robert F. Woodward was born and raised in Minneapolis, Minnesota. He entered the Foreign Service in 1932. Ambassador Woodward's career included Deputy Chief of Mission positions in Bolivia, Guatemala, Cuba, and Sweden. He was ambassador to Costa Rica, Uruguay, Chile, and Spain. Ambassador Woodward was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1987.

Q: *So you went to Cuba.*

WOODWARD: I went to Cuba as a friend of Harry Norweb's. As a matter of fact, he had a vacation house above the cloud line in the Lima region, a little cottage he used to get up in the sunlight because of that blanket of clouds that hovers over Lima for months of the year. I was there during the month of February, and he loaned us this little house for our honeymoon.

Q: *How wonderful.*

WOODWARD: Anyhow, our relations were very pleasant. And all during this time, my relations with Norweb, I had not become well acquainted with his wife, Emery Mae. Emery Mae was an extremely wealthy woman. Harry Norweb had married into this large funding and Emery Mae tended to terrify the wives of the young officers, but she kept to herself a great deal of the time. Her relations with her own daughter, whom I understand was a very attractive young woman, in Lima were such that when the young daughter had a frustrated love affair with a secretary of the Spanish embassy, she went into a cloistered convent and is now the Mother Superior of a small group of cloistered Carmelite nuns in New Jersey.

Q: *Good heavens.*

WOODWARD: I attribute this, perhaps unfairly, but it seems probable that it was because of relations with her mother. Anyhow, we went to Havana under these circumstances, where I knew Harry Norweb very well, I didn't know his wife, nor did Virginia, my wife. Well, the upshot was that Virginia had virtually no relations with Mrs. Norweb. But my wife was the most

extraordinary adaptable woman, and there was never a word of complaint about this. She just took it in her stride and whenever we were able to pick up the crumbs of some relationships, some affair that Mrs. Norweb was managing as she did occasionally, we'd cooperate in every way we could. There were a couple of times when the Ambassador went off on consultation, or went up to Cleveland on business, and we would drop around and have a martini with Mrs. Norweb. She always made very good martinis, and she always made martinis no matter who was there. In any event we got along. I thought we were doing fairly satisfactorily, but I was pretty young to be Counselor of Embassy there. I went there in January of 1947...

Q: *'46, and you left in March of 1947.*

WOODWARD: That's right. I went there in January of '46.

Q: *You were rather young to be the...*

WOODWARD: ...let's see, I was 38 years old. Well, there weren't very many Counselors of Embassy in embassies quite as large as Havana who were that young in the Foreign Service. There were exceptional cases. Caffery, for example, was Ambassador to Salvador when he was 38. The reason I mention this is because the other senior officers there, the Counselor of Embassy for Economic Affairs was 53 years old; the Commercial Attaché, George Howard, was about 48 or 50; the Consul General, Prescott Childs, was considerably older than I was; and the Agriculture Attaché. He was very important there because sugar was the big industry and our big concern during the war. This was just after the war and we were still buying all the sugar; the United States was responsible in the United Nations Food Board for redistributing the allotments to the countries that normally would be importing it directly. The United States had the contract for the purchase of all the sugar, except for the amount that was left in the hands of the Cubans for free sale. They produced about 6 or 7 million tons of sugar a year. They kept maybe a million for their own individual sales from time to time.

But anyhow, I went there by myself and lived in a hotel for three months because Virginia was having our second child back in Washington. I went there directly from Guatemala with the intention of getting to Washington a couple of weeks later for a few days when the baby was born. My plans carried out exactly as planned, but the baby's didn't. The baby came before I got there and I was able to get there a few days after the child was born. Everything went all right. Ginny stayed at her mother's house, as she had before we were married, so the problem was well taken care of.

Time went on. In this particular spring of 1946 the sugar agreement was renegotiated annually at that time because the price had to be revised, and some other considerations probably were introduced. The negotiations were going on during the first months of 1946 in Washington, and they were not getting anywhere. The Secretary of Agriculture was getting kind of worried about this because the system in the sugar harvest in Cuba is to harvest all the sugar, usually before about the first of June, and it's all shipped out. There's no adequate place in Cuba for storage of more than modest amounts and it has to be shipped. And so the sugar was being shipped in the spring of 1946 at a tentative price, and the contract had not yet been negotiated. Finally along about April or May the Secretary of Agriculture, who as I recall was Clinton Anderson--a very

able man who had been a Senator--finally got fed up with this whole thing and he had some very good experts. He said, "I'm going to come down to Havana personally and get this thing negotiated." So the negotiations were transferred from Washington to Havana, and all the experts were to get together in Havana.

Well, at this time, rather strangely, we had a notice of maybe about a week or ten days that this was going to occur. The Ambassador thought this negotiation was off on the wrong foot completely. I believe he must have, because he said, "I've simply got to go off on business up to Cleveland." And he left. Well, he left me as Chargé d'affaires, the Secretary of Agriculture was coming in and they were going to negotiate. As soon as the Ambassador left, two or three days before Clinton Anderson was going to arrive, I had a searching talk with the Counselor of Economic Affairs--who was great fellow, he was one of the best friends I ever had, his name was Al Nufer. Al was married to a Cuban he'd met when he was a Vice Consul in Cienfuegos. He'd been a Vice Consul years before and from that point on he was assigned to Havana and he became a rather permanent Commercial Attaché in Cuba. He stayed right in Havana, and as he grew older, he was then 53, he was Class I in the Foreign Service. I was Class III or IV, and I was supposed to be his boss which was kind of ridiculous. But the result was that Al and I became the closest of friends.

And I'll tell you why he didn't want to be Chargé d'affaires, because he had been, at one point years before, when the Ambassador went away and he was called upon to make a speech at the American Club. All the people who were interested in sugar (he was going to talk about sugar, being an economist). And he made some comments advising the Cubans as to how they could improve their handling of the sugar business. He suggested that they develop new industries to find work for the Cubans during the off season because the harvesting and cultivation was a very seasonal thing, and the workers were without employment during a large part of the year. So he was much concerned about this and hoping that they could find some supplementary industries. But this was resented by the Cubans. The fact that he presumed to give advice to them--and this is one of the problems that we, handling Latin American relations, always had to be very, very careful about--that anything that presumed to act like tutelage, or giving advice on how they run their affairs unless they sought it, which they very infrequently did. They would occasionally ask for an expert on some subject and we'd find an expert for them. In fact, we had quite a little system hunting for experts and arranging to assign them where they were wanted.

But anyhow, Al didn't want to be Chargé d'affaires. He said, "I got so badly burned by that, I never want to be Chargé d'affaires again, so I'm delighted to have you be here to be the Chargé, and to cooperate with the other fellows." Well, when I settled down with Al, I said, "What are we going to do to help Clinton Anderson? Here I am, I don't know the first damn thing about sugar." I'd been there just four or five months. I said, "We've got the Agriculture Attaché who is a very knowledgeable man, but not a man with imagination." It's hard to describe. I like him very much. His name was Minneman. He'd been educated in a German university and he always identified himself very precisely as Minneman. But he was a good fellow, and his wife was a lovely woman. Anyhow, Al and I figured that if any ideas were going to be developed, he and I would have to develop them.

My first idea, off the cuff, was now here Anderson is coming, virtually the entire sugar crop has been delivered. They're going to begin getting ready for the next year's crop. I said, "How about our suggesting to him that he negotiate two year's crops at once? The one that's almost completely delivered, and the one that's going to be created this coming year, the rest of '46 and into '47." And Al said, "Let's suggest that to him and see what he thinks about it."

Then I said, "Al, you speak absolutely perfect Spanish, and you can speak absolutely perfect Cuban Spanish," which is another breed of cats because anybody who is a Castilian might have great difficulty understanding a Cuban. When the Cuban gets a little bit excited, he gets to speak rapidly and with many colloquialisms. Al was absolutely drenched in Cuban, and his wife was a Cuban. So I said, "You're going to have to really do this for him. You're going to have to really do this negotiating." We went over to the airport, I guess it was the next day, to meet Anderson and we sat there in the National Hotel where we had made arrangements for Anderson to stay. He had with him a couple of his real experts--they have some very able sugar experts in the Department of Agriculture. And incidentally, the sugar law in the United States, we discovered, is virtually written by the principal lobbyist here for the sugar industry in the United States. Of course, the cane industry is adequately protected--because there's a big cane industry, and a big beet industry out in Colorado and the west.

Well, anyhow, we made this suggestion to Anderson and he thought it was not a bad idea to negotiate two years. It would take a lot of the problem out of this if we could work out a good two year deal. So he called Washington and the experts up there okayed that idea, so that's the approach he took. Then the real idea was developed up at the negotiating table by Al Nufer who was a very practical down to earth fellow and had read carefully the results of the long negotiation of the General Motors workers under that famous labor leader...

Q: *Roy Reuther.*

WOODWARD: ...and his brother when they were both up in General Motors. They had come up with what was then a unique labor agreement on the system of wages, which was that they would establish a base price, and then have it changed according to an average of three different cost of living indexes. I think one was the production index, and one was the cost of living index, and then there was another...I can't remember just where that came from. But anyhow, this was a widely heralded understanding that had been reached by the labor unions for General Motors. So Al, in the course of the sugar negotiations, said, "Let's establish a fair price for today on sugar, and have it modified by these same price indexes that are in the General Motors contract." And surprisingly, that's what was approved. The price at the moment was established in what would appear to be a ridiculously low price today, but it was a very good price list--4 cents a pound, or something.

The upshot was that there was a very successful negotiation, and a hell of a big celebration at the presidential palace. Of course, Clinton Anderson was widely feted as being the great negotiator by the president of Cuba who was President Grau San Martin, and all the Cuban labor experts, and there were some very, very sharp, able Cuban lawyers who were always in on these negotiations. I remember one in particular, Arturo Manas, a very able lawyer. Anyhow, everything was a great success. Harry Norweb was up in Cleveland on leave. And incidentally,

during this short period he was gone there was another important visit other than the Secretary of Agriculture. As a matter of fact, when we had a reception out at the Havana Yacht Club for our Secretary of Agriculture, we also had as a guest of honor Admiral Halsey who was on a goodwill trip to Latin America, as a war hero after the war. This was the spring of 1946 so the war had been over for a year. There was a great conclave in which Admiral "Bull" Halsey made a speech where I introduced him at the American Club in Havana and then we were able to include him at the same reception with Clinton Anderson, which was a rather happy coincidence. I remember it was the only time I ever saw Hemingway. Hemingway lived in Havana and he came to that reception to see Halsey. It worked out very well.

And then during another brief absence of Ambassador Norweb, we had a visit from ex-President Hoover. I was Chargé, and President Hoover had in his entourage the man who had been his director of the Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce during the Hoover administration, Mr. Julius Klein. And he had Hugh Gibson who had been one of his favorite Ambassadors during World War I, or just after World War I, when Hoover had been handling the war relief in Europe, and Gibson was Ambassador to Belgium where they became very close friends. He had Gibson and Klein and the U.S. government had provided him with an airplane, and his job was to go to all the countries that might be able to contribute to supplying food for the UNRRA, the United Nations Relief & Rehabilitation Administration, for post-war relief. I thought it was a great experience being there to receive Mr. Hoover.

As a matter of fact the night he was there just one night, he was the guest of President Grau at a dinner at the presidential palace, to which I was invited--it was a stag dinner--and I was with President Hoover in the National Hotel while we were waiting for the proper hour to go to the presidential palace for the dinner, and I remember Hoover-- quite unlike the image that had been built up in the minds of a lot of people--was very relaxed and congenial. After he had had three martinis, I said to him, "You know, Mr. President, you're the only President of the United States that I ever voted for." I had voted in Winnipeg on an absentee ballot a short time after I went to my first post in 1932. My family had always been Republican, and I voted for President Hoover in Winnipeg. Then I never voted again during my entire Foreign Service career because I figured I was a non-partisan public servant.

Hoover thought this was rather funny. He said, "Which time was that? The first time or the second time?" I said, "It was the second time." And he said, "That's when I really needed it. So thank you very much." President Hoover was then a very good natured man. The Cuban government gave him a very large tonnage of sugar out of that part that they could dispose of as they wished, and that they'd not contracted to sell to the United Nations. So he got a good gift from the Cubans.

I had a very interesting tour in Havana as a result of all these things I'm telling you about. I did make one mistake which I'm glad to say was never noticed. Wanting to do some reporting on my own, and nobody else seemed to be working on it, I decided I would make an appraisal of communism in Cuba. And at that time there was quite an active little communist party, and it was a legal party in Cuba. They got about 5 percent of the vote, a really small operation, but there were a couple pretty vigorous communist leaders. They weren't getting very far in their proselytizing. So I made a report about the personalities of the leaders, whom I had to admit

seemed to be very capable men, and there were a couple who were quite interesting intellectuals. Then there was a fellow who was the most popular leader, his name was Blas Roca, which was obviously a kind of a pseudonym which had been developed in his party work. I even went around amateurishly trying to see what they were doing, maybe I could overhear a conversation.

I wrote this report--I didn't really have much inside information in it--but I got together bits and pieces as much as I could and my final conclusion was there was not much likelihood of Cuba ever going communist unless the entire region of the Caribbean was to become overwhelmed somehow by the enthusiasm for the communism. In other words, I never foresaw a phenomenon such as Castro's, which was very, very largely contrived. I don't mean to be jumping into the later history because I'm not a real expert, but it was quite obvious when he came into power he was not a communist. But he had been greatly influenced and was listening a great deal to Che Guevara who had joined up in his small invasion of the Sierra Madre down in eastern Cuba, and his brother, Raul Castro, had been, I think, pretty well sold on this maybe by Che Guevara. Anyhow, they were the ones who really quite artificially planted communism in Cuba. There was no enthusiasm for communism except by this small group.

LESTER MALLORY
Counselor to Havana
(1946-1948)

Ambassador Lester Mallory entered the Foreign Agricultural Service in 1931 and became a Foreign Service officer in 1939. His career included assignments in France, Mexico, Cuba, and Argentina, and ambassadorships to Jordan and Guatemala in 1959. Ambassador Mallory was interviewed by Hank Zivetz in 1988.

MALLORY: Then along in May or June of 1946, I was asked to go as counselor to Havana. The same day I was approached to go to the first class of the War College. Well, what do you do? I thought I couldn't choose, they'd have to make up their minds. I've been sorry to miss the War College ever since. Anyway, I went to Havana.

I had two years in Havana, and I have a few remarks about Havana.

Q: *Who was running the place at that time?*

MALLORY: Henry Norweb.

Q: *That's our ambassador. Who was the ruler of Cuba?*

MALLORY: Ceram San Martin.

Q: *And what was the American-Cuban relationship at that time?*

MALLORY: Quiet, with no big problems. Our big interest, officially, was sugar. And the embassy didn't have much to do with sugar, because the sugar business had enough clout in Washington to do anything they wanted, practically. We had a big investment there. So the embassy didn't do much of anything, except representational, and to keep our noses clean.

There were incipient problems, but nothing big at that time, except when I arrived I had been there a month when I was left in charge. The Caribbean Legion was trying to overthrow the Dominican Republic. It was helped from Guatemala and Venezuela, and there was a training on an island off the north coast, called Cayo Contites. Fortunately, we had good coverage on that, because there were regular flights from Guantanamo to Key West, by our people. Every time they went over, we'd ask them to check on any boats there, what was going on, and so on. We got a pretty good coverage from local sources and help from Ernest Hemingway and his friends.

The Cayo Contites thing was washed out, about November. They brought all those people in by train, and the Army took over pretty much. What I can't be sure of was which Castro it was, but there was a Raul Castro listed among those people who came back from Cayo Contites.

Q: *Your saying that this effort at overthrowing the Dominican Republic was started, somewhat, from Cuba? That there were Cubans involved?*

MALLORY: Largely Cubans. Some help from Venezuela.

Q: *Why were they involved? What was the tie-in between Cuba and the Dominican Republic?*

MALLORY: Well, the official tie was friendly, but leadership in the Dominican Republic was considered to somewhat of a dictatorship, and you had this movement all over the Caribbean to throw him out.

Q: *So it was kind of a popular movement, that extended beyond the borders of individual countries?*

MALLORY: Yes. For example, we followed the progress of a sloop from Guatemala, which came with a load of arms.

Q: *In modern days, when these things happen, we immediately say this is a communist plot; but was that an issue at that time?*

MALLORY: No, I don't think it was an issue. There was an idea of freedom running, much of it sparked from Venezuela at the time.

I want to say something about the value of foreign military officers. We've done a lot of that in recent years in Panama. We bring them up from Latin America, at various levels, and they're trained, I think at Fort Gulick, Panama. They're given some training, some orientation; and the idea is to get them onto our side of the fence, make friends, and so on. I've seen some criticism of this, that this was a bad idea; that we were training people who would eventually become

dictators and so on. I've seen no evidence that, of the officers I know, in South American and Central America. But I do know of one instance in Cuba, and the story--I think--is well worth telling, if nobody has seen the full report of it.

One Friday afternoon, we had four submarines come in, for shore leave.

Q: *American?*

MALLORY: American. The next morning all hell broke loose. The paper had headlines right across, "The statue of Marti," who was a great guy, "has been desecrated." They had a picture of a sailor sitting up on the shoulders of the statue, and liquor running down. He had urinated on Marine. Well, we'll never know what happened, but it's very coincidental that the photographer happened to be there just as that bottle of beer was thrown. Anyway, it was bad. Saturday morning I received the paper, and took off. We tried our damndest to get the ambassador, but we couldn't find him; he had just disappeared.

Finally, about noon, I was at the embassy and we were trying to assess things. Our liaison with the police, at that time, was an FBI officer; they were called Legal Attachés. We had that cooperation working. A man from the Associated Press came in, and he sat down at the typewriter, and typed out a little statement which in Spanish you'd call a *desagrare*. It means " to take away the hurt." I was in no condition, at that point, to do any writing myself.

The ambassador showed up eventually; this was not Henry Norweb, he would have known better. He sent him over to the foreign ministry, where the foreign minister was waiting. The foreign minister had a wreath of flowers ready. And the foreign minister walked--with the ambassador--from the foreign office to the statue of Marti, to place the wreath; and made our little statement. The foreign minister saved our neck, really; he didn't need to do that. And if he had had any feeling against us, he'd have let us sweat it out. But no, the foreign minister was a proud graduate of the United States Naval Academy, and it paid off.

NANCY OSTRANDER
Consular Clerk,
Santiago (1947-1950)

Consular Files Chief,
Havana (1950-1952)

Born in Indiana in 1925, Ambassador Nancy Ostrander received her BA from Butler University. She was posted in Santiago de Cuba, Havana, The Hague, Antwerp, Mexico City and Kingston and was the Ambassador to Suriname. On May 14, 1986 she was interviewed by Ann Miller Morin.

Q: Did you study much history?

OSTRANDER: Not until college, and in college I did. The other day when I was going through the attic again, I came across a paper I had written for one of those courses, a course in contemporary European history or something like that. I came across a term paper that I had done which was on the Foreign Service Act of 1946 and about the United States Foreign Service. I had forgotten that I had done that, so maybe somewhere in the back of my mind, but it certainly wasn't conscious, was this whole idea.

Q: That's interesting.

OSTRANDER: Certainly I was interested in learning Spanish, which was my major, and any other language that I could manage to get, German, French, and that really turned me on. Then as my last year in college approached, I knew I was going to go to Cuba as fast as I could. I knew my family wasn't going to let me do it, so the day I graduated from college, I went down to the War Assets Administration and got a job typing inventories. I think about that, because I typed inventories for at least twelve hours a day. Of course, today they would have it on a computer, which would automatically take care of itself. We had to type inventories of war surplus. I did it twelve hours a day and I did it for two weeks and a couple of days straight, and the third consecutive Sunday you got paid triple time.

So by that time I had enough money, $200, and I had talked some Cuban friends of mine, who were going back to Cuba for the summer, into letting me sit in their back seat. So then I went home with the money and announced I was leaving for Cuba, to see my uncle. I think Mother knew that I was not coming back, because she immediately got in touch with Cuban friends to try to look after me. I didn't think about anything beyond getting off the plane in Cuba. She realized that there was a little more to it than that. What would I do when I got there? But she got in the back seat with me and rode all the way to Miami, then saw me off on the plane, but arranged with friends to take care of me for a few days in Havana, until my uncle's business partners were up in Havana, and they could drive me back to where he lived and I would visit him during the summer and stay with my uncle's business partner. And all this for nothing, of course. Well, it was absolutely marvelous, but after three months my mother wrote me and said, "Sorry, but the money has run out. You've got to go to work and you can't just live off these people forever." Because my uncle had had a very bad stroke in the meantime, so he couldn't look after me at all.

This was in the far eastern end of Cuba. So I went down to the consulate at Santiago de Cuba, and applied for a job. They had been hiring American clerks through the Foreign Service, but every one of them, as soon as she arrived, had taken one look at Santiago de Cuba, which was not the garden spot of the world, and quit. So I kind of came as a godsend right out of the blue and they hired me on the spot. So you see, I backed into it. I was avoiding going home. I was hired as an FSS-14, Foreign Service Staff 14, $2,160 a year, general clerk, and that was my entry into the Foreign Service.

Q: Imagine! That is quite a rise from there to ambassador.

OSTRANDER: I'll answer your questions and then leave it at that.

Q: Where did you learn your secretarial skills?

OSTRANDER: I didn't have any secretarial skills. My mother saw me studying art and history and foreign languages and said to herself, "This one had better learn to type," and Eve, too, just to be on the safe side. So she insisted on a typing course, and I must say that's what they wanted me for. They wanted a typist. They didn't really care about somebody who was interested in the culture of the land. [Laughter]

Q: But that's the only secretarial experience you had had?

OSTRANDER: I avoided stenography like the plague because I knew that's what I would end up doing. But I was always good at filing. Lane Bryant's had taught me that! [Laughter]

Santiago de Cuba was a very small post. There was a consul and a staff officer and the American clerk. Then there were about six or seven local clerks, and that was it. The consul had been there for years. There was an awful lot to do at that post. It was a big area, a big district, so he often was traveling and the other one was often out of the office on business, so they sort of turned the whole thing over to me, and it was a marvelous job. They just let me learn everything! I learned passports, citizenship, estate law. They let me do the accounting for a year. Let me--they forced me to do the accounting for a year. The budgeting. They just gave me exposure to everything that there is to do in a consulate.

Q: Tremendous for the first job.

OSTRANDER: Of course, we had the naval base at Guantanamo and they were often in Santiago, so I got to do all that liaison work, and all of this in Spanish. Harry Story was the consul there. He'd been in Santiago for years and years and years. He thought the sun rose and set on me, and just said, "This is potential here, and I'll mold it." Bless his heart, he really did a good job. So that was three and a half years, and I didn't realize it at the time, y of course, that I was learning anything, but I certainly was. Really, still to this day, there's not an office that I walk into in the Foreign Service that I don't understand exactly what's going on at every desk because I've done it.

Q: We left you in Cuba, yes, and you were telling me how you got into the Foreign Service through the back way, and how Harry Story, as the consul, molded you. He helped you in all sorts of ways and made sure you did all the work, all different kinds of work, in the consulate. I was in Santiago until 1947. I went to work on September 29, 1947.

Q: You even remember the date!

OSTRANDER: Oh, yes, I certainly do. I stayed in Santiago until Christmas Eve 1950.

Q: Then you went over to Havana.

OSTRANDER: I went to Havana. Somebody from the embassy had come down from Havana early on, and they were trying to find someone at about my clerical level, which was very low, to run their consular section file room. Again, they were having the same trouble as Santiago was having, that whenever they found an American girl and brought her down there on transfer, she would take one look at the job or the work or the surroundings and say, "This is not for me," and leave. Havana was having the same difficulty in that consular file room. It was pretty much of a mess and they just simply couldn't find anyone. So I can remember when they talked to me about it, I had a feeling, "Oh-oh, I wonder if somebody's about to do something." And sure enough, they did. They just phoned one day and said, "Be on the plane." Christmas Eve, they said, "Be on the plane." I was very upset. I was running around with a very nice, young Spanish Cuban from Spain, and had big plans for Christmas Eve and for the holidays. I was *really* upset to have to leave, but I did as I was told. They promised they would send me back the next week to pack, but I had to leave without packing and everything.

Q: Why the big rush for Christmas Eve? Surely they closed?

OSTRANDER: Exactly! Exactly! But this was sort of typical of the Foreign Service in those days. You always had to be somewhere so fast, and when you got there, they would--and the same thing happened here. When I walked in, they said, "But we didn't expect you." But that's the way it went.

So my first home then in Havana was in the Ambos Mundos Hotel, which I wonder if it's still there or not. It was certainly a relic, even then, in old Havana, downtown, and was the hotel that Ernest Hemingway used to live in and where he wrote his earliest work. *Sun Also Rises*, perhaps, or maybe even earlier than that. But I remember there was a plaque in the room, that that's where he had written it.

Q: In your room?

OSTRANDER: In my room. I lived there for a while until I learned of a boarding house, Ma Findlay's. She was British. There was a wonderful group in that boarding house.

Q: Were they consular people?

OSTRANDER: There was one from the French consulate. There were three from the American Embassy, one who has been a lifelong friend ever since then. But mainly British and American business people, teachers, who stayed there for a while until they got settled and then moved on. So it was a good beginning for anybody. My mother would have approved of Ma Findlay's boarding house, and did, as a matter of fact.

I stayed there for, I think, a little over a year, and then [I lived with] the one I spoke of, who was a lifelong friend, whose name was Rae Yelverton, who was from Akron, Ohio. As a matter of fact, the embassy called me in to find out who this Rae I was living with was. They wouldn't dare do that these days. I said, "Let me introduce you." She worked for the Navy. So who was this person in the Navy named Rae that I was living with? We took an apartment together and we had a marvelous time. Those were wonderful days, both of us going steady all the time. She married

her young man, who was Danish and with the Nestlé Company, who later went on to hold a very high office in Nestlé. They're now retired and are living in Toronto, so I still see Rae and hear from her often.

Work was not the most important thing in my life for those years in Havana or Santiago, either. They may think of me as serious, but I had a *wonderful* time in Cuba! We'd dance all night and still be able to go to work and do a very good job. If I danced all night at this age, I think I would have to take a couple of weeks' vacation to get over it. [Laughter] But not so in those days. It was marvelous. The Cuba years were heaven. I, of course, became completely bilingual in Spanish.

Q: The young man you were dating was Spanish?

OSTRANDER: Cuban, of course. I never really had much interest in American young men. [Laughter] Anyway, our friendship kept on for years. We did not marry, and all for the best. I don't know why I say that, except that I cannot believe that as a marriage it ever would have lasted very long. We enjoyed each other's company very much, but not to that extent.

Q: Well, maybe you were having just too good a time to tie yourself down.

OSTRANDER: I suppose so. Oftentimes he wanted to get married and oftentimes I wanted to get married, and I used to think if we ever wanted it at the same time, it might work out, but we never did. And maybe that was it. Whenever he was interested, I'd back off. Perhaps neither one of us wanted that sort of responsibility.

Q: What happened to the poor fellow you left behind in Santiago?

OSTRANDER: He came up to see me a couple of times in Havana, and it was just obvious, even on the first visit, that I had moved on. Not out of sight, out of mind, but proximity certainly is important. It didn't last very long.

The other night on PBS, there was a program about a young Cuban man returning to Santiago de Cuba. He had lived here for ten years. His family had come up from Santiago and he had lived here and become a newspaper reporter. He had left when he was eight or nine years of age, something like that, and he had gone back with TV cameras. Of course, I looked at it with interest, you can imagine, to see Santiago again. But in listening to him explaining about his family, I realized he was the nephew of this young man that I had gone with when I was in Santiago.

Q: Did you enjoy Havana as much as, or more than, Santiago?

OSTRANDER: In a different way. In a different way entirely. I loved them both. [Laughter]

Q: You had more responsibility, of course.

OSTRANDER: Oh, I certainly did. It was a big section that I ran there. They liked the way I ran it, and I can remember my boss there, Ben Zweig, long dead, I think, but a Foreign Service name, for sure.

Q: This was the file room?

OSTRANDER: It was the consular file room. That was a big job at that time. We had a lot of work to do.

Q: It was a very big embassy, wasn't it?

OSTRANDER: Yes, it was. It was a sizable embassy. Willard Beaulac was there. I was there for a little over three years, so we had a couple of ambassadors. I made many good friends in that embassy, and some of the local employees who left at that time are here, and I have known them since.

Q: By this time you had about decided to stay in the Service?

OSTRANDER: If things had worked out with this man, I would have stayed. No, I wasn't thinking career at all. Just enjoying every day and having a marvelous time.

Q: How was the pay back then?

OSTRANDER: I started at $2,160 a year, and I can remember after two years, a telegram came around from the Department of State, a circular telegram, saying that they were now employing, as an opening salary, one grade higher, and if there was anybody around who was still at that old level, they were automatically promoted. And I was one of those, so that brought me up to FSS-13. Then I got another promotion to FSS-12 when I was in Havana, and then a double promotion after that, because the work was obviously much more important than what I was being paid. I wasn't suffering for lack of money at all, but I certainly wasn't spending it like a drunken sailor, either.

Q: But it was ample to live on, and it was an inexpensive place to live, wasn't it?

OSTRANDER: Havana was considered very expensive at the time. As a matter of fact, we used to be able to go to Miami and live in a hotel for the weekend and still come out ahead, and we did that. I think what we paid was about thirty-five dollars round-trip on the plane. We'd go on shopping sprees because it was so much cheaper to buy things in Miami.

Anyway, the day came that I got orders again for direct transfer to Vienna with the Refugee Relief Program. Again, a wrench. I don't know why I was always picked for direct transfers, but I had never had a home leave. In those days, if you put one foot in the United States, they called it "breaking continuity," and you could only have home leave at government expense if you were outside the U.S. for two years. Well, taking these trips back and forth to Miami, of course, broke all the continuity, and I also always went home and spent two or three weeks on vacation every

year. So I never had a home leave, so I suppose that's the reason for always having direct transfers. I was never eligible for home leave.

Of course, going to Vienna, having lived all that time in the tropics, I immediately took some annual leave and went up and bought a lot of winter clothes. I can remember they gave me seventy-five dollars to buy myself a new winter wardrobe. Well, you can imagine, even in those days, that did not even buy a winter coat. Or if it did, it didn't buy a very good one.

THOMAS F. CONLON
Consular Officer
Havana (1949-1951)

Thomas F. Conlon was born in Illinois in 1924 and received his BS from Georgetown University in 1948. He served overseas in the US Army from 1943-1945. Upon entering the Foreign Service, he was posted in Havana, Surabaya, Singapore, Saigon, Le Havre, Manila, Nice, Canberra, and Bangkok. In 1992 Mr. Conlon was interviewed by Arbor W. Gray.

Q: You would have arrived in Cuba, probably in the Spring of 1949. How did the country strike you?

CONLON: It's hard to believe that people are still talking about the same place. When we were there, it was a free, open, democratic society. At the Embassy I was a visa officer, a common assignment for junior officers where we could do the least harm. I really profited from the experience by learning to read and speak Spanish fluently. I'd studied it previously in high school and college. It is perhaps typical of the Foreign Service that I was never assigned to a Spanish-speaking country again.

Q: Are there any incidents during your tour in Cuba that you particularly remember?

CONLON: There was the death of an American citizen, from natural causes, when I was Embassy duty officer for the first time. When I was reporting his death at a local Police Station, as the law required, I observed Cuban Police beating up a black man who reportedly pulled a knife on another policeman. I learned then that there were some things in life that you may find distressing but which you cannot do anything about.

We were robbed in our apartment when we were sleeping--the only such experience during our 20 + years overseas.

Perhaps most important of all, during these years, two of our sons were born in Havana.

RICHARD G. CUSHING
Public Affairs Officer, USIS
Havana (1952-1957)

Richard G. Cushing joined USIS in 1949. In addition to serving in Chile, Mr. Cushing served in Cuba, Mexico, Venezuela, Kenya, and Washington DC. This is a self-interview from 1988.

CUSHING: This was perhaps my most interesting and demanding post, and the most stressful, because US policy supported the Batista Dictatorship, cruel and unprincipled, but anti-communist. Two political ambassadors, Arthur Gardner and Earl E.T. Smith, in the Eisenhower administration were completely sold on Batista, and refused to accept the advice of Embassy intelligence and political officers to back off a little and realize that an opposition movement was growing and could win.

I believe it highly likely that a tough career ambassador could have convinced Batista early on, when Fidel Castro was first in the Sierra Maestra with his ragtag guerrillas, to conduct an honest election, even at the risk of having his chosen candidate lose, and go off to his home in Daytona, thus eliminating all reason for a Castro revolution.

In my role as Public Affairs Officer in Havana, having moved up from Information officer after a year, I dealt with all segments of the media and cultural community, but also became involved with pro-Castro people without intending to do so. There were more and more all the time as Batista's excesses became widely known -- tortures, killings, corruption. One of our closest friends was an economist, Rufo Lopez-Fresquet, who had an American wife. Rufo later became Castro's Minister of the Treasury, defecting two years later to teach in the US Rufo was extremely close to the Castro movement, although he remained in the capital, and was a great source of intelligence information which he passed onto me and also to my Embassy colleagues in the political and CIA sections once I convinced him they would not betray a confidence.

But despite this channeling of inside information to the ambassador at staff meetings there was great reluctance at the top to believe there could be any serious movement against the man they often played canasta with and admired.

I had excellent contacts with the Cuban media and was able to place a great deal of material, but this may be due in part to the official Batista policy of friendship with the US, and an abhorrence of communism, so that editors were under pressure to follow this line.

My Information Officer, Sher Helms, and I came up with the idea of a colorful monthly poster "Mundo Grafico", made up of photos and short captions, which store owners placed in their windows to attract customers. Hundreds of these went up for public view all over the island every month. We also put up racks at airports filled daily with USIS pamphlets for travelers to read on the planes. One of the best cultural officers in the business, Francis Donahue, had contacts everywhere.

In short, USIS-Havana was, in my view, a first-rate, highly imaginative, adequately-funded endeavor, and effective in what it set out to do. Yet Castro took over, seized the press and radio stations, converted Cuba to a form of Marxist state, ranted against the United States to thunderous public approval, and US-Cuban relations came to an end.

It's not that USIS didn't do enough. The people wanted a change. They wanted Batista out and they wanted Castro in, and they still do, 30 years later.

JOHN F. CORRELL
Labor Attaché
Havana (1956-1959)

John F. Correll graduated from Kenyon College and became a teacher in Mansfield, Ohio. He began his career in the labor unions in the early 1930's when he became the educational director for the local union. He was brought into the State Department by his friend, Cleon Swayzee. In addition, he has served at labor attaché in South Africa, Spain, Cuba and England. He was interviewed on March 9, 1990, by Morris Weisz.

Q: *Did he arrange for you to be appointed Labor Attaché just to get you out of the country?*

CORRELL: (laughter) No, but I do want to repeat that it was a great experience to serve in the kind of dictatorship I saw in Spain. From there, of course, I went to a hard post down in Havana, Cuba. At that particular time, Castro was out of jail and operating down in Santiago de Cuba. The dictator and President Batista was doing some strange things in order to protect his position, but they did not help him one bit.

But the labor movement in Cuba had a good arrangement with the Government. I use the word "good." They had a close arrangement with Batista. Eusebio Mujal was a skilled labor leader, and there was a strong labor movement in Cuba, as you probably know. By that time, I could speak enough Spanish to get along very well, and I attended conferences at the Confederation of Labor there, and I learned a lot about the sugar workers. That was the important union at that particular time, although there were a number of craft unions which were also important. Well, when Castro took over in . . .

Q: *Before Castro took over, the AFL had a representative, who went there frequently, Serafino Romualdi. What were your relations with Romualdi? What did he do, and what did you do?*

CORRELL: They were good. He came down and would advise the union leaders there on certain aspects of their relationships with US labor. But he didn't come to the Embassy a great deal. That was not because he didn't want to have a close relationship with the Embassy, but he didn't want to be known as having such a close relationship. He was an independent agent of the AFL, and

he would advise Eusebio Mujal on certain aspects of making the ties between the Cuban labor movement and the American labor movement close. And they were close; there was a good deal of mutual understanding.

Well, when Castro came into power, everybody thought he was going to be a very good boy. He wasn't a good boy at all. It only took about four months before Che Guevara and his brother Raul had him moving very quickly . . .

Q: *Castro's brother Raul, not Che's.*

CORRELL: Castro's brother Raul, not Che's brother, no. Castro's brother, Raul, who was really a dedicated Communist. I think Castro was not that dedicated, but he did not care for the United States, and probably that had a lot to do with his feelings.

Q: *I think Castro admitted a few months after he came into power that his objective was Communism in his country. He hadn't admitted that before. Were you still in the country when that happened, or had you already gone?*

CORRELL: No. His appointments at first were non-Communists, but when they found out what was happening, many of them left. Some of them were executed later on, and some of them came over to Miami. As you know, Castro was supported by a great many intellectuals, by the professional class, and when they realized what was happening, then there was a total migration of that group of people over to Miami. Preceding him had been the Batisianos who knew that for them the game was up; and then, later on, was when the Mariel people came in, so we had three great waves of Cubans coming into Miami.

Well, that was a great experience. I did not get out very much. I attended two or three of the sugar mill refinery workers' conferences, but that was a period when you had to be very careful. Bombs were being set off. The bombs were being set off at that wonderful nightclub in Havana called the Tropicana and people were hurt. So that was a very tricky business as you know. Batista left. He really wasn't pushed out by a coup. He just left and went away, and Castro came in and celebrated. I was in Havana the night that he came in, and he had his little son on one of the tanks with him, but he soon forget his little son, and nobody heard very much about him after that. Well, I left . . .

MICHAEL H. NEWLIN
United Nations Affairs
Washington, DC (1958-1963)

Ambassador Newlin was born in North Carolina and was raised there and in the Panama canal zone. After graduating from Harvard he joined the Foreign Service in 1952 and was posted to Frankfort, Oslo, Paris, Kinshasa and Jerusalem, where served as Consul General. During his distinguished career, Ambassador Newlin served in several high level positions dealing with the United Nations and its

agencies and NATO. He served as Ambassador to Algeria from 1981 to 1985 and as US representative to the United Nations Agencies in Vienna., 1988-1991. Ambassador Newlin was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2006.

NEWLIN: The most exciting thing that happened while I was in UNP was the Cuban missile crisis. Some of us were called in on a Saturday afternoon. Sisco wanted to know where, we had a young man named White, where his files were. So we had to go and find his safe and files. We were then dismissed.. We surmised it is either Cuba or he was working on Honduras. Well it turned out of course it was Cuba. So when we finally got to the denouement of this big Security Council meeting with Adlai there, Cleveland was of course on top of all of the things. He said, "The OAS (Organization of American States) is meeting this afternoon." We had a resolution there condemning the installation of the missiles in Cuba, calling on the Soviets to remove them. Cleveland sent a member of our United National political affairs over to be at the OAS for the vote. We were all in Cleveland's office that evening glued to the television. The telephone rang and it was JFK. He said, "Harlan, the OAS just voted in our favor unanimously except for Cuba.. We have got to get this up to New York right away." So Cleveland said, "Mr. President, if you will look at your TV screen, you will see Joe Sisco handing a note to Adlai with the vote." Now I call that completed staff work. If there ever was completed staff work that was it. One of the big advantages I remember is I got to go up to New York for brief periods and then also I got to go up for one whole assembly. For some reason I had items that Adlai was interested in, and so to show you what a wonderful person he was.

Q: This is from the representative of the United States of America to the United Nations. Dated May 11, 1961.

Dear Mike,
I enclose copy I sent to the Secretary of State about you. Perhaps you will want it for your scrapbook. In any even it expresses my feelings and I want you to know how grateful I am for your help.
Cordially yours,
Adlai Stevenson.

The letter is dated May 9, 1961
Dear Mr. Secretary:
This is to express my appreciation for the outstanding work done by Michael Newlin during the resumed session of the 15th General Assembly. I worked closely with Mr. Newlin when the Assembly was considering the Cuban question and had the opportunity to observe his performance firsthand. Without the experience and good judgment of such officers as Mr. Newlin our task at the resumed session would have been well nigh impossible. I came away from the session with a renewed pride in the quality and devotion of the people who work in the State Department and the foreign service.
Sincerely yours,
Adlai Stevenson.

NEWLIN: That shows you what kind of person Adlai was. He was wonderful

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NEWLIN: Some years later Khrushchev told Rusk that he had talked to many West European leaders and all of them said they were not prepared to fight if the Soviets took West Berlin. Rusk replied, "Well, you much recon with the fact that the Americans would be foolish enough to do so. Perhaps it was during the Cuban Missile Crisis, Khrushchev was asked during a press conference if he believed the U.S. was a paper tiger. He replied, "Maybe so, but the tiger has thermonuclear teeth."

Incidentally, I do have something I think I should add about the origins of the Cuban Missile Crisis, because this happened years later when I was on a mission to Moscow. It was at a luncheon and the Russian that I was sitting next to had been an aide to Khrushchev. They were down I think in Yalta. The subject came up of American intercontinental ballistic missiles in Turkey right across the Black Sea. Just maybe less than 200 miles, Minuteman. My luncheon companion who was there said Khrushchev declared, "Well if the Americans have nuclear missiles that close to the soviet Union, then I want Nuclear missiles in Cuba close to the United States." That was when he gave orders to do that. As a result of the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Russians removed their missiles from Cuba. Secretly Kennedy committed to remove our missiles from Turkey which was done after a time.

WILLIAM LENDERKING
Rotation Officer, USIA
Havana (1959-1960)

A native of New York, Mr. Lenderking graduated from Dartmouth College and served a tour with the US Navy in the Far East before joining the Foreign Service of the US Information Agency in 1959. As Public Affairs, Press and Information Officer, he served in posts throughout the world and in Washington, D.C., where held senior level positions in USIA and the Department of State dealing with Policy, Plans and Research. Mr. Lenderking was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2007.

Q: Well, you went to Havana when?

LENDERKING: In March of 1959.

Q: What was the situation then?

LENDERKING: Fidel Castro had just come to power two months earlier and Havana was euphoric. In the early days Fidel and his circle were regarded as folk heroes, even worshipped by some Cubans, and I had to admit when I saw them in public they cut a fine figure, especially Che Guevara and Camilo Cienfuegos, who was later supposedly removed by Castro when he had doubts about the revolution. Everyone seemed to think that this was a new era, that a bad government had been ousted and that we could get along with Castro and he would certainly

want to get along with us because of our power and influence. And so it was a period of real optimism there.

Q: What was your job?

LENDERKING: I was not just the youngest and most junior officer on the USIS staff -- we had about six or seven officers there -- I was the youngest and most junior officer in the whole embassy. In fact, I was still in trainee status, and did not have an official position, which meant I was supposed to get experience in all the sections or at least the two USIA sections, information and culture, and as it turned out that was only a one year assignment. That is the way USIA did it in those days. And in that one year the whole situation in Cuba turned 180 degrees. The feeling of euphoria dissipated quickly, at least among those who were not committed revolutionaries, and changed to one of deep dismay and opposition. There were constant crises between the U.S. and Cuba; Castro was denouncing us all the time, there were demonstrations, intrigue, high emotions. It was very exciting. My wife and I thought wow; this is a great place to be, and I had chosen the right career. Shortly after our arrival, my first child was born, and I couldn't have been happier.

Q: Who was the ambassador?

LENDERKING: The ambassador was Philip Bonsal, an eminent career ambassador, very much of a gentleman, a diplomat of the old school. His wife was a lovely lady and was cordial to the junior wives from her rather lofty perch. Remember, this was in the time of the last years of the old Foreign Service. Arriving spouses paid calls on senior wives, left calling cards, had tea. We were so junior we didn't see much of Ambassador Bonsal; we weren't invited to the residence all that much. But whenever we did see him he was very cordial and gentlemanly, and when we left he included us in a small farewell luncheon at his residence for departing officers. Bonsal was the Eisenhower administration's attempt to initially get along with Castro. His predecessor, Earl E. T. Smith, was a wealthy Republican investment banker who was well connected with the Cuban Old Guard and supportive of Batista, and he was very unpopular. His wife, Florence Pritchett Smith, was a Palm Beach socialite and equally unpopular outside the decadent Cuban country club set. One of the biggest knocks on U.S. foreign policy, especially in Latin America, was that we always supported corrupt, brutal, and unsavory dictators like Batista, Trujillo in the Dominican Republic, Somoza in Nicaragua, Perez Jimenez in Venezuela, and a host of others. Bonsal was a gentleman, low key and sophisticated, not at all bumptious, spoke excellent Spanish, was familiar with Cuba and Latin American history, and he was popular with the Cubans. He tried very hard to have a good relationship and get us over the bumps of old resentments that were always getting in the way. Certainly in the beginning we hoped there would be a chance to build a new relationship to replace the old one of dependency and exploitation based mostly on sugar. I'm convinced that the Eisenhower administration genuinely wanted this, and the Kennedy administration would have backed any initiatives in that direction with even greater vigor.

But in retrospect I think Ambassador Bonsal was slow to recognize just how far Fidel Castro was prepared to go and that he was not really interested in good relations with us, except totally on his own terms. In short, I think from the beginning Fidel was convinced he could never carry out

his revolution unless Cuba's close ties with the U.S. were broken. He later said he'd always been a communist and forged a close relationship with the Soviets, replacing Cuba's dependency on the U.S. with one on the Soviet Union. But in his radical student days and in the early period of his rule, Castro was never a committed Marxist-Leninist and merely used the rhetoric and the socialist model as guideposts for his very personalist policies.

Q: What were you doing while all this was going on?

LENDERKING: I was assigned to various information tasks, such as writing articles in English, which we would have translated, and try and get placed in newspapers about one thing or another. The idea was to emphasize the practical benefits of democracy and a free press, and the hazards of following authoritarian models, which was clearly the direction Castro was taking Cuba in a big hurry. We hit hard on the idea that you could have thorough reform without confiscating all private property and driving away entrepreneurs and people you needed to make the economy productive. I would write under a pseudonym, and this was a way of criticizing the way things were going without confronting the regime directly.

For example, I wrote a pamphlet on agrarian reform, which was the heart of the revolutionary program, and we didn't like the way the government was just taking peoples' land and throwing the owners off without any compensation. Some of the landowners were Americans who had made genuine and honest contributions, and they were driven out with no compensation. My pamphlet was on how land reform had succeeded in our state of Georgia. Unfortunately, when it came out under a title everyone thought I was talking about Georgia in the Soviet Union so I am not sure the pamphlet had much of an impact. Especially since Castro was taking control of the newspapers one by one and the daily drumbeat of really vicious attacks and false charges was much greater than anything we could respond to. But we tried. There were lots of projects going on and I spent most of the time in the press section and we had a lot of contacts with Cuban journalists. There were tons of visiting American journalists and I met a lot of them and learned a lot from them.

I was the youngest guy in the embassy and in the beginning I didn't speak Spanish, but it isn't the most difficult language and I had an hour a day in an early morning class at the Embassy with a great teacher and I was picking it up quickly. And because everyone was so busy -- we didn't have a very large embassy -- very few people were able to get away from the work load in Havana. And everyone was wondering what was really happening throughout the country, which way Castro was moving and what he would do next, and what would happen to Cuban-U.S. relations. Since I was the most expendable American officer, still technically in training, I went out and what I saw in the squares and talking to people in some of the interior cities was that there was a massive program of indoctrination going on beyond anything we were aware of in Havana, and it was against the U.S. and it was pro-communist. Castro's officials were taking the books out of the libraries and replacing them with Marxist tracts, supplied massively in Spanish through the cheap paperback programs the Soviet Union had in those days, worldwide. We also had a worldwide book translation program, but it wasn't in the same league in either depth or breadth with what the Soviet Union was offering. They understood the importance of ideas and argumentation much better than we did. And it wasn't just books. The regime was taking over

the newspapers and independent magazines, one by one, picking off anything and anyone who offered an independent opinion.

I also witnessed on several occasions kids outfitted something like the Boy Scouts being marched through the squares chanting, "Uno-dos-tres-cuatro, viva Fidel Castro Ruz!" Well, I'd read "Animal Farm," "1984," "Darkness at Noon" "Brave New World," and others in that same general vein and what was happening in Cuba was alarming. It was nothing less than the stifling of all independent voices and the indoctrination of the youth of an entire country, and it seemed to me very ominous. So I went back and wrote all this up, a couple of lengthy reports, and the political section liked it, and they sent it to Washington. I was, of course, elated that something I had witnessed and written about was deemed interesting enough to send on to Washington as a political cable. But the plain fact was that no one else in the entire Embassy had seen what I had, and it was all there in plain sight going on in the squares of the interior cities. Of course there was a Consulate in Santiago de Cuba, and we had consular agents in a couple of other cities, and the CIA must have had reports (which I never saw) coming in from their contacts, but I think the small American staff was overwhelmed in just trying to keep up with the big problems coming their way every day. For example, dealing with the confiscation of American property and the harassment of American citizens, screening people trying to leave the country for visas (and some of these were in great danger), dealing with officials of Castro's government and searching for those who genuinely wanted to work with us instead of blaming the U.S. for all of Cuba's ills since the beginning of time, and many other problems – you can imagine it was a huge workload and our officers simply didn't have the time to take a few days off to take the temperature of the country.

Q: Well, were you able to maintain your personal contacts, was this difficult or were relations with individuals fairly cordial?

LENDERKING: Well, certainly in the beginning they were very friendly. From my experience and the experiences of others, I believed Cubans genuinely liked Americans and vice-versa. But Cubans had a very highly developed sense of grievance toward the United States, which in my view was justified to a large extent by having had Cuba as an American colony, and after Cuba's independence in 1934 continuing to treat it like one. But we tried to meet as many people as we could and in the beginning, as I said, neither my wife nor I spoke very good Spanish but we were picking it up quickly and we tried to develop relations with people our own age who were up and comers in the Castro government, or in the "new Cuba." One person I had an introduction to through my wife's sister, who had met him when he was visiting at Yale, was a senior official in the foreign ministry. He was a Yale graduate, a charming bon vivant, and when I contacted him he said okay, I will take you to lunch. Well, we hit it off instantly – he was suave and very outgoing and we just bounced from one topic to another at this upscale restaurant he took me to, with the din of the Cuban luncheon cocktail hour and Cuban music blasting in our ears. It had to be experienced to be believed. Lunch that day consisted of seven gin and tonics and no food. Finally he looked at me and said, "Well, Bill, there's no time for lunch, I have to get back to the Ministry. We had a good time, and let's keep in touch," and off he went.

So I wobbled back to my office, unfit for any productive labor that afternoon, but I did cultivate my friendship with him and when things really got bad I offered, and he accepted, my help to get

him and his wife out of the country. And it's a long story but basically what happened is I was able to get him an expedited visa. I argued with the visa officers who insisted he appear in the Embassy in person. We all knew the Embassy was being watched, and he, as a senior official in the Foreign Ministry would certainly be spotted by the surveillance people, and he was very apprehensive of coming into the Embassy. I arranged for him to come in and leave by a side door and maybe that helped, but it was wrong to make him put his life at risk by coming in to have a quick interview and pick up the visas. The risk was real enough -- he could have been arrested, jailed, and even executed as a traitor -- it happened to others.

Fortunately, he and his family got out – disguised heavily – and he made his way to New Haven where American friends helped him get established and settle in a new home. It's good to remind ourselves that very few people coming to America, even if they aren't running for their lives as he was, are as fortunate as he was, with close American friends, bilingual English, a fungible professional career, and contacts ready to help him.

These incidents were very exciting. Even though we were Embassy people, being in Havana when relations were going downhill fast carried genuine risk. It was jarring to think that Havana was regarded as almost a paradise and a haven for tourists of all kinds only a few months previous to all this.

I'll tell you one more story that I think is interesting. The head Cuban cultural affairs assistant-

Q: At the embassy?

LENDERKING: -at the embassy, in USIS, was very popular and well connected. Everyone loved her. She was just perfect, and had been my older sister's advisor when she was at Smith College. So we naturally had a lot to talk about, and everyone liked her and relied on her. But there was only one problem -- she turned out to be a spy for Castro. She was in the Embassy in a glassed in ground floor office, so she saw all the people who came and went, and she was reporting to Castro's intelligence services. I'm sure some people ended up in prison or being roughly interrogated because of her. So that was the kind of atmosphere it was; it went from euphoria in the beginning to very unpleasant.

Q: Well, you were sort of the new boy on the block and so you could observe this, were they going through almost a rejection period, saying this cannot be as bad as it seems and maybe there is a way to deal with Castro or was the embassy divided in saying this guy is a communist and he is evil and others would say oh no, he is a reformer?

LENDERKING: Well, there was certainly debate but I think we were all dismayed about the way the government was going. It was shutting down the newspapers and censoring, seizing land without compensation, mounting scurrilous and vicious public attacks on anyone who dared to criticize what was happening, and none of these were essential to a successful revolution. So we began to see that Castro's agenda did not include a friendly relationship with the U.S. and a willingness to sit down and work out our problems. And we were all operating from the premise that our problems could be negotiated and settled and it was in the interest of both our countries. And I think almost all of us felt very strongly about that and were dismayed. At one point, I can't

remember exactly when it was, but it was before I left in May of 1960, so it would have been somewhere around fall of 1959, the embassy, I guess it was the country team, had a straw vote, just the embassy section chiefs, the Ambassador and the DCM, and they voted that there was no way the United States could get along with Castro if he continued on his present course, because things had gone too far. And after that point I think we all prepared for what would be an eventual breaking of relations.

Q: What was your impression of the newspapers there, to begin with?

LENDERKING: They ran the gamut. There were some that were old supporters of the oligarchy and very strongly conservative, pro-Catholic, basically mouthpieces for the Catholic hierarchy, very much on the side of the wealthy Old Guard, and consequently very critical of Castro. The leading paper in this group was Diario de la Marina. Of course, their criticisms made them targets, and Castro got rid of them right away, the old establishment papers that had supported Batista. As one who had little sympathy for the old regime and the corruption and brutality of things under Batista, I was initially not sorry to see Diario criticized. But as the attacks became vicious and the dangers to the paper and its personnel became very real, I admired their bravery and eloquence in standing up to Castro. Of course they were swept away, and I hope that those who wanted to leave were able to.

There were probably about 11 daily newspapers in Havana, and some of them were pretty good, and in the middle of the spectrum there were some very good reporters. There was a popular weekly magazine called "Bohemia," which had excellent cultural and political articles. Their leading cartoonist, Prohias, had a very popular series "Spy vs. Spy" that lampooned Castro's spies as well as the CIA. Eventually, Prohias had to flee for his life. He made it to the U.S. and continued his cartoons in the American press, and they attracted a wide following in the US as well. So the Cuban press overall was quite good, and certainly lively. But even the moderate papers and the ones that had been pro-Castro were forced to follow the party line without deviation and if they wavered in the slightest they would be threatened or censored, with blank spaces in the paper appearing in the paper where their column was supposed to be. So what was happening was really a communist takeover. The Castro regime was turning out to be very rigid and doctrinaire; Castro was going to create a "new Cuban man," and he increasingly turned to the Soviet Union as his model. Castro's supporters on the left in the U.S. refused to see this, and continued to make excuses for what was going on.

Q: Was there any debate whether Castro was a real communist or was he just a homegrown dictator?

LENDERKING: We talked about that all the time and everyone did, whether they were in the embassy or not; that was one of the main topics. I guess where I came out was that Castro was not a communist in the beginning, but he certainly had a blueprint for how he wanted to run the country and what he created was a communist state. I doubt if he was ever a Party member, but he was a radical leader in his student days and must have had a lot of contact with doctrinaire communists as well as student radicals and revolutionaries.

Q: Well then, you left there in, when?

LENDERKING: I left there in June of 1960.

G. HARVEY SUMM
Principal Officer
Santiago (1959-1960)

Consular Officer
Havana (1960-1961)

G. Harvey Summ was born on November 11, 1919 in New York City. He received his BBA from City College in 1939 and served in the U.S. Navy from 1942 to 1946. He entered the Foreign Service in 1948 and served in countries including the Dominican Republic, Brazil, Ecuador, Cuba, and Angola. Mr. Summ was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on March 5, 1993.

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.

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?*

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, 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 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.

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 certainly.

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.

ROBERT M. SAYRE
Economic Counselor
Havana (1960-1961)

Ambassador Robert M. Sayre became interested in the U.S. Foreign Service after serving for four years in the U.S. Army during World War II. He began his career at the State Department in 1949. Ambassador Sayre held positions in Peru and Cuba, and ambassadorships to Uruguay, Panama, and Brazil. He was interviewed in 1995 by Thomas Dunnigan.

Q: Well then after several years in Lima you were transferred into a post that was probably much more in the eye of the storm at the time, Havana. And you went there in 1960 I believe under Ambassador Philip W. Bonsal. You went as Economic Counselor I see which is quite a change from being Political Counselor.

SAYRE: Well I had just graduated from Stanford University with a Masters degree -- the Department of State had sent me to Stanford -- and I went to Havana. I was sent there as a Financial Officer. Because of the difficulties we were having, the difficulty we had getting people who were willing to go to Cuba, the fact that Ambassador Bonsal departed, and the Economic Counselor moved up to be the Charge, I moved up to be the Economic Counselor.

Q: What could you do in Havana in those days, did you have a feeling of being cloistered or shut in or being followed wherever you went, or were the Cuban officials still semi-friendly?

SAYRE: Cuba officials were not friendly at all. We were cloistered. We could not have any association; we could not have any consultation with the Cuban Foreign Ministry. I only met one Cuban official for the whole time I was in Cuba, and he was in the central bank. I went over and talked to him about the economic situation in Cuba. But as a practical matter, Fidel Castro and his officials simply would not talk to any official in the United States government at all. It was a very difficult situation.

Q: And you were there as Economic Counselor at the time I gather when they were seizing property of American companies there?

SAYRE: Beginning in October of 1960, they seized all private property in Cuba including all of that belonging to the United States. The government took over everything.

Q: Did they respond to any of our protests or anything?

SAYRE: None whatever.

Q: Did you ever get to meet any of the revolutionary leaders?

SAYRE: No I did not. I never met Fidel Castro, his brother, or any of the rest of them. They wouldn't talk to us.

Q: What was the atmosphere in Havana at that time, in the streets and so forth? Were the people still rejoicing in their revolution?

SAYRE: No, they were not. For example, if you went to a restaurant in Cuba, and I went to a restaurant at the principal Hotel in Havana, I think there were two or three people in the restaurant. That was it.

Q: The life of vacationing in Havana had ended?

SAYRE: There was no tourism. Havana just was not active either economically or socially or any other way.

Q: Did you ever feel that you personally were the target of abuse or attack or not?

SAYRE: No, I didn't. That came later. Not in Cuba. But I know that I was observed by Cuban security.

Q: And we had no way, I take it, of helping our business people there?

SAYRE: We couldn't do anything. The only thing I could do when I was there was report on what was happening in Cuba, what the economic situation was, which direction it was going, what they were doing in terms of taking over everything, what it was doing to the economy and so on. I couldn't do anything else.

Q: Did we have any reason to believe that the Soviet Union was shipping missiles to Cuba?

SAYRE: At the time, I don't really think they were. I think this happened just a little bit after. But we knew that the Soviet Union was heavily involved--the Cubans worked out an agreement with the Soviet Union while we were there. One of the things that I tried to persuade the Department of State to do in order to disrupt what was going on was to embargo all sugar from Cuba. We were buying 3 million tons annually of sugar from Cuba. But it didn't, wouldn’t do it. After Cuba worked out a sugar agreement with the Soviet Union, the United States finally embargoed sugar from Cuba in 1961.

Q: Were the Cubans then exporting the revolution, could you tell, trying to inflame other Latin American countries?

SAYRE: I'm sure they had already started that, because after I got back to Washington it was clear that they were busy all over the hemisphere.

Q: When and why did you leave Havana?

SAYRE: I left Havana because Fidel Castro effectively closed the United States Embassy. I was at this apartment watching the TV, and Fidel Castro's speech on New Year's Eve. He went on for four hours. He got near the end of his speech and he said that he was going to require that the United States take out of Cuba all of its diplomatic service, except the equivalent number that Cuba had in Washington. Now, what he didn't recognize was that Cuba had 130 Cuban diplomatic people in the United States at various consulates including in Washington. Well, we tried to find out from the Foreign Ministry what all of this meant at about one o'clock in the morning. We couldn't find out until the next day, and they finally told us it meant everybody, including the employees who ran the elevators. Well, we just couldn't possibly run an Embassy with only eight people including general service staff. So within I think it was 48 hours, we were on a boat headed back to the United States because the Cubans made it impossible to maintain an Embassy there. They can say they did not break relations with the United States. They did break relations with the United States even before that because they would not let our people in Havana talk to or conduct relations with the Cuban government.

Q: Did we force all their people out of the U.S. at that time?

SAYRE: We then decided to close the Embassy in Cuba because they had broken relations with us. I mean it was just normal.

WILLIAM T. PRYCE
Special Assistant to the Assistant Secretary for Inter-American Affairs
Washington, DC (1960-1961)

Born in California and raised in Pennsylvania, Mr. Pryce was educated at Wesleyan University and the Fletcher School of Tufts University. After service in the US Navy he worked briefly for the Department of Commerce before joining the Foreign Service in 1958. Though primarily a Latin America specialist, Mr. Pryce also served in Moscow. His Latin America assignments include Mexico, Panama, Guatemala, Bolivia and Honduras, where he was Ambassador from 1992-1996. Ambassador Pryce was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1997.

Q: *Today is the 16th of October, 1997. Let's start talking about the Bay of Pigs. Again you were doing what?*

PRYCE: At that point I was a special assistant to the assistant secretary for Inter-American Affairs in the State Department, Thomas Mann. I must say it was a unique position because Secretary Mann wanted to have a staff assistant in all his meetings and so he insisted that I get

clearances to attend meetings that he had with the CIA, with Defense and others without holds barred. As a result I was involved in the meetings that were leading up to the Bay of Pigs. There was a very detailed plan developed by the CIA involving an invasion of Cuba from Nicaragua and Guatemala originally. The overall plan was to first destroy Castro's air fields by having planes take off from a couple of places, and bomb the air fields, bomb Castro's planes on the ground so that the invasion could then take place.

Mr. Mann felt this was not a viable program and he opposed it inside the circles of the government. He wrote a memo to Secretary Rusk showing why this plan wasn't the right one. He became very unpopular of course with the Agency because there was tremendous pressure frankly. We had built up this huge apparatus that President Kennedy was handed and there were hundreds of people, perhaps thousands of people, ready to go on this invasion and it would be very difficult to call it off. Mann had two fundamental points. One that it probably wouldn't succeed. It would have great difficulty succeeding without U.S. involvement and that the U.S. should not be involved but that if we did become involved, we should see it through and we should be prepared to use U.S. troops to make it succeed.

He then proposed an alternative plan; if something had to be done we should try to use the OAS. It was a very interesting time because there were people that felt this plan would not succeed. Another fascinating thing was that this was a covert plan which was bandied about in The New York Times for probably a month before the invasion took place.

Q: *You were in ARA, I realize that you were kind of the fly on the wall...*

PRYCE: Right, exactly.

Q: *But at the same time the fly on the wall often has... Were you sensing anywhere within the ARA apparatus that was cleared for this, anybody who was saying you know, Castro isn't that disliked in Cuba and we are not going to be accepted. It is not just a military thing, it is a popular thing.*

PRYCE: Well, yes, I think that the plan of course depended upon a popular uprising. The word from people who said yes, Castro has a certain amount of charisma; but as I remember if the premises of the plan, if the bombings were successful, in other words if the air force were destroyed and if there was a successful insurgency which was able to establish a beachhead, then I think the prevailing opinion in ARA (and there weren't very many people who were involved in it, there were very few)... One of the interesting things is that as you probably remember, Adlai Stevenson was not privy to what was going on.

Q: *He was the ambassador to the United Nations at the time.*

PRYCE: That's right, and the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations was not privy to these plans even though talk about an invasion appeared in The New York Times.

Q: *Well Stevenson was considered by this new thrusting group, activists, to be soft.*

PRYCE: I guess it was a question of plausible denial. What I remember very clearly was that one of the premises was that the Agency had at least one or two, several I think, Cuban pilots that were supposed to take off from the air field, then turn around and bomb it, and then fly off to other places, so the story that this was a Cuban operation would have some plausibility. Of course that never happened and I don't know if that was ever a serious possibility or not but it was touted as a possibility. The decision was made to go ahead and go without the people from Cuba so I think maybe they had a plane that had been in Cuba at one point. I'm recalling now that Stevenson was very much embarrassed in the UN because he made statements which later turned out to be not correct. I also remember that what had happened is that the initial raids did not achieve their purpose, they were only partially successful, but the decision then was to go ahead anyway.

I would like to mention one thing that I think has come out lately but not always. There were a lot of stories around that at the last minute President Kennedy held back the participation of U.S. forces. My recollection is that that clearly was not the case. President Kennedy at all times made very clear at all discussions that I heard about and certainly in the other discussions, that there was to be no U.S. involvement. This was one of the things that Mann was saying, that if we do this we shouldn't fail but it was very clear that the president made up his mind ahead of time that there would be no U.S. participation.

What happened was when the invasion was in trouble, the president did relent to the point of allowing an air cover to cover the beachhead at the Bay of Pigs so that the people there would not be pounded by Cuban air. An air cover was authorized but never a U.S. attack. I've heard pilots talk about it, I was up there and we were ready to go. I think that probably lower in the chain of command maybe our U.S. military wanted to go but there was never, to my knowledge, ever, any thought that U.S. forces would be directly involved. President Kennedy never called anybody off. He basically refused to have involvement as he always said he would.

Q: *Again from you position, did you sense sort of hostility from either the White House, the National Security Council, or from the CIA towards Mann for not being fully on the team?*

PRYCE: No, I didn't. They respected each other and there were honest discussions and he raised his doubts. I should also say one other thing. I remember that at one point, this probably was in Ted Sorenson's book, that there was a thought that the military said that they never really had a chance to look at the plan, that JCS never had a chance to look at the plan. I recollect that there was a plan which was signed off on by the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Now what happened was they didn't vet it through the normal process so you could say in a sense that the Joint Chiefs had not looked at it in the normal process but there was a small group of people that did look at it. They said that there was a reasonable chance of success, again assuming they had the air superiority, and that this estimate, which was cautious, nevertheless was seen by the Joint Chiefs and was signed as I remember correctly, and I think I do, by the Joint Chiefs so they were certainly aware.

Q: *There were a lot of people who were backing away from this and as the president later said, victory has many authors, or something to that effect, and defeat it's...*

PRYCE: ...defeat it's hard to find who's in charge. He accepted full responsibility. He was I think very courageous to do that because he certainly was handed an ongoing process which had been authorized by President Eisenhower and there was a certain inertia there. As people at one point said, Tracy Barnes and Bissell...

Q: *Richard Bissell yes.*

PRYCE: ...were the people involved in it, "What are you going to do with these 2,000 people that you've been training for a year-and-a-half if you turn it off?"

Q: *It's a little bit like 1914 when everybody mobilized and the Germans said we've got to invade France rather than fight the Russians. The whole thing got caught up in military plans.*

PRYCE: Clearly the president was fully briefed but there was a certain pressure to go forward with the plan.

Q: *How did this play out when it didn't work? What was Mann getting from his posts?*

PRYCE: I think just about that time Mann was transferred to Mexico City and he may not have been there when the actual invasion took place.

Q: *Were you there?*

PRYCE: Yes, I was there. I continued on for a short time as staff assistant to...

Q: *What was the reaction you were hearing and seeing about what this failed Bay of Pigs thing did to our relations within the Western Hemisphere?*

PRYCE: That it was an unfortunate event and that it obviously damaged our prestige to be involved. Some people felt that we should have been involved in such a venture but the greater feeling was that if we were involved, we should have won, we should have made it work. So there is a combination of people feeling this is intervention, and that certainly was the public position by most countries that the United States should not intervene in situations like this. A lot of private opinion was that you guys, the United States, if you did something like this you should have made it work, you should have gone all the way, you should have eliminated Castro.

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Q: *You were there at the time, or immediately thereafter, when the Bay of Pigs things fell apart. There has always been this affinity between Cuba and Castro and Mexico, how did that play out?*

PRYCE: Well that was difficult. There was the special relationship that you are talking about. Because they were the only country I think that did not break relations with Castro. The way the Mexicans tried to play it to us was that you need a messenger, you need someone in the hemisphere that deals with Castro and we can send messages, we can be helpful. Of course we didn't see it that way and said we don't need any messages, we don't need this. But they wanted

to be independent and this was one of the expressions of their independence that it was one nation that they did not break relations. That was a signal of their desire not to be publicly seen as being beholden to the colossus in the north.

JORDAN THOMAS ROGERS
Reports Officer, Staff Secretariat
Washington, DC (1961-1963)

Mr. Rogers was born in South Carolina and raised in North Carolina. After graduating from the University of North Carolina, he served with the United States Air Force in WWII. Entering the Foreign Service in 1946, he served at a variety of foreign posts in Europe, Latin America and Asia, primarily as Economic and Political Officer. His final overseas post was Rawalpindi, Pakistan, where he was Deputy Chief of Mission. In Washington, Mr. Rogers was assigned to the Department's Staff Secretariat, to the Department of Defense as Foreign Affairs Officer and finally as Economic Officer in the Department's Latin America Bureau.

ROGERS: My current recollection is that the first news or intimation of my next assignment came in the form of a letter from one Tom Dunnigan, advising me that I had been assigned to the Department to replace him as Chief of what was known as the Secretariat. The Secretariat, or S/S, served the Executive Secretary, who was then Luke Battle (and later, while I was there, Bill Brubeck), to the Secretary of State, then Dean Rusk. The Secretariat had at least three main functions, as follows:

1) to control the paper flow between the various Bureaus of the Department, as well as from other governmental Departments, and the Secretary of State. Thus a memorandum from Bureau A to the Secretary would immediately arouse several questions: was it complete; were all necessary references attached, and very important, were appropriate clearances and/or comments from other concerned bureaus attached?
2) to control the paper flow between the White House and the Secretary of State, in fact between the White House and the Department. Appropriate control of this flow was even more important, involving as it did relations between the President and the Secretary.
3) To accompany the Secretary on trips abroad, and there to facilitate the preparation of daily cable selections from Washington and posts abroad for him, as well as to assist in the preparation of reporting cables on his activities, and to assure that he had available all the information that was required.

There were also a myriad of other functions, such as the preparation of briefing books for the Secretary on current problems, the handling of verbal requests from the White House, and on and on. But in brief the responsibility was to maintain order for the Secretary and to assist him in being responsive to the White House.

The staff of the Secretariat consisted of its Chief, a Deputy and about 8-10 staffers, mostly Foreign Service Officers. It operated under considerable pressure, at least under President

Kennedy, who wanted immediate responses and action, and who not infrequently phoned directly himself to desk officers for information or explanation.

In brief, the place jumped!

One of its major responsibilities turned out to be on the alert for people in the Department trying to sneak something into the Secretary without someone else, who might object, hearing about it. Another, it goes without saying, was to follow up on any request from the White House to make certain State's response was prompt and adequate.

I was there during the Cuban Missile Crisis, which of course, and very properly, had everyone on pins and needles. There were several channels then in use between Washington and Moscow, one from Washington to the US Embassy in Moscow, and the other through the Soviet Embassy in Washington. One night when I was on the late shift (we were then running 24/7, as the saying is now), we had an urgent message for the Soviets to be delivered to the Soviet Embassy. Well, our regular messenger was gone, and since I was about to leave, I said I'd run it over. I was driving our second car, a beaten up old black Ford, about twenty years old, and I've always wondered what the FBI thought when this old wreck pulled up about 3 a.m. in front of the Soviet Embassy and some joker gets out and goes to the front door with a big envelope in his hands.

Prior to the Cuban Missile Crisis, I was taken out once for a tour of the facility where certain people would be taken in the event of a nuclear attack, to keep the government functioning. That was rasher scary, in particular the concept that if you were at work when it happened and were on the "go" list, you went, leaving your family to fend for themselves. I had an aunt in North Carolina who sent us a key, but how Sarah could have managed if I had been at work, or even how we both would have managed, thank goodness we'll never know.

LEONARD MEEKER
Deputy Legal Advisor, Department of State
Washington, DC (1962)

Ambassador Leonard Meeker was born in New Jersey in 1916. He graduated from Amherst College in 1937 and received his law degree from Harvard University. After serving in the army in World War II, he worked for the Departments of Treasury and Justice before joining the Department of State in 1946. Ambassador Meeker was interviewed by Robert Martens in 1989.

Q: *When did you first learn of the problem of Soviet missiles in Cuba?*

MEEKER: Very late on the afternoon of Thursday, October 18, 1962, Secretary Dean Rusk asked me to come to his office. When I arrived, he told me that photo reconnaissance showed the presence of Soviet missile sites in Cuba, and said that it appeared that the Soviets were shortly going to equip them with nuclear armed missiles. I asked a couple of questions. First, whether it was quite clear and definite from the photography that these conclusions were correct. Secondly,

whether, if the missiles, in fact, were there and remained operational, they would, indeed, become a security threat to the United States. His answer to both questions was "Yes." He asked me to develop a legal analysis of the situation, focusing on the steps which the United States might take in order to secure the removal of the sites, the missiles, and, if present, the warheads from Cuba.

Q: *What did your memorandum to Secretary Rusk state concerning the steps open to the United States and international law?*

MEEKER: There was not a lot of time to work on this because Mr. Rusk wanted a memorandum by 7:00 that evening, only a little more than four and a half hours away. He also asked me to work on it alone, without disclosing to anyone else or consulting anyone else about the subject.

So I went back to my office and got out some treaties, including the Rio Treaty of 1947 and the United Nations charter. I began to think about--and then to write--a legal memorandum on the subject. What I concluded and put into the memorandum was that, under the Rio Treaty, the council of the Organization of American States could be convoked as an organ of consultation under the Rio Treaty, and could, under that treaty, recommend to members of the OAS that they take appropriate measures to remove a threat to the peace of America, if they found such a threat to exist.

There is another provision in the Rio Treaty which provides for action by the organization and its members if an armed attack occurs against a member of the inter-American community. It did not seem to me that any armed attack had occurred by any country against any other and, for that reason, I did not rely upon the provisions dealing with armed attack, but rather, on a later provision of the treaty which provides for consultation and recommendation in the event the organ of consultation should find the existence of a threat to the peace of America. I said, "I thought that the council could reasonably conclude that the placement of nuclear armed missiles in Cuba--not only near the United States, but near many other members of the OAS--did indeed constitute a threat to the peace of America within the meaning of the Rio Treaty."

Under the treaty, the organ of consultation has the right to recommend measures to member states, to be taken in such a case. The recommendation requires a two-thirds vote. It is not binding upon members. It merely authorizes them to take action which is recommended by the organ of consultation. It was necessary, also, to relate this whole subject to the United Nations charter, because the United Nations charter contains provisions prohibiting the use of force against any country in contravention of international law. There is an exception in the case of armed attack, but I did not conclude that this was such a case.

The charter also has another exception, and that exception is for action taken by a regional organization. Indeed, the provisions of the UN charter on regional organizations in chapter eight were designed and tailored specifically to take account of the existence of the inter-American system. So it seemed to me that a very good argument could be made that, if the council of the OAS recommended even military measures to remove what we characterized as a threat to the peace of America, this, indeed, would be consistent with the UN charter, because it would be the action of a regional organization recognized as legitimate in chapter eight of the charter.

Q: *Secretary Rusk, you said, requested this memorandum by 7:00 on the evening of October 18. Can you tell us what took place the following morning, then, in the Department of State?*

MEEKER: I took the memorandum to Mr. Rusk that evening about 7:00. The next morning, around 8:30 or 8:45, George Ball, then Under Secretary of State, convoked a meeting in his office to discuss the whole problem of the Soviet missiles in Cuba. One of the subjects, which we naturally discussed, was military measures to prevent the introduction of any more Soviet material by sea into Cuba. Some of the participants who were there, naturally, said, "This was a blockade and the United States should declare a blockade of Cuba, and then enforce it with our Navy." I suggested that this was not really the best terminology, because a blockade implies the existence of a state of war. The United States had not declared war against either Cuba or the Soviet Union, and certainly would not wish to do so. In order to avoid any implication of a state of war from the imposition of measures which we described as blockade, I thought we should adopt different terminology.

I was remembering, then, the speech given by Franklin Roosevelt decades before, in which he had spoken of quarantining the aggressor. So I suggested as an alternative to blockade the term "defensive quarantine." It seemed to me that if we were to take military measures involving our Navy to prevent the arrival of any more war material in Cuba, we would do best to describe it as a defensive quarantine--a measure that was defensive in character and which did not imply the existence of a state of war between anyone.

Q: *I believe that, later that morning, an Ex-Comm meeting took place--that is, on the morning of October 19. Could you indicate who attended that meeting and what took place there?*

MEEKER: About 9:00, on the morning of October 19th, the group which had been meeting in Under Secretary Ball's office moved across the hall to the conference room, where Ex-Comm was to meet. Those present were Secretary Rusk; Under Secretary Ball; Ambassador Llewellyn Thompson; Deputy Under Secretary Alexis Johnson; Assistant Secretary Edward Martin; Secretary of the Treasury Douglas Dillon; Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara; the Deputy Secretary of Defense Roswell Gilpatric; and Assistant Secretary for International Affairs in the Defense Department, Paul Nitze; General Maxwell Taylor, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; Attorney General Robert Kennedy; Deputy Attorney General Nicholas Katzenbach; CIA Director John McCone; Ray Cline, also of the CIA; McGeorge Bundy, Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs; Theodore Sorensen, speech writer for President Kennedy; and Dean Acheson, former Secretary of State.

Q: *Can you go on, then, to tell us what took place at that meeting?*

MEEKER: The meeting began with Secretary Rusk asking Alexis Johnson if he was ready to lay a program before the group, a program of proposed action. Alex Johnson said that he was not ready to do that. Then there followed a briefing on the basis of photographic intelligence presented by a CIA representative, Arthur Lundahl.

After this, Mr. McCone asked Ray Cline to give the most recent intelligence estimate conclusions of the US Intelligence Board. Mr. Cline did this on the basis of three papers which were then distributed to the group. In his presentation, he covered the question of what the state of construction was at the missile sites, and what was believed to be the probable development at those sites, with the arrival of missiles and possibly war heads later.

Mr. Rusk then said he thought there ought to be some exposition of the legal framework to surround any possible military measures by the United States. He was about to ask me to do that, when Attorney General Kennedy signaled and said Mr. Katzenbach will do that. So Nick Katzenbach, at that point, expressed the view that the President had ample constitutional and statutory authority to take any needed military measures. He thought a declaration of war was unnecessary, and from the standpoint of international law, Mr. Katzenbach thought US action would be justified on the principle of self-defense.

I said I did not think a declaration of war would improve our position, but would, indeed, impair it, and that, furthermore, if we were going to engage in measures which we could describe as a defensive quarantine of Cuba, involving the use of force, we would need to relate this to the provisions and obligations of the United Nations charter. It did not seem to me that the situation in Cuba constituted armed attack by any country against another, and that we needed to consider it on another basis. I said, "I also did not think that one could simply say that any action to be taken by the United States was justifiable, if we said it was self-defense." I reviewed the provisions of the Rio Treaty and of the UN charter and laid forth the analysis which I had expressed in the memorandum to Secretary Rusk.

There was then a discussion as to whether the necessary votes would be obtainable in the Organization of American States. Mr. Rusk asked Ed Martin, the Assistant Secretary for Latin American Affairs, to give his estimate about this. Mr. Martin said he thought the US could immediately secure the vote of 14 out of the then 20 members functioning in the OAS. He thought that within 24 hours we could raise that majority up to 17, or maybe even 18 or 19. He was hopeful in regard to Ecuador and Chile, and believed there was a good chance of getting Mexico.

At this point, Attorney General Kennedy said, "The President would be placed in an impossible position if we went to the OAS and failed to get the necessary votes, or if there were a delay." He asked if we could be perfectly sure of the outcome before seeking OAS concurrence. Mr. Martin said he hated to guarantee anything, but he had a lot of confidence about this. You could not go to the American Republics in advance without loss of security, but he felt that a last minute approach by US Ambassadors to heads of state laying the situation on the line would produce the votes. Attorney General Kennedy once again expressed his great concern at the possibility of some slip if this course were to be followed.

Then there was a discussion which covered a meeting held the night before with the President. One participant looked back on that meeting and believed it had arrived at a tentative conclusion to institute a blockade, and thought the President had been satisfied at the consensus, which was seemingly arrived at among his advisors. General Taylor quickly indicated that he had not concurred, and that the Joint Chiefs had reserved their position. McBundy said he had reflected a

great deal upon the situation in the course of a sleepless night. He doubted whether the strategy group was serving the President as well as it might, if it merely recommended a blockade. He had spoken with the President this morning, and he felt there was further work to be done. A blockade would not remove the missiles. Its effects were uncertain and, in any event, would be slow to be felt. Something more would be needed to get the missiles out of Cuba. This would be made more difficult by the prior publicity of a blockade, and the consequent pressures from the United Nations for a negotiated settlement. An air strike would be quick and would take out the bases in a clean surgical operation. He favored decisive action with its advantages of surprise and confronting the world with fait accompli.

There was then discussion of this general subject as to which line of action ought to be pursued. Mr. Rusk asked Mr. Acheson for his views. Acheson said Khrushchev had presented the United States with a direct challenge. We were involved in a test of wills, and the sooner we got to a showdown, the better. He favored cleaning the missile bases out decisively with an air strike. "There was something else to remember," he said. "This wasn't just another instance of Soviet missiles aimed at the United States. Here they were in the hands of a madman whose actions would be perfectly irresponsible. The usual restraints operating on the Soviets would not apply. We better act, and act quickly."

As far as questions of international law might be involved, Mr. Acheson agreed with Mr. Katzenbach's position that self-defense was an entirely sufficient justification. But if there were going to be imported a qualification or requirement of approval by the OAS, as apparently suggested by Mr. Meeker, he could not go along with that. Secretary Dillon said he agreed there should be a quick air strike. Mr. McCone was of the same opinion.

General Taylor said that a decision now to impose a blockade was a decision to abandon the possibility of an air strike. A strike would be feasible for only a few more days. After that, the missiles would be operational. Thus, it was now or never for an air strike. He favored such a strike. If this were to take place Sunday morning, a decision would have to be made at once, so that the necessary preparations could be ordered. For a Monday morning strike, a decision would have to be reached tomorrow--meaning Saturday--because 48 hours' notice was required.

Secretary McNamara said that he would give orders for the necessary military dispositions, so that if the decision were for a strike, the Air Force would be ready. He did not, however, advocate an air strike. He favored the alternative, a blockade. Under Secretary George Ball said he was a waiver between the two courses of action.

At this point, Attorney General Kennedy said, with a grin on his face, that he too had had a talk with the President, indeed, very recently, only this morning. It seemed to him three main possibilities. One was to do nothing--that would be unthinkable. Another was an air strike. The third was a blockade. He thought it would be very, very difficult, indeed, for the President if the decision were to be for an air strike, with all the memory of Pearl Harbor, and with all the implications that this would have for us, and whatever world there would be afterward. For 175 years we had not been that kind of country. A sneak attack was not in our traditions. Thousands of Cubans would be killed without warning and a lot of Russians too. He favored action to make known unmistakably the seriousness of US determination to get the missiles out of Cuba. But he

felt the action should allow the Soviets some room for maneuver, to pull back from their over extended position in Cuba.

Mac Bundy, addressing himself to the Attorney General, said this was all very well, but a blockade would not eliminate the bases; an air strike would.

I then asked, at this point, "Who would be expected to be the government of Cuba, after an air strike? Would it be anyone other than Castro? If not, would anything be solved, and would we not be in a worse situation than before?"

After a pause, Ed Martin replied that, of course, a good deal might be different after a strike, and Castro might be toppled in its aftermath. Others expressed the view that we might have to proceed with an invasion after an air strike. Still another suggestion was that US armed forces seize the base areas alone, in order to eliminate the missiles. Secretary McNamara thought this a very unattractive kind of undertaking, from the military point of view.

Toward 1:00, Secretary Rusk said he thought this group could not make the decision as to what was to be done. This was for the President, in consultation with his constitutional advisors, presumably meaning Cabinet members and the Joint Chiefs. The Secretary thought the group's duty was to present to the President for his consideration fully staffed out alternatives. So two working groups ought to be formed, one to work out the blockade alternative and the other to work out the air strike. Alex Johnson was designated to head the first of those, and Mac Bundy the second. Mr. Johnson was to have with him Ambassador Thompson, Deputy Secretary Gilpatric, Mr. Martin, Mr. Nitze, and myself. Mac Bundy was to have Secretary Dillon, Mr. Acheson, and General Taylor. Mr. McCone was asked to serve with the air strike group, but begged off on the ground that his position and duties on the US Intelligence Board made it undesirable for him to participate in a policy working group. Mr. Katzenbach was detailed to the Johnson group, later visiting the Bundy group to observe and possibly serve there as devil's advocate.

Ted Sorensen commented that he thought he had absorbed enough to start on the draft of a speech for the President. There was some inconclusive discussion on the timing of such a speech, on the danger of leaks before then, and on the proper time for meeting with the President once more, in view of his current Western campaign trip.

Before the whole group dispersed, Ambassador Thompson said, "The Soviets attached importance to questions of legality, and we should be able to present a strong legal case."

Attorney General Kennedy, as he was about to leave the room, said he thought there was ample basis for a blockade.

I said, "Yes, that's so, provided the organ of consultation under the Rio Treaty adopted an appropriate resolution."

The Attorney General then said, "That's all political, it's not legal." On leaving the room he said to Nick Katzenbach, half humorously, "Remember now, you're working for me."

These two groups met separately until about 4:00. They then reconvened and were joined once more by the cabinet officers, who had been away during the earlier part of the afternoon. The Johnson group scenario, which was more nearly complete and was ready earlier, was discussed first. Numerous criticisms were advanced. Some were answered--others led to changes. There was again a discussion of timing, now in relation to a presidential radio address. Ed Martin thought Sunday might be too early, as it would be virtually impossible to get to the Latin American heads of state on Sunday. Ambassador Thompson made the point that 24 hours must be allowed to elapse between announcement of a blockade and enforcement, so as to give the Soviet government time to get instructions to their ship captains. About two hours were spent on the Johnson scenario.

Then, at 6:00, the Bundy approach was taken up, its author saying "It's been much more fun for us up to this point, since we have had a chance to poke holes in the blockade plan. Now the roles will be reversed." Not much more than a half-hour was spent on the Bundy air strike scenario.

More than once during the afternoon, Secretary McNamara voiced the opinion that the US would have to pay a price to get the Soviet missiles out of Cuba. He thought we would at least have to give up our missile bases in Italy and Turkey, and we would probably have to pay more besides.

At different times the possibility of nuclear conflict breaking out was referred to. The point was made that once the Cuban missile installations were complete and operational, a new strategic situation would exist, with the United States more directly and immediately under the gun than ever before. A striking Soviet military push in the Western hemisphere would have succeeded and become effective. The clock could not be turned back. Things would never be the same again. During this discussion, Attorney General Kennedy said, "In looking forward into the future, it would be better for our children and grandchildren, if we decided to face the Soviet threat. Stand up to it and eliminate it now. The circumstances for doing so at some future time were bound to be more unfavorable. The risks will be greater. The chances of success less good."

Secretary Rusk, toward the end of the afternoon, stated his approach to the problem in this way, "The US needed to move so that a planned action would be followed by a pause, in which the great powers could step back from the break, and have time to consider and work out a solution, rather than be drawn inexorably from one action to another, and escalate into general nuclear war." The implication of his statement, although he did not say this expressly, was that he favored blockade rather than air strike.

In the course of the afternoon discussion, the military representatives, especially Secretary McNamara, came to expressing the view that an air strike could be made sometime after Sunday, if a blockade did not produce results as to the missile bases in Cuba. Attorney General Kennedy took particular note of this shift in the Defense Department view, and toward the end of the day, made clear that he firmly favored blockade as the first step. Other steps, subsequently, were not precluded and could be considered. He thought it was now pretty clear what the decision should be.

Around 6:30, Adlai Stevenson, who had come from New York, arrived at the meeting and was asked by Secretary Rusk if he had some views on the question of what to do.

Q: *He was ambassador to the UN at that time.*

MEEKER: At that time, Adlai Stevenson was United States representative to the United Nations. When he was asked what his views were, and specifically whether he favored a blockade, he answered affirmatively. He went on to say, "We must look beyond the particular immediate action of a blockade. We need to develop a plan for a solution to the problem, elements for negotiation designed to settle the current crisis in a stable and satisfactory way, and enable us to move forward on wider problems." He was working on some ideas for a settlement. One possibility would be the demilitarization of Cuba under effective international supervision, perhaps accompanied by neutralization of the island under international guarantees and with UN observers to monitor compliance.

Once again, there was some discussion of when another meeting with the President should be held. It was generally agreed that the President should continue on his trip until Sunday morning. He would be reachable by telephone prior to that time. In fact, the President's trip was cut short, with the press being informed that he had a bad cold and was returning to Washington.

Q: *When did the President return? When was the meeting with him, and what happened at that following meeting, at which, I presume, decisions began to be taken?*

MEEKER: The next meeting of Ex-Comm, which was indeed with President Kennedy, took place on Saturday, October 20th. I was not present at that meeting, and therefore, learned of what happened there only from participants who were. At that meeting, it was decided to take, as a first measure, steps to prevent the introduction into Cuba of any further material for completing the missile sites and making them operational. It was decided that these measures would be known as a defensive quarantine, rather than a blockade. It was also decided that the vote of the OAS would be sought to support such measures. Instructions were to be sent to the ambassadors in the Latin American countries to call on the Presidents of those countries on Sunday afternoon to secure their authorization for their representative in the OAS council to vote in favor of a US resolution, recommending steps to remove the missiles from Cuba. It was also decided that President Kennedy would make a radio address on Monday evening, October 22nd, and that a resolution would be introduced in the Security Council the following day.

Q: *It sounds to me like a number of your ideas were, by this point, accepted, and I wonder what happened then with the preparations for the President's speech that were to follow over the next day or two, prior to his speech on the evening of the 22nd?*

MEEKER: Well, a great deal of work was done on that speech. Ted Sorensen was in charge of it and was the principal drafter, since he had been a participant in several of the meetings, including those where these plans had been most thoroughly discussed. He was in a position to draft a speech which would reflect quite accurately the decisions made, plus, also, the views of President Kennedy. Different drafts were, in fact, circulated in the course of Saturday and

Sunday. Various people made comments which were essentially comments of detail. The speech as given Monday night was very much Ted Sorensen's product.

Q: *When the President did deliver the speech, then, on the evening of 22 October, could you indicate what the final course was, that was announced?*

MEEKER: The course announced was that quarantine measures would be adopted and would be enforced from a time that was set in the speech. The time was set back about a day and a half, following Tommy Thompson's strong suggestion that there should be some time allowed to elapse between announcement of the measures and enforcement of them by the US Navy. In fact, any enforcement would later postpone a little bit longer, and instead of beginning Wednesday, was delayed, by President Kennedy's own decision, until Thursday. In fact, no such measures were ever taken. Tommy Thompson had feted out the great necessity of giving the Soviets time, not only in which to reflect on what course they would follow in response to the President's speech and announcement, but also practical time within which to communicate new orders to ship captains, since various Soviet vessels were on route to Cuba at that time. They were seen by US air and naval reconnaissance approaching Cuba.

He also had pointed out something else which seemed to me always of great importance. He said, "If the US were to begin enforcing the quarantine by actually shooting at a Soviet vessel, and if the vessel were damaged, sunk, or personnel on board were killed or wounded, a whole new situation would arise, far more serious because, at that point, was not involved simply a Soviet attempt to install nuclear missiles in the Western hemisphere, but actual armed conflict between the US and the USSR. The Soviets would consider that their prestige and honor were at stake. At that point, one could not predict what the Soviet response would be, or how the whole affair would end."

It always seemed to me that Thompson's advice was exceedingly sound. It was based on very long experience in the Soviet Union, knowledge of the Soviet government on how it works, understanding of the Russian mind, and that his counsel was very important in persuading President Kennedy to move with greatest care and to achieve his intended objectives with minimal risk.

Q: *While all this was going on, one presumes that approaches were now being made, in the interval, to the various heads of state of the other American Republics. Could you tell us what happened in the various capitals concerned and at the emergency meeting of the OAS council that followed?*

MEEKER: On Sunday afternoon, as planned, the US ambassadors to the Latin American countries did call upon the presidents of those countries, and asked for their authorization to their representatives to vote for the measures which the US was about to propose. When the vote took place in the OAS council, 19 votes were cast in favor of the US resolution. There was one abstention, and that was Uruguay, which, at that time, had a nine man council of government, which could not be brought together and brought to a decision in time for the meeting. However, I believe, one or two days later, Uruguay also cast its vote later in favor of the same resolution.

Q: *So it became a unanimous resolution.*

MEEKER: It was then unanimous. I should point out, at this stage, Cuba was not sitting in the council, because it had been ejected following long debates within the council about Cuban subversion and aggression in the Western Hemisphere. Because of the conduct of Cuba, its participation in the council of the OAS had been suspended.

Q: *We're now fairly deep into the crisis. Could you tell us what your role was from Tuesday, the 23rd of October, through the following Friday, the 26th of October?*

MEEKER: I went to New York--either Monday night or Tuesday morning--to be present there to assist the US delegation in presenting the case to the Security Council, and I spent the remaining days of that week in New York. I tried to help Governor Stevenson, and also talked with representatives of a number of other countries that were members of the council. The effort was focused, as you might expect in such a case, on what legal grounds the United States had for taking measures of force to remove the missile bases from Cuba. Not only the Latin American countries, which are traditionally very concerned with questions of international law that any issue of intervention might arise, but other countries as well wanted to be convinced that, in fact, the United States had a good legal case, and that they could properly turn aside and defeat the Soviet argument-- which was that the United States was violating the charter of international law by announcing and preparing to take measures against Soviet shipping on the high seas.

During the next few days, I circulated a memorandum in New York to delegations on that subject, and they were largely satisfied, I think, of the legal basis on which we were proceeding. It was essentially the Soviet veto, which prevented the Security Council from taking any action in favor of the US draft resolution. Friday night, since the proceedings in the council had come to an end--or at a dead end, in fact--I returned to Washington, and was there during the next couple of days while the final dénouement of the crisis took place.

Q: *I believe that was on October 28th, wasn't it? What took place, then, on the 27th of October at the State Department?*

MEEKER: The 27th was, in many ways, a crucial day. That morning there began arriving from Moscow a message from Khrushchev to the President--a message which gave all the signs of having been written by Khrushchev, himself, and which appeared to concede that the USSR would unconditionally remove the missiles from Cuba.

After the arrival of this message, there came another one, which appeared to be much more institutional and bureaucratic-- and which people believed must have come out of the Politburo, or the Foreign Ministry, or both--which, in effect, said that the missiles could be removed, but subject to certain conditions, as to actions which the US would have to take. There was, naturally, discussion within the government, at that time, as to whether Khrushchev was losing control of the situation, and how to respond in the face of these two somewhat different messages. The decision that was made was simply to act as if only message number one had been received. A reply was sent out which specifically and expressly accepted what the Soviets

had said in what appeared to be the Khrushchev personal message, and the other one was ignored.

A couple of other things were happening at about this time. On Friday night, Robert Kennedy had had a meeting with the Soviet ambassador, and in that meeting he apparently indicated that the US would agree to the withdrawal of US missiles in Turkey. But this could not be announced publicly at the time of the settling of the Cuban missile crisis. He just wanted that to be understood as something that the US would do, but that it could not acknowledge at the time.

Also on Friday night--this was not known until long afterward--Dean Rusk received a call from President Kennedy, in which President Kennedy asked him to arrange for a proposal to be made by U Thant, Secretary General of the United Nations, that the missiles be withdrawn from Cuba, and that also the US missiles be withdrawn from Turkey. Many years later, in fact, in early 1988, Dean Rusk disclosed that, in response to this request from the President, he spoke with Andrew Cordier, who was then Under Secretary of the United Nations, in order to lay the groundwork for such an appeal by the secretary general. However, because the crisis was, in fact, settled bilaterally through exchanges of messages between Washington and Moscow, the U Thant proposal was never floated, and indeed was not known until Mr. Rusk disclosed it in a letter.

Q: *Why do you think Khrushchev--or perhaps I should say the Soviet government, since the Politburo was obviously involved--moved to put nuclear missiles in Cuba in the first place?*

MEEKER: It always seemed to me, that this was quite directly connected with the US attempted invasion of Cuba in April, 1961 at the Bay of Pigs. At that time, the US sought to overthrow Castro with an invasion to be mounted by Cuban exiles who had been training in Nicaragua. The plan had been initiated during the Eisenhower Administration. It was still alive, and very much under consideration when President Kennedy took office. The plan evidently underwent changes in the early months of 1961, and earlier ideas for US military participation or US military support of the invasion seemed to have been dropped, on the ground that the United States did not want to seem to be directly involved in this invasion, but hoped that it could be carried out successfully as a Cuban exile enterprise.

In addition, I suspect that the Soviets knew of other efforts on the part of the US, or at least possible plans to eliminate Castro through assassination. They felt that perhaps the best way to protect Castro and the communist experiment in Cuba was to put some military might there.

It could also have been still another element. Khrushchev was a man who was disposed to make bold moves. He might have thought that at a time when the US preponderance in nuclear missiles was considerable, he would be able to even up the balance, to some extent, by placing intermediate range missiles very near to the United States coast, so that the Soviets would have that sort of weapon targeted on US cities and not have simply intercontinental ballistic missiles some thousands of miles away. I suspect all of those elements probably entered in to what was indeed a rash venture.

Q: *I think there was another aspect too, and that was that the Sino-Soviet dispute had broken out and reopened in 1960. By this time, through '61 and '62, the dispute had come into full bloom,*

and the central core of the dispute was that the Chinese at that time felt that a much more vigorous line was necessary in dealing with the Third World. They were accusing the Soviet Union of being soft on capitalism, so to speak, and the Soviets were making efforts to, while on the one hand, say that the Chinese were going too far--they were overly optimistic. On the other hand, it kind of proved their own fidelity to the cause, and their macho nature, you might say, by taking vigorous steps in those areas that were described by them as being a more vital concern, namely, the relationship between the West and East at the core level, you might say.

MEEKER: Well, that's an interesting element, yes.

Q: *In mentioning the Cuban missile crisis, you mentioned the build up of the Bay of Pigs episode as a preliminary step in that direction. Did you have any involvement in the decision to do that?*

MEEKER: This was a subject of intense discussion and debate within the State Department in late March of 1961 and the early days of April. At that time, Chester Bowles, who was Under Secretary of State, was very concerned when he learned of the proposal to invade Cuba, and convened a series of meetings in his office at which both Abe Chayes and I were present, also Tom Hughes and some others. And out of those meetings came a series of memoranda addressed by Chester Bowles to President Kennedy objecting to the proposal for an invasion, pointing out various disadvantages of it and urging that the whole plan be dropped.

I remember one morning fairly late in a series of meetings, when Dean Rusk looked into the conference room where Mr. Bowles was having one of these meetings, and said, "If you are preparing another memorandum on Cuba, the President has said he really doesn't want to hear about that subject anymore." We, at that point, desisted from sending any further memoranda, and, indeed, I think no more meetings were held.

On the Thursday before the Monday invasion of the Bay of Pigs, I guess we were aware in the State Department that the invasion was going to take place, quite imminently, within a matter of a very few days. I thought that, perhaps, I should make one more effort on this subject. I called up Walt Rostow over in the White House, who was Deputy Assistant for National Security. I asked if I could come to see him. I went over there and said essentially two things, "The US role in organizing an invasion of Cuba by exiles was clearly a violation of our international obligations. Furthermore, the whole plan was of such a nature that it seemed bound to fail for lack of US military participation. And if this plan were proceeded with, the US would be in the worst possible position of taking an action which the world would regard as lawless, and also engaging in a monumental failure."

Walt said that he himself was not working on Cuba--that his main concentration was on Vietnam--but Mac Bundy was the person that dealt with Cuba. He could assure me that Mac and the President had been over this very carefully, and that things were well in hand, and that I should return to the State Department and deal with legal problems. [Laughter]

Q: *Well, to go back to the Cuban missile crisis, which we were speaking of most of the time. Do you have any thoughts on how the Kennedy Administration treated their success in securing the removal of the Soviet missiles from Cuba?*

MEEKER: President Kennedy had very definite views about this. He understood that an important moment in history had passed. The US had secured its objective of removing the missiles from Cuba. He was also very concerned not to seem to crow over the victory, not to make matters more difficult for Khrushchev, or to appear to humiliate the Soviet Union in the eyes of the world, any more than the facts already made it appear humiliated. He gave directions all down the line that people in the US government were to treat this as a very serious international crisis, which had been settled through careful, thoughtful negotiation. He wanted no one to boast or brag that the US had threatened its nuclear power against the Soviet Union, and had forced the USSR to bow to the American will.

I think it was really this experience which, for the first time, began to motivate Jack Kennedy to feel that something needed to be done to arrange for a better and more stable relationship between the US and USSR. I think he saw very clearly what could happen if a crisis got out of control, if nuclear weapons were to be used, and if a general nuclear exchange were to take place. He was the father of young children. I think he thought of what would happen to them, and to the world, if there were a nuclear war. It always seemed to me that this was the beginning, for him, of a process of thought which led to his speech at American University in June of 1963, and which led, also, to his pursuing the idea of the nuclear test ban treaty, which was concluded later that summer.

Q: *I was rather struck by the fact, particularly in the earlier stages that you described, that a great deal of work was being conducted in the Department of State. Besides yourself, a number of other players from the State Department were there, including Alex Johnson and Llewellyn Thompson, and Martin, of course. Do you have any comments on the degree to which the Department of State as an institution was involved in the decision making process? Obviously, the final decision was the President's. The main players are all mentioned, that is, the Cabinet heads, but there did seem to be a fair amount of institution involvement.*

MEEKER: I think the State Department as an institution was, indeed, central in the management of this crisis. A great deal of the work was done there. Meetings were held in the Department, and Department officers prepared positions, papers, and draft messages. It seemed to me, over all, that the US government functioned exceedingly well during those difficult days. The representatives of other agencies, particularly Defense, were participants but, at that time, somewhat less centrally involved than the State Department. Later, when military measures were prepared and ordered, the Defense Department was very active, indeed.

It seemed to me that the government, as a whole, performed exceedingly well throughout the Cuban missile crisis. Security was, indeed, tight. There were no leaks between the early part of the crisis which, you might say, dated from about Monday, October 12th or Tuesday, the 13th. There were no leaks between that time and the President's speech. Indeed, very few people were informed about what was going on or what was being considered. Many of those people were, indeed, State Department people. I think the whole effort was managed efficiently and with great care, and, indeed, you would have to say, with as much wisdom as human beings could muster.

THOMAS L. HUGHES
Director, Bureau of Intelligence and Research
Washington, DC (1963-1969)

Mr. Hughes was born and raised in Minnesota and was educated at Carleton College, Oxford University and Yale University. After service with the US Air Force he worked on Capitol Hill and became active in Democratic Party politics. He later joined the Department of State, first as Assistant to Under Secretary Chester Bowles and subsequently as Deputy Director, then as Director of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, where he served during the event filled period 1961 to 1969. His assignments brought him in close contact with the major political figures of that era. His final government assignment was to Embassy London as Deputy Chief of Mission. Mr. Hughes was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1999.

Q: This is the 25th of August 1999. Tom, you said there was something you wanted to add about the Bay of Pigs.

HUGHES: Bowles used to know Richard Bissell at Yale. In fact he had originally wanted Bissell in the State Department as Undersecretary for Economic Affairs. This was before Ball's appointment. Chet knew that Bissell was working at the CIA, but he had no idea that he was organizing the Bay of Pigs. Chet innocently asked Dulles to release him, but Dulles said Bissell was indispensable to a highly secret project which he was not at liberty to disclose.

Q: How much contact did you have at the upper echelons of the foreign service? Was there much effort on Bowles' part to reach out, or were things in such a state that it was the political appointees at the top who were in charge?

HUGHES: I think Bowles and the new Kennedy people generally could be faulted for not connecting more successfully with their potential sympathizers in the foreign service. The FSOs were not all old fogies, and many of them could have been of more genuine help than they turned out to be. Most of the assistant secretaries of the geographical bureaus (Europe, East Asia, Latin America) were foreign service officers, but they too were newly appointed to their positions and chosen by the administration. Yet Kennedy himself, privately but frequently, complained about the lack of responsiveness at State. I probably should have been more active myself in bringing Bowles together with promising younger FSOs, and in retrospect I regret not doing so.

The Bay of Pigs, the earliest disaster of the new administration, was produced and executed without foreign service participation. Neither Hilsman nor the INR bureau played any role in that mismanaged enterprise. In its wake, there was common agreement in State, however, that INR was the logical place for a more active liaison with CIA and defense intelligence (DIA).

Throughout the 1960's, Cuba remained an obsession for US policy, and INR's analysis on Cuban subjects illustrated another bureaucratic advantage we had inside the State Department. Since we

combined worldwide capacities within a single bureau, we enjoyed a built-in capability for cross-regional analysis. INR was conveniently able to bring divergent perspectives together in analyzing the Cuban-Soviet relationship, the motivations of Cuban foreign policy, Castro's third world connections, Cuba's involvement in the Angolan rebel movement, etc. Critics who have examined the INR analytical product on Cuba for the 1960 decade have concluded that INR 's analysis stands out as particularly noteworthy. (See, for example, "Conflicting Missions" by Piero Gleijeses, University of North Carolina Press, 2002.)

RONALD D. GODARD
Deputy Director, Office of the Coordinator of Human Affairs
Miami, FL (1970-1972)

Desk Officer, Cuban Affairs
Washington, DC (1972-1973)

Ambassador Ronald Godard was born in Oklahoma and raised in Oklahoma and Texas. He was educated at Odessa College and The University of Texas. After a tour with the Peace Corps in Ecuador, he joined the State Department in 1967 and was posted to Panama, the first of his assignments in Central and South America. These include Costa Rica, Chile, Nicaragua, Argentina and Guyana, where he served as Ambassador from 2000 to 2003. His Washington assignments also concerned Latin American Affairs. During his career the Ambassador served with the Organization of American States, was Diplomat in Residence at the University of Illinois in Chicago and was Political Officer in Istanbul. Ambassador Godard was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2004.

Q: Again in 1970, whither?

GODARD: I went off to become the deputy director of the office of the coordinator of human affairs in Miami. Very unusual Foreign Service assignment. In those days we had an office in Miami because of all the action going on in Cuba. We had Cuban exile groups that were going across the straits and shooting up villages. We had airplane hijackings to Cuba and we had a role in Miami of coordinating the return of these planes to the United States. We were point of contact with the Swiss who were the ones who represented our interests in Havana in those days.

Q: We didn't have an office there did we?

GODARD: No American presence. The Swiss were representing us, and they had moved into our old embassy in Havana, so they kept up the real estate. And we also had incidents involving fishing vessels. The primary thing though, was Cuban refugee airlift. There were two flights of Cuban refugees being brought to Miami, getting processed, and resettled there all over the United States by the old HEW department. So we were coordinated. Staying in touch, the department felt like it needed to have a State presence to keep abreast of what was going on in all of these areas. We were also the voice of the neutrality law and trying to get the exile groups to

cut it out in terms of shooting up Cuban fishing villages and so forth. Interesting tour, gave me an opportunity to live in Miami for two years.

Q: '70 to '72. Did you have a boss?

GODARD: My boss was Matthew Dinsdale Smith II. He was a great boss, a real mentor, and real smart guy. He went on from there, I guess he was reaching retirement time, he went on to Matamoros. He was the consul general there, and then retired. But he and his wife were very good to us, and we had a great time with them. It was a funny office. We were in the federal building. There were only two officers there, myself and the director of the office. We had to close up at five o'clock. The security was such that the building, they closed it down, you had to turn the key or whatever it is on the security system at five o'clock or it got very complicated. So it was a nine to five kind of job, unless there was an aircraft hijacking. You handled that from home on the telephone, keeping in touch with all the folks that had to be involved. At one point, I remember I had three airplanes in the air at the same time heading for Havana from various different cities. They were hijacking planes. It had really become the thing to do all over the place.

Q: What was your relation and what did you see of the Cuban exile community in Miami at that time?

GODARD: Quite a lot. We were in dialogue with them all the time. When Matt moved on to his new job, I became the director so I was the main contact point with a number of the exile groups. They were interested in talking to us. The exile leaders would come and go and there was a grand old guy, Jose de la Coriente, that I remember being particularly important there. There were the really rough and ready types, the alpha 66 types we had some contact with as well. And then there were civic leaders who were Cuban Americans who were in exile politics, but were also becoming politically prominent. They became much more prominent of course as more and more of them became American citizens. It was an introduction to a different kind of politics than what I had seen in Panama. Cuban exiles were just learning. They weren't as many as they are now, and they were just learning how politics operates in southern Florida. They were still at that point resisted by, their influx was being resisted by Floridians, because it was changing the nature, even then, the nature of southern Florida. That's why, at their insistence, as these Cuban refugees would come in off the airlift, the obligation was to resettle them outside of Florida. That didn’t last. We settled them as far away as Alaska in some cases, but in most cases, because they had family there and that's where the center of exile community life was, they eventually drifted back to southern Florida, built up the population to what it is now.

Q: You said part of your job was to stop exiles and mounting these little attacks against Cuba. I one time did a book called the American Counsel in which I was looking at the consular service in the nineteenth century. The consulates spent a hell of a lot of time trying to stop, they were called filibusters at that time, and a different type, I mean these were Cuban exile groups trying to raise hell against the Spanish authority and they would organize and take off and they were bad incidents.

GODARD: Our main legal instrument that we were enforcing was the neutrality laws. Very vague legislation we discovered. There weren't any prosecutions unless they really went beyond the pale. There was one man who actually took a bazooka and fired it into a visiting Soviet vessel in Miami Harbor. He got sent to jail for a while. There were no arrests to speak of. What you had was you were constantly jawboning and trying to threaten with legal action and whatever these exiles. They were clever too in the way they mounted their activities clandestinely. They trained in the Everglades and it's not that difficult to get weapons, and then they took off. I was struck by this when I recently went to Fort Lauderdale as well, the number of boats in southern Florida is absolutely astounding, and even back in those days it was easy for them to get access to vessels of one kind or another; it was impossible for the Coast Guard to keep up with this. There weren't that many incidents but we were making a good faith effort to stop it because there was no point to it really.

Q: Did you run across reverse Cuban agents trying to infiltrate, were they around?

GODARD: I'm sure they were and subsequently we learned that Castro certainly had over the years, had the exile groups well penetrated. Very easy to do because there was an influx of so many Cuban refugees over the years. There weren't any celebrated instances, but Miami is always full of rumors that so and so may be a Cuban agent. But there were no celebrated spies captured while I was there.

Q: Did you get a look at the Cuban community as it was developing there at the time?

GODARD: I did and I recognized its potential. Also, it's talent. These are extraordinarily talented people who had arrived with nothing but the clothes on their back and got to work. And they took on all kinds of menial jobs and maybe three or four jobs in order to support their families, and make something of themselves. Took advantage of opportunities to get their kids educated. Hardworking people. You see the result in Miami. They have made it a place, it's really quite astounding.

Q: Had Miami at this point become the city of choice of Latin Americans when they were going out to whoop it up or to shop or do something?

GODARD: I think that was happening. When I was there, there were a few groups from other countries, but Cubans were the largest, and then there was an old Puerto Rican community as well in Miami. In fact, the mayor while I was there was from that Puerto Rican community, from a wealthy business family. But it was still to realize fully its potential. It was beginning to happen, but it wasn't like it is now, where it's a bilingual city and you had to have English everywhere. It was difficult when the Cubans first arrived, having to cope with that.

Q: I realize you worked for Cuba first, but did Haiti play any role when you were there?

GODARD: No. I don't remember any issues concerning Haiti that I had to handle. I don't think the exiles had reached the size that they are now, of course. I just don't remember it being an issue.

Q: The man, he's now dead, I forget what his name is, Mas, was he..

GODARD: Mas Canosa. He was one of my contacts. Later on he became much more prominent and influential and set up the Cuban American Foundation. I knew him and ran onto him later because he was a businessman too, and had interests in other countries. I ran onto him in Nicaragua while I was assigned there.

Q: Did you get any pressure from any particular congressmen or senators, particularly from Florida or anything, on what you were doing? What you were doing, did it ever get controversial?

GODARD: I think we had pretty good support from the Florida delegation. We had particularly close relations in those days with Dante Fascell who was in the same federal building. His office anyway, we knew the folks in the office quite well. But that's the only member of Congress, of course he represented part of Miami, and was very interested in the Cuban issue, stayed up on it very closely. But that's the only congressional interface that I recall.

Q: Who were hijacking planes going to Cuba and never thought about going any other way?

GODARD: There have been studies of sort of the psychology of these people. They were not necessarily sociopaths, but people who were loners, disaffected with society, may have come late in life onto leftist ideology and maybe not at all. Just the idea of hijacking a plane had a particular psychological appeal to a certain kind of psychosis of some kind. And they weren't dull, some of them were criminals, sort of a mixed bag of disaffected people who were unhappy with their life, they very often had lots of family problems and money problems, whatever.

Q: We went through that stage, some of us have forgotten now, but hijacking planes. I noticed they were sort of keeping score, and at your time, our officials got a little tired of it and started killing them. There was a significant number of people who tried to do this, were picked off by a sniper.

GODARD: And we've put in place some pretty severe penalties for hijacking as well, so there's a lot of disincentives now and especially with increased security on planes and so forth. It's a lot more difficult than in the old days to get away with something like that.

Q: What about the other way? Were you running across Cubans on Cuban planes, or refugees taking..

GODARD: Refugees were coming all the time. In those days of course we had the Cuban refugee airlift which was bringing people in legitimately. These were folks who had signed up to leave and Castro had agreed to let them leave. We provided a plane to bring them from Cuadadero Beach on over to Miami Airport. But there weren't aircraft being hijacked. Mostly the folks coming across were in some cases on inner tubes or collections of inner tubes that they'd put together, rafts, really dangerous stuff. Some of them didn't make it. We know that, because we'd find them. The Coast Guard would find their vessels where they just didn't make it across. But really heart rending stories of folks coming across.

Q: As a Foreign Service officer and working mainly in the Latin America area, did you form any feeling about what was going on in Cuba and about Castro?

GODARD: I read everything I could get hold of about Cuba. I was hearing the viewpoint of the recent exiles from Cuba. Over the years I developed an opinion of Fidel that he is a true believer in radical Marxist society. We entertained over the years the idea that it would be possible to have some sort of accommodation, have some sort of reconciliation with Fidel. But I don't think that that was going to be possible, unless we were willing to accept it on his terms; and his terms are pretty draconian in terms of our having to swallow the kind of society that he's imposed on Cuba and without opposition. With no tolerance at all for free press, a very authoritarian figure and I don't think there's any compromise. And we sort of vacillated over the years and tried every time we could to work something out, but I don't think Fidel is really interested in a real compromise and meeting us halfway. I think he wanted us to collapse and become a communist regime as well, and that's what he waited for.

Q: I've dealt with exile communities one way or another over time, I think we all have, and often they have very unrealistic viewpoints. You know, they think that if only something happened, the United States does something, they're going to go right back to where they came from. And often these exile groups don't fit very well with the settlement. People grew up in the United States, they seem to see things through a particular lens that we don't… did you pick up this?

GODARD: Yeah, certainly in the old days, the exiles had that view, that if they just get rid of Fidel then they could go back and play an important role in the future of Cuba. Now over the years I've certainly come of the opinion and I think I developed this even back when I was in Miami, that the future of Cuba is going to be coming from the Cubans who are there. There's no reason that exiles, some of them at least, could not play a role back there, and I've seen that happen in other countries I've been in; in Nicaragua for instance, after the revolution there was a return of hundreds of Nicaraguans who had gone into exile. And indeed they have played a role and many of them have played important political roles. But it's been a long time in Cuba, and the society has changed radically, and so the starting point for an exile to be relevant to the politics is just too steep a learning curve for them to be relevant I think. You know, and that I saw certainly in Chile where the same thing to a certain extent happened, where there was a lot of exiles left during the Pinochet period and many of them returned, as many proportionally as did in Nicaragua. But a lot of them came back, and they played important roles, but the people who have built the future of Chile are those who stayed behind and suffered through the dictatorship and were positioned to take over the politics of the country. I see the same thing probably happening in Cuba. There's no doubt, and they become more important with time, that the exile community could play a very important role in bankrolling reconstruction in Cuba, as they have done quite well in southern Florida in particular, but in other parts of the United States as well. And they retain an interest in Cuba, so there's potential there as a development force, and I saw that happening in Guyana, my last post overseas, where the exile community is enormous in Toronto and in New York in particular. And what they send back, not just through businesses although that's an important part of the economy of Guyana and many other countries in Latin America, but investments by the exile groups, and know-how and expertise that they also bring back to the country. There's a lot more potential there if there were more opportunities for them.

Q: Well then in 1972 you went to Washington?

GODARD: Went to Washington for a year where I was one of the desk officers in the office of Cuban affairs and did what desk officers do: answer congressional correspondence, inquiries from American citizens about problems of one kind or another they had with Cuba, did a lot of briefing papers of one kind or another.

Q: What was Castro up to during that time? We're talking about what, '72 to '73?

GODARD: Well, he was consolidating his position. There were still these sort of pinpricks from the exile groups, and there were those that sort of thought that they could recreate in the exile community something like the Bay of Pigs only successful this time, coming out of Florida. So there continued to be those little problems. But he was consolidating his position and at that stage he was also building up his alliances in other parts of Latin America. Later on, after developing some very strong support, for what started happening in Central America, the Salvadoran revolution in particular, support for the Sandinistas in Nicaragua.

Q: Well was he doing anything in Africa?

GODARD: In those days I don't remember it being an issue. I think that was still to come when he launched his initiative in Africa.

Q: Were we doing anything vis-à-vis Cuba? Any initiatives or anything like that you recall during this time?

GODARD: It was mainly status quo I think. We had determined at that point that we were not going in for violent overthrow of Castro, and that's why we were trying to tamp down the exile activities. And I think as much as anything our thought at that point was that he would fall of his own weight at some point. I guess we underestimated his staying power.

Q: Yeah well we were talking about 30 years more.

GODARD: My entire career. That's the thing. When I first took on this assignment of Cuban affairs I was real excited about it because I thought, "So, it's going to change. Cuba, it will be a great opportunity for a young diplomat to build his career on expertise in Cuban affairs." It's the same policy, same hostile environment, although we have opened up our liaison office.

Q: I realize you were way down on the feeding order, but did you get any feel for the level of Henry Kissinger, of Secretary of State, or…

GODARD: No.

Q: He really was renowned for having very little interest in Latin America.

GODARD: Yeah. Didn't touch my life. Certainly not when I was in Cuban affairs.

JOHN A. BUSHNELL
Deputy Assistant Secretary, ARA
Washington, DC (1977-1982)

Mr. Bushnell was born in New York State and educated at Yale University and McMurray College. An Economic Specialist, he served primarily in senior level positions at Latin American posts, including Bogota, Santo Domingo, San Jose and Buenos Aires, dealing primarily with Economic and International Trade issues. An assignment to the Staff of the National Security Council was followed by tours as Deputy Chief of Mission at Buenos Aires, Chargé d'Affaires at Panama City, and subsequently as Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs. Mr. Bushnell was the recipient of several awards for outstanding service. Mr. Bushnell was interviewed by John Harter in 1997.

BUSHNELL: Yes. I had the Cuban portfolio through much of my time in ARA The big move to warm relations with Cuba occurred early in the Carter Administration. By the time I got to ARA, interest sections were being set up in each others' capitals and there was considerable excitement that we would be able to resolve long pending problems related to such issues as migration, prisoner exchanges, and air hijacking. I think Terry Todman made at least one trip to Cuba, if not two. I was quite comfortable with the Carter Administration revision of our Cuba policy, and I think Todman was too. However, those on the American right who opposed the Panama Canal Treaties were strongly against our moderate warming with Cuba as another part of the Carter sell-out of American interests.. I don't think I ever saw the policy papers leading up to the warming of relations with Cuba, assuming there were some.

Of course the warming with Cuba did not last as the Cuban military role in Africa expanded. But during my first year in ARA opening the Interests Section in Havana was a big budget problem. We hadn't budgeted in ARA [Bureau of American Republic Affairs] for an Interests Section in the Swiss Embassy in Havana. In fact, the Interests Section ultimately was established in the old Embassy on the Malecon in Havana. The big old building had to be cleaned and everything aired and repaired. The Interests Section was very expensive, even though we had a small staff, as supplies were flow in from Florida and security was expensive. However, we had no choice. We had to spend money on this. I had either to squeeze funds from elsewhere in ARA or else fight with the central authorities of the Department of State to try to get money.

Q: The Executive Director of ARA was Bob Gershenson. He had served in Central America many years before.

BUSHNELL: Yes. Bob Gershenson was the ARA Executive Director. He had been the Administrative Officer in San Jose during the first part of my tour, and my wife and I still see the Gershensons from time to time. However, he became DAS in Personnel about the same time I became DAS in ARA. Bill Calderhead was the Executive Director for much of my time in ARA.

Q: Did you work with Gershenson and Calderhead on the budget for the "Interests Section" in Havana?

BUSHNELL: Yes. Bob had done an outstanding job in getting the Section established. It involved breaking other assignments to get people to Havana and all of the other efforts in connection with doing things out of the ordinary. That job was already done when I got there. The problem, when I arrived in December 1977, was that we were spending money as if it had no end. The Department budget officers had come up with substantial funding, and our staffing costs were of course covered. Communications costs were not an ARA responsibility. But the Foreign Building Office did not have the funds to restore our Havana building at top speed. I was able to squeeze some funds from the ARA budget and beg some more from the budget people, but we had to leave many sections of the Havana building in disrepair for lack of funds.

I have always assumed the initiative for an opening to Havana had come out of the White House. However, I don't actually know that for a fact. I would be surprised if this were a Todman initiative. I think this was something the White House wanted to do, and Todman was the Assistant Secretary in charge of making the arrangements.

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BUSHNELL: I spent a lot of time on Cuba. Cuba was a big issue in one way or another all during the time I was in ARA. Before I was assigned to ARA, the new Carter administration launched an initiative to improve relations with Cuba. The objective was to improve contacts with Cuba and encourage improved human rights by a series of small steps. Among the most visible was to open an interests section in Cuba and allow the Cubans to open a similar office in Washington. Although the U.S. and Cuba are close neighbors, there had been no diplomatic relations since January 1961, soon after Castro took power, nationalized major investments of the private sector, and turned to the Soviet Union for large-scale military and economic assistance. Interests sections, which consist of a small number of diplomatic officers who act as part of a friendly embassy, not under their own flag, are a big first step toward diplomatic relations. When, as in the Cuban case, both nations actually staff the buildings that were previously their embassies with a substantial number of people, the difference between interest sections and embassies becomes mainly a matter of protocol. The heads of the interest sections are not ambassadors and thus rank below all ambassadors.

Q: How do you explain this extraordinary sensitivity to Cuba throughout history, going back to the administration of President Jefferson? I can understand that during the period before the Civil War, Cuba became tangled up with North-South issues in the United States. However, Cuba seems always to have been our soft underbelly. Why was this the case?

BUSHNELL: If you think of the original 13 states along the Atlantic Ocean, Cuba was considered by many Americans to be the 14th state.

Q: That was the perception?

BUSHNELL: Geographically, yes. Inevitably, in the 20th century, with the Spanish gone from the area, Cuba was, for many purposes, part of the United States. It was close, only 90 miles South of Florida. Moreover, the situation is unlike that of Mexico, where Mexico City is over 400 miles south of the nearest point in American territory. Havana is less than 200 miles from Miami. Northern Mexico is largely desert near the Mexican border. All of Cuba is geographically close to the U.S. and has therefore long been part of many things going on in the United States. Cubans adopted baseball as their national sport. Entertainers traveled regularly between the two countries. For many wealthy Americans in the 1930's through the 1950's Havana was the winter destination, not Miami. Most found Havana a more sophisticated and metropolitan city than Miami in that period. US companies dominated many areas of the Cuban economy.

Fidel Castro came along in 1959 and, in effect, drove the Cuban upper class into exile, largely in the United States. Nearly 10 percent of the Cuban population left for the U.S. over a period of years, including most of the wealthier and better educated. These Cubans, for the most part, went to Miami and made Miami largely a Cuban city. The perception is not wrong that there are two large Cuban cities: Havana and Miami. Not surprisingly, given their capabilities, the Cuban refugees have done well economically and professionally in the United States.

Q: Did you feel the impact of that huge, expatriate Cuban community while you were in ARA?

BUSHNELL: Absolutely. Perhaps I haven't had enough experience to make a generalization, but I think one could make a case that, after the Jewish lobby, the next most powerful lobby of foreign origin or interest is made up of the Cubans. The Cubans have made a lot of money, and beginning in the 1970's they became big contributors to political campaigns, both in Florida and nationally. Moreover, the Cuban community has focused its political interest on policies regarding Cuba. In many respects Cuban views are as diverse as any other group of Americans, but on Cuba, until recently anyway, there has been great unity in being anti-Castro, even among the generation that has spend all, or almost all, their lives here. The Cubans consider that they were kicked out of Cuba by Castro.

Q: Especially since the "Bay of Pigs" [Playa de Giron] invasion of Cuba in 1961 by Cuban refugees, supported by the US Government.

BUSHNELL: The young Cubans who took part in the Bay of Pigs invasion have now spent much of their life in a democracy. They believe in human rights and democracy; they believe in the same things other Americans believe in.

Q: As well as in the principles of a competitive economy.

BUSHNELL: And in an open economy, yes. Many Cubans have benefited and done very well in this economy. Most have become naturalized. They ARE Americans. They want to see an open democratic system in their homeland. They have suffered seeing what a mess Castro and his government have made of what they remember as a fairly rich country with great potential. Of course, many Cubans who came to the United States still have close family ties in Cuba. They realize that the living conditions of their family in Cuba have been going down almost as fast as

their prosperity has been growing here. Moreover, the decline in Cuba has happened despite major transfers of money from families here. I'm not so sure about the attitude of the third generation of Cubans, those born to Cuban-Americans who have mainly lived in the United States, but the above comments certainly apply to the first and second generations. These people seem to continue thinking or hoping they can move back to Cuba someday. They may want to return to Cuba only for a time or for retirement, but not to Castro's Cuba. In the past couple of decades many other Latin Americans have migrated to the United States, and many have settled in Florida. But these migrants have not had the education and capital that the Cubans had. Thus the Cuban-Americans have in effect made policy on Cuba a big domestic issue in this country. Also, if you look at the politics, Florida is a swing state in national elections.

Q: And they have a lot of votes.

BUSHNELL: Florida has the fourth largest number of electoral votes. The Cuban community has largely been naturalized and can and does vote. Thus the Cuban community has a strong influence on Cuban policy. Although the Cubans were mainly Democrats at first, many have become Republicans as they have found their free economy and pro-life views closer to the Republicans. There are Cuban-Americans in the Congress, and other members work hard for the support of their Cuban American constituents. For example, there are large numbers of Cubans living in New Jersey, and Senator Robert Torricelli [Democrat, New Jersey] is a strong proponent of anti-Castro policies. He normally has a number of Cuban-Americans on his Congressional staff.

This situation may be changing, to some extent. When I worked on Cuban affairs 20 years ago, the Cubans really dominated the Hispanic community. They were more articulate than other Hispanics, were richer, better organized, and also more civic minded. So the Cuban-Americans often tended to be the spokespersons for the Hispanic community. For example, an Hispanic leader from Texas would turn out to be a Cuban. The same would be true of the spokesperson for the Hispanic community in California. However, this situation has changed considerably over the past 20 years. Now there is much more friction among the various Hispanic communities. The Mexicans and Puerto Ricans now have their own spokespersons. They are interested in issues which have not been important to the Cubans such as conditions for agricultural laborers and bilingual education. However, Cubans continue to play a major role in the Hispanic community, especially in Florida.

Q: To a certain extent this changed during the Carter administration?

BUSHNELL: My impression was that the Carter Administration adopted its warming policy toward Castro without realizing what a strong adverse reaction it would generate in the Cuban community. Its lack of decisive influence in the early days of the Carter Administration made the Cuban-American community realize it needed a major presence in Washington. It hired lobbyists, and its leaders began coming to Washington with some regularity. In Florida it organized to have greater impact on foreign policy, meaning for it Cuban policy. By the time I came into ARA at the end of 1977 the Carter Administration was already working harder at improving relations with the Cuban-Americans than with Castro. There was little interest in additional warming even before the Cuba military role in Africa and the Mariel sea invasion of Cuban immigrants ended

and reversed the warming process. The experience at the beginning of the Carter Administration showed the Cubans that groups such as the Council on Foreign Relations with a broad membership can be more important during the turmoil of a presidential transition than more narrow groups such as the Cuban American Foundation which might not have a seat at a key transition table.

Q: My impression is Cuban warming was one of the recommendations of the Trilateral Commission.

BUSHNELL: I think that this goes back to 1975 or 1976.

Q: Wasn't Sol Linowitz Ambassador to the OAS [Organization of American States] at this time?

BUSHNELL: No, Linowitz was Ambassador to the OAS in 1966-68 under President Johnson. Under Carter he was first one of the negotiators on the Panama Canal Treaty with Ambassador Bunker and then a Middle East negotiator. However, you are right to bring him up. Linowitz chaired a private group of Latin American experts which produced a report and recommendations on Latin American policy in 1976. Bob Pastor, who because the NSC Latin American deputy at age 29, was the staff director of the Linowitz Commission on Latin American Relations. At the NSC he kept track of how many of the Linowitz Commission recommendation the Carter Administration implemented. That report recommended more contact with Cuba and reconsidering the nature of our relationship, and Cyrus Vance had picked up this recommendation in a memo he had sent Carter in October1976. The idea of the Linowitz Commission was to guide the policies of whatever new administration took over in 1977. There were a number of dissenting views in the Linowitz report including, as I recall, on the Cuban recommendations. I kept a copy of the report in my desk in ARA as I found it a reliable predictor of the positions that would be taken by Bob Pastor, Mark Schneider, and Dick Feinberg – the key activist political appointees dealing with Latin America. One of the lessons the Cuban-Americans learned in 1977 was that it was important for the Cuban-American community to influence such private policy-oriented commissions. When I arrived in the Bureau of American Republic Affairs [ARA], the interests sections were open.

Q: I think that Terry Todman [Assistant Secretary of State for American Republic Affairs] was involved in these negotiations.

BUSHNELL: Yes. Todman was proud of having negotiated the opening of the interest sections. He wanted to make progress with the Cubans on other issues such as Cuba taking back Cuban criminals who were subject to deportation and dealing with airline hijackers who would force planes to Cuba and then escape prosecution by staying in Cuba. The Cubans were not very responsive on these so-called consular issues, perhaps because they wanted to see movement on our trade and financial sanctions. During my first weeks in ARA, Todman suggested I invite the head of the new Cuban Interests Section, Sanchez Parodi, to lunch on the 7th floor of State. Because Sanchez Parodi did not have the rank of ambassador, only officers below the Assistant Secretary level were supposed to deal with him. This rank question became an issue as Lyle Lane, who headed our interests section in Havana, had contacts with the Foreign Minister and even Castro himself. Eventually Sanchez Parodi was invited to the Secretary's and even the

President's receptions for the diplomatic corps, but his business contacts were generally with the Cuban country director and occasionally with me. Most of our negotiations with the Cubans were done by a DAS from Consular Affairs and a senior Legal Advisor. I believe Vaky or Bowdler called Sanchez in once or twice when we wanted to impress the Cubans with the seriousness of our position on something.

About February of 1978 I invited Sanchez Parodi to lunch on the 7th floor. I did not generally lunch upstairs, and at that time I had had lunch maybe once in the general dining area, since my time in Treasury. We arranged for Political Under Secretary Phil Habib to drop by the table and shake Sanchez' hand as a token response to the higher level treatment our representative was getting in Havana. There was considerable chatter around the dining room as the word passed on the identity of my guest, particularly when Phil came to greet him. Of course the Cuban missile crisis was foremost in the minds of most of the career officers there, and Cuba was seen as an enemy country. In fact I looked at Cuba as an enemy throughout my career, and I think it was the right perspective. I have no doubt Castro considered the U.S. an enemy, including during the first part of the Carter Administration.

I, of course, played the diplomat and tried to establish a good professional relationship with Sanchez. He said he was not clear on just how to go about his job and asked me to suggest a country which did a particularly good job of getting its views across in Washington. I could not resist telling him the Israel Embassy was probably the most effective. He apparently took my suggestion seriously and said he would examine how the Israeli Embassy works. Of course the basic difference is that the Cuban Interest Section had to compete with Cuban-Americans who were totally opposed to Castro while the Israelis had tremendous support from the American Jewish community. My attempt was to hint to Sanchez that he should try to make peace with the Cuban-Americans. I thought he might see that as a joke, but he did not appear to get it. I soon learned the Cuban-American community was a prime intelligence target of the Cuban Interest Section. Thus, I took seriously Sanchez' later pleas for increased security protection because of the threat from extremists in the Cuban-American community. We did increase security far beyond what was provided to friendly embassies, and during my tour there were several nasty incidents.

My lukewarm efforts did not develop much of a relationship with Sanchez. He never invited me back for a meal at the Cuban Interest Section. Several times I was seated near him at diplomatic functions, and we engaged in friendly conversation. I believe the last time I saw him was in early 1981 when, as acting assistant secretary, I called him in to declare one of his senior deputies PNG [Persona Non Grata] for interference in our elections. My assessment was that he was basically an intelligence operative; his assessment of me was probably equally harsh.

Q: What do you recall of the Soviet brigade of troops in Cuba in 1978 or 1979?

BUSHNELL: When I arrived in ARA, there was disagreement on how to look at the Soviet combat troops in Cuba. The Soviets had a large intelligence operation near Cienfuegos, Cuba, and there were Soviet troops stationed in that area. The troops engaged in active maneuvers to maintain combat readiness. Most troops were rotated back to Russia as a unit each year. Some argued these troops were just there to protect the intelligence operation and its sensitive

equipment. Or one could look at this Soviet unit as a brigade there to help to defend Cuba, presumably from the United States. Most of the discussion on this issue was before I arrived. When I was briefed, I said it was a false choice; the troops served both missions although it appeared to me the Russian forces did fewer joint exercises with the Cubans than I would have expected if they were planning a joint defensive action. I had DOD compare the frequency of joint Russian/Cuban exercises with the frequency of similar US/South Korean exercises. There was not a conclusive difference. I suggested the Russian brigade probably also had a third function as a trip-wire to involve the Soviets in Cuba's defense against an attack from the U.S. while deterring any US attack because there would be Soviet casualties. I don't recall any operational debate about the Russian brigade; attacking Cuba was the furthest thing from the mind of the Carter Administration, which was dead against any military action in Latin America.

One of the first flaps I had involving Cuba was when Senator Stone {D. Florida), who was a key vote on the Panama Canal Treaty, wanted to end the alleged commitment made by President Kennedy not to invade Cuba. Stone had a neat political calculation. He wanted to support President Carter by voting for the Treaties even though there was a lot of opposition to them in Florida. More retired Panama Canal employees lived in Florida than in any other state, and they and other conservatives actively campaigned against ratification of the Treaties. Thus Stone wanted to offset the minus he would suffer in voting for the Treaties by delivering something to the Cuban-Americans that would assure him of more support from them. I was assigned by Bunker's Panama Treaty group to resolve this problem and get Stone's vote. The Kennedy commitments on Cuba were only in TOP SECRET documents. I had a hard time even getting access to the documents; no one then in ARA had ever reviewed them. I found the commitment on invading fairly ambiguous. However, Senator Stone was making the commitment public and unambiguous and urging we announce a new interpretation, not that we had ever had an old interpretation except that of Senator Stone, who I later found had never seen the documents.

We worked out an exchange of letters between Senator Stone and the Secretary of State which aimed at giving Senator Stone something he could argue opened the door to a possible invasion of Cuba sometime in the distant future. Drafting these letters was extremely hard. Both the Legal Advisor and the European Bureau insisted that we not in any way change whatever the Kennedy commitment was and that we be able to tell the key countries that there was no change. On the other hand Senator Stone wanted to run for reelection on getting a change in the policy. We eventually came up with a formula which seemed to work. It was a matter of playing with words in terms of what the commitment on Cuba was. Of course, our big crisis involving Cuba was the later massive movement of Cubans from Mariel, Cuba, to the United States.

Q: Please tell us about that.

BUSHNELL: In April 1980 a rumor spread in Havana that the Peru Embassy was granting safe passage to Peru to people that came to that Embassy. A crowd of a thousand or so Cubans entered the Peruvian Embassy property in Havana before Castro's police acted to stop entry. Of course many Cubans were desperate to get away from the Castro police state. Peru had not decided to take a significant number of Cubans, but these Cubans stayed in the Peruvian Embassy property, most living in the grounds with no cover and inadequate sanitary conditions for some time. Others clamored to get into the grounds; a Cuban police officer was killed in one

successful attempt by a large group to enter. Eventually there were more than 10,000 Cubans crowded in the Embassy grounds and buildings. It was an embarrassing high profile situation for Castro, who, of course, blamed the U.S. for starting the rumor and claimed few Cubans wanted to leave Cuba. Peru refused to take the people. Several South American and European countries tried to work out programs to take some. Many were allowed to go home. Some went to Costa Rica as a staging area, but Castro then stopped issuing exit visas. In Miami the Cuban community began saying this situation marked the end for Castro.

Then about the end of April a few family members arrived in Florida on small boats sent by their families to the port of Mariel. Castro then announced that Cuban exiles could come by small boat to Mariel, a port on the North coast of Cuba, and pick up their relatives to whom he would give exit permits. The prosperous Cuban community in Florida launched every boat they owned or could charter at any price and headed to Mariel. They were allowed to pick up relatives who managed to make their way to Mariel. The Cubans began arriving in Florida by the thousands. At first President Carter welcomed them. In early May he said they would be received with, "an open heart and open arms." However, the sheer numbers began to overwhelm southern Florida. The Miami authorities pointed out that housing vacancies were only one percent and there was no place for all these people to live. Various domestic agencies began setting up refugee camps at military bases including Elgin in northern Florida. Tourists abandoned Key West which was a mob scene. INS announced that boats bringing people without visas would be fined $100 per person, but little or no attempt was made to collect the fines. Republican candidates began pointing out that the U.S. had lost control of its borders.

Moreover, Castro wanted to create problems for the U.S. while solving problems in Cuba. He had many of the street crime and even murder prisoners in jails as well as some political prisoners and the patients in mental hospitals and asylums transported to Mariel. He forced the Cuban-Americans to take several of his problem cases for each relative he allowed them to take. As we realized Cubans were being landed up and down the Florida Keys as well as in Miami by the thousand, most were not relatives, and worse many were common criminals or insane, we began to see we were facing an invasion of a type never envisioned in our worst nightmare. Of course none of these Cuban newly arriving in the U.S. had visas; most had no documents, and there was no way to figure out who most really were. Mixed in were the mothers, fathers, aunts, and children of the Cuban exiles, but many of them also had no documents. There was a great effort to set up refugee processing centers and to try to catch the criminals and put them in jail. I was mainly involved in the issue of how to stop the invasion.

We arranged for the Coast Guard to intercept some boats when they reached territorial waters. But the best the Coast Guard could do was to escort some of the boats to a more orderly disembarkation in Miami instead of some bay in the Keys. The Coast Guard certainly could not sink boats full of people, and the volume was such that the Coast Guard could only escort a small fraction.

I remember sitting in that windowless conference room of the NSC [National Security Council] with Secretary of State Muskie, the Chief of Naval Operations, the director of CIA [Central Intelligence Agency], the head of the Coast Guard, and the Head of INS and several other senior officials, debating how to stop this flow of Cubans. Brzezinski [National Security Advisor]

chaired until President Carter came in toward the end of the meeting. There was a long discussion on how Coast Guard and Navy ships might physically stop the Cuban boats either from leaving the U.S. or returning. The Navy and the Coast Guard, represented at this meeting by Admirals, asked: "How can we do this?" It was suggested that these boats could be rammed or shot at. The Navy and Coast Guard said that it would be very difficult to stop these boats physically from leaving the U.S. or from returning without major lose of life among the boat crews and passengers.

I guess Secretary Muskie was something of a sailor. He certainly knew a lot more about boats than I did. He was suggesting ways of maneuvering boats to block passage, which struck me as sort of wild. It sounded to me as if he had in mind a picket line of Coast Guard and Navy boats going across the Straits of Florida to stop the movement of these small boats with refugees. This naval discussion went on for a long time but was inconclusive. I asked if we could not fine and detain any boat bringing Cubans into port so it at least could not make another trip. At that moment the Coast Guard was giving notice of intent to fine, but the fines were so small they were not much of a deterrent. Moreover, most boats avoided the Coast Guard and landed the Cubans somewhere in the Florida Keys where the wanted immigrants were picked up by family members and the others made their way north or turned themselves in to INS. There seemed to be legal authority for detention as the boats by definition had been used to gain illegal entry into the United States. The Chief of Naval operations had some interesting thoughts about how to disable the motors so the boats would not have to be under intensive guard. However, some 4000 boats were at that moment waiting in Mariel. Perhaps some would be deterred by fines and seizure from coming back loaded, but the volume presented tremendous problems for law enforcement. Already storms had destroyed several boats with substantial loss of life. Fines would have to be much larger to have any hope of success. Staffing was assigned on detaining and fining boats and/or crews and increasing fines, but the easy answer for most participants in the meeting was that we should get Castro to stop the operation. Our assessment was that he might stop it soon because the large crowd gathering in Mariel were becoming almost as much an embarrassment as that in the Peru Embassy. I was assigned to work on options of how to send many of these people back.

Q: Presumably, these were people from...

BUSHNELL: Insane asylums or prisons. Since I saw that only a gigantic concession, such as weakening our trade ban, would induce Castro to take back these people he was just sending out, I tried to find some way to present Castro with a done deed, i.e. the worse criminals were back. But the only thing we could think of was that the undesirables might be loaded on a couple large old boats which would be sailed back to Cuba and sunk close to shore.

Q: Was this idea realistic?

BUSHNELL: Probably not. It is not the sort of think a country like the U.S. does. Moreover, it is not clear who would sail old boats loaded with Cuban criminals into Cuban territorial waters, let alone who would sink them. The idea got the consideration it deserved, little to none.

By mid-May over 50,000 refugees had already landed in the United States. About half were in camps where riots were breaking out, including one in Arkansas which had a big effect on the political career of its then Governor Clinton. Finally, the Administration announced large fines and the seizure of boats caught bringing in undocumented people. The Coast Guard redeployed its ships from all over to the Florida area to intensify efforts to arrest boats. President Carter called on Castro to take back the criminals and other undesirables. Castro called for all Cubans to march in front of the US Interest Section to protest US policies denying Cuba the right to trade and development and attacking the Castro government. I spent a nervous Saturday in the office with an open telephone line to our Interest Section as more than a million Cubans marched past attacking the U.S. with posters and yells. We had evacuated non-essential personnel in the previous few days. But Castro provided adequate security, and little damage was done. I had been nervous because I thought Castro, although crazy like a fox, might try just about anything and the Cubans on both sides were prone to violence. During the first half of 1980 Cuba's mission to the UN had been bombed twice; one Cuban diplomat had been killed and bombs had been found in other Cuban diplomats' cars. We assumed this terrible violation of laws was the work of Cuban exiles, but only a couple were caught.

For a few days the inflow of Cubans continued, and hundreds of boats were detained. Some boats then came back from Mariel empty. Most priority family members had been collected or could not get to Mariel, which was a mob scene, and Castro agents were collecting large bribes from people without relatives in the U.S. for forcing boat operators to take them. Many boats were forced to take only those Castro's agents gave them and strangers who more or less forced themselves on board. Boats stopped going, and by early June the flow of refugees virtually stopped. In mid-June a Florida judge ordered that some boats be released because they were needed for the fishermen to make a living. Shortly most boats were released, and few fines were paid. The Coast Guard returned most of its boats to their normal duties. As I recall, the number of people who came to the U.S. in this Mariel boat lift, as it was called, totaled well over 100,000, and probably quite a few just melted into the Cuban community and were not counted. Toward the end of June the Congress appropriated $484 million to assist holding and settling the refugees and to compensate the communities that were impacted by the invasion. I used this appropriation as a key example of why foreign aid through the Caribbean Group was a good investment. It was much better to help our neighbors build a good economic future for themselves at home than to have a flood of desperate refugees, which would cost more money to settle.

In mid-June after the invasion had basically stopped, I and other State and INS officers were called to testify before the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Immigration. The members reflected the very mixed views in the country. Conservatives were concerned with loss of control of our borders but welcomed anti-Castro refugees. No one wanted the criminals, homosexuals, and insane, and everyone insisted we make Castro take them back. I invited ideas on how we could make Castro do this. No one suggested either use of force or relaxing the restrictions on trade. As the invasion was basically over, the committee seemed to shift to safe ground, and various members of the Black Caucus attacked us for not giving Haitian boat people the same treatment as the Cubans. I pointed out that the Haitians got the same treatment as any Latin Americans except the Cubans and there was not a communist dictator in Haiti. INS seemed to argue the Haitians got the same treatment as the Cubans. I kept quiet and let them take the heat.

Over the next few years there was an effect of the Mariel exodus that neither Castro nor anyone else had expected. The hardened criminals among the boat people did not change their ways, and their criminal activities generate a crime wave in Florida. Although the Cuban-American community suffered the most from these criminals, this criminal activity turned non-Cuban public opinion in Florida strongly against Castro. Of course, many of these Cuban criminals were caught and sent to jail. Even when the jail term was short, these persons were then subject to deportation because they had been in the country illegally. INS would then detain them, pending their being sent back to Cuba or elsewhere. Castro would not take them, and no one else wanted them. Over the years Castro did agree to take some back. But a significant number of these people are still in jail here at considerable expense to the taxpayer over a long period of time. Also among the Mariel boat-people were quite a few Cuban intelligence agents; only a few have been caught, although many have probably returned to Cuba. However, the overwhelming majority of the Mariel immigrants were successfully absorbed, as had the much larger number of earlier immigrants.

Once the Cubans substantially increased the number of their troops in Africa and linked them directly to new shipments of equipment from Russia and the consular negotiations bogged down, our relations with Cuba stagnated or worsened. Castro began attacking President Carter as he had every President since Eisenhower. Castro's basic political strategy was to paint the U.S. as Cuba's big enemy responsible for everything that Cubans were complaining about. The two Interests Sections functioned mainly as listening posts. I still had to spend a lot of time on Cuba because it was the subject of many Congressional letters, we prepared frequent press guidance, and several times I testified about Cuba. But activities on Cuba were pretty routine for the rest of the Carter Administration.

At the start of the Reagan Administration in 1981 there was a lot of focus on Cuba. The Republicans had criticized Carter for warming toward Cuba which, it was argued, was rewarded by the deployment of many more Cuban troops to Africa and the Mariel immigrant invasion, not to mention a major Cuban role in helping guerrillas in Central America. I don't recall anyone suggesting closing the Interest Sections. However, there were several White House comments critical of Castro.

RUDOLF V. PERINA
Political Officer
Moscow, Soviet Union (1979-1981)

Ambassador Perina was born in Czechoslovakia when that country was under communist control. He escaped with his family to Morocco, then Switzerland and finally the United States. The ambassador was educated at the University of Chicago and Columbia University. Entering the Foreign Service in 1974, Mr. Perina specialized in Military-Political Affairs at posts abroad, including Moscow, Berlin, Brussels, Vienna and Belgrade. In Washington he served on the National Security Council, specializing in Soviet issues. From 1998 to 2001 Mr.

Perina was US Ambassador to Moldova. Ambassador Perina was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2006.

Q: Let's go back just a bit. Before this you were dealing with Soviet policies in Africa and Latin America, Cuba, other places. How did we view Soviet policy? Was it seen as aggressive?

PERINA: Well, that's a very good question because my responsibility in the external political section was in fact for Africa, the Middle East, Latin America and parts of Eastern Europe. We had other people for Asia, Western Europe, arms control and international economic issues but basically I did the rest of the world. This was the developing world, or Third World as some called it at the time, and our relations with the Soviets there were very competitive. We were always watching what they did, and they watched us. There was one curious incident that happened during my tour even before Afghanistan that I think probably a lot of people don't even remember. It was the issue of a Soviet brigade in Cuba. Do you remember the Soviet brigade in Cuba?

Q: I do but give us the background.

PERINA: Well, in the fall of 1979 there were suddenly intelligence reports that the Soviet Union had stationed a brigade of Soviet troops in Cuba-- not missiles, not nuclear weapons or anything like that but just that there was a Soviet brigade in Cuba. It became public and there was a big outcry, particularly in Congress. The Embassy was asked to do a demarche on this and to find out what was going on. Again, it was Bob German, the Political Counselor, who delivered the demarche, and again he took me along as the note taker. As I recall, we met with Viktor Komplektov, who was a senior figure, the head of the Americas Department in the Foreign Ministry. The demarche again hit a complete stonewall, except this time the Soviets at least did not lie—they just would not answer. Their position was that what the Soviets had in Cuba was their business and not ours. They did not deny that there was a brigade, but neither did they admit it. Then when Bob German kept pushing, Komplektov asked, "Are you saying that we do not have the right to put Soviet troops into Cuba? Are you denying the Soviet right to do this? " Bob very effectively dodged the question but after the meeting we had a long discussion in the Political Section which revealed that we really were not sure of the answer. The problem was that we did not really know what deals were struck during and after the Cuban missile crisis about what could and couldn't be done in Cuba by the Soviets. In fact, even the desk in the State Department could not give us a straight answer. Some people were saying that there were agreements made by Kissinger years after the Cuban missile crisis that were very closely held, and no one seemed to be sure what they entailed. We never did get a clear answer from Washington, and I am not certain that our Soviet interlocutor knew the answer. Komplektov may have been bluffing with his rhetorical question and betting that we would be uncertain of our answer.

JON DAVID GLASSMAN
Deputy - US Interests Section
Swiss Embassy, Havana (1979-1981)

Ambassador Jon David Glassman studied International Relations at the University of Southern California. He then attended Columbia University and received a Masters degree in Russian Studies. Mr. Glassman entered the Foreign Service in 1968. He has served in Madrid, Moscow, Havana, Kabul, and was ambassador to Paraguay. He was interviewed in 1997 by Peter Moffat.

Q: How would you characterize the Soviet approach at that time - did they try to take advantage?

GLASSMAN: They not only tried to take advantage because they felt that somehow they had been confronted; remember in the Carter administration we had the pulling and tugging between Brzezinski with a very hardline policy and Vance on the other side. Vance continued to be influenced by Shulman. So, we had the constant pulling and tugging. On strategic arms, Brzezinski had pushed hard for deep cuts. The Soviets read it as an effort of some influential American circles to confront them. So they began over time to see that Vance and Shulman, who they felt were more sympathetic, were getting the worst of the distribution of power in Washington. So they became more confrontational. More opportunities were presenting themselves in the Third World. The U.S.-Soviet/Cuban surrogate state struggle in Nicaragua had been going on for some time. Nicaragua began to fall apart. The Cubans were drawing in the Russians then, if not materially, at least spiritually. The idea began to spread in Moscow that there were more opportunities out there in the Third World, that the United States was not providing them the trade benefits they thought they would get through detente because of the Jackson-Vanik Amendment (conditioning MFN treatment on Jewish emigration). The arms control situation was in a sort of holding pattern because of Carter's attempt to get the deep reductions first, so Soviets began to see the Third World as a place of advantage and this in turn led to further confrontations.

Q: About your reward for all this good work by being sent as deputy for all your work in Havana. This was quite a shift in your career pattern. How did it happen?

GLASSMAN: I had spoken Spanish from my youth and I spoke Russian. At the end of the Ford years and the beginning of Carter, the Administration had had some discreet contacts with the Cubans at the United Nations and other places. As you recall, we had broken diplomatic relations with Cuba in 1961. We had abandoned our facilities in Havana and the Swiss had represented our interests in Cuba over the years. Because the Carter group wanted to innovate, they decided they would open a United States Interests Section as part of the Embassy of Switzerland in Havana. I was successful in promoting my candidacy because of my knowledge of Spanish and Russian so I was sent to Havana as deputy. We went in there in difficult circumstances, since we had no housing. We all went to live at the Havana Riviera Hotel in a group of ten people. The head of the mission was a Foreign Service Officer by the name of Lyle Lane, a Latin Americanist.

We were asked to begin dangling in front of the Cubans the idea of eventual lifting of the United States embargo on trade with Cuba. When we opened the Interests Section in Cuba, the Cubans

told us that their participation in Angola, where they had sent 20 thousand troops and received material support from Soviets, was an exception. This was going to end, it would not be repeated elsewhere. There would be a normal state-to-state relationship between the U.S. and Cuba. What the Carter Administration was dangling was an incentive for that to occur. Once the Cubans were out of Angola, we would resume trade relations with them. My job as a deputy was to begin visiting the various Cuban foreign trading entities, and to tell them that, when the U.S. embargo was lifted, a number of opportunities would open up. We were definitely holding that out as an incentive to the Cubans. We were received very well initially by the Cubans; they allowed us to move back into the American Embassy building - which had been occupied previously by about four Swiss secretaries. They were quick to give us ten houses which we began to restore. They gave us back the Ambassador's Residence which was a magnificent 1930s building. We began to restore all these things. The Cubans were very free initially with access.

(The Cubans control the access unlike any other country in the world where I've served. You could not call for appointments directly to people concerned; you had to solicit meetings through the Foreign Ministry. You had to make an oral and/or written request to them.)

The first three months we were there almost all our requests were granted; we were able to see almost any Cuban official we wanted in the trading entities and the Foreign Ministry and the government in general. Also during these early months, we had a number of congressional visits and these congressional visitors were almost always received by Castro personally.

Castro had a personal entourage. There was one man, Pepe Naranjo, who was only the Minister of Food Industry but was actually a personal friend of Castro. Another friend was Osmany Cienfuegos, the brother of famous revolutionary Camilo Cienfuegos. Carlos Rafael Rodriguez was always there - the Soviets' main contact. Also Dr. Jose "Chomi" Miyar [Dr. Jose Manuel Miyar Barruecos], Castro's personal secretary. It was an entourage who was with Castro and he would invite the Congressmen to meet with them. They'd have a reception with this group, talk with them and sometimes he would meet with them alone later. Castro had a very special technique for his personal meetings. He would wait for the end of the visit and he would frequently call people at midnight on the night before they were to leave. The guest would sit for three or four hours talking to Castro. He had a capable staff there, who supplied him with biographic information. They would develop a lot of information which Castro used to flatter these visitors. The Americans would come out with an incredibly favorable impression. Guy Vander Jagt, the congressman, told me after meeting with Castro he felt like a 17 year old girl who on her first date had been seduced and taken to bed. It was an incredible technique that Castro had; it was both intimate knowledge of the person with whom he was talking and then an unlimited store of time. He would talk for hours and hours and then often at the end offer to drive them personally to their hotel. He was very, very seductive in that way.

Q: Anything you can add to the fascination with Castro?

GLASSMAN: Castro was very soft spoken, when you met him. I met him about 17 times. We're used to seeing these television commentaries of him ranting and raving in a public speech but personally he is very soft spoken. He's also good with the ladies; for instance, when there were women there he would often play up to them.

Regarding his own situation, Castro lives in a number of houses. When I was there, he lived in eight houses. He would move almost every night. The way you'd know he was in a particular house was by observing the security people around. Then he would move. One of his houses was right across the street from the Ambassador's residence. Castro had one or several mistresses, one of whom was his favorite English interpreter. When we spoke to her about Castro, she would say the man is a God. She and other official Cubans would speak of him as kind of a deity. They would treat him as a deity - in fact as Alexander the Great was treated by his entourage. Castro, they say, tried to cultivate the idea of reasonableness, of softness of character but his basic inclinations were confrontational, particularly with the United States. He grew up in a time when gambling, prostitution and American tourism dominated Cuba. When relations with the U.S. appeared to be normalizing, he would always stimulate a crisis. This is how the intervention of Ethiopia was described to me by members of Castro's personal entourage. The U.S. opened the Interests Section in Havana in August-September 1977. Then, the Cubans and Russians moved into Ethiopia in December - Castro, in my judgment, wanted to prevent normalization with the U.S.

I remember when we first arrived in Havana, we talked to the Somalis. The Somalis were very close to the Cubans and the Russians. All of a sudden the roles were reversed. The Cuban leadership, Castro's entourage, told me that what happened was Castro was fascinated by the Ethiopian revolutionary leader Mengistu. Castro saw him as a man who wore a military uniform, a revolutionary like Castro himself. Castro convinced the Soviets to shift their bets. Whether this is true or self serving is not clear. But what is evident, is that the prospect for normalization with the United States was there; the Americans opened up in Havana. But three months later the Americans, Cubans and Russians are at each others' throat. Despite the fact that we had dangled all this business about lifting the embargo, and the influx of Cuban visitors from the so-called Cuban community (the Cuban exiles in Miami) which created an inflow of foreign exchange immediately, Castro threw this all to the winds. Whether the Soviets told him to do this, or whether he convinced the Soviets to do this, it's hard to know. But what we do know is that, in December 1977, after we moved in, there was a change in the tone of our relationship with Cuba. After Soviet-Cuban intervention in Ethiopia, the Carter administration could no longer be dangling the prospect of embargo lifting there. The Cubans, for their part, began to clamp down on our contacts. Pending appointment requests started to build up and by the time I left Cuba in 1979, I had 45-50 outstanding appointment requests which had not been granted. They were really tightening up on us. So to pursue our tasks there, we began meeting more and more with the Soviets and Eastern Europeans and talked about their economic ties with Cuba. But the tone with the Cubans turned to confrontation and Castro had precipitated this. While this was going on in Ethiopia, Castro was also putting money, goods into the support of the Sandinistas in Nicaragua. At the end of my tour, I had a meeting with Osmany Cienfuegos, a member of the Cuban Communist party Politburo at the time and very close to Castro. He said, "You know, you have seen our hand in Nicaragua and you're going to see it again soon in El Salvador and Guatemala." He was telling the truth, of course. That was the next phase in the confrontation.

There are those such as Wayne Smith who defend the Cubans but the reality is that the Cubans had a golden opportunity. They had said that Angola would be unique. They had been offered implicitly the lifting of the embargo and yet they moved against U.S. interests. They dispatched

troops to Ethiopia. We used to see these troops at the airports flying out there; it was really a rush operation. As the Cubans began to clamp down and close off contact with us, we began to see more and more of the Russians. They were very open about their economic relationship with Cuba. They professed to have a disdain for Castro but they had a different point of view regarding Fidel and his brother Raul. The Soviets generally would tell us that they considered Raul to be a disciplined fellow whereas Fidel was more emotional and problematical. It was clear that they preferred a succession arrangement in which Raul would take over; he was, of course, head of the armed forces. They would talk, for example, about Raul's wife, Vilma Espin. She apparently in her youth was a very beautiful woman, so they would say, "Why do you think Vilma married Raul as opposed to Fidel the great hero? He had a great future. He was more disciplined." That was certainly their hope.

In the meantime, whether the Cubans instigated the Ethiopian intervention or the Russians had, the Russians continued to upgrade Cuba's strength while we were there.

One interesting incident happened. I was at a reception once talking to a Cuban, a senior Cuban, he was sort of in his cups. He said, “You know, we have a means to launch a military strike against Washington.” “I said how’s that?” He said, “We have an airplane that can fly on a one way mission and bomb Washington.” I said, “What are you talking? He said, “You’ll see, you’ll see.” So we sent this little anecdote in a memorandum to Washington and got an alarmed massage back. Somebody has to come down to Havana and speak to us personally. So they sent a man down from INR (Dept. of State Intelligence and Research) and he said they had detected a delivery of MIG-23 fighter aircraft. The MIG-23s, maybe would get to Miami, maybe if you had a one way mission it might get up to Jacksonville, Florida. Under certain scenarios, with external fuel tanks maybe a little longer, but perhaps this is what they thought the Cuban was talking about. The Soviets delivered MIG-23s and the reason they were considered particularly dangerous was, not only the interceptor version delivered, but also the ground attack version. They would be used to attack a ground target whether Washington or Miami or whatever. So that was the subject of some concern. The Administration made it public. They didn't know, however, how many of the ground attack and how many of the interceptor versions had been delivered. Finally at a crucial point of the crisis, the Cubans published a photo on the front page of Verde Olivo, a Cuban military magazine, which showed a specific ground attack version. It has a nose that tilts downward and you could count in the photo how many ground attack aircraft and how many interceptors. This helped defuse the crisis, but what it showed was the Soviets despite all this gossip about not liking Castro and being discouraged by the amount of economic support he required, continued to upgrade his inventory and facilitated actions which were considered as provocative by the United States.

On another subject, when we arrived in Cuba, Castro had a number of American citizens prisoners - many who were involved in early CIA rebellions or assassination attempts and other things. Basically they had been held and sentenced for many years. There was a presumption that when we opened up, Castro would finally have to release some of these American prisoners. He also had some hijackers from the U.S. there who lived freely. They hijacked American aircraft to Cuba. First we started talking to the Cubans about the hijackers, some of whom actually wanted to leave. One of them I remember was named Jesus Garland Grant. He came into the Interests Section and asked to be repatriated to the United States. We were finally able to get him released,

and sent him to an American prison. We received a letter later from an American prison thanking us for sending him to a U.S. prison, despite having been permitted to live free in Cuba. This was sort of an interesting commentary on life there. We also, more seriously, had American political prisoners, one of whom committed suicide just before we arrived there. Rafael Del Pino, who had been one of Castro's collaborators during the revolution, had turned against them later. What was told to us was, just before we opened the Interests Section, the Cubans put him in an isolation cell. They began 24 hours a day playing very loud, loud music and drove him mad. Finally he committed suicide just before we arrived. But we had other prisoners there who were alive and we would visit them. Some of the many prisoners were cooperating with the Cuban authorities, some of the prisoners would not cooperate. The Cubans had earlier segregated common criminals and political prisoners. Just before we arrived they changed the regime so all prisoners had to wear the same uniforms. The real hardline political prisoners refused to do that. So they just walked around in their underwear for years; they were the hardest ones to get out; eventually they were released much later. There was one prisoner who had somewhat cooperated and since wore the uniform - Larry Lunt. He was a relative of the Belgian Royal family actually. He'd been there a number of years and we were able to negotiate finally his release. But a number of other political prisoners remained - we used to visit them at the Combinado del Este Prison and talk to them.

Q: Given your background in Soviet affairs, did you have contacts with the Russians and how many of them were there?

GLASSMAN: Basically our contacts were with the Soviet embassy and economic mission but there were a lot more Russians there. On one occasion, we had a visit from the Moiseyev Ballet. They brought in people from the Lourdes monitoring station where they monitored U.S. communications. They had filled up the auditorium, over 10,000 Russians were there. We essentially discovered after we left a so-called Soviet Brigade. We found the Russians had had a Soviet Brigade in Cuba since after the Cuban Missile Crisis.

STEPHEN BOSWORTH
Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary, Western Hemisphere Affairs
Washington, DC (1981-1983)

Ambassador Bosworth was born and raised in Michigan and educated at Dartmouth College and George Washington University. Entering the Foreign Service in 1961 he served abroad in Panama, Madrid and Paris before becoming Ambassador to Tunisia, where he served from 1979 to 1981, to the Philippines (1984-1987) and to the Republic of Korea (1997-2000). The Ambassador also was a member of the Department's Policy Planning Staff, and he played a major role in the US-Japan Foundation and the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization. In 2009 Ambassador Bosworth was named the President's Special Representative for North Korean Policy. He was interviewed by Michael Mahoney in 2003.

BOSWORTH: As in 2001 this time, that time also, a lot of this was a reaction to what had gone before. You remember Reagan came into office and announced himself as loyal to America's friends pointing to what had happened to the Shah in Iran, pointing to what had happened to Somoza in Nicaragua as people who had been long time friends of the United States. We had abandoned them and he said we will not do that anymore. That was part of it. The other part of it was a conviction on the part of many people that this was all being directed from Cuba and there were ties between the Sandinistas and the Cubans, no question. But Al Haig for example used to talk rabidly about the need to go to the source. If you were going to solve the problem with Central America, you had to solve the problem with Cuba. I'll never forget one of the most bizarre exercises I ever participated in in all my years in government. I was the newly arrived principal deputy in ARA. Tom I think was traveling someplace. Haig charged us with producing a set of proposals on what to do with the boat people, Marielitos, the refugees that had come out of Cuba in '78 and '79 who for the most part were really bad people. Most of them were in a federal penitentiary in Atlanta and there was a lot of agitation on the right in the United States to get rid of these people, send them back. So, Haig charged me and the fellow who was the chief of the joint staff in the defense department to come up with proposals for how we could do this. Of course it was a totally bizarre exercise, we were never really going to do it. At one point we came forward with a proposal, which we presented to Haig first, and then he called Weinberger over and we presented it to both of them. It was to take a derelict freighter, shackle these guys inside the hold, put the freighter on autopilot and send it up onto the beach outside Havana. Haig actually said he thought it was a great idea and commended us for our imagination. Weinberger was appalled and then I think Bill Casey may have been there and Casey or somebody from the agency made the point that beach was where the Russians in Havana went to sun bathe Sunday afternoons and maybe it wouldn't be a good idea to have a freighter come roaring in. That was the sort of stuff that was going on there. All the stuff that was surrounding the activities in the Contras and the effort to try to interdict the supply of equipment and arms from Nicaragua that was going into Honduras and going into El Salvador, which was really happening, but the notion of how you would stop this. The agency, a fellow named Dewey Claridge has written a book. Dewey is a delightful rogue and I really enjoyed him, but he would come up with some of the most harebrained schemes. I mean these people all needed adult supervision.

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BOSWORTH: They were getting help from Cuba. Cuban military equipment was arriving and they were sending money and weapons into El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala. Enders went down to meet with the commandants in what would have been the summer of '81 and he in his very blunt fashion said, "Look, we would probably be prepared to let you continue to live and exist here in Nicaragua, but you are trying to export this revolution to other countries and that is something that we cannot allow or cannot live with." I think it was Ortega, Daniel Ortega said to him, "You don't understand, do you? The revolution is our shield. In other words we have to keep exporting it in order to continue to survive." It was, we again decided that there had to be a third way and that basically the third way in this instance was to negotiate.

Q: So, you draft up a memo on the Contra question?

BOSWORTH: Yes, on the question of the Sandinistas really, what were we going to do about the Sandinistas? There was no political support in the United States for putting American troops in there to take them on, no political support for doing anything about Castro and the Contras were visibly backing up in terms of U.S. interests, so we proposed that we begin a process of negotiation with the Sandinistas and try to persuade them that we would give them certain security guarantees in return for their explicit agreement to stop aiding rebel movements elsewhere in the region.

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BOSWORTH: Haig had never really recovered from his experience in Vietnam and in some ways being Nixon's close advisor. Haig was among those that believed that basically this whole thing in Central America was being directed from Havana. He had been a young colonel or a young major even in the Pentagon at the time of the Bay of Pigs and still felt scarred by that experience. He was very much a hawk on Central America.

Q: Was a lot of it being directed from Cuba?

BOSWORTH: There was no question that Cuba saw its interests as advanced, but I think fundamentally the problem was indigenous. Unless you were willing to address that, there was not really a hope of solving it and it was, the solution had to be very long term. It involved economic aid, which we managed to get substantial increases in. It involved trying to civilize the militaries in the region. We were partially successful and it involved trying to build democratic institutions.

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BOSWORTH: We were of course very anti-Castro, there was a great deal of hostility as there is now. Our policy was driven by two things. Driven by an interpretation of Cuba's role vis-à-vis the Soviet Union in the Cold War. It was also driven very substantially by the Cuban American population in the United States. I remember a fellow who had been director of Cuban affairs who was a very able Foreign Service Officer who had gotten crosswise at some people in the Cuban community.

Q: Who was that?

BOSWORTH: Myles Frechette. When Ted Briggs left as the second deputy in ARA, Tom and I wanted to make Myles the first deputy in his place. Basically the White House said no because the Cuban Americans don't like him. They don't want him in a policy position.

Q: I always thought it was interesting, you had a huge Polish community in the United States and Hungarians and others which never stopped us from having relations with those regimes. I've often wondered if maybe it was just the fact that it was Castro himself, he's lived so long and he's been in so long that maybe if he had died in 1970 let's say. There was still a communist threat maybe even the Cuban American community might have been able to and therefore, the U.S. government, I don't know whether that. It seems strange when one looks at this, I'm not

saying that's my view, but that's a position often articulated that we could deal with everybody else, the Chinese. We could never really normalize with the Cubans.

BOSWORTH: I think its been a bizarre policy for 40 years and one very much not fundamentally in U.S. interest. It has, the policy has been highjacked by the Cuban American community certainly in the years since the end of the Cold War. It's very difficult to construct a rationale for continuing to try to isolate the country particularly when we have failed. I think there is a good reason to believe that had we treated Cuba differently that probably Castro would have been long gone. I attribute all of this basically to the power, influence and money of the Cuban American community. They were very strong financial supporters of Ronald Reagan.

EDWARD L. LEE II
Regional Security Officer
Panama City, Panama (1982-1985)

Mr. Lee was born and raised in Michigan, educated at Delta College and American University. After seven years service with the US Marine Corp, he joined the State Department as Agent in the Office of Security. Mr. Lee's entire career in the Foreign Service was devoted to Security matters in Washington and in diplomatic posts throughout the world. His postings as Regional Security Officer include Cyprus, South Korea, Thailand and Panama. Mr. Lee was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1999.

Q: Let's turn to the Caribbean before we go to the Southern Hemisphere. Cuba. Were you involved at all with Cuba?

LEE: I made a couple of trips to Havana simply to review the RSO's operation there in the Swiss embassy. Hostile environment against Americans unquestionably at that time. By and large, our foreign policy has been very consistent if you go back to the establishment of the embargo. I made perfunctory trips there, but they were pretty much uneventful. Most of what I did was internal within the interests section itself. The staff was relatively small. The biggest concern of the RSO was counterintelligence and being a clearinghouse for information relating to hostile intelligence.

Q: During this '82-'85 period, Cuba was seen as the fomenter of problems all throughout Latin America?

LEE: Absolutely. Fidel Castro was generally considered to be a strategist behind a lot of what was going on. Once the liberation movement began to unfold in Latin America, he didn't have a direct role, but he played a supportive role. The Soviet Union and Cuba often provided material support to a lot of these rebel groups. They supported them financially in many respects. A lot of rebel groups were routinely given training in Cuba or in the Soviet Union. That's really the reason that this liberation movement was so powerful because it had the clout and the influence of the Soviet Union and Cuba behind it.

JOHN A. FERCH
Chief - US Interests Section
Havana (1982-1985)

Ambassador John A. Ferch was born in Toledo, Ohio on February 6, 1936. He received his BA from Princeton University in 1958 and his MA from the University of Michigan in 1964. As a member of the Foreign Service, he served in countries including Argentina, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, Cuba, and Honduras. Ambassador Ferch was interviewed by William E. Knight on September 27, 1991.

FERCH: Because of his intervention I was called one day and asked if I would like to go to Cuba as chief of mission there? We don't have an embassy in Havana, we have an equivalent of an embassy, an Interests Section. I was totally surprised because Cuba is a communist country and I had never served in that environment at all and hadn't followed Castro's revolution. What I also realized at that time was that I couldn't say no. I was, however, concerned about my lack of experience in communist societies.

So I went to Cuba and spent three years there. I was on the island during the invasion of Grenada.

Q: *Could you pause here for a while and describe exactly what your function was in Cuba and what you were able to do and not do and what officials you saw or didn't see, etc.? Give us a picture of what it was like to be in that hostile environment.*

FERCH: I was going to do that under the issues segment, but I will do it here if you like.

First of all, the Interests Sections were established in 1977 by an exchange of Notes, very brief Notes, that limited their size, but also said they would be treated as if they were embassies and the chief of the section would be treated as if he were an ambassador. And the Cubans lived up to that. I was the American Ambassador in Cuba and dealt as any other ambassador. Now, having said that, our work load was different in Cuba than other American embassies around the world because of the hostile relationship with the Cubans.

Q: *Does that mean that you could trot down to the Foreign Office and be received at a reasonably high level?*

FERCH: Absolutely. In fact, it was rather strange. Let me walk through this a bit. It took me some time to realize what the situation was there it was different than, I am sure, any other diplomatic mission we then had--it may not be true now. But then Castro wanted effective contact with the United States. I use the word effective advisedly. He wanted to be able to communicate quickly with us. And he wanted to be able to have us communicate with him. He

could not do that through Washington because we never honored that exchange of Notes. We do not treat the chief of the Cuban Interest Section here as if he were an ambassador. He is not invited to regular diplomatic events. He does not have access. I was the third chief of the Interest Section and our practice was well established. So Castro knew that if he was going to have effective communication with the US Government, it was going to be through the Interest Section in Havana, through me.

Prior to my arrival he designated in an informal but clear manner, a handful of men to deal with the chief of the Section. The senior of these men, was a man by the name of Jose Luis Padron, who was in their DGI, intelligence organization, but had the open job of head of tourism. He was an old personal friend of Castro...a very intelligent, a very personable man. In addition to him there was the now Ambassador to the UN, Ricardo Alarcon. He was then senior vice minister in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. There was Jose Antonio Arbreu, who is now chief of the Cuban Interest Section here. He worked with Piniero "Barba Roja", in the Americas Department in the Party. The Americas Department is the group that managed and supplied the guerrilla movements around Latin America. And there was the Foreign Policy Adviser to the Vice President, Rafael Rodriguez, an old line communist. This man's name was Salsiminde.

These people, with the exception of the latter (Salsiminde and I didn't hit it off well, I think for personal reasons) met with me frequently. I had very high regard for those other three men. And still do. They were very bright guys, professional. Through them I could reach Castro probably quicker than anybody in town.

To give an example, during the first day of our invasion of Grenada, I had a prearranged call on Jose Luis Padron. I used the visit to reiterate, under Washington instructions, the thrust of our Note which I had delivered earlier to Alarcon. The thrust of that note was that the Cubans on Grenada were not the target and if they laid down their arms they could leave honorably. Padron picks up the phone and calls Castro right on the spot. That is the type of contact I could have.

What is interesting about this is that that was the only contact I got. I couldn't do other things that a mission would normally engage in. Say dealing with the Minister of Commerce, the Minister of Culture, etc. Castro wanted the substance of diplomatic relations but didn't want the appearance of friendly relations.

Q: *You did not see Castro himself?*

FERCH: Oh, several times, but not in personal conversation. I could not call up Castro and get an appointment. It was always in the context of other events in which he arranged to see me. I had lengthy conversations with him several times, but it was at his doing rather than my doing. My contact, when I wanted to reach him, was through these men.

But the point is that I didn't have much else to do in the sense of...you want to do a fishery report? Call the Ministry of Fisheries. No, I couldn't do that. It would give the appearance of normality and they didn't want that.

Q: *How much of a staff did you have?*

FERCH: It was limited by the Note. However, both the Cubans and ourselves, circumvented the Note by bringing in TDY people. We were not supposed to have more than 20 some people. At any one time, I suppose, we had 30 to 35 Americans, including eight marines. Then, of course, being Americans, we had to have a large local staff. Think of this, here is the government we love to hate most and we hired 100 Cubans. They were running all over the place. We were not going to drive ourselves, or paint our own houses. So we had this tremendous staff to maintain our presence there. I always found that rather amusing.

Q: *But, the rest of your staff were they doing substantive reporting also?*

FERCH: Well, there were four or five people doing substantive reporting with a couple of secretaries. It wasn't much. The real work of the Section was done by me because the real work was done through those four men and myself. The end result of this was ironic. You frequently hear people say, "Boy, I wish I had time to think. Wish I had time to sit back and plot my course, but I can't because I am too busy." Well, I wasn't that busy and I had time to think about what the Cubans were up to or what Castro was doing. I would sit in my office overlooking the water and El Moro Castle and ponder the entrails of the Cuban mystery.

Q: *This was the old embassy that we were still using?*

FERCH: Oh yes. (And I lived in the Residence. The finest Residence I have ever seen in the Foreign Service.) In this manner I taught myself how to analyze communist newspapers by what is not in them. You keep up to date on world events and then you compare with what they are not saying with what is actually going on. I was very proud of it. It was one of the most intellectually satisfying times I ever had. It was almost like puzzle breaking. As a result of this I think they respected me. They could see that I was understanding what was going on. Those societies are so opaque. They create all these barriers between anyone and them. And I was able to break the barrier because of the time they gave me.

For example, I was able to alert Washington to such things as a Cuban about face on Angola. To me it was very clear at one point that the Cubans were taken aback by Assistant Secretary Crocker's success in his negotiations with the Angolans and wanted to come on board. I was able to alert Washington to that and negotiations resulted.

I should note that they did allow me to visit factories, which I never could understand because they displayed how inefficient they were Cuba was very interesting. I could go on talking about Cuba for hours. It was fascinating.

Cuba also provided us with a fascinating personal note. When Sue and I went to Argentina in 1959 we stayed in a hotel called the Crillon on the Plaza San Martin.

I was simply going to say that there was a neat completion of the circle, personally for Sue and myself in the Cuban assignment. Cuba was a very satisfying assignment intellectually. A very difficult assignment because you were always on your guard. The Cuban officials I dealt with were super sharp individuals. I never thought I could relax with them as you can in most places

in Latin America where you can become friends. The Cubans I dealt with were very good acquaintances. They were very personable. They never mistreated me. They treated me with respect. I treated them with respect. We got along, we laughed, but you never let your guard down.

So every time we left Cuba, and we left frequently because of the pressure of always being on stage, I felt, I used to tell people, 20 pounds lighter when I got off the plane in Miami.

The completion of the circle that I was talking about before...when Sue and I went to Argentina in 1959 to begin our career we stayed in the Hotel Crillon on the Plaza San Martin. For people who know BA they will know exactly what I am talking about--a lovely place. Castro, Che Guevara and a whole crew of people were also staying there. I have this image in my mind...Sue and I are going out to dinner one night, we were at the hotel for three months before we found a house, and Fidel and Che were coming through the door. That was my first contact with Cuba and there were no other contact for years and years and then I get assigned to Havana near the end of my career. So it was kind of a full circle.

At the risk of getting off on a tangent, let me say something about the invasion of Grenada because this illustrates something very interesting about our relations and the Cuban people's relations to Castro.

I had not been told that the invasion was pending. Apparently the Cubans saw it coming and for reasons I don't understand...perhaps it was coincidental...our communications were cut. Power was down and it was very difficult for me to cable Washington on Saturday...the invasion was on a Tuesday morning. On Tuesday morning I was awakened by a call from Washington because they could not send a message on the regular facilities. They read me a diplomatic Note to be given to the Cubans. I wrote it down and rushed to the Embassy, translated it and had it typed up, and delivered it to Ricardo Alarcon at 8:30 that morning, as I mentioned earlier.

The Note was the first of many. It was very interesting to me because it was almost out of the 19th century. It said something like, "You, Cuba, are not the target. Your soldiers can lay down their arms but keep their side arms, flags and depart with honor." It was really right out of another century.

As I said, I had a call scheduled on Padron at 10:00 that day and kept it obviously. I was told by Washington to go in and repeat the message orally. So I made the demarche orally. He called Castro on the phone at that time and said, "This is what Ferch is saying." Castro said...and I never figured out whether Castro had been deceived or not...he said, "Tell Ferch he is behind the times. All of our men died fighting. The last of them wrapped themselves in the flag and died fighting." Well that wasn't true, of course. But that was what Castro's message to me was.

Q: *There were none of them killed were there?*

FERCH: There were 22 or 23 killed.

From that point on for the next two weeks there were many messages. The Grenada invasion for us in Cuba lasted until the bodies and the troops came home. There was a lot of diplomatic correspondence. During the first part of those two weeks, the level of tension in Cuba was very, very high. I say level of tension in the sense they didn't know what we were going to do and the people of Cuba were very, very worried that war was going to come to them. During this period, no one picked up the phone and made a nasty call to us, much less demonstrated in front of the Interest Section, must less threw a stone at anyone, nothing. It was a controlled society, but it says something about the Cuban people, they can't control everyone all of the time. The people were worried.

What I am leading up to is the following. Castro tried to calm down this concern and he was unsuccessful. Therefore, this is my own interpretation, on the second day there appeared in the upper left hand corner of the Party newspaper a little box headlined, "Advise to the Public." This box appeared subsequently after every demarche I made, every Note I delivered. It began, "Mr. Ferch has the following to say." And it reported correctly in every case without changing words at all.

The conclusion that I reach from that, and I don't think the conclusion has been properly drawn by anyone else, is that it demonstrates that the Cuban Government lacked credibility in the eyes of the Cuban people and that the only way Castro could get the message across to calm down, that there would be no war, was to let it come through the words of the US representative. I had more credibility in the public eyes than he did. I think that was the lesson there.

Q: *In your liaison and communications with Washington what was your channel? Who did you really communicate with--Desk or higher?*

FERCH: Obviously, like any ambassador, I communicated on various levels. On a daily basis I would talk to Ken Skous who was the coordinator for Cuban Affairs, effectively the Country Director.

Q: *By telephone?*

FERCH: By telephone and by cable. I did most of the reporting there so I was communicating with a lot of people. I must say now on my current job with the National Intelligence Council I find a lot of people who seem to remember my reporting. Everybody was interested in Cuba so my reporting was widely read.

When I would go to Washington I would see the Assistant Secretary. Before going to Cuba, Larry Eagleburger called me in and gave me a message for Castro to get me off to a good start. The message said something to the effect that we too wanted effective relations.

I saw George Shultz several times during the course of the three years because of certain events that he wanted to know more about.

So the level of contact was up to the very top of the Department, which is true of most ambassadors.

Q: *Were you there during Mariel?*

FERCH: No, Wayne Smith, my predecessor, was there during Mariel. That was 1980, I came in 1982. People in the Section who had been there during Mariel were still there. That was a very difficult time for the Section because many Cubans fled to the Section--40, 50, maybe even more--and couldn't leave for months.

Q: *Came over the fence.*

FERCH: Well, there was no fence. They just came into the building. We had one person come in while I was there and it was months before we could get her out. A middle aged American woman who married this Cuban kid of 18. She came into the Section and asked to bring her husband in. Not thinking, the guard said, "Sure." Once he was in she refused to leave. She was trying to get him out of the country. It eventually worked.

Anyway, I was in Cuba for three years and it was the most intellectually satisfying assignment I ever had. I got Cuba in my blood, a beautiful country, great people. My kids at this time were almost grown. They also loved Havana.

Q: *They were with you?*

FERCH: No, they were all in school, but would come down for vacations.

Q: *But your wife was with you.*

FERCH: Oh yes. The children loved Cuba and were able to really get around, especially my son who was at St. Albans. They are all bilingual, bicultural. They would go back to Cuba in an instant if Cuba opened up.

I approached Cuba as a non-ideologue. I didn't like what I saw there. Sue and I were greatly upset by what we saw there. How Castro in effect tried to change the Latin character. I could go into that if you are interested, but that is not about me. We did not appreciate what we saw. I am, on the political scale, extremely liberal. I believe in change, experiment politically, but I didn't like what I saw there. I didn't like the fact that when you sent out invitations to dinner for 7:30, everybody was there at 7:30. I am not being facetious. I didn't like the fact that everybody obeyed the speed limit. That is not Latin. No one blew their horn.

I had a lot of visitors, a lot of personal friends came to visit me. They did so because it was a fascinating place and being in Cuba the Cuban Government as a courtesy to me would give visas to these private people. The US Government would arrange permits for them to visit us. Personal friends, from Mexico, primarily, came over to visit us. I mention this because I would tell all of them to walk through the heart of Havana. They all had the same observation afterwards...how quiet it was. Obviously there was nothing on the shelves, but they knew that. But they would comment on the lack of noise. No one is yelling. Now Latin societies are loud and that is not so in Cuba. That is bad. This is an indication, small, but a revealing indication of how this guy has

tried to change the character and successfully so. Well, I shouldn't say successfully, but at least they have bowed to what he wants. So Sue and I did not like what we saw there. It will be a better country afterwards. It may be more chaotic and may be less egalitarian. I certainly am an egalitarian, but less equality and more openness is certainly a good trade-off in this case.

Anyway towards the end of my third year in Cuba I began to look for an assignment. Now my aspiration was for another mission, but this time with a title. One day Tony Motley called up and asked if I would like to go to Colombia as ambassador. He wanted an honest answer. Going to Colombia with the drug situation meant that my kids could never visit, and everyone in the Embassy there lives in a very constrained world. I thought about it and said, "Yes." Later he called me back and said he was changing the assignment if I didn't mind. They were going to send me to Honduras. The guy who was going to go to Honduras had trouble with the White House and they had to shuffle people around.

STANLEY ZUCKERMAN
Counselor for Public Affairs, USIS
Ottawa, Canada (1983-1986)

Mr. Zuckerman was born and raised in Brooklyn, New York and educated at the University of Wisconsin. After service in the US Army, followed by newspaper reporting and a position with the Governor of Wisconsin, he joined the USIA Foreign Service in 1965. He subsequently served as Information, Press and Public Affairs Counselor in Congo, Belgium, Mexico, Canada and Brazil. He also had several senior level assignments in Washington at USIA and the State Department. Mr. Zuckerman was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2004.

ZUCKERMAN: Cuba was a freebie for Canadians. Canadians love to be friendly with countries with warm climates. Even working class Canadian families spend a couple of weeks as far south as their budget will allow. If you go down to Miami in the winter you will hear a French Canadian station that operates only in the tourist season. Canadians discovered that travel to Cuba was cheap and fun and then the hotels began improving as foreign investment went in. So although their differences with us over how Castro should be handled were not very different from the way Americans who disagreed with American policy would describe it; nonetheless, it was one of those areas where they were free to tweak us, free to pull Uncle Sam’s beard without any consequences. We understood that. There were problems of course, once you start trying to export to the United States Canadian products containing sugar that was bought in Cuba, that ran afoul of American laws restricting Cuban goods. I don’t know how they could determine which box of cookies had Cuban sugar in it rather than beet sugar from wherever. It is pretty silly, you know, when you get right down to it.

HARRIET C. BABBITT
Private Law Practice

Phoenix, AZ (1986-1992)

Representative, Organization of American States
Washington, DC (1993-1997)

A lawyer by profession, Ambassador Babbitt was born in West Virginia and raised there and in New York and Texas. After attending the Universities of Texas; Madrid, Spain; Arizona State; as well as Sweet Briar College and Mexico City College of the University of the Americas, she entered law practice in Arizona, the home state of her husband, Bruce Babbitt. She continued her law practice throughout her husband's political career until being named US Ambassador to the Organization of American States in 1993. Ambassador Babbitt was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2002.

Q: Well, as you came back from these things, was there any follow through for you? You were doing your law and then you went out to these things?

BABBITT: Well, I was always interested in going to Cuba, but of course couldn't, when Bruce was involved in elected politics. So, he and I both were invited to speak in Cuba. I went to speak about electoral politics, believe it or not. I got a cool reception. I brought out with me a document that had been drafted and signed by the Cuban intellectual community. They asked me for very basic things, freedom of expression, opportunity for elections, the nuts and bolts kind of stuff. But, counter-revolutionary in Cuba, so unthinkable there. Anyway, they asked me if I would take the document out. I said, "Well, let me read it." So, we met over mojitos, in a bar someplace. I read it. It was exactly the kinds of things that any Anglo, liberal society would support. I said, "Sure." I took it out, and was immediately condemned on the front page of Granma as a CIA spy. I gave it to folks in Madrid who distributed it widely. Then, I wrote a piece for the Washington Post and another for the L.A. Times, and some other stuff about that. So, it wasn't just a matter of occasionally getting on a plane, flying someplace, and then going home.

Q: Were you forming any ideas about our relationship with Cuba, going there? This is very controversial. Some would say that our embargo actually kept Castro in power. From this trip, and other places, what were you coming away with?

BABBITT: Well, I'm a believer in engagement. You can quarrel about lots of the details, but I'm a believer in engagement. I have, as recently as this week, been very involved with a guy named Oswaldo Paya, who has done the smartest thing I've seen in all the years I have been watching folks trying to do things in Cuba. He is a Cuban living in Havana who looked at the Cuban constitution and realized that if you get more than 10,000 signatures asking for "X" then, the National Assembly must call a referendum on "X." So, at great personal peril, (the guy spent a lot of time in prison) he got 11,000 signatures. Imagine in Cuba what that takes. He submitted it to the National Assembly. Of course, it has never been seen since. It was a great secret to most Cubans until Carter was there, last fall. In the middle of this press conference, he brought it up, on television. Most Cubans, of course, hadn't heard about it. Paya is in town this week. He was

not permitted to leave to come to the United States, but got the European parliament Andre Sakharov prize, was permitted to go there, and decided to stop by Washington on the way home.

Q: Did you run across the Cuban community in Florida?

BABBITT: What I was doing was sufficiently in sync with their desires, because what I was doing was publicizing this manifesto. It was a declaration. I can't quite remember what the name of it was. I was getting condemned on the front pages of Granma for my efforts. So, I didn't get a hostile reaction.

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Q: Why don't you explain what drug certification was?

BABBITT: Drug certification was a federal law which in effect requires the Secretary of State to annually certify which countries in the world... Not just Latin America, but since most of the drugs come from Latin America, it impacted Latin America the most... Which countries in the world are cooperating with the United States in the battle against narcotics trafficking. The response from the Latin American countries was outrage that it was graded by the United States, and while we were this enormous magnet. They were sellers, but we had this enormous country full of buyers, where selling wouldn't be a problem, if there weren't all these buyers. So, how did we get off grading them! Then there was the Helms-Burton legislation.

Q: Would you explain what that was?

BABBITT: The Helms-Burton legislation was legislation introduced by Senator Helms and Dan Burton, which basically had the United States punish other sovereign countries whose nationals did business with Cuba. The rest of the world, not just Latin America, thought that was none of our business.

Q: Yes, the Canadians were particularly outraged.

BABBITT: My unhappy lot in life was to be ambassador at the point at which those issues were at their most red-hot. It was different than being a bilateral ambassador, because the other 33 countries in the case of Helms-Burton disagreed with the United States. They didn't just not think much of it, they really hated it. In the case of drug certification, there were a few countries around that didn't care very much, because they didn't actually export. But, the whole notion... They were symbolically there with their brethren. Those were tough.

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Q: How about Cuba? Did the subject of Cuba come up much in the OAS?

BABBITT: People were always trying to get in on the agenda. Other countries, I felt, were not useful. I was already in the position where the organization was lined up, more or less, thirty-three to one, on drug certification, and more or less, thirty-three to one on Helms-Burton. The

last thing I needed was a more or less, thirty-three to one. It was another one of those issues. So, I was happily successful in beating back all the attempts at the OAS to deal with Cuba.

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Q: Was there any effort on the part of Castro to get back into the OAS?

BABBITT: Every so often, the Mexicans would try. I would go to some Mexican event, and realize that there were an awful lot of Cubans at this event. Of course, the Cubans don't belong to the OAS. If there are Cubans at an event, you wonder what is happening. They didn't try hard enough to get very far. I assume if they really wanted to they could have made my life more miserable than they did.

JOHN J. (JAY) TAYLOR
Chief - US Interests Section
Havana (1987-1990)

John J. Taylor was born in Arkansas and attended Vanderbilt University before joining the US Marine Corps and eventually the Foreign Service. Overseas Taylor served in Ghana, Taiwan, Malaysia, China, South Africa and Cuba. He also served in INR, the NSC, as the deputy assistant secretary for intelligence coordination and as the chief of mission in Cuba. Taylor was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2000.

Q: What were you told before your departure about the Cuban-American community in Miami because that is a powerful lobby in the U.S.?

TAYLOR: The Cuban-American National Foundation (CANF) headed by Jorge Mas Canosa dominated the Miami Cuban community. Like many exile cultures, CANF was of course interested in bringing down the hated regime, but it was even more concerned about its position as the major political force in the exile community and in the U.S. CANF opposed any activity that undercut its goal of weakening and eventually overthrowing the Castro regime. A belief in the imminent collapse of the hated regime was a key tenet in the group's outlook Thus it had opposed the setting up of the two "interest sections," and continued to argue against bilateral agreements between the two governments. As happens in such political environments, the leadership of the exile group fell to the more militant elements - i.e. those who made the most inflammatory comments about the need to oust the hated regime.

Q: You went at the end of the Reagan administration. Were you told to be concerned about domestic U.S. politics because particularly the Republicans seem to pay considerable homage to the Cuban-American community in Miami?

TAYLOR: I didn't get any specific instructions about this matter. The Cuban community and the Foundation were of course in very good standing with people in the Administration - particularly Elliot Abrams. A prominent Cuban-American named Sorzano, who had been a member of the Foundation and close to Mas, was the NSC staffer for Latin America. This was a pretty clear signal as to the priorities of the Administration regarding Latin America. I asked whether I should stop in Miami to pay a call on Mas but was told that would not be necessary. I said I would stop and have lunch with him during a later trip, which I did. I called at the Foundation's office in Washington before I left.

Q: It is said that in the Israel situation, anything that is reported in the morning, will be on some Senator's desk in the afternoon - even before it gets to the Department. Was that the situation in Cuba? Were you told that you could have entirely private correspondence with the Department?

TAYLOR: As I mentioned earlier, I told Elliott Abrams during our first meeting that I would be totally candid in sending him my views. If the issue was especially sensitive, I said, I would send the message NODIS *and* EYES ONLY or as an "official-informal" cable so that only Abrams would see them. Jorge Mas through his position on the Radio Marti Board could have had access to some of our lower classified cables. During a lunch discussion with him in Miami one day, he did seem to know the substance of a recent message we had sent to the Department. CANF had close contact with the Cuban Desk, which soon turned notably unfriendly toward my reporting from post and it seemed toward me personally. I don't know why, but Mas and the Foundation soon assumed that I was too "soft" on Castro. They appeared to have heard that I was recommending policies, for example on Angola, which were not in accord with their views. I assume this judgment came to them through ARA or possibly Sorzano, who as NSC director for Latin America, also read my messages.

In reading the previous year's cables from Havana I did not find any penetrating analysis. The office reported conversations with Cuban officials and foreign diplomats, what Castro said in public, what propaganda was emanating from the regime, and what was going on in Cuba so far as they could learn. But the reporting was essentially factual; it did not attempt much if any analysis or speculation. For example, I wanted to read an assessment of what was motivating Castro in his actions on the migration agreement, Radio Marti, and the supply flights. What was he thinking about the US/Angolan/South African talks going on and what were his current objectives in Angola and Central America? What did he think of Gorbachev and Glasnost? And how could we best play the situation to achieve our goals, such as promoting human rights? The office also might have asked whether the Blackbird flights where producing any truly valuable intelligence that we were not getting from satellites.

Q: The Havana Office was perhaps reflecting the time when the "hard-liners" had taken over ARA. You went to Cuba after Iran-Contra, which must be a sobering experience for ARA.

TAYLOR: One could make a case for a policy that sought to maximize Cuba's isolation; keeping Cuba out of the Angolan talks for example, while also trying to address practical bilateral issues like migration. Likewise, one could reasonably advocate reliance solely on pressure for amelioration of the regime's systemic human rights abuses and a rejection of incentives as an additional and parallel way to bring about change. This kind of policy line could

have been argued professionally. In theory, it was even possible to recommend a war against Cuba and explain it in a professional way absent flag waving or polemics. But it was not professional to treat the presentation of alternative views or policy options as a hostile action. It was distressing to have policy differences discussed in strident terms, which what I soon encountered.

At this time, Cuban desk memos to Abrams, sometimes then sent on to the White House, did attempt to analyze what Fidel was up to by his recent actions - canceling the accord, jamming Radio Marti, stopping support flights, etc. These memos concluded that Castro was deliberately trying to destroy the ties that had been established with the U.S. since 1978. His objective, they speculated, was to provoke us into some rash (presumably military) response. Why Castro would want to do this was not clear. From what little I had read, I thought the analysis seemed at best debatable. I think I have somewhere the date of that memo.

More likely, it appeared to me, Castro was reacting to events rather than initiating them. Radio Marti was having an impact and Castro was taking retaliatory action. Not too surprising. The cancellation of the USINT supply flights may have been a response to the Blackbird over flights and the holding of the defector's airplane. The supply flights among other things had been bringing in large classified pallets, which in turn provoked some wry Cuban comment. It was a stretch to suggest that Cuba's jamming of Marti's signal and the cancellation of the flights were part of an effort to provoke the United States in order to destroy the tenuous bilateral connections that had been established with great difficulty. But that was the ARA view. I thought a broader dynamic was probably at work, including what was happening in the Soviet Union and in US-Soviet relations.

Q: Tell us a little about the interest section. How was it staffed? How did it operate?

TAYLOR: The staff included a deputy principal officer who also did economic reporting. A CIA analyst was aboard on loan as our political officer. Since the Department would not authorize a new State political reporting position at that time, the Agency was asked to lend us a good analyst. The man they sent was outstanding - a fluent Spanish speaker, and an energetic and insightful reporter with a keen analytical sense. He was strictly a State employee while in Havana. In latter positions, his CIA affiliation would become public knowledge. In addition, the roster included, a researcher, two communicators, an administrative officer, an assistant administrative officer, a USIA public affairs officer, a security officer, and a consular section with a chief and three or four other officers. A contingent of five or six marines was also on board. As an old Marine, I officiated at the traditional Marine Corps Ball held at the residence. Finally, we employed about 100 Cuban employees provided by the Cuban Government, no doubt including a number of undercover intelligence officers.

Once the Mariel Agreement was restored, the Consular officers processed immigrant visas and also political refugees. The latter task sometimes involved going to a Cuban prison for interviews. Castro, under the accord, allowed a few thousand Cuban citizens a year to go the States to visit relatives and return, and the Consular section processed these non-immigrant travelers as well. Essentially, I concentrated on reporting and analysis of Cuba's foreign policy, including making demarches to the Foreign Ministry on issues between us, and recommending courses of action. I

tried to meet a wide range of Cuban officials and others in Cuba's quasi non-public sector such as churchmen, writers, artists, and think tank types. I also established close contact with those foreign diplomats who were serious "Castro watchers." Trying to get a feel how the system worked, I visited plants, schools, hospitals, farms, and of course sugar mills, and cigar factories. I tried to do one or two of these visits a week. I wrote thought pieces not only on bilateral and foreign affairs but also on internal issues, most especially human rights and popular attitudes. The political officer reported on trends inside the country, including popular attitudes. He even did a regular market basket survey, reporting on prices and availability of various goods and foodstuff. When we get to human rights I will discuss the important role of the PAO and the Chief Consular Officer in this area.

Q: How did you see Cuba in 1987?

TAYLOR: As I mentioned, the key bilateral issue of the moment was resumption of the Mariel agreement. We wanted: 1) to avoid another chaotic inflow of undocumented Cubans arriving by boat in Florida; 2) to resume the program returning convicted felons to Cuba; and 3) to restart the refugee program for Cuban political prisoners. On external matters, Cuba was a key actor on two important U.S. interests, Central America and Angola. On the former, I thought we should explore how if at all Cuba might change its policies in a way that would encourage the Sandinistas to go along with the Esquipulas peace process and hold internationally monitored elections. More intriguing because it seemed more possible was getting Cuban troops out of Angola. There were of course other matters of concern regarding Cuba. It was: a vital a cog in the Soviet Bloc throughout the world; a serious violator of human rights; and a major player in the Third World or the illogically-named Non-Aligned Movement. Finally, we had a strong interest in promoting human rights in Cuba and providing the Cuban people access to objective information about what was happening in the world and in Cuba. Eliminating the jamming of Radio Marti was thus an important objective.

I took my job to be one of trying to figure out how we could best deal with the Cuban government so as to achieve these objectives in whole or part. This meant first of all trying to analyze the dynamics and interests that lay behind Castro's position on these various issues. I thought it was an elementary principle that we would treat the regime as a serious government if we hoped to achieve serious results. This meant that their side would have to see benefit in any important changes they made. Whenever the Cubans professed a willingness to cooperate, I thought, we should test them but be prepared for failure.

Critical to achieving some success, I believed, was having the flexibility to hold out to Castro the prospect that significant advances on key issues could open the door to an improvement of bilateral relations. As mentioned, I had asked for and received the maximum encouragement about future relations that Elliot Abrams was willing to offer - "only after renewal of the migration agreement could there be any discussions about broader issues." I thought this was a fairly good position. The implication of the statement was that discussion of issues like Angola and even improved bilateral relations were possible <u>if</u> Cuba cooperated on certain matters. In fact, the only condition mentioned in the approved statement was resumption of the migration accord. The implication it seemed to me was that once this condition was met, the bilateral atmosphere

would clear and then we could address the more difficult "broader differences" including Angola, Central America, and ultimately bilateral relations.

The Cubans and we approached all of these questions in the context of the important changes taking place in world politics. By 1987, Gorbachev had been in power a couple of years. *Perestroika and Glasnost* were actually being implemented, and contrary to the neocon view were real, far-reaching reforms. Freedom of speech was making astounding gains in the Soviet Union. A powerful process of change seemed underway. At the same time, relations between the U.S. and the USSR appeared to be on a brand new course. It was possible that Soviets could soon decide to withdraw from Afghanistan. In October 1986 at Reykjavik, Iceland, Reagan and Gorbachev - to the dismay of some of their respective staffs (i.e., Richard Pearle) - had almost agreed to eliminate ALL nuclear weapons! Gorbachev and Raisa were now expected in New York in December. They would receive a stirring embrace by the American people enthralled by the prospect of not just peace with the mighty Soviet Union but actual friendship.

Castro was very astute - perhaps the most astute and clever of all the communist dictators. He understood the dynamics of what was happening in world affairs. The changing circumstances, I thought, could possibly give him a new perspective and new interests and priorities regarding Central America, Angola, relations with the U.S., and possibly even human rights. If the Soviet Union and the United States were to continue down the path of détente, Castro would be isolated and in a difficult situation regarding Angola and Central America. After all, he probably could not keep his army more than a few weeks in Angola without Soviet support. Apparently influenced by people like Carlos Aldana, the Politburo's chief ideologist, Castro, I believed, had decided he must try to get on board the détente boat. In other words, Castro most likely did not want to destroy the existing ties with the United States, as the Cuban desk in ARA and Elliot Abrams thought, but rather he felt compelled by a changing world to seek his own improvement of relations with the United States. I said all this in a series of cables to ARA, mostly OI, exdis, or nodis. This would have been in September, October, and November 1987.

Re-establishment of the Mariel agreement would be the key first step. Soon after I arrived in Havana, I met with the Cubans who would be my counterparts in the Foreign Ministry and in the Central Committee of the Cuban Communist Party. These were: Vice Minister Ricardo Alarcon and German Blanco, head of the United States Desk at the Ministry; and at the Central Committee, Jose Arbesu and his assistant named Alcibaides. The Cubans, in answer to my inquiries, said that the Cuban Government was willing to discuss restoration of the Mariel agreement and that its resumption was basically in their interests. On Radio Marti they said that if the US would concede that Cuba had the right to broadcast on medium wave into the United States, it was possible that the jamming of Radio Marti would end. They wanted to know how agreement on these issues would affect the bilateral relationship and broader questions such as Angola. I emphasized that discussions about "improved relations" and broader issues could come after such an agreement. I also made a point of calling on the Latin Ambassadors as well as all the NATO envoys in Havana and stressed the same point to them. They all said they would urge the Cubans to resume the Mariel Accord and lift the jamming of Radio Marti.

I reported to Washington that Cuban officials, including Alarcon, seemed interested in finding a solution to current bilateral problems, but had sought a linkage between Cuba's right to

broadcast in the US as the US did into Cuba. Alarcon had also stressed that the Cubans wanted to discuss Angola, noting that in Luanda the US side was trying to persuade the Angolans not to include the Cubans in the on-going negotiations. In addition, the Cubans wanted to raise the issue of the Cuban plane being held in Florida. I suggested to ARA that we could find a face-saving way to accommodate the Cubans on their "broadcast rights" without surrendering anything, that we could hear them out on Angola, and that perhaps we should consider returning the plane. I got back a sharp and negative response. The desk warned that we would be falling into a "Cuban trap" if we agreed to talk about radio rights (other than the subject of Havana stopping its jamming of Radio Marti) and other issues (Angola). In the mind of ARA, Castro was simply looking for an opportunity to play a trick and provoke us.

In reply, I said I did not think Castro was setting "a trap" and that we could easily deal with the issue of radio rights by simply saying that Cuba could broadcast into the United States as long as it met all international standards and regulations. This was giving away nothing at all. Castro, I thought, probably wanted a fig leave to abandon the jamming of Radio Marti. On Angola, I said Castro's objectives might not be to disrupt the talks. I suggested that the Cuban ruler was aware that fundamental improvement in relations with the United States depended upon changes relating to both Nicaragua and Angola, as well as to the migration accord, and if we played our hand skillfully with Castro we might promote our objectives in these two areas. We should proceed cautiously, I said, but the possibility could provide a strategic framework for our relations with Castro and how we dealt with the issues in the upcoming meeting.

Prior to my arrival in Havana, Castro had told Nelson Rockefeller's daughter that Cuba would be interested in participating in the negotiations that were on going between South Africa and Angola brokered by the United States. Rockefeller's daughter took the message back to George Shultz who relayed it to Elliot Abrams. The African Bureau was never informed. In early October, I sent in a long cable assessing the key issue of Angola. In my report, I suggested that Castro had important incentives to try to settle the Angolan crisis. Pressures existed as well. For one, the Soviets were not interested in having one of their client states interfere with their rapprochement with the U.S. Gorbachev wanted to solve the Angolan issue for financial as well as political reasons. Castro was dependent on Soviet support to retain his forces there. The Cuban people were also becoming unhappy with the long deployment of Cuban men and women to that far away country. The troops had been there for more than ten years and they suffered a low level but steady rate of casualties.

I concluded that Castro <u>probably</u> did want or more likely needed an honorable way out of Angola. If so, this position could also be seen as part of his apparent recognition of the changing dynamics of world affairs and his now increased need to improve relations with the United States. Every senior diplomat in Havana, I reported, as well as the Catholic Bishop and other clergy in Cuba agreed with this assessment. I said that of course Castro might use the talks simply to further the existing fissures among the various parties in Angola. But it was very unlikely the Cubans would withdraw their troops or be told to withdraw by the MPLA until Havana was a participant in the negotiations. I thought that we should test Castro and see what happened. I sent this message NODIS for Elliot Abrams, but not "Eyes Only."

Q: Did you notice any discontent among the Cubans on the Angola issue?

TAYLOR: When asked about Angola, Catholic clergy and most other Cubans, including even some officials, would say that the ordinary citizen was growing tired of the involvement. In my opinion, a combination of growing domestic unease and the rapidly changing relationship between the two super-powers was driving Castro to be forthcoming on Angola and other issues.

In response to my message on Angola, I received a biting reply from Abrams suggesting that after only a few weeks I was not in a position to assess Cuban motives and that I needed to be steeped deeper in Angolan history and all the inequities perpetrated by the Cubans in the region. It was clear, ARA said, that Castro would not leave Angola until the communist revolution had succeeded in South Africa. This was a reference to Castro's 1986 statement that in order to protect Angola, Cuban troops might have to stay until apartheid was ended in South Africa. This eleven-year old proclamation by Castro was quite different from Abrams portrayal of it. The debate in Washington over whether or not to involve Cuba in the talks took place within the context of a broader struggle over policy toward South Africa that had raged within the Administration from the beginning. Right wingers such as Pat Buchanan, Jesse Helms, Bill Casey until his death in December 1986, and until his firing over Iran-Contra, John Poindexter, supported cooperation with the South African apartheid government, including its intelligence and military organs, against leftist black movements in southern Africa, meaning most of the key black nationalist parties, including the African National Congress.

This proto-neoconservative group saw the white South African Government as a valuable strategic asset against growing Soviet influence in Africa. The Shultz/Crocker camp advocated promotion of solutions to the internal conflicts in the region, such as in Angola and Mozambique, while pushing for an end to apartheid in South Africa. The moderate group that believed this was the way to prevent the spread of leftist and communist influence in southern Africa included the State Department generally outside of ARA, and a large majority of congressmen and women, including many Republicans. The American public seemed clearly on this side of the debate as well. After 1986, the Iran-Contra debacle plus new political realities gave the advantage to Shultz and Crocker.

Q: Did you get the feeling that you were dealing with "true believers" in the Department and that ideology was trumping professionalism?

TAYLOR: In ARA, the mind-set that persisted seemed to me not only unprofessional but also detached from the situation on the ground as well in the world arena. It was a frozen war mentality - just as it seemed maybe the Cold War was melting down. But more than a Cold War outlook, I now wonder if as far as Elliot Abrams was concerned it also reflected early manifestations of the *neocon* worldview. Richard Pearle and other *proto-neocons* were at that moment still doing what they could to prevent President Reagan from accepting the authenticity of Gorbachev's professed desire for peace and reform. As noted earlier, even the post-Casey CIA was still insisting that Gorbachev was either faking his reformist ideas or else he would never be permitted by the all-powerful *nomenclatura* to institute them. For Pearle and his fellow *proto-neocons*, it was perhaps beside the point whether or not Gorbachev was sincere. Likewise, Abrams may have thought Castro might indeed want to get out of Angola, but in the Hobbesian, misanthropic *weltanschauung* of today's *neocons*, we should not permit him to do so.

Hopefully, history will examine the question further. But looking back from 2004, I am struck by the similarities between the Reagan period and the current Administration of George W. Bush. Strikingly, many of the characters are the same - Abrams, Wolfowitz, Pearle, Rumsfeld, Feith, Libby, Bolton, Wurmser. Everyone but Oliver North. (By the way, a friend of mine, a CEO of a substantial energy services company - not Halliburton - was an Annapolis class mate of North. He tells me that most midshipmen who knew North at the time thought he was a "scumbag.") Even Admiral Poindexter made a cameo appearance at the Rumsfeld Pentagon. His last Dr. *Strangelove* idea, however, went too far even for Wolfowitz and Co., at least once it was leaked. Resurrected from the old Reagan regime, a breed of ideologues unique to the American tradition now dominates the G.W. Bush Administration.

The Administration's hard line group in the 1980s, as today, believed the United States must not limit its use of military power just for the defense of itself, its allies, and its friends by countering or preempting threats that were real or "real time," that is in some reasonable and realistic timeframe. Rather, in the 1980s version of the doctrine, American military power should be employed with limited regard for the sanctions of international law as a pro-active tool to destabilize and destroy communist regimes. In the updated George W. Bush version, the ultimate goal is the maintenance of American dominance or hegemony - no nation or group, whatever its perceived intentions - will be allowed ever again to rival American power.

The neocons like the proto-neocons also believe, Machiavelli-like, in the need at times to be unscrupulous, deceptive, and even cruel. President Reagan and Bill Casey, for example, condoned the unconstitutional and criminal transfer of missiles to Iran in 1985-1986, the swapping of arms for hostages, the illegal funding of the Contras, and lying to Congress, all in the interest of the pursuit of ideals. Half a million civilians died in Angola partly as a result of the Reagan Doctrine, and to no purpose. 50,000 or so died in Nicaragua purely as a result of a U.S. armed intervention applied to an internationally recognized but communist or pro-Soviet government - a government with which we had diplomatic relations. There is no evidence that the neocons, while still believing that their ends are worthy and their means necessary, feel much remorse for the tens of thousands even hundreds of thousands who died and are still dying as a result of their policies.

Like Shultz and James Baker, Colin Powell today is a traditional, internationalist who believes in collective security and military strength but also in the equal importance of America's moral authority and the promotion of international law. The ideological nature of ARA under Abrams was reflected in the strident, dogmatic, sometimes cynical tone of messages and memos that I saw, not just those addressed to me. I recall one memorandum of conversation between Abrams and Yuri Pavlov, the Director Latin American affairs at the Soviet Foreign Ministry. The two men were speaking about Nicaragua. Abrams sounded like Soviet diplomats of the early 1950s - doctrinaire, polemical, belligerent, and threatening. Pavlov sounded like a traditional American diplomat - conciliatory, rational, and objective. I think I have somewhere the date of this memo. This and the traffic between ARA and myself in 1987-1988, including "official-informal" cables, would make a fascinating study.

Sometimes the ARA messages I received were flippant. At one point, I suggested that on the question of Angola, we might tell the Cubans that a final solution, including the complete withdrawal of Cuban troops "would significantly improve the climate of US-Cuban relations." I was told not to say any such thing. Instead, I could offer the tautological promise to the Cubans that such a solution of the Angolan issue "would remove one of the issues between us."

Q: Did you send copies of your messages on Angola to AF?

TAYLOR: Several weeks after I received ARA's categorical and strident denunciation of my Angola cable and it was obvious that there would be no other follow-up, I sent an official-informal cable to Chas Freeman, a DAS in AF (and an "old China hand" who had been DCM in Peking when I was there). I suggested that Chas read my Angola thought piece of a month earlier, which he did. AF's subsequent follow up changed the dynamics in Washington on the issue of Cuba and the Angolan talks. ARA remained dead set against having Castro involved in the negotiations even though it was clear that the Angolan problem could not be solved without Cuban participation. Chet Crocker, the Assistant Secretary for African Affairs, won the battle on the 7th floor. On Christmas Day, I received instructions that had been cleared by all concerned in Washington to see the senior Cuban official working on African issues (Jorge Risquet) and ask a series of questions about Cuba's current intentions regarding Angola and its attitude toward the talks. That started a US/ Cuba dialogue for the first time about Angola and the possibility of Cuban involvement in the talks.

This was followed up with talking points on Angola drafted by AF to be delivered at a January meeting in Mexico City with the Cubans. At the meeting, our side led by Mike Kozak, as instructed, told the Cubans that a genuine solution in Angola that all sides could welcome "would contribute to improved US-Cuban relations." Re-implementation of the migration agreement, the Cubans were also told was the first step in this process and this step would also lead to a "further improvement in bilateral relations."

Overall, the talks in Mexico City were a success. Cuba agreed to resumption of the migration agreement, including a renewal of the program returning to the island Cubans found guilty of criminal behavior in the U.S., and the recommencement on an enlarged scale of the political refugee program. We said that we would issue up to 20,000 immigrant visas each year. Furthermore, the Cubans simply stopped jamming Radio Marti, although we had no real leverage over them on this issue. I believe this notable success - Cuba agreeing virtually to everything we wanted - was due to the striking change in our posture, including a stated, explicit willingness to discuss other issues, including Angola, a categorical assertion that re-implementation of the migration agreement and a successful outcome in Angola could open the door to" improved US/Cuban relations." This, I thought, was fantastic! During the next year of negotiations on Angola, I repeated over and over to the Cubans the approved linkage between a successful outcome on Angola and improvement of US/Cuban ties. The outcome in Mexico City confirmed me in my view that Castro was reassessing his tactics on a wide range of issues and this might open the door for us to make progress not only on Angola, but possibly on Central America and even human rights. Holding out the prospect of better relations was indeed proving to be a productive incentive for Castro.

About this time, the war in Angola, which had been heating up, escalated in a dramatic fashion. The MPLA had decided to increase the pressure on Savimbi in light of the negotiations. In response, the South Africans sent in a large expeditionary force. The South Africans gave the MPLA a beating and recovered some of the ground that Savimbi's UNITA had lost. UNITA was now using the antitank and antiaircraft missiles we had provided them. The Cubans charged that South African military personnel were actually handling the weapons. Shultz later revealed that covert aid to UNITA that year had risen from $18 million to $40 million. Responding to appeals from Luanda, Castro rushed a tank brigade, MIG-23s, and other reinforcements to Angola. The Soviets supplied the shipping. All the warring parties were trying to maximize their positions before serious talks began on an overall settlement. The reinforced Cubans attacked and forced the South Africans back. When the stalemate was more or less restored, troops from the various armies were just about in their original positions before the South African intervention. However, the campaign was seen as a success for Cuba. On instruction, I continued to talk with the Cubans on Angola throughout the escalation in the fighting. This was a testament to AF's ability to deter the Administration from over-reacting to the Soviet-backed Cuban military action to counteract the South Africans.

During the next year, the U.S, led by Assistant Secretary Chet Crocker, mediated a series of meetings on Angola that included Cuban delegations and that twice took place in Havana. The South African and Cuban military officers attending these meetings got along famously. Crocker told Shultz that the Cubans were conducting themselves in a "statesmanlike way and making a positive difference." But according to the Secretary, at this time right-wing staffers in Congress, "fueled by information from the CIA," were telling Savimbi that the State Department was prepared to sell him out by depriving him of South African support but leaving loopholes that would permit the Cubans not to withdraw. Crocker reassured Savimbi this was not the case.

In December of 1988, all the parties concerned, including Cuba, signed the final Angola-Namibia Accord. At the signing ceremony, Secretary George Shultz congratulated the Cuban delegation for its positive contributions to the success of the negotiations. As we predicted was likely, Cuba lived up to its commitments and even withdrew all of its military forces from Angola well before the scheduled date. Elections were held soon after in Namibia and it became an independent state ruled by the former national guerrilla organization, SWAPO. This also laid the groundwork for the declaration by the MPLA in the 1990s that it was no longer a Marxist party and that Angola would henceforth develop as a free market economy. UNITA/MPLA peace talks repeatedly broke down and the Angolan civil war continued for another 15 years. In February 2003 MPLA soldiers killed Jonas Savimbi and UNITA was finally disbanded.

After the successful conclusion of the peace efforts, in 1989, I wrote a thought piece suggesting options on how we might follow up on our commitment to the Cubans that, if they cooperated in a positive outcome on Angola, this would result in improved US/Cuban relations. Among the options, I included one to do nothing. Abrams had moved on by this time, replaced by Bernie Aronson, a Democrat and a moderate and open-minded person. The new country director for Cuban affairs, Bob Morley, was also an outstanding professional. Still, Mike Kozak, a holdover from Abrams' days but an officer I respected, sent me a zinger saying that we had never made any commitment to the Cubans about improving relations. I sent him back the relevant cable numbers, but heard nothing further on the subject from him. Needless to say, no consideration

was given to following up our pledge, a pledge approved at the highest level. I wondered what our reactions would have been if Castro had blatantly turned his back on a firm commitment made to us. Nevertheless, there would again arise in 1989 another context in which we had the opportunity to tie a desired and important change in Cuban policy to the possibility of better relations with the United States.

Q: Before Abrams departed the scene, Cuba was already playing a positive role in the Angolan/Namibian negotiations. What was his reaction to this striking refutation of his view that Castro would never cooperate?

TAYLOR: Despite the on-going success of the Angola negotiations and the earlier resumption of the Mariel accord, the basic view among the Abrams people, so far as I could tell, was that these were essentially tactical maneuvers by Castro that did not really reflect fundamental changes in the regime's communist predilections, its anti-Americanism, or its revolutionary ambitions in Latin America. I also did not believe a basic change in the regime's ambitions and ideology was likely. But, I argued, as in the case of Gorbachev, while adhering to his beliefs, Castro's actual behavior on specific issues was changing. These changes, I thought, could start his regime down the garden path if not the greasy pole. In the meantime, we could achieve important US objectives as on Angola and Namibia, human rights, and perhaps even Central America. I believe the *proto-neocons* never had any intention of following up on the commitment they were compelled by Secretary Shultz to make, promising that success in Angola would lead to an improvement of bilateral relations. Instead, they saw Cuba's actions on the Angolan peace process, which had confounded their dire predictions, as a retreat, which signified weakness. Consequently, in their mind, the U.S. goal continued to be to isolate and weaken Castro as much as possible. This was certainly what Jorge Mas believed.

Q: With whom did you deal with in the Cuban government?

TAYLOR: In 1988, Castro appointed Carlos Aldana, a politburo member, to be the key person on US affairs. This was an informal assignment, but it was clear enough. Aldana, who was the Party's chief ideologist, had remarkably become the most important relative reformist in the inner circle - or so it seemed. Events and rumors suggested that Aldana was sympathetic to Gorbachev's reforms, and that within the Politburo he promoted the policy of seeking a fundamental change in relations with the United States as the necessary condition for internal economic reform and long term political stability. In any event he was a problem solver. The policies he apparently advocated beginning in 1987 were: renewal of the migration agreement, a commitment to withdraw from Angola, some softening of the then absolute suppression of dissidents; and finally a new approach to Central America. I had regular meetings with Aldana over the next two years.

I also had contacts with "think tanks" and universities, all of which were government or party institutions. The scholars and "thinkers" in these organs were careful about what they said, and we always highly caveated their comments to us. But many of them wanted to be seen as true intellectuals, capable of being objective. So it was possible to have useful discussions with some of them on issues such as Angola and human rights, keeping in mind their ultimate ties to the regime. We described these relatively open intellectuals as "wishful thinkers" pushing, within

acceptable limits, for change. Several of the key personalities of this sort - including Osvaldo Martinez and Jose Luis Rodriguez - eventually became government ministers.

At the same time, we developed contacts among Cuban journalists and others in culture and media who were not just agitprop robots but could offer interesting insights. Some of my closest personal contacts were in the cultural field. On the office staff when I arrived was an energetic Public Affairs Officer named Jerry Scott. An equally outstanding USIA officer named David Evans replaced him. Scott and Evans introduced me to fascinating Cubans, including writers, ballet dancers, poets, movie directors, etc. All were eager to have contact with us and we included them in many social activities. Unlike in the Soviet Union, Cuban artists did not have to join the communist party to be successful, but most were believers in or apologists for the regime. Still, like the academics, many of them also had pride in their integrity and self image, and were concerned with how as how we perceived them. In private they could be sardonic or even moderately critical about the regime. Jokes about Fidel and the pathologies of the system were one way of expressing a certain disparaging and thus independent attitude. From these friends, one could gain some sense how the political atmosphere in Cuba was developing.

On day I had lunch with Garcia Marquez, the Nobel novelist. He wanted to discuss a personal matter and to request US Government cooperation. I reported the conversation and suggested that if possible we accommodate Mr. Marquez. He was a close friend of Castro and thus could be an interesting contact. I received back a blistering cable from Abrams, asking what I was doing having lunch in the residence with a known sympathizer of communists and terrorists. I replied that most of my contacts in Cuba were communists who had sympathized with various terrorists. Abrams copied his message to Otto Reich, our Ambassador in Caracas. The Ambassador, a Cuban-American with strong CANF connections, sent a cable confirming that Garcia Marquez was a terrible person.

Q: What about the human rights situation?

TAYLOR: Human rights, of course, were a major concern. Castro knew full well that his record in this area was a real obstacle to any possibility of a true relaxation of relations with the United States. Thus, he began to initiate small but important changes. For one thing, following entreaties by such visitors as Cardinal O'Conner, he began to release the political prisoners who had been held since the early days of the new regime. These old timers were called, *plantados historicos*. More important for the situation inside Cuba, he began to allow some dissident voices to be heard. Before 1987, Cuban dissidents were either in Miami or in a Cuban jail – this was a situation very much akin to the fate of Russian dissidents under Stalin. But in 1987, the situation became similar to that in the post-Stalin era in the USSR when Refuseniks were in and out of jail but sometimes back in their homes speaking against the regime with any one who came to visit.

A few Cuban political prisoners were released from prison and if they chose not to go to the United States were allowed to live at home and even create little informal bands of dissidents. While they could not publish or print written material nor hold meetings, they collected adherents one by one, word of mouth. In addition, for diplomats, foreign journalists, and eventually visiting foreign dignitaries, they became the principal source of comment on human rights in Cuba. Their treatment varied. Sometimes they were given unusual leeway and then

sometimes for little reason they would be put back in jail. Some of these dissidents were probably government provocateurs, at least one proved to be so, a lady named Tania Diaz. But most of these refuseniks literally were dedicating their lives to peacefully challenging the regime.

Dissidents who elect to stay behind rather than flee are often not trusted and in fact resented by activist exiles who live abroad in comfort and freedom and who profess to speak for the people of their oppressed homeland. This is often true even if the stay-behinds have spent time in jail. The Miami community and under Abrams even ARA tended to be suspicious of the first such dissidents of this sort in Cuba. This was because, their existence suggested Castro was willing to tolerate some level of dissent and that Cuba might not be completely a Stalinist-type regime. The exiles and the old ARA did not want to believe that Castro could make even a tactical relaxation of his draconian controls. No doubt, a few were government plants. Others, the Government tried to paint as collaborators, thus distorting their credibility. In the 1990s, Havana claimed that Elizardo Sanchez, the most prominent dissident when I was there, had cooperated with the Ministry of the Interior (MININT). Elizardo denied this, saying that like others, he had, when pressed, simply talked with MININT agents. If Elizardo was and is a "double," it was a costly counter-intelligence ploy. For years he denounced in scathing terms the abuses of the regime, including alleged of torture. Some exiles were also suspicious of the Catholic clergy in Cuba because they continued their mission on the island, thus allowing Castro to argue that freedom of religion existed on the island.

At USINT, I organized a system for maintaining contact with the former prisoners and human rights activists who remained behind in Cuba. Our goal was to provide them moral support but not to posture for the sake of posturing. We did not want to put the dissidents in any more danger than they were. Castro, in an apparent further effort to improve the climate with the U.S., began to give the refuseniks a bit more leeway in what they could do or say without necessarily ending up back in jail. I asked our chief consular officer, Bill Brencik, to serve as USINT's human rights officer charged with following and reporting on the informal movement that was slowly growing.

Our PAO was also very much involved in making these contacts. The PAO and the chief consular officer would visit refuseniks like Elizardo Sanchez. I myself avoided inviting them to the residence or going to their homes. I thought that would be pushing the envelope to no good purpose, possibly putting the dissidents in more danger than they were already, and lending credence to Castro's charges that they were stooges of the USA. We encouraged other embassies also to keep in contact with the dissidents. The Cuban government noticed our activities. German Blanco and on another occasion the Foreign Minister called me in to warn against these activities. I explained that the persons in question were free citizens of Cuba whose opposition to the government was stoutly non-violent and as far as we knew they had no organization, much less one that had been declared illegal. Thus our contact with them did not violate our diplomatic status.

In several cables, I examined what strategies we might adopt at the 1988 UN Human Rights Commission meeting in Geneva. In previous years, the United States had lobbied for a resolution strongly condemning Cuba for its human rights record. I suggested that we try something else; namely a resolution that might earn the support of a large majority of the Commission. Such a resolution would call for an investigation of the human rights situation in Cuba by an UNHCR

delegation. I also thought the charges we made should be those that could clearly be substantiated, of which kind many existed. But to gain credibility we should avoid charges that were particularly shocking but evidence of which was scanty. Ricardo Bofill, the political refugee referred to earlier, once in the United States, released statements charging murder and disappearances in Cuba of other activists. We suggested that rather than simply repeating these charges and seeking a resolution condemning Cuba, the US delegation should ask the UN Commission to investigate these and other allegations and report back the next year. ARA did not like our approach. But the Human Rights Bureau did and that became our strategy in Geneva. The Human Rights Commission did vote to initiate an investigation in Cuba and Castro, to every one's surprise, agreed to cooperate.

In expectation of the UNHCR investigation, Castro made several positive moves. He permitted a UN Human Rights delegation to come to Cuba to investigate the situation there and to listen to the testimony of anyone they wished. Again to everyone's surprise, this commitment was carried out. He also allowed the ICRC to visit all political prisoners in Cuba; he permitted our consular officers to interview potential political refugees in prison; and he began to relax some controls on the Catholic Church, allowing the assignment, for example, of foreign priests where needed. Sometime later, as Castro sought to arrange a visit by the Pope, he changed the constitution of the Cuban Communist Party removing its commitment to atheism and permitting believers to join. At that time at least, the Cuban Party was the only communist party that had taken such a step. Catholic priests could supposedly join the Party, but few if any believers rushed to sign up. Meanwhile, the strict ban on organized or public political activity, including publications and meetings continued. Cuba remained a card-carrying police state, but it was a quasi- rather than a full totalitarian regime. In my view, the limited progress was another aspect of Castro's reaction to the tectonic shift in world politics.

Q: Did you detect any restiveness among Cubans after thirty years of one-man rule?

TAYLOR: The mood was changing. In the late 1970s and early '80s many Cubans saw themselves bestriding the world stage or at least a part of it. Numerous events had led some Cubans to increased national *hubris* - and thus admiration of Castro. These included: the US debacle in Indochina; the communist takeover of Afghanistan; the Sandinistas' victory in Nicaragua; the successful Cuban military role in Angola, Mozambique, and Ethiopia; Castro's sticking it to the USA in the Mariel boat exodus; and Cuba's impressive victories in baseball, boxing, pole-vaulting, and other sports at the Olympics and elsewhere. Fidel was also the recognized leader of the Non-Aligned Movement. All this despite the continued austerity of everyday life for Cubans.

But by 1987, the Cold War was abating and with it Cuba's importance on the world stage. The Soviet Union had run into serious internal problems and a creeping malaise. After the quick death in succession of two old party hacks as leader of the socialist motherland, a reformer who called for a new world order of peace and stability now led the USSR. In the Soviet Union, the press was becoming remarkably assertive. In its novel pursuit of historical honesty, the Soviet Government itself admitted the Katyn Forrest massacre in Poland and published the secret protocols of the 1939 Nazi-Soviet Pact. Even my official contacts like Alarcon were shocked by these revelations, and they said so. In China, Hu Yaobang, an outspoken liberal in the Chinese

Communist Party context, was ousted in 1987, but still an impressive level of reform was taking place. Deng Xiaoping was carrying out a sweeping changes in China's agricultural sector, in effect returning the land of Maoist communes to family farming. Various moves toward political as well as economic reform were taking place in most of the communist world; the global *Zeitgeist* was changing.

No upsurge in the demand for political change, however, took place among Cubans. The main reason was that any public protest or organized opposition would have been quickly knocked in the head. But informed observers inside Cuba, both foreigners and locals, including Catholic pastors with whom we talked as we traveled around the country, also did not detect a rising level of animosity toward the regime. After having been in Cuba for about a year, my impression was that about 25-30% of the population strongly supported the government. They were ready to man the barricades, at least for a few days if not longer to defend Castro's Cuba. These *militantes* for the most part held middle or even lower to high positions in the party, the government, the military, the internal security apparatus, or the economy. Probably another 30% or so were unalterably opposed to the regime. Probably 40% were neither haters nor devotees of Castro. In a crisis, this group could swing to whichever side seemed to be winning. It would depend on the chemistry of the moment.

In a free election with an open campaign Castro in the late 1980s would have probably lost by a wide margin. But even in countries that have had a communist dictatorship imposed upon them, like Mongolia or Poland, the communist party has maintained support in key elements of society even after their walls come tumbling down. As long as an East European communist regime had the solid support of its core and the backing of the Soviet Union, it could resist strong challenges and even revolutions. Unlike most communist dictators, however, Castro possessed a certain historical legitimacy. I'm not sure, he probably still does today. Neither the Russians nor anyone else brought him to power. He created his own revolution. Moreover, his successful stand off for decades with the giant to the north provided him further credibility among many Cubans and other Latins. Thus, it seemed to me that Castro was likely to retain control for some time.

Q. Did the change from Reagan to Bush make a change in our Cuban policy?

TAYLOR: Yes, it made a big change. As I mentioned, the country director Bob Morley was a true professional, a problem solver, not an ideologue. The next year, Elliot Abrams departed to face criminal charges that he lied to Congress. Abrams was the figure in the Iran-Contra scandal who obtained a ten million dollar secret donation from the Sultan of Brunei for the Nicaraguan *Contras*. Typical in this Keystone Cops caper, Oliver North, provided the wrong secret bank account number in Switzerland, and the Sultan's ten million were lost never to be recovered. My businessman friend who knew North at Annapolis has other ideas where the money probably went. Like the current neocons, in the early and mid-1980s, this hard-line group sometime acted as the gang that couldn't shoot straight. Remember the cake and the Bible delivered to the Ayatollahs along with the missiles?

Before Abrams left the Department he gave me an unsatisfactory Evaluation Report - the annual assessment that is the principal element in an officer's promotion and future assignment. In what may have been a first in the foreign service, the then country director, Bob Morley, who of

course worked for Abrams, sent to Personnel a two page memo praising my performance as the chief of mission at Havana. Morley had declined to perform the usual practice and draft Abrams report on my performance. Instead, he wrote his own. It was a courageous thing to do. Quite unprecedented. The letter was put in my file along with Abrams evaluation, but also with a memo from Assistant Secretary for Human Rights, Richard Schifter, commending my "outstanding work on human rights in Cuba under trying circumstances." Following is a brief quote from Schifter's letter:

> "The constant flow of information and analysis which you provided and your highly skilled efforts to nurture and encourage the fledgling human rights movement in Cuba, while avoiding actions that would give the Castro regime a pretext for claiming U.S. interference in domestic affairs, contributed immensely to the success of our efforts…"

Earlier, Secretary Shultz wrote a personal note commending me for my "contribution to our foreign policy... particularly in the area of human rights... in an especially challenging environment." Little did the Secretary know how challenging it was. That note was also in my file. These letters all related to my period in Cuba when Abrams was my boss. After I departed post in 1990, the Promotion Board awarded me a "performance pay award" of several thousand dollars - probably the first such award given a chief of mission who had received a failing grade from his assistant secretary. Abrams was found guilty of perjury but pardoned by President George H.W. Bush. The second Bush put him in the National Security Council in charge of Middle Eastern Affairs, a position he held during all the misrepresentations, exaggerations, cooked intelligence, and gross mis-calculations leading up to the invasion of Iraq and the occupation. Surprisingly, his name has hardly been mentioned as among those responsible for the adventure that will probably prove to be the greatest debacle in American history.

Q: Was Cuba an issue in the 1988 elections?

TAYLOR: As I recall, Cuba was not an issue at all in the presidential campaign of 1988. Bush swept Florida with the support of the Cuban-American community. But the new Secretary, James Baker, intended to build a broader base of support for our Central America policies. The focus was on El Salvador and Nicaragua. As the new assistant secretary, Baker chose Bernie Aronson, a lawyer and a democrat, who had worked in the labor movement. Baker wanted a consensus builder. Policy-wise, he wanted a good outcome to the mess in Central America. When Aronson was appointed, Cuban officials were cautiously hopeful opportunities would open up, or so they told me.

Q: What specifically happened in regard to Central America?

TAYLOR: Aronson did not want to go out on a limb on any Cuban-related issue, and it was incumbent on him to try to massage the Miami community. But, on Central America, if the geo-political pay off was promising, he was willing to explore the idea of a possible détente with Cuba. His was not an ideological approach. Bernie was a breath of fresh air. He authorized my informal conversations in Havana on Cuba and Central America to continue. My political officer

and I met many times with Aldana and his assistant, Garcia Almeida. We stressed that Cuban aid to the guerrillas in El Salvador posed a grave problem. The Cubans insisted that such assistance had already ended and would not begin again. They repeatedly claimed that Cuba wanted to contribute to an outcome in Central America that all parties could accept just as it had done in regard to Angola.

We also discussed the subject frequently with Yuri Petrov, the new Russian Ambassador. Petrov, was a protégé of Yeltsin and a remarkably liberal-minded communist, symptomatic of the "New, New Socialist Man" in Gorbachev's Soviet Union. Petrov stressed that Moscow did indeed want to see an end to tension in Central America and that Castro indeed wanted to cooperate in the peace process in the area. Clearly, Petrov's talking points on this subject came from Moscow. Petrov was close to Aldana and he urged me to take Aldana's remarks on Central America seriously. Petrov indicated that Gorbachev, as he had in Angola, wanted to eliminate Central America as a source of tension with the United States. He also implied that the Russian leader wished to get Cuba off the shoulders of the Soviet Union.

I reported my frequent meetings (usually accompanied by my astute political officer) with Petrov, suggesting that his remarks strongly supported the notion that we should explore the possibilities on Central America with the Cubans. Moscow at the minimum, I suggested, wanted Castro not to be a problem on this critical issue for the United States. A comment to me in late 1989 from Petrov's Political Counselor drove home Gorbachev's amazing redirection of the Soviet *weltanshauung.* Musing about events in Europe and the next step in detente, the Counselor suggested that one idea would be for the Soviet Union to join NATO. I told Betsy I was reminded of the LEGGs stocking incident with the Chinese women cadre in 1975. Again, it was like, "Honey, we've won."

In the summer of 1989, Aldana repeated that Castro was serious about wanting to contribute to a peaceful and stable Central America. But, he added, the Cuban leadership had heard that the United States was planning to launch TV Marti with broadcasts beamed from a dirigible over Florida. The Cubans, he said, felt like the USA was intending to spit in their eye. The TV Marti project was already well under way. The idea had been simmering for some time. In 1989, Congress, pushed by Jorge Mas and his friends, voted funds to start up this TV version of Radio Marti. The station was to be run by the Voice of America and was to be ready by early 1990. Aldana said the Cuban Government was confident that it could jam the TV Marti signals with 90 percent or more success. But its initiation would have a significant effect on US/Cuban relations.

Aldana and I talked about Central America and TV Marti over the next few months. Aldana, by the way, was, at this time, mentioned by Cubans as being on the short list of possible successors to Castro. Aldana repeatedly stated his main points:

Cuba wanted to contribute to a peaceful settlement of the crises in Nicaragua and El Salvador; Cuba had stopped its arms shipments to the area and did not intend to resume them. Cuba would effectively jam TV Marti if it began; but Cuba would see the broadcasts as evidence that US hostility toward Cuba would not change whatever the regime did.

Q: Did Aldana expect the US simply to drop TV Marti?

TAYLOR: Surprisingly, no. At least, that was the message they sent us at that time. I believe it was in the fall that Aldana added an intriguing point:

if the United States felt it important to have American style TV news broadcast into Cuba, there might be other arrangements which the Cuban Government could find acceptable. For example, CNN or PBS' McNeil-Lehrer News Hour might be shown regularly without censorship on Cuban television. But not TV Marti.

This seemed a rather remarkable proposal to be coming from a member of the Cuban Politburo. I reported Aldana's remarks to Washington and suggested that we consider delaying TV Marti broadcasts, which would be blocked in any event, while we explored further the alternative that Aldana had suggested and the Cuban position on Central America. One proposal on the alternative TV news source could be to suggest an American-produced, Spanish-language commercial news program.

Aldana seemed to believe that the new Bush Administration might be amenable to a real break through in US-Cuban relations. But, he understood that for Washington the test would be Central America. At least, Aldana wanted Cuba to be <u>seen</u> as trying to take part in the peace process. But even if it was superficial, I thought, this posture could be useful. But, I speculated, Aldana probably did in fact favor the line of general detente as well as some domestic economic liberalization.

Q: What was happening in regard to economic reform?

TAYLOR: Cuban intellectuals understood that the island and they themselves were being left behind. In many ways, Cuba was still a very backward society, partially because of its dependence on the Soviet Union and sugar. It was not unusual in Cuba to see animal powered carts in the countryside The Cubans provided sugar to the Soviet block at subsidized prices and in return received oil and other products at low prices. This arrangement kept Cuba in the sugar business. Many other countries gave up sugar farming because of the consistently low world market price and subsidies to growers in the United States. Cuban sugar mills seemed like rusting relics of the early industrial revolution, but they kept on grinding. Traveling around, I was always surprised by how outdated the farms were - cane was still cut by machete. The pueblos, larger towns, and Havana itself were also crumbling relics. It was clear that Cuba was falling further and further behind in economic development.

A few in the Cuban Communist Party and the government, like Carlos Aldana, who apparently understood what Gorbachev was trying to do - that is, put a more economically efficient <u>and</u> more human face on communism. This group felt that the Socialist Bloc, the Cuban party, and Cuba itself all had to modernize. They wanted the communist system to become more productive by the use of some elements of a free market system. But, like Gorbachev, they also seemed to accept that a pre-condition for modernization and change in the socialist world was détente with the capitalist - we would say the democratic - world. By the summer of 1989, following events in Poland and the bloody Tiananmen incident in Peking, Castro had concluded that *Glasnost* and *Perestroika* were slippery slopes that where blindly followed would eventually dump socialism

into the dust bin of history. But even still, he recognized that with the likely diminishment if not the ending of Soviet Bloc aid and subsidies, some important changes would have to be made in Cuba's economic regime.

Q: How was Castro reacting to events in Afghanistan and the Soviet Bloc?

TAYLOR: In my talks with Aldana, Alarcon and Arbesu it was apparent that Castro fully understood the disaster for the Soviet Union that Afghanistan had become. This was an intervention, with which Castro had never been happy and about which he had never been consulted, but had publicly supported. The summer of 1989, in his July 20 Moncado Anniversary speech given that year at Cienfuegos, he declared for the first time that Cuba might have to survive without the Soviet Union. I was there, just getting ready to walk out, when I heard him say that Cubans might some day "wake up and learn that the USSR has disintegrated." Despite the tentative wording, he was in fact predicting a momentous historical event - the fall of the USSR. But, he proclaimed, if this happened, Cuba and the Cuban Revolution would continue struggling and resisting.

In a fascinating historical reference, Castro recalled that at the most dangerous moment of the Cuban missile crisis of 1962, Cubans (meaning Castro himself) refused to make any "concessions to imperialism," and were prepared to die rather than retreat or yield. I heard this sitting in my car outside the stadium. This passage was a reference to Castro's fervent opposition at the height of the '62crisis to Khrushchev's proposal to withdraw the Russian missiles in exchange for a US pledge not to invade Cuba and to remove its missiles from Turkey. Instead, Castro, in a message to the Soviet leader, insisted that the nuclear-armed missiles aimed at American cities remain, and if the US Marines, then massing in Florida, did invade Cuba, the Soviet Union should launch a massive first strike against the United States. As Castro has explained, at that time the Cuban people (again meaning himself) knew that in such a nuclear exchange their island would likely be extinguished, but still, for the sake of the world revolution, they were willing to go to the brink of such an outcome rather than compromise. Khrushchev was not willing to do any such thing. Castro's analogy between 1989 and the 1962 crisis was clear, in "this special moment for the world revolution" the Cuban people (that is, Castro) were prepared to fight to the last Cuban against the *imperio*, whatever happened to the USSR and socialism elsewhere.

This speech came well before most Western observers thought the collapse of the Russian communist state was a serious and near term possibility. The Moncado Anniversary speech of 1989 laid the ground work for what came to be called "the Special Period in peace time," a time of grave austerity for Cuba occasioned by the end of Soviet Bloc aid and subsidies. To meet the drastic drought expected in foreign currency he gave the go ahead to a commanding emphasis on expanding tourism and eventually "dollarization," turning Cuba into a two-part economy - peso and dollar. He also commanded a variety of other emergency measures. Expecting a painful shortage of oil, for example, he bought 100,000 Chinese bicycles.

The effort to boost tourism was a remarkably successful program. The target for 1990 was 200,000 tourists. During the year 2003 more than 2 million foreigners would stretch out on the sands at Varadero and the other beautiful *playas o*f Cuba. Castro reluctantly accepted the

collateral social and ideological damage that would come along with the expected tsunami of foreign bourgeois looking for pleasure. My last year in Havana, 1990, young women began to appear along the Malacon and even *Quince Avenida,* waving at foreign men passing in cars or taxies. Before "the Special Period," prostitution had supposedly been wiped out, and in fact previously one saw little public appearance of the trade. Except for tourism and the dollar economy, however, Castro was cautious on economic reforms, but some important experiments did go forward.

Dealing with global political questions, however, was different. Even at this time, Castro, pressed by the Russians, was still willing to give Aldana the authority to continue to explore the possibilities of an improvement of relations with the United States, including the possibility of broadcasting in Cuba a regular schedule of CCN, PBS, or Telemundo news programs, presumably with Spanish subtitles. But now the Cubans linked this question to another developing issue in our relations - the plan to begin US-Government financed television broadcasts to Cuba - TV Marti.

Q: Before you talked about Cuba and Central America? What <u>was</u> happening at this stage.

TAYLOR: Early in my tour, in several cables I wondered if Castro in his efforts to accommodate to the shifting sands of global politics might also be willing to change his policies in Central America as he had in Africa. Aldana, Alarcon, and Ambassador Petrov claimed that Castro was well aware of the changing currents in Central America. For one thing, Gorbachev, in his pursuit of detent, wanted an end to US-Soviet tensions in that area as he had in Africa. Thus, Castro, we were told, wanted to play a positive role in Central America as he was then doing in Angola. Cuba, they claimed, was no longer providing arms or training to the FMLF in El Salvador and would not do so in the future. Moreover, they insisted their government also understood that for the foreseeable future a communist regime would not be the best solution for Nicaragua. Yes, they asserted, this meant Cuba could accept an electoral victory in Nicaragua by a non-Sandinista party. These assertions, if true - a big "if" - meant that our objectives regarding Cuba's policies and actions in Central America had to a large extent already been achieved.

In my cables, I stressed that this was a proposition not necessarily to be taken at face value. But I proposed that we test Castro on the question. I thought if we could get Castro to support, even if only rhetorically but convincingly, the *Esquipulas* peace process in Central America, including monitored elections, then that might further edge the Sandinistas toward actually carrying out the elections, which they had by that time agreed to. But much earlier in a 1987 cable, I had said I assumed that our strategy in Nicaragua was to try to push the Sandinistas toward democratic elections that they might well lose. In the fall of 1989, with Bernie Aronson now on board as head of ARA, I again proposed a possible parallel between Nicaragua and Marcos' situation in the Philippines in 1986. Castro's open support for a genuinely free election in Nicaragua could significantly contribute to achievement of a similar outcome in that country. The experience in Angola suggested that it was at least possible that Castro perceived that the fundamental shift underway in world politics had fundamentally altered revolutionary prospects in Central America for the foreseeable future. I ended my cable by saying that my assessment could be wrong in its basic assumptions, but that I thought we should at least explore with the Cubans what they had in mind in regard to Central America.

Q: In 1989, events in Eastern Europe raised the possibility that some of the communist regimes could collapse. What was the view about Castro's position at that time?

TAYLOR: For 30 years, the exile community had believed Castro was on the verge of collapse and the Abrams *proto-neocons* also adopted this assumption as one of the foundations of their policy. The Ochoa affair and the collapse of the Berlin Wall led to intense pressure on USINT to predict the near-term, if not imminent, collapse of the Castro government. Some in Washington and Miami argued strenuously that the execution of Ochoa and three of his co-defendants was a sign of deep, irreversible splits in the regime that were certain to worsen and steadily weaken to the point of rupture. (Some also argued that - even if the splits didn't exist prior to the trial - the execution would cause them.) The likely loss of Soviet subsidies was also cited as nearly certain to aggravate popular suffering, instigate widespread protests, and - especially if the state apparatus overreacted in a repressive manner - lead to the regime's downfall.

If this conclusion was true, it followed that the United States should increase pressure on the regime in any way possible and minimize its dealings with Castro. In the then existing political environment, some Foreign Service officers and some senior people in the CIA absorbed this view. I am told that even my successor in Havana, a fine officer and not an Abrams *proto-neocon* (Aronson was then Assistant Secretary), told the USINT staff in 1990 that Castro's days were numbered. That was 4,000 days ago. After the trial and execution of General Arnaldo Ochoa in 1989 for drug smuggling, the CIA National Intelligence Officer for the Western Hemisphere insisted that the Cuban Army would soon revolt. Although working-level CIA analysts on Cuba did not share this view, an official Agency assessment at the time, concluded that the collapse of the regime was imminent. A Miami journalist, Andres Oppenheimer, wrote a book entitled, "*Castro's Final Hour*." Today, when they meet him, Oppenheimer's friends point to their watch.

However much my like-minded colleagues and myself would have liked to see the pressures on Castro lead to rapid democratic change, our job was to report the government's weaknesses and strengths as we saw them. Our conclusion in 1989-90 was that the "crises" at home (the Ochoa affair) and abroad (in the Socialist Bloc) constituted a serious blow to the government's credibility and to its previous image of near invincibility. Nevertheless, we said, the government had substantial political assets remaining and had begun showing the flexibility to mount a strategy that could enable it to survive for years to come. This was an unpopular conclusion in some quarters and prompted numerous personal attacks on myself and the political officer (who as I noted was a career CIA analyst on loan). To some people, noting a police state's residual strengths and suggesting it could well survive for some years reflected sympathy with it. But, 14 years later, the accuracy of our reporting and analysis, I believe, has been borne out.

Much of our reporting effort was devoted to exploring the regime's growing vulnerabilities and residual strengths. With the fall of the Berlin Wall, the Central and East European embassies, which previously had limited their interaction with us to discrete social events, practically flung wide their doors. Having invested for decades in Cuba - just to be cut off with the fall of the wall - they got a taste of the "class enemy" status that we often endured in dealing with the government, including the close surveillance which we in USINT were subject to. (If we have

time, I will mention later examples of this surveillance and harassment.) These new diplomatic friends were eager to piece the analytical puzzle of Cuba's future together with us. The Czechs encountered a serious problem when two dissidents took refuge in their ambassador's residence. The Czechs refused to turn them over to the police. A day or two later, more avowed dissidents (I am not sure of the number), obviously MININT agents, also fled into the residence. The next day, the faux dissidents began methodically trashing the residence. Eventually, the Czechs had to call in the police, who took away the original refuge seekers and the MININT agents.

The government's declaration of the "special period of peace time" that merged in the second half of 1989, bordered on a plan for autarchy. It appeared in part to build on the regime's greatest strengths: maintaining political control and controlling the distribution of scarce resources, but it also included not only an all-out promotion of foreign tourism and some economic relaxation as well.

Betsy and I, usually accompanied by the Section's political officer, made numerous trips around the country to see what was happening as "the special period" began. Again, we crisscrossed the entire island, sometimes by Cubana Air, but usually driven by our excellent chauffeur and guide, Orlando. We saw flexibility, albeit usually hidden under mounds of hoary rhetoric such as the revived slogan "Socialismo o muerte." Under the screen of public revolutionary cant, we perceived an almost surreptitious redrafting of some tenets of socialism and even *fidelismo*. Enterprise directors who in the past hewed closely to the Marxist catechism of "to each according to his need," were reworking their talking points to reflect the emerging need for increasingly generous material incentives to workers. "To each according to his production," they would say without batting an eye.

Citrus and tobacco farmers told us that those who produced more, were now paid more - sometimes with hard-currency certificates. A law governing foreign investment was passed, and expanding tourism was identified as a major economic engine. The enfeebled King Sugar was soon to be dislodged. Inefficient state farms were trying to mimic the successes of the country's thousands of private farmers, who were among some of the richest people in the country. The media insisted that *perestroika* wasn't coming to Cuba's shores but nevertheless it began to lay out new guidelines for managers, emphasizing workers incentives, rationalization of accounting books, and waking up to the fact that change was necessary for national survival. Many state enterprises were beyond reform. But the message to the Cuban economic and other bureaucracies seemed clear, change was in the wind.

So, while the C*omandante's* rhetoric pretended that nothing was changing or would change, the meaning of socialism was being rewritten to accommodate some stretching of the ideology. Most of these changes fell short of deserving the label of "reform," but we sensed that they amounted to a regime survival strategy that, while excruciatingly slow and limited compared to that of China and Vietnam, over time could, by giving the people a little breathing room, give the government breathing room. Economic conditions continued to worsen while I was there until August 1990, but the gameplan that we first discerned in 1989-90 later evolved into the compendium of adaptive policies later called "dollarization" in the second half of the new decade. It could be argued that since that time the tinkerings have amounted to little. Some have in fact been rescinded. Maintaining control has certainly continued to be far more important than

improving people's lives. But today, people who continue to follow Cuban affair closely tell me that the changes that were made have over time eroded the ideological underpinnings of the regime, the people's relationship with the state, and their expectations of it.

In December 1989, I went back to Washington and talked with Bernie Aronson about Cuba, Central America, and TV Marti. I told Bernie that the Cubans wanted to know, if they played a positive role in Central America, could they really expect a new era of U.S.-Cuba relations? On the other hand, we wanted to know if Castro was willing and able to play a useful role at this time in Nicaragua and EL Salvador. I said I thought it was possible. It was also possible that Fidel could, if he wished, throw the Nicaraguan election train off the tracks. I said that Petrov had indicated the Russians were leaning on Castro to be forthcoming on the issue. Before I left, Petrov had said that Aldana would have a specific proposition for us. This was intriguing to say the least.

Aronson instructed me to tell the Cubans we would listen to any concrete proposals regarding what they might do in regard to Central America that would prove their *bona fides* and significantly encourage the Sandinistas' implementation of a democratic settlement - that is free and monitored elections. If their proposals seemed helpful, Aronson concluded, the Cubans could then be invited to participate in broader discussions, perhaps in the Esquipulas process, and this in turn would have consequences for their relations with the United States.

In my discussion with Aronson, I stressed that the Cubans could and would jam TV Marti in such a way as to bar reception to virtually all of the population. Bernie offered no guidance on this question. At the Cuban desk, however, Bob Morley showed me an inter-agency study that was about to be submitted to the NSC. This was in early or mid-December, 1989. The study unanimously recommenced what we had been suggesting, namely that we delay the launching of TV Marti while exploring with Carlos Aldana his suggestion that there might be an acceptable alternative in which American commercial or Public news broadcasts would be received in Cuba on a regular basis. Then, the Berlin Wall came tumbling down. The same week, in Bucharest, Ceausescu fell.

Q: What happened after your return to Havana?

TAYLOR: When I returned, I immediately set up a meeting the next morning with Aldana in his office. I intended to pass on what Bernie had instructed me to tell him and to receive the proposal Yuri had indicated would be forthcoming. That night, the United States invaded Panama. In the morning, tens of thousands of Cubans were "spontaneously" demonstrating in front of the Interest Section. A platform had been built overnight and loud speakers were broadcasting a steady stream of vitriolic speeches. Over the next week, supposedly a million Cubans took part in the protest. Our Marines went on riot alert. Aldana's assistant, Garcia Almeida, telephoned to say the meeting obviously would have to be postponed. But he asked if he could come to see me. I, of course, agreed, and he rushed over to the Interest Section, pushing his way through the mob to get in the building.

To my knowledge, this was the first time a Cuban official had called at USINT. My wonderful secretary, Vivian, by mistake put salt rather than sugar on the table along with coffee. In the

usual Cuban fashion, Garcia put several spoons in his cup. At the first sip, he gagged. After being assured that we were not trying to poison him, he said that in view of the invasion, Aldana would have to postpone our meeting. But, he emphasized, we should simply "cool" things for a while until the dust settled; then early next year, we could hopefully continue the discussions as planned. He said that there would have to be an interval during which time the Cuban government would strongly protest our military actions in Panama.

Over the next few days, I made my way several times through the excited crowd to drive to the Foreign Ministry. There, I protested the protests, and on one occasion received a serious protest in return from the Cuban side regarding the temporary detention by US forces of the principal Cuban diplomat in Panama City. I talked on the phone to Bernie about the detention and it was quickly cleared up. Along with what had just happened in Berlin and elsewhere in the Communist Bloc, the invasion of Panama excited the hopes of the Cuban-American community in Miami.

Q: What happened on TV Marti?

TAYLOR: The Miami exiles now believed that for sure Castro's days were numbered. Bumper stickers appeared proclaiming, "Navidad en la Havana." The dictator would be lucky to survive until the end of the coming year (1990), they thought. Mas and the other exile leaders immediately stepped up their pressures to put TV Marti on the air ASAP. By this time, Mas had read the interagency study. Even before, he knew full well that the TV broadcasts would be effectively jammed. Mas' priority objective, however, was not to bring unbiased TV news to the Cuban people. If this had been the goal, we should certainly have explored Aldana's proposal that Cuba accept regular news broadcasts by CNN or PBS. But Mas' real intention was to create a provocation that could stir Castro to retaliate, perhaps by illegally beaming broadcasts into the USA or even trying to shoot down the dirigible, "Fat Albert," that was planned to be the transmitting tower. In event, the launching of TV Marti, Mas surely calculated, would be a feather in his cap and another multi-million dollar employment opportunity for CANF supporters.

In the existing environment, Castro needed only a little shove, the community thought, to do something reckless. TV Marti might do the trick. At least it would throw a monkey wrench into any US-Cuban cooperation such as on Central America. Mas lobbied strenuously on the Hill and he almost certainly reminded the White house that candidate George Bush in 1988 had in person promised CANF and other Cubans in Miami that TV Marti would definitely go ahead. Neither Abrams, who was present, nor anyone else had the *cohones* to tell Bush the serious problems with the project.

The NSC met to review the inter-agency paper and decide what to do about TV Marti. The White House, however, had clearly made up its mind long before. Although USIA technical people agreed that the TV Marti signal would be "very fragile," the politically appointed head of USIA argued that some Cubans would hear the broadcasts and the programs should begin ASAP. The unanimous interagency recommendation in favor of exploring the alternative policy was ignored and the Council voted to begin the broadcasts.

At least somebody at the FCC was awake. President Bush's order to proceed with TV Marti included a proviso that all of the station's transmission had to be consistent with international regulations. Mas, I was told, opposed this restriction, but, not surprisingly, the NSC agreed with the FCC. The restriction meant that TV Marti could not interfere with existing Cuban broadcasts. That limited TV Marti's broadcasts to a time period between 2 a.m. and 5 a.m. One Sunday after mass, a group of Cuban parishioners told a Section officer that they hoped the United States would not begin TV Marti if in fact Castro could as he claimed jam it. Please don't give him another victory, they pleaded.

On the night in February when TV Marti began broadcasts, we divided USINT staff members into various teams, each with a car and a portable, battery-run TV set. Beginning at 2AM, the teams drove around Havana and its suburbs to test the reception of the TV Marti signal. I was part of the exercise. Beginning promptly at 2 am, we all saw a brief picture of the lead-in with the anchors at their desk. But after that, "*Click*," and a screen of snow appeared along with an audio of confused static.

Immediately after 5 am, I telephoned Bernie Aronson, who had risen early for the occasion, and told him that TV Marti had not been received anywhere in the areas we had monitored. The next day, we canvassed religious leaders, diplomats, and other sources in Havana about the reception. We heard the same response from diplomats. Most notably, catholic priests around the country reported to their Bishop in Havana that essentially zero reception was the rule in their local areas. Western correspondents said they also could not receive the signal and had not heard of anyone who had. We circulated a questionnaire to visa applicants, asking whether they could receive TV Marti in their homes. After several weeks, the results showed that an overwhelming majority (about 95%) of the 2,000-or-so respondents said that they could not receive TV Marti. Cubans told us it was called "*La TV que no se ve*," (The TV that cannot be seen"). In short, the evidence was overwhelming - the broadcasts were effectively jammed.

We reported all this to Washington. In response, we received a cable saying that our research was deficient because USIA had conducted a survey that indicated that a majority of Cubans were receiving and watching TV Marti, getting up in the wee hours to do so. I returned to Washington and attended a meeting at USIA with the TV Marti director, senior USIA officials (I think including the Director), Jorge Mas, and others. I told them what our surveys had shown. I said the jamming was almost 100% effective. Spots existed here and there where the signal was received sporadically, but those instances were few and far between. When the programming first began each morning, usually a few seconds of the opening scene could be seen before the jamming cut in. All of our contacts in Cuba, including the clergy and human rights activists, reported that few if any persons on the island were receiving the signals from TV Marti.

I was told, however, that USIA had commissioned a survey by a professional polling company that indicated otherwise. Two of the pollsters were at the meeting. The USIA-sponsored survey had been conducted at the Miami airport. The pollsters interviewed people arriving from Cuba, both residents of the island and of the USA. In other words, Cubans landing in Miami, some of whom had never been out of Cuba before, found themselves in front of a total stranger who out of the blue asked them whether they had been able to see TV Marti while in Cuba.

I invited a USIA representative to come to Havana with or without the polling contractor to conduct his or her own survey there. I said it was ridiculous to believe that a survey conducted in Miami was more trustworthy than all the on-site tests and surveys we had made in Cuba itself. Night after night, we had seen it - actually, not seen it with our own eyes! And our eyeball tests had been confirmed by diplomats, priests, the Catholic Bishop, Cuban activists, and Western journalists. It was unanimous. TV Marti for all practical purposes was not being seen. Mas said I was wrong. I again invited any or all of those in the room to come back to Cuba with me and see - or not see - for themselves. Silence prevailed around the table.

I don't think anyone there really believed TV Marti signals were being received in Cuba. It was a Kafkaesque moment - a true Orwellian experience, to see a room full of grown, educated men and women so afraid for their jobs or their political positions that they could take part in such a charade. Again looking back, this behavior was in keeping with the Hobbesian philosophy of the proto-neocons of the 1980s and the neocons of the current Bush Administration: bald deception by the enlightened ruling elite is sometimes necessary. The rule: when caught in a total fabrication, simply insist it is true. Similarly, Dick Cheney in 2004, despite the reports of two commissions to the contrary, continues to insist there was an ominous connection between Saddam Hussein and Al Qaeda, and Saddam and terrorist attacks against America. (In reality, the CIA, not Al Qaeda, had collaborative connections to Saddam, and it was at the time when he was killing thousands with poison gas.) In 1990, Aronson and ARA understood what had happened and told me as much. They rolled their eyes. But Bernie did not pick up the cudgels on the TV-Marti fiasco. He had other, bigger problems.

So, 14 years later, good humored TV Marti anchors, handsome men and beautiful women, continue to open their show at 2:00AM and a slick, professionally produced two hours of news follow. But still the Cuban people can not and do not see the programs. The ideas of Leo Strauss, the neoconservative philosophical icon, have been confirmed: 1) the steel will of a determined political elite, even in a democracy, can - in the service of a presumed good and essential cause - impose projects that override the basic rules of common sense and rationalism; and 2) deception is the necessary norm in political life. Come to think about it, these are the same rules under which Castro has always operated. I believe the cost of TV Marti is about $16 million a year. No Democratic or Republican politician cares to take on this unique waste of taxpayers' money.

Eventually, the TV Marti programs were also transmitted by satellite. But the only Cubans who can see these broadcasts are the elite who have satellite receivers: the Cuban internal security police, Castro, and perhaps other Politburo members.

Q: I guess the $16 million is sort of a payoff because there must a number of people in Miami who are now employed by TV Marti.

TAYLOR: That's probably true. I would guess there are dozens or even a hundred or more well paid jobs that go to members of the Cuban-American community. The invasion of Iraq, now justified largely on the basis of expelling a dictator, has again excited the exiles in Miami. Most recently, CANF and others have successfully pushed for the US Government to invest in a new TV Marti transmitting station - a C-130 flying high - but in US air space. The hope is that this

signal will be strong enough to override Cuba's jamming. This may be another fiasco in the making.

The TV Marti episode was a sign to Castro that there could not be an improvement in U.S.-Cuba relations even under the relatively moderate, common sense Administration of George Bush. For the Bush White House, like most Democratic as well Republican Administrations, Cuba was just not that important. Aldana, who apparently had been the principal figure in the inner circle pushing for a new relationship with the U.S. and for domestic reforms, was discredited. Castro sent him off to be the manager of a state enterprise outside of Havana. At the same time, the fall of The Wall and other dramatic developments in Eastern Europe strengthened Castro's conclusion that even minor democratic reforms would destroy a communist government. The events in China leading up to the Tiananmen Incident in July 1989 drove the point home. The possibility that he could be nudged onto the slippery slope of political reform vanished for good.

Q: How did you as a professional deal with this political maze? Did you become cynical?

TAYLOR: I just kept plugging away. I was a professional and I called the shots as I saw them. The worst they could have done would have been to fire me - which CANF did try. It was a fascinating experience - to be in Cuba at that time and to be involved in the heated internal struggle over Cuba policy. Actually, except for the African, ARA, and Human Rights Bureaus in State, the Miami exiles, and rightwing politicians, no one else in the nation seemed to care. In the George Bush Administration, ARA was understanding and cautiously supportive. I should say that all the concerned departments of the US Government, except USIA, at the principals level supported my recommendations on TV Marti. But none wanted to make an issue of the counter decision made by the political leadership. On some other issues, for example, cooperation on drug trafficking, I was alone in floating alternatives and presenting what I thought was an objective interpretation of Castro's situation, his intentions, and our related interests.

I wouldn't have missed it for the world. Cuban policy is one of the frustrating but endearing aspects of the foreign policy of a rich and powerful democracy in which the interests of ethnic/religious and exile groups play a big role. As a result, as a nation we can often act irrationally and seemingly not in the country's best interests. Its human nature to take advantage of power, and in America, money and votes can outweigh common sense on foreign policy. Likewise, in a democracy those not directly affected often let relatively small minorities focused on a single foreign policy agenda have their way, particularly when it seems to involve little cost and when on the other side dictators are involved. As American politics becomes increasingly driven by money, that phenomenon is enhanced. In government as elsewhere, true integrity is fairly rare. Careerism is a common disease. A healthy, democratic system will eventually self-correct. Still, in that USIA meeting room, I did think of all the good burghers and bureaucrats of Nazi Germany who went along with a travesty, although of quite a different order.

Q: Was Castro perceived as still being on top of his game and fully supported by the Cuban population?

TAYLOR: Although the popular mood had soured considerably since 1980, I didn't see any diminution of Castro's power or health while I was there. To live to a ripe old age and thus

survive a few more US presidents, Castro gave up cigars. He also exercises at least an hour a day. In 1990, I thought we should predicate our plans on the assumption that he would be around and in charge for years to come, perhaps even 10 or more. It has now been 14 years since I thought that. Obviously, anything can happen, including sudden death from natural causes or assassination. Although Fidel would lose a free election, I believed that the core of his support - maybe 25-30 percent of the population - remained strong. He was an expert at playing on Cuban nationalism and even many of those Cubans who in an open free election would have voted against him, were impressed by his victories against the odds, particularly those over the "Yankees." Castro, of course, was and is central casting's version of a charismatic dictator. When he had an opportunity, such as the Mariel crisis of 1980, the serious outbreak of fighting in Angola in 1987 and 1988, the incident involving alleged double agents recruited by the CIA, or - to jump ahead to 2000 - the case of the young refugee, Elian Gonzales, he would put himself at center stage. For him, politics was and is theater.

He plays many roles - the communist "Big Brother," the Western Romantic, the macho, Latin caudillo. Like Mao, Stalin, and Hitler before him, he hardly ever fails to enthrall visitors of whatever political persuasion with his magnetism, charm, and detailed knowledge of almost any subject that is raised. Like his historical models, supreme confidence in his own mission gives the Cuban leader a special magnetism. His "*hubris-nemesis*" complex has imparted to him energy, ambition, and dynamism. He has always dreamed of glory, of being enthroned as a savior in the hearts of Latin Americans, if not all humankind. Once he said he would be glad to be the Pope. He has sought to achieve the ideal of the revolution - creation of a new, unselfish socialist man - while also destroying his *nemesis,* his Moby Dick - the United States. After leaving Cuba in 1990, I discussed all this in a book entitled, *The Rise and Fall of Totalitarianism*.

A more recent thought, upon which I have touched on briefly, would suggest that Castro's fervent support of high socialist ideals at the cost of truth and law is similar in principle but not in degree to the amoral idealism of American neocons. During the Cuban-missile crisis in 1962, Castro urged Khrushchev not to remove the missiles and if the US as a result invaded Cuba, to launch an all-out first strike with nuclear weapons against the United States. The American neocons today support the threat of nuclear weapons not just to deter any nuclear attack on the United States or its allies but also if necessary to maintain America's overwhelming military Dominance, most notably over China.

But, back to the popular mood in Cuba. Radio Marti, I think, in its early years raised the general level of political consciousness in Cuba and thus to some extent of popular dissatisfaction. A number of factors, however, in addition to the threat of brute force, kept discontent from bubbling up. These included the pervasive surveillance system of block committees and other informers. Cubans, although tired of the society of scarcity and fatigued by incessant propaganda, turn out for mass rallies - as much as ten percent of the population on some occasions. During the protests of the US invasion of Panama in December 1989, a total of a million Cubans over a seven-day period reportedly congregated before the USINT building on the wind and wave-swept Malacon. Of course they came because their work unit or organization was told to send them on certain days and certain hours. And most came in buses. Nevertheless, my guess is that the majority of the demonstrators vaguely agreed with the cause behind the protest, although they were not all that angry about the matter. Most important, it was a day off.

For most Cubans no real alternative to the current regime existed then or I believe exists today. Considerable tacit, and in some cases active, support for the regime, however, was also generated by a common belief that reasonably good education and health care were freely available to all as well as a full if monotonous diet. Beef or pork was rare but chicken was probably served one to three times a week in most homes, pork, maybe once and a week. Cuban socialism was good at producing eggs and making ice cream. During my time in Cuba, a family of four received a ration of four dozen eggs a week! Some regularly fed the family dog a raw egg. Others suggested that after the revolution a great statue to THE EGG would be raised, for it allowed Cubans to survive. The local government provision shops also doled out a large ration of sugar - the same family of four could buy up to a pound of sugar a week at a very cheap price. Cubans always bought anything and everything on the ration list if it was available. What they did not need they would sell or barter. Non-rationed items were also snapped up regardless of what they were. A common story was of someone joining a queue and after a while asking the person in front what it was they were waiting to buy. The ice cream was also delicious and cheap enough for popular consumption. Preferring rice, the Cubans were terrible at making bread. For three years we did chose not to have bread at home. In small pueblos as well as in the big cities ubiquitous coffee bars sold Cuban espresso. Cheap rum was available as well as a local beer and a version of coke.

Subsidized highbrow culture was provided, including European quality ballet, orchestra, and opera. As in sports, children were selected at an early age for these pursuits. As a way out of socialist drudgery, boys were as anxious to become ballet dancers as girls. As a result, male Cuban dancers were then at least overwhelmingly heterosexual. Homosexuals had been jailed early on in the Revolution but by the 1980s were winked at but did not live openly together. The famous Alicia Alonso ran the renowned Cuban Ballet; at seventy, sometimes tottering around on stage herself. The hundreds of little cafes and clubs that used to enliven Havana with their own salsa bands were, however, long gone. Thus, informal groups or “clubs” of musicians who played at home, like the now famous “The Buena Vista Social Club,” came into existence.

As in other communist countries, the cities of Cuba lacked the color and vigor of pre-Castro days. I believed that a traveler beamed anywhere in those days could tell immediately that he or she was in a communist city. Cubans who lived in the pueblos and the city slums were poor by US standards. Petty crime in Havana Vieja was a constant problem. The wife of Sonny Metha, the liberal-thinking editor of Knopf, while visiting Havana, was mugged near the Hotel Nationale. She came to the office one Saturday morning to get a new passport and told me her story. After she returned to New York, she wrote a mostly-positive article about Cuba but omitted the story of her mugging. One day, on the steps of the old *Catedral*, a thief grabbed Betsy’s purse, but she managed to hang on. Overall, however, life in Cuba in the 1980s and probably still today was and is not like the grim existence in North Korea or before the 1990s in Bulgaria and other Bloc countries. One difference was and is the beautiful Cuban weather and the glorious Gulf waters that the regime offers free to the people. For Russian families, an assignment to Havana was then like a posting to heaven. Some Cubans called the swimming pool at the large hotel where many Russians stayed, “the Bay of Pigs.” Every year one or two hurricanes ripped through the island, but basically it was a grand island climate, a nice breeze nearly always whistling through the cane. And at the end of it all, funerals were provided free - a little payment would get you a better coffin or something other than a small government-issue stone. Probably cradles were free

as well. Because of the low birthrate, special allowances existed for children along with long maternal and postnatal leaves.

In between the cradle and the grave, the opiate of the masses was and is television. Virtually every home had a set. Baseball, soccer, boxing, and basketball were favorite programs. All baseball games were - what else? - free. Work units gave out the tickets. Most popular, however, were the up-to-date American movies that were pirated in Mexico and broadcast several times a week. The Cuban station would seldom miss a Hollywood film like "Platoon" that made America look militaristic or full of crime and violence. But surprisingly the card-carrying station producers also broadcast a great many movies that left a favorable or straightforward impression of life in the United States. Despite the very unreal aspects of most movies, romances and police films usually gave such an impression simply by showing everyday life and how society worked or even didn't work in the USA.

Actually, Cuba at that time was just beginning to produce good films on its own. The writers and directors, some of them I knew, would poke fun at Cuba's political and economic system and the social pathologies it produced. Castro's tolerance of such satires was another indication that Cuba might slowly evolve toward a more open society, although certainly not a democratic one as long as Fidel was around. Here, I might note, that while Castro was in some ways a Big Brother figure, he was not openly deified. One did not usually see his picture in government offices or schools. Instead, the honor went to Che Guevera, Jose Marti, and other revolutionaries of the past. Castro is a narcissistic personality, but he understood that his God-like stature among the intelligentsia was best projected without the slavish idolization of a Kim Il-sung.

Cubans freely tell jokes about Castro and pass on true stories of the eccentricities of the socialist system of scarcity. An old lady friend of ours said a window frame in her house had rotted out and her underground handyman said he could fix it but he did not know when - first a window that size would have to be stolen. A priest said that in Cuba only Nine Commandments were in effect. "Thou shall not steal" had been removed.

Q: Did we do anything to ameliorate popular resentment of the United States that sprang from old memories and history and was constantly fanned by Castro? Or was it so strong that little could be done about it?

TAYLOR: Radio Marti was fairly effective at doing just that, at least while I was there. Later, especially after 2000, it apparently became highly propagandistic and polemical. I understand it has lost much of its audience. At the insistence of USIA, Radio Marti originally did not indulge in blatant propaganda. Rather it ran interesting features and balanced news programs. Then under insistent pressure from Jorge Mas the organization moved to Miami. There it became the creature of CANF.

Among Latin Americans, Cubans are the closest to North Americans in popular culture. Cubans are fun loving but good organizers. At all the old gatherings of the Non-Aligned Movement, Cuban personnel normally played the key administrative role wherever the meetings were held. Cubans, of course, like Americans, love the intricacies and arcania of baseball. Castro is a big fan. He has told visitors that someday, Havana will be in the Major Leagues. Also like

Americans, Cubans, even without the stimulation provided by Hallmark, pay a lot of attention to Mother's Day and Valentines' Day - *dia de los romanticos*. They take these days more seriously than we do. Of course, they remember and resent the long history of interference and dominance by the Yankees as well as the corruption of post war Cuba by US gambling and criminal interests. The public schools naturally play up and embellish these memories to *a fair-thee-well*. But as a pure impression, I personally think anti-imperialist resentment in Cuba is superficial, especially in the young generation, which is much more interested in North American pop culture and sports than in what happened half a century ago. During the 1950s Revolution, Castro did not pitch his revolution as an anti-U.S.-imperialism cause. That came after the victory of the revolution.

Q: Besides the renewal of the Mariel agreement and the Angola settlement, were there any other developments while you were in Cuba?

TAYLOR: Many other issues arose during my tour. One dealt with the Olympics to be held in Seoul, Korea. North Korea refused to participate. The South suggested holding some of the events in the North if Pyongyang would participate, but that didn't change the mind of Kim Il-sung. People became concerned that the North might try to disrupt the games in one way or another given its record of violent behavior. The Soviets agreed to participate in the Seoul Olympics, a decision that infuriated the North Koreans. But Castro, in a gesture of "solidarity" said that Cuba would not participate. It seemed to me that if the International Olympics Committee could change Cuba's position that might diminish the prospects of any North Korean attempt to create trouble during the Games in Seoul. So I suggested to Washington that we get the IOC involved and explore how we might encourage Cuba to attend the Games. The desk rudely rejected this suggestion.

At one point in 1988, the Cubans tried to relieve our growing concerns about the construction of a nuclear power plant in Cienfuegos. The Soviets were building the plant. We worried about its safety because it was the same type of reactor that had blown apart in Chernobyl the year before. Newspaper articles in Florida warned of a possible Chernobyl next door. Informally, I asked many lay-man's questions in Havana about the plant. The Cubans suggested that I visit the facility. With Washington's approval, I spent two days climbing round the gigantic construction site and talking to the engineers and supervisors. Near the site was a little Russian community of workers and their families. I returned to Havana and gave a detailed report. Of course, I knew nothing about nuclear energy or weapons so my visit could hardly calm concerns. But it was a start. Again, with Washington's approval - many agencies would have been involved, such as Energy - I suggested to Washington that we follow up with a visit of US experts. Given the horrendous if remote safety implications, the inter-agency bureaucracy agreed on this initiative and a team soon arrived. That was another example, in my mind, of Castro's willingness in some limited respects to follow the path that Gorbachev was taking toward a general policy of cooperation.

Q: Did you have a steady stream of visitors who wanted to see Castro?

TAYLOR: We did indeed. Surprisingly, a number of congressmen came to Havana. Near the end of 1988, two prominent congressional visitors arrived back-to-back. One was Congressman

Torricelli (Democrat, New Jersey) - later Senator - who was known then as being quite liberal. He had a large entourage with him. Castro summoned him one evening for his usual night session. The next day before the Congressman and his staff departed for Washington, my wife and I and the PAO, Jerry Scott, had dinner with them at a government-owned restaurant. At the dinner, Torricelli enthusiastically described all the things he had seen in Cuba - factories, schools, hospitals, public works, etc. He was very impressed. He compared Cuba in favorable terms with the poverty stricken Latin American countries he had visited.

I politely suggested that one had to make such comparisons within some context. Cuba was run by a quasi-totalitarian government; the regime controlled virtually everything, especially its appearance to the outside world. Under Castro, Cuba had achieved some impressive gains, but in such societies, as I knew from Maoist China, things were never as advertised. Cuba was a "propaganda society" which for foreign visitors featured Potemkin villages and happy liberated *campesinos*. I also pointed out that when Castro took over, Cuba was among the most developed countries in Latin America together with Argentina and Chile, so the comparison should be with those countries. I suggested that Costa Rica was probably now ahead of Cuba in most social indices although it was probably well behind 30 years before. But Torricelli was convinced by what he had been told had happened in Cuba since the revolution and by what he had seen. He became quite cutting in his remarks. Our conversation turned heated; it was the first time in my Foreign Service career that I had ever gotten into a contentious argument with a Congressman. I have politely disagreed with others, but this was a real argument. Torricelli left the next morning and shortly after Senator Pell arrived.

Pell stayed with us at the residence. The first night, he got the call to see Castro just as we were having dinner about 8:00 o'clock. Pell was a gentleman if there ever was one, but he understood that these preemptory summons to an audience were cast to put the visitor in an inferior even supplicant's position. He sent back the message to the President that he would be along after he finished dinner. I had breakfast with him the following morning and asked how the meeting went. He said it was odd because Castro began by saying that Jay Taylor was doing everything he could to wreck U.S.-Cuban relations. The leader said I was even trying to turn American friends of Cuba against Cuba and the Revolution. Pell said that Castro was very upset. I gave Pell a description of my conversation with Torricelli the night before his meeting. We agreed that my evening spat with Torricelli had probably been taped.

The next time I heard about Torricelli was a couple of years later when he became a leader of the anti-Castro group in the U.S. Senate. He proposed and passed legislation bearing his name and that of Senator Helms that in various ways tightened restrictions on contact with Cuba and even threaten sanctions against foreign subsidiaries of American companies that did business with Cuba. I was told by someone who was very close to Torricelli that after his return from Cuba he had approached anti-Castro groups in Miami, including CANF, for substantial contributions. I must have been very persuasive in my argument with him, a record of which I am sure is resting somewhere in a MIINT file in Havana.

Q: Did you escort visitors when they went to see Castro?

TAYLOR: We did not have formal diplomatic relations and therefore my attendance at such meetings would not have been appropriate. I would see Castro periodically and informally when I had some important matters to take up with the Cuban government, such as the Angolan situation. I would usually do this at Cuban Government receptions for foreign VIPs. Betsy and I would first go through a reception line and then Castro would invite me to see him privately in a secluded room. I did attend the long, separate interview he had with Chet Crocker during the Angola-Namibia negotiations.

Q: How were the other diplomats?

TAYLOR: The Latin American embassies tended to be critical of U.S. policy toward Cuba. They thought we were irrationally tough and that the policy of isolation did not work. When I made my initial calls on these ambassadors I used the exact words that had been given me by Elliot Abrams and Mike Kozak. When asked about U.S. Cuban relations, I would say that until the Mariel agreement was restored, there would could not be any discussion of broader issues. I would then go on to list all of the other outstanding issues, such as the Cuban presence in Angola, its role in the Central America, and human rights. I said that there had to be progress on all of these issues before relations could substantially improve. I would then usually be interrogated further to find out exactly what my general comments meant. I would not get into any specifics. But the possibility of improved relations in some unstated fashion and very heavily conditioned was a key element in my presentations. The Latins were eager for signs that we would in fact seek some kind of rapprochement. I was well aware of this inclination and tried not leave them with exaggerated expectations. The Ambassadors reported back to their respective capitals my conversations with them. Sometimes these reports would get back in various ways to Washington. I found out later that the Argentine Ambassador, downplaying the conditions I had stressed for any discussion of better relations, said I had indicated that US policy was changing, and that our goal was a fundamental improvement in relations with Cuba. Although Abrams had approved the talking point I used on the subject and in an expanded version it would soon be incorporated as an official line in our talks with the Cubans, he was in fact determined to avoid an actual improvement, regardless of what Castro did on the migration agreement, Angola, etc. Thus, a report like that of the Argentine Ambassador convinced Abrams I was working against his policy.

In a 1987 meeting on my first return to Washington for consultations, Abrams told me just this: I was working against his policy. I replied that he had been badly mis-informed. I had not deviated from the talking point he had approved. I had emphasized it through repetition, a tactic which led the Cubans to believe that renewal of the migration agreement would open the talks about Angola and bilateral relations. But the Cubans understood there was nothing more specific promised than that we could talk about these matters. I assumed his policy was to have the migration agreement renewed, to see the radio jamming stopped, to have Cuban troops withdraw completely from Angola, and for there to be some progress on human rights in Cuba. All of these objectives, I said, can best and probably only be achieved by telling the Cubans that their realization will result in an improvement in US/Cuban ties. I do no recall Abrams precise reply, but the meeting did not clear the air.

All European envoys - German, Dutch, French, British, etc - agreed that Castro was not a benign figure and that he would have to make considerable changes in order to be accepted by Western Europe as a legitimate leader. But at the same time, they all felt that the USA was not following the wisest course to bring about this necessary change, a situation that they attributed to our domestic political condition - the power of the Cuban-American lobby, and the power of the US Congress.

The Canadians had good relations with Cuba and this was sometimes an irritant to Washington. Canada was the major source for Cuban tourists. The consular officers in the Canadian Embassy were busy with the various needs and problems of the thousands of their compatriots who flocked to the island's beaches. One task was processing visas for young Cuban men who had married single Canadian women they had met on the white sands of Varadero. Usually, the women were older than their young lovers who had successfully wooed them. The suspicion was that many of the bridegrooms were simply looking for a ticket out of Cuba. While I was there, a Canadian firm bought part ownership in the Cuban Government's nickel mining company.

Q: Were you able to get other embassies to take up cudgels on some issues of importance to us?

TAYLOR: We did quite a lot of that. For example, I would ask for assistance from my diplomatic counterparts on political prisoner cases that I had taken up with Alarcon. But the most effective intervention was that of US Congressmen or other American VIPs. Castro, for example, in the spring of 1988 freed 48 of 57 prisoners on a list submitted to him by Cardinal O'Conner, who had paid a visit. Also on Angola, most of the Western Ambassadors and some Latin and African ones made representations urging a peaceful settlement.

Q: What was the story on cooperation on anti-drug trafficking?

TAYLOR: Early in 1988, the Coast Guard and other American law enforcement agencies began to report that drug traffickers were making airdrops over Cuban waters. The drops were picked up by speedboats, which continued to U.S. shores. In January, I suggested that we enter into a dialogue on this issue with the Cuban government. I thought that we should at least test to see how far they were willing to go. ARA and CANF felt that this was the wrong approach; it was assumed that Castro and his government were probably cooperating with the drug traffickers. Shortly after I made my suggestion, several people were indicted in Miami for trafficking. The accused confessed that they had picked up the drugs in Cuban waters and even in some cases in Cuban ports. I received instructions to approach the Cuban government to describe these events and the confessions of the traffickers. After my first presentation to the foreign ministry, I was told that I should contact Politburo member, Carlos Aldana, on the subject. At our first meeting, Aldana expressed great doubts that any smuggling through Cuba was going on, blamed the exiles in Miami for starting the rumors, and suggested accused traffickers were trying to get lighter sentences by dragging Cuba into the story. But he promised to investigate.

At some point in 1988 or 1989, the case of Robert Vesco, the fugitive American financier, also arose. He had absconded in the 1960s after being charged with a multimillion-dollar fraud and eventually ended up in Cuba. We had information that indicated that Vesco from his residence in

Cuba was also somehow involved in drug trafficking. The Cubans also expressed skepticism about this story, but promised to investigate it as well.

At several meetings with Aldana I passed detailed information from the US Coast Guard - giving time and date of the airdrops. At one point, Aldana told me that Havana was conducting its own serious investigation. Within a few weeks, the Government announced the arrest of a General Arnaldo Ochoa Sanchez. Aldana, I believe, briefed me before the public announcement, although I am not certain. The arrested General was a Cuban hero; he had led the Cuban troops during the successful fighting in Angola a year or so before and in the 1970s in Ethiopia. It is fair to say that he was the most famous Cuban General at the time aside from Fidel. He was also personally close to Fidel; according to some, Castro thought of him as a son. Ochoa, his aide, and several officials from the Ministry of the Interior (MININT), were charged with treason - collusion in drug trafficking - supposedly without the knowledge of their superiors. The trial was televised. The General explained that his aide had learned that MININT was raising US dollars by facilitating drug drops and that he, the General, had foolishly approved the aide's suggestion that they do the same thing in order to raise dollars for hard currency needs of the army corps he now commanded in Cuba. Ochoa said that in Africa he and all other Cuban commanders had normally engaged in black marketing to raise hard currency for critical equipment and supplies. He had thought the drug venture would be in the same class. In any event, the one operation he had approved was fouled up and never took place. All the accused were found guilty and Ochoa and three others were sentenced to death. They appealed. Most thought Castro would save them from execution. But a day or so later, the morning news announced that Ochoa, his aide, and two MININT types had been shot at dawn. People were amazed.

My theory is that Castro saw himself like Simon Bolivar at a time when the Revolution of the Americas seemed threatened. The Spanish had recaptured several provinces. The future looked bleak. At that time the general closest to Bolivar, Manuel Piar, was charged by subordinates with plotting an insurrection and sentenced to death. Many thought Piar was innocent. But Bolivar upheld the sentence, and then wept for days. By this act, however, the Liberator reputedly showed his steel resolve. For him, the struggle, the cause was everything. And reputedly for Bolivar it worked. The shock supposedly welded the army together. We had no evidence at all that Ochoa had been suspected of plotting against Castro. But in an important respect, according to my theory, Castro saw some parallel and hoped that the execution of the General would likewise demonstrate that for him, *La Causa* overrode everything.

Q: Are you confident the case did not go beyond drug trafficking?

TAYLOR: Many observers did speculate that Castro viewed the general as a potential threat to himself or his plans for the succession and that this was the root of the problem. That was the speculation in the early days of the trial. But after having talked to innumerable Cubans, including those who knew Ochoa well, I came to the conclusion that Ochoa was probably not a political threat nor perceived as such.

The government claimed that the Minister of the Interior, Abrantes, did not have any idea that his people were running the drug smuggling operation. That did not seem credible to me and many others. A few weeks after the trial and executions, the Minister himself was dismissed and

arrested on charges unrelated to drug smuggling. Did Castro or his brother know about the drug shipments? Possibly Raul knew, but I doubt Castro did. Maybe so; but he was probably too smart to become involved in something that was almost bound to come out. Abrantes could have assumed or gotten a hint like that Reagan presumably gave Casey regarding diversion of the Iranian missile sale funds to the *Contras*: "do what you have to, but don't tell me about it." Several years later, a defector who had once been an aide to Ochoa told me over lunch in Washington that he agreed with my analysis of the case.

Q: While you were in Havana, did you see any reason why Castro would have wished to have better relations with the U.S. - in light of his virulent anti-Americanism?

TAYLOR: In the period I was in Havana and probably all along, Castro was ambivalent about Cuba-U.S. relations. I think he knew that the most important positive aspect of his political image was the perception that he was willing to stand up to the rich "giant" up North and that he had done so repeatedly and mostly successfully. Grenada was the only occasion where he came off looking bad. The US embargo also allowed Castro to blame the country's economic failures and even its tight "homeland security" controls on the United States. But beginning in 1987, a period existed when in reaction to new pressures and incentives he seemed to seek a fundamental improvement in relations with the United States. To achieve this, as I recounted, he took important steps on Angola and limited ones on human rights, and even professed a willingness to cooperate on Central America and to compromise on a US TV news service to Cuba. Of course his principal objective was to retain control. And he was not about to take any step that he thought would threaten this central goal. Consequently, real steps toward democracy were and still are highly unlikely as long as Castro is in charge. But if the United States had lived up to its commitment to significantly improve relations after the successful implementation of the Angola/Namibia Accord, Fidel could possibly have been edged near and perhaps onto the slippery slope of reform. Changing popular expectations might then have swept him out of power as it did other dictators of the period, including eventually Gorbachev himself.

Castro wanted to assure that his Revolution would outlast him. Thus, he could have believed that normalization of relations with the United States would give an important element of legitimacy to his regime in his final years and carry over into the succession. Economically, he could also have foreseen major benefit in improved relations with North America. But he would have wanted to carefully control US investment and business presence in Cuba to minimize the political impact. People like Aldana seemed to believe that major changes in the economy and movement toward something of an open society, *a la* China, could only come after a real relaxation of relations with the United States. Possibly, this thought also lingered in the back of Fidel's mind and was the reason he gave Aldana approval to begin some changes toward limited Incentives in the economy.

Before the Ochoa trial, Aldana told me that Cuba was interested in closer cooperation with the U.S. in controlling the drug trade. As I recall, he offered to have DEA agents enter Cuba to interview foreign drug traffickers in Cuban jails and to exchange information on the subject. I proposed that we consider the Cuban offer and returned to Washington for an inter-agency meeting on the subject. Many in the US Government believed that Castro was fully aware of the drug trafficking that had taken place in Cuban waters. I said we didn't know for sure but

suggested that we test the Cuban government to see whether it would cooperate in the future. I had no takers. I suggested the Coast Guard send an officer to talk with its Cuban counterparts, but the interagency group thought that what I was suggesting might be interpreted as a major change in U.S. policy. Politically, the U.S. government did not want Castro to be seen as anything but "evil." Consequently, the existing pattern of limited cooperation continued on an ad hoc basis: the US Coast Guard would radio the Cuban Border Guards about a suspicious flight or boat sighting in Cuban waters and the Border Guards would presumably follow up.

Q: You seem to suggest that U.S. policy was almost cased in cement and that no indications from Cuba would move the administration.

TAYLOR: Some people believed that Cuba's cooperation on bilateral issues, including even migration, was neither necessary nor desirable. To engage Castro in a serious dialogue on any subject meant a public recognition that Communist Cuba was a serious state and could carry out agreements. ARA under Elliot Abrams supported serious negotiations on the migration accord and little else. The Cubans carried out their part of the bargain on migration, including, to the surprise of many, taking back convicted felons. And, as I explained at some length, Havana played an important part in the Angolan settlement and lived up completely to its commitments in that agreement.

I might mention that sometime in 1989, Jorge Mas called on Secretary of State of Baker, to urge that the Secretary fire me. Elliot Abrams had left the Department by this time. Baker must have asked Bernie Aronson what Mas' outburst was all about. I don't know the details, but I was simply told of the approach by Mike Kozak and warned to take care.

Q: One of the interesting aspects of our Cuban policy is that the threat it posed paled in comparison to the Soviets, but nevertheless we were much tougher on Cuba than we were on the USSR. I wonder whether had we been a little more forthcoming, we might have had a different situation today. Did you see it that way?

TAYLOR: The way I answered visitors who asked that question was to say that inconsistency is rampant in foreign policy as in other aspects of human affairs. It is a habit not limited to little minds. Different circumstances bring about entirely different priorities. Because the Soviet threat was huge, dealing with Moscow was of the highest priority. And of course enormous differences existed in the pulling and tugging of U.S. domestic politics on the two issues - dealing with the Soviet Union and dealing Cuba.

In some of my analytical messages, I discussed what seemed to me to be the cost/benefit consequences of a U.S. policy that in return for significant moves by Castro was willing actually to improve bilateral relations, including a softening or eventually removal of the embargo. First, we should have made some concrete but limited change in the embargo that acknowledged Castro's critical cooperation on Angola. Then, when and if he lessened his grip at home, we would take other steps toward ending our policy of isolation and pressure. Basically, it seemed to me that internal reform in Cuba would come from within, and that to encourage this sort of change we should gradually increase private contacts and exchanges, including economic ones, depending on events within Cuba. But, by the spring of 1990, Castro was almost certainly dead

set against any internal political reform and even any broad economic change at home beyond large scale tourism, the dollar economy, and a limited private sector. Still, even then, he would have possibly responded to a more open door American policy. The idea was to test him. I think the new ARA under Bernie Aronson more or less agreed with this view, but it had to face domestic political realities - George Bush had to win Florida in 1992 - and to consider priorities -- Cuba was way down the list.

An illustration of pressures on the Washington decision-makers was the telephone maintenance issue. When I was in Havana, all the telephone connections between the U.S. and Cuba went through 40-year old AT&T equipment. The available circuits were extremely limited and because of the age of the equipment the system broke down repeatedly. Sometimes it took hours to get a call through from Havana to Miami or vice versa. AT&T raised the possibility of upgrading the system. I favored whatever option would maximize the number of circuits so that the supply would exceed the demand for private communications between Cubans in the U.S. and in Cuba. I believed that the greater the number of calls, the better for U.S. interests, not to speak of the interests of Cuban-American and their relatives on the island. Restricting calls far below the demand would only serve Castro's interests.

Washington had turned down previous efforts to upgrade telephonic traffic. It was, I believe, in 1989 that the US Government finally agreed to expand the circuits by laying another cable and installing new, although outdated equipment in Cuba. Elements in Miami, including, I recall, CANF, opposed any upgrade at all; they were not interested in a project that might indicate closer U.S.-Cuban relations. The cable was laid and calls significantly increased, but not as much as they might have had the most modern radio technology been used. After I left, the issue took on a new dimension when Havana demanded, as apparently is the practice on international traffic, a share of the receipts generated by the calls placed in the United States. US-made calls represented the great majority of the traffic, as Cuban-Americans did not want their poor cousins on the island to pay. This created another crisis, about which you will have to ask my successor.

Q: What about Guantanamo?

TAYLOR: As all Americans know by now, Guantanamo is an American Naval base in the southern part of Cuba near Santiago. Betsy and I visited the base once, flying in via Jamaica, because the Cubans would not allow us to enter via the gate. It is a totally self-sufficient base. It makes its own water with one of the world's largest desalination plants. Guantanamo is a great natural port able to host large warships, including aircraft carriers. There is a narrow continental shelf off of Guantanamo, and subs can consequently dive shortly after leaving the harbor. Finally, the Navy uses exercise a large swatch of the Caribbean south of Guantanamo as a live-fire area. When I was in Cuba, some 70-80 Cuban old timers who worked on the base were still passing in and out the main gate everyday. The base itself is a little California town: McDonald's, Burger King, bowling alleys, swimming pools, Little League parks, movie houses, low-slung public schools, and housing areas with palm-lined streets. The treaty that gave us use of the land said that we could hold on to it in perpetuity, but that we should pay a nominal rent - something like, as I recall, $1000 per annum. So, annually, one of the least demanding things that I did was to hand over a check to the Cuban government in this amount - or whatever it was. Castro never cashed the checks; he put them in his desk drawer.

Q: Did Guantanamo become an issue at all while you were in Cuba?

TAYLOR: Occasional incidents took place, for example when a Cuban would try to escape to the Base either by crossing a land-mined "no man's land" or by swimming from the sea or across the Bay. Occasionally shootings by the Marines took place when they thought someone was trying to break through the perimeter.

Guantanamo possessed a Navy squadron of A-6s. In approaching the runway, the planes had to make a tight turn into final in order to avoid Cuban air space. That gave the planes very little leeway in making their final approaches. As a Marine pilot carrier-qualified in the old tail-wheel, prop planes I appreciated the performance.

It always seemed to me that our occupancy of Guantanamo gave us a potential tool to use some day in encouraging a transition to a democratic regime in Cuba. During my musings on this possibility in one cable, I suggested that at some point we might even say publicly that once a democratic regime had been established in Cuba we would be willing to negotiate the return of the base or a new lease, whichever the people of Cuba wanted. Something like a cruise missile immediately shot down this idea. For the Navy, Guantanamo was and is a very valuable training base and it doesn't have to worry about public protests. This was, of course, before the base became a famous refugee camp for Haitians and then the prison for detainees from the war in Afghanistan.

Q: I think one of the great games played in the Foreign Service is to figure out who might succeed a dictator such as Castro. I did that when serving in INR and worrying about the succession in Ethiopia after Haile Selassie. What was our speculation on how Castro might leave power and what might happen after that?

TAYLOR: Castro's brother, Raul, was and still is the designated successor in all sectors - military, party, and government. He is not charismatic like his brother or striking in appearance - he has a weak chin. But many Cubans and some diplomats who knew him insisted that he should not be underestimated. My view was that when Castro departed from the scene, the regime would go through a period of instability under Raul; there would be a lot of pressures and a period of uncertainty, but the party, the military, and the bureaucracy would probably see it in their interests to keep things going under Raul. Adjustments would be necessary because with Castro gone, the government would lose most of its historic or moral authority, particularly among the middle, younger, and intellectual group of Cubans. Economic liberalization on the pattern of Vietnam would very likely begin fairly soon. If Raul had to govern under a rising threat from the U.S. in the immediate post-Castro period, he could be strengthened politically. Thus, we felt that when Castro departed the scene, the United States should emphasize patience and calmness. If we did not have to worry about the political reaction in exile-Miami, which would then be in a high state of excitement, we might at that time send a message to Raul, indicating that the United States had no hostile intent toward his government and stood ready to respond to any significant effort to bring about a more open and prosperous society on the island.

Q: Was there any concern that if the attitude of the regime were to change, the exiles might return and claim the property they had lost?

TAYLOR: In Eastern Europe and China there have been restorations of private property taken by communist governments. It is not inconceivable that Cuba might go through the same process even under a successor communist government. The Cuban-American community in Miami, including CANF, has wisely not agitated for a return of residential properties. They seem to realize that to make such claims would militate against any popular effort to oust the communists in Cuba. Fear of losing long occupied family housing has in fact served to discourage sentiment for a fundamental change.

Q: Did we have a record of the property expropriated from American firms?

TAYLOR: I believe that as confiscations began in the early 1960s, American citizens and business firms could register their properties at the American Embassy. I think there is a list of such properties somewhere. A number of well-to-do Cubans brought jewelry and other items to the Embassy before flying off to Florida. Technically and legally, these items should not have been accepted. Legally, they cannot now be sent to the States. The dispensation of these items will have to be negotiated. So, they for the time being they remain in boxes and file cabinets in the USINT (Embassy) basement. Businesses are different. According to the Helms-Burton Act passed in the early 1990s even companies that were not American firms at the time of expropriation can lay claims under U.S. law to their business properties on the island. For example, a strictly Cuban entity whose business was nationalized could under U.S. law seek compensation in a US court.

Q: What else should be said about your tour in Havana?

TAYLOR: In the summer of 1989, during his July 26 Moncado anniversary when he spoke about the possible fall of the Soviet Union, he also as usual made a strident attack on "American imperialism." I was in the diplomatic enclosure and as usual on hearing such language I walked out of the stadium. I sat in my car in the parking lot and with Orlando listened to the rest of the speech on the radio as I had done before. For the first time, I heard Castro express direct concern for what was taking place in the communist-socialist camp. He could not predict what might happen, but he called on Cuba to be prepared for very difficult times. Later he defined this as "a special period in time of peace," which he compared to war.

Q: You left Havana in September 1990, after three years.

ALAN H. FLANIGAN
Chief – US Interests Section
Havana (1990-1993)

Alan Flanigan was born in Indiana in 1938. He graduated from Tufts University in 1960 and served in the U.S. Navy from 1960 to

1966 as a lieutenant. After entering the Foreign Service in 1966, his assignments abroad have included Lima, Izmir, Ankara and Lisbon, with an ambassadorship to El Salvador.

Q: Why don't you talk for a little bit about how you prepared for the assignment in Havana and what some of the issues were at that particular time and how you consulted to take up that post.

FLANIGAN: Well, I had never served in a communist country. I'd never served in a country which had an authoritarian government, so it was quite a change. I knew it would be, and I spent a lot of time, well as much as I could, talking to people on the desk, talking to people in the academic community here. There are a lot of people around Washington that maintain a high level of interest in Cuba. Most are academics, but many foundations are also interested. What to me is an amazing number of people retain an interest in Havana. Not just retain but have an active interest and follow events there rather closely. So, I tried to get in touch with as many of those people as I could with the help of the desk. The coordinator of Cuban Affairs in the State Department was very helpful in putting me in touch with all of these people, and I just tried to absorb whatever I could of the lore of Castro's Cuba. There is a lot out there. It is a fascinating place which has attracted enormous interest both antagonistic and romantic over the years both in the United States and elsewhere. Castro is one of the few mythical leaders, if you will, who still exists in this world today, and he attracts the attention – positive and negative - of a lot of people.

Q: People are very divided of course. I'm sure that those you talked to had feelings to even further isolate and restrict dealings with the remaining communist power in this area and others feeling that we ought to engage in trying to work for change and opening up of the relationship.

FLANIGAN: Precisely. There is a wide range of attitudes about Cuba among the people who deal with Cuban affairs and think about Cuban affairs. However, the truth of the matter is as many people have said, all politics is local, right. What it comes down to in the end is there is a very dynamic and well organized Cuban-American community that is determined to maintain a strong negative policy toward Castro. It has a lot of political clout and has been successful over the years in making sure that the policy stays as rigid as it is. That's not necessarily wrong, but that's the way it is. Critics assert that the Cuban- American National Foundation dictates U S policy. That is not true. But it does influence policy, and don't forget a tough policy *vis a vis* Cuba is a very popular policy in the United States. If you were to conduct a public referendum on Castro, I think you would find that he is soundly disliked in the United States and most people believe that the policy of isolation is exactly the right policy. It is not as if the government has pursued a policy that doesn't have popular support. In a democracy foreign policy must take into account popular attitudes. That does not mean that all policy questions must be decided by popular referendum. But a government that decides to carry out a policy contrary to popular wishes must be prepared to expend an extraordinary amount of energy – and political capital – in the pursuit of that policy. In the end I think that the inertia created by that reality better accounts for the rigidity in U S policy than the influence of the Cuban-American community.

Q: There are a lot of not only those in the Cuban-American community but people certainly remember the Cuban missile crisis and other actions that Cuba has taken in Latin America and other parts of the world over the years.

FLANIGAN: There is no question. When Castro took power in 1959 on New Year's Day, we as a people were already deeply divided over him. A lot of people were positively inclined because he had overthrown an obviously corrupt regime, the Batista regime. On the other hand there was uncertainty about what he wanted to do. And many people were nervous about his revolutionary rhetoric. It all became clear fairly quickly that Castro was determined to create a revolutionary state in the Caribbean just 90 miles from Key West, and that was not a very comfortable thought for most Americans and certainly not most Americans in Florida. As the numbers of Cuban-Americans increased over the next few years, and they increased dramatically as tens of thousands of Cubans fled or were forced to leave, it consolidated that view, that there was a need to isolate Castro and make sure that whatever he embarked on was not a successful effort to revolutionize the area, the region.

Q: Did you find controversy when you were undertaking these consultations before going to Havana about whether the United States should be present in Havana or were people generally of a view that it made sense for us to have an office there?

FLANIGAN: I think most people, nearly everybody felt it made sense for us to have an office there, even the most outspoken opponents of a better relationship. The Cuban-American National Foundation, for example, supported the presence of an interests section simply because there are a lot of Cuban Americans that go back to visit their families. Very little distance separates Cuba and the United States, and the flow back and forth between the two countries States even under the present circumstances is rather extensive. It is useful to have a presence there to maintain some kind of consular relationship if nothing else. I think many conservative elements feel that if you go beyond that, you are beginning to edge over into something that isn't acceptable. The official presence was useful and I think most people saw it as useful simply to maintain communications both in crisis and in normal times. There were incidents, there were issues to be dealt with and an interests section enabled us to deal with such things in a routine fashion.

Q: Probably to show my ignorance of Cuba and Havana, could you talk a little bit about the U.S. Interests Section? How large is it? Are there restrictions on the part of the Swiss Embassy; how does that work before you start to talk about some of the substance of the issues?

FLANIGAN: We broke relations with Cuba in 1961; we established a mission there in 1977. We negotiated a bilateral agreement with Cuba which allowed us to open an interests section and allowed them to open an interests section. Theirs is in Washington and ours is in Havana. In both cases we were allowed to reoccupy the old embassy buildings. We were under the protection of the Swiss Embassy; they were under the protection at that time of the Czechoslovakian Embassy. Subsequently that had to change. During the time I was in Havana that changed and they too came under the protection of the Swiss Embassy because they broke with the Czechs. Neither Slovakia nor the Czech Republics wanted to continue as protecting power, so the Swiss took over the role. In any event the role that the Swiss played after we had reestablished a presence in the country was almost insignificant. During the years before we sent our own people back to Havana, the Swiss role was of more consequence. The Swiss had responsibility for the protection of our properties and facilities. They also made diplomatic representations to the Cuban government on our behalf. In the 16 or so years we were absent, for example, they at least in

theory maintained a guard on the chancery building and had people living in the Ambassador's residence. In fact we never were sure how secure the protection of the Embassy building had been. Our assumption was that it wasn't very secure at all, that Cubans had access to it rather freely over those many years, so when we moved back in we had to operate under the assumption that the Cuban intelligence service had the capacity to listen to everything we did there. We moved back into the residence as well. Our relationship with the Swiss ambassador was a social relationship basically. By terms of the agreement that established our presence in Havana we had the right to have direct access to the Foreign Ministry and through them other elements of the government and the Communist Party. We were generally restricted with regard to the level of access. My most common interlocutor the deputy foreign minister with responsibility for American affairs. There was only one occasion, shortly before I left, that I was invited to call on the foreign minister. That was just as a courtesy. That was the only time they elevated my official access beyond the established level. In contrast, socially they treated me like any other chief of mission. In return they hoped that the chief of the Cuban Interests Section in Washington would be accorded the same treatment. They complained that I would get invited to receptions hosted by Castro at the Palace of the Revolution and that my counterpart in Washington never was invited to the White House, which was true. Whenever there was a state function in Cuba; when there was a visiting chief of state and Castro gave a reception of some sort, my wife and I were generally invited like ambassadors from other countries. My interaction with Castro was limited to that. The limited interaction was not unusual. In fact it was very rare for Castro to meet with foreign ambassadors at all. It is the only country I am aware of, there may be others, where the president does not receive credentials of ambassadors. The presentation is made to a vice president of which there are several. Castro would very rarely meet with the ambassadors at all. He made a practice of once a year or maybe it was once every six months while I was there, meeting with the European Community ambassadors, having a luncheon or something like, and he would meet with the Soviet or Chinese ambassador from time to time but not regularly. This was true even when I first went to Havana and the Soviet Union was still in existence and the Soviet ambassador was a political figure. The Soviets always had political ambassadors in Havana because they had a tremendous presence. I recall shortly after I arrived there talking to the Soviet Ambassador, Yuri Petrov. (My wife and I would have lunches with Petrov and his wife from time to time. Because of the nature of the situation, the Soviet ambassador and I did not spend a lot of time talking to each other at diplomatic events because people would gather around or speculate or whatever, but we would have private meetings fairly regularly.) I remember at one of these, which was a luncheon at his residence, we were talking about the sizes of our various communities. They said that they felt like grandparents to 10,000 Russians. They had 10,000 people in Cuba when I arrived in 1990.

Q: That included all of their military.

FLANIGAN: The military was a good portion of that but it was far from all because the had a lot of technicians and aid workers etc. The size of the American mission was quite small. We were restricted, originally when it opened in 1977, I think the number was 14. The limit had expanded, and by the time we arrived in Havana we had about 33 people including marines. We had about eight marines. During my time there it expanded a little more. Each expansion had to be negotiated; there had to be a reason for it, because we weren't expanding Cuban presence in the United States. We were only expanding U.S. presence in Havana. The reasons nearly always had

to do with the need to deal with immigration issues. It was quite legitimate. We needed more people there than they needed here. They ultimately agreed, but they were always difficult to deal with, a very rigid bureaucracy. They would agree to establish a new position, and then we would have to go through the interminable process of finding a new residence. I mean a house for somebody to live in because there is no free market of course. Everything belongs to the government, everything. Everybody works for the government, and foreign missions who employ people have to employ people through the government. It is all contract labor. There is an office of the Cuban government – *Cubalse* - which has the responsibility for providing services to foreigners, foreign missions, foreign businesses. Every foreign entity – individual, government, business - has to go to *Cubalse* to get its services whether it is a house or a carpenter or whatever it is. It is not only cumbersome, it is often infuriating. We had about 120 Cuban employees at the Interests Section. They were all hired through *Cubalse.* We paid the Cuban government, but we also managed to negotiate an arrangement so that we could provide part of their salary directly in U S dollar equivalents and that they could use in the hard currency stores; so it was a great benefit to be working for us. Some of our employees had been working for us since we returned in 1977. There was even one person who had been working for the old embassy before it was closed in 1965. Of course , since we did not hire these people directly, we had to accept the reality that they were first and foremost employees of the Cuban government.

Q: How did you get physically to Havana for the first time?

FLANIGAN: When I went in the summer of 1990 there were thrice weekly flights from Miami to Havana which were flown by contract airlines. At that time the principal contract was with Eastern Airlines, so we flew down in an Eastern Airlines Lockheed 1100, I think. Anyway, it was a rather large aircraft. At that time we, the U S government, also required that these flights occur at night however. I'm not sure of the background of this, but I think it in part had to do with the desire to avoid creating a situation at the Miami Airport where there might be political or public problems with planes flying out to Cuba. Of course, most of the passengers on the planes were Cuban- Americans who had authorization from the Unite States and visas from Cuba to come back and visit their families. In any event that's how we arrived. We arrived, I recall, shortly after midnight. It is one of those experiences we will never forget. In 1990 Cuba was already beginning to enter in to an economic crisis. It wasn't in the full throes of it yet, but in 1990 it was hurting. The level of electricity available to light streets and houses and things like that was really quite low, so flying in you really didn't see the bright city lights you would see in arriving at a European capital or a city in the United States. Driving in from the airport we had the feeling we were going through a war zone because of the dilapidated condition of most of the buildings. Castro had for years sacrificed Havana for the benefit of provincial cities. He had allowed Havana to deteriorate visibly, especially the old rich areas that he identified with the bourgeoisie. A lot of fine houses and fine office buildings were in terrible disrepair. They'd been allowed to just crumble. Some of them had been recovered and were being used by foreign businesses or Cuban businesses, state businesses or schools or this, that or the other thing, but even those that were, were not well maintained. Our overwhelming sense was of a country that had gone through a very difficult time.

Q: The economic crisis was brought on or at least helped along by what was happening in Europe. How did Cuba react to those momentous changes that were taking place many of which started before you got there with the fall of the Berlin Wall and others after you got there?

FLANIGAN: Well, with great fear. The Cubans were obviously concerned about the collapse of the Communist world. They were in a very real sense an outpost of the Communist world and dependent on it not only – or even primarily – because had we isolated them but because they had self isolated. The economy was totally dependent on trade with the Soviet Union and its allies. As the Soviet Union began to fall on hard times and eastern Europe began to break away from the Soviet Union, Cuba's support mechanism disappeared. There are lots of reasons for the economic crisis which then ensued, but the most significant one I think was that Cuba over the years had become dependent on Soviet assistance - Soviet assistance in various forms whether it was preferential prices for sugar or simply cash assistance or assistance in various industries or providing oil or whatever it was to the tune of perhaps $4-5,000,000,000 a year. When that disappeared as it did almost overnight, they were left with an economy which was dependent on that kind of input and wasn't able to sustain itself. There was not sustainable development by any manner of speaking. Over the years I think Castro had done many wasteful things from the development point of view. I mean he had done them for other reasons, but economically they were very wasteful, and he had created a system and an economy that were not sustainable.

Q: Politically and emotionally they also lost all it took to be connected with the Soviet Union.

FLANIGAN: Yes. Castro had harsh words to say about Gorbachev whom he believes was a traitor to the whole socialist world. I believe he decided early on that he would never allow Cuba to suffer the same fate that the Eastern European countries had. He was not going to entertain the kinds of reforms which might then undermine his hold on power. From the beginning he clearly decided that the only way he could maintain his position and his power and keep the revolution in place was to be extremely rigid. As eastern Europe relaxed, Cuba became more rigid. Castro had tried a few economic reforms in the early ‘80s which permitted farmers markets, for example, and those were quite successful in some terms in a sense that they brought products to the market so that people could buy them. But they also brought them at relatively high prices, and worst of all from Castro’s perspective they allowed a lot of people to get rich. One of the things that drove and still drives Castro is a visceral dislike for capitalism. There is no question, he just doesn't like it. It offends him that people somehow get rich off of other people, so he closed the farmers markets in '87, somewhere around there. By the time we arrived in 1990, the markets around Havana and the suburbs, the open air markets, had very little in them. One of the things we did in the Interests Section was send somebody out monthly to conduct a market basket survey. We wanted to see what was available, what it cost. The costs were all very artificial, because when I arrived the Cuban peso was still pegged at, well actually by then it was valued at 1.1 to the dollar. The real value was probably somewhere between 20 and 40 to the dollar, but when we arrived it still had some value in the sense that a person could take a peso and go to a market and buy maybe a tomato or a cucumber or a chicken. Within two years there was nothing in those markets. Absolutely nothing. Nothing could be bought that wasn't on the ration card. Therefore, only people with ration cards, only Cubans could go to the markets. The prices were all controlled. The prices were nominal. But increasingly nothing was available. When we arrived Cubans could survive fairly well on what they could buy on the ration card and what they might

be able to supplement with a few other things available in stores or markets. Black markets also began to become more common. There had always been a black market for luxury goods, but increasingly Cubans were forced to look to the black market for essentials. Fairly soon it reached the point where they could just barely survive. One phenomenon which was fairly interesting, not very pleasant, over the course of the three years I was there was to notice how few overweight Cubans there were in the country. Not that an overweight population is necessarily a positive phenomenon, but the total absence of overweight people strongly suggests that things are not going very well. That was certainly the case in Cuba.

Q: How did the U.S. Interests Section get supplies? Did we have supply flights that came in? You didn't have to rely on the market or the official stores there?

FLANIGAN: When we first arrived, it was possible to buy a few things in the local market. There was a supermarket for the diplomatic corps and other foreigners which we had access to. Most of the products in it came from Europe and Canada, some from the United States even. The prices were quite high and sometimes the products were quite old. The quality of the fresh fruits and vegetables and meats was not very good. I remember paying something like $3.50 a pound for Canadian onions. Onions are a staple of the Cuban diet, but they were not available on the local market. It was amazing. The Interests Section was also permitted to bring in shipments of food for our use directly from Miami. We would charter a supply flight every three months or so. Historically the Cubans had restricted these flights from time to time just to make life difficult for the Interests Section. At least that seemed to be the best explanation. During the time we were in Cuba, the Cubans were so preoccupied with their own crisis, both political and economic, that they didn't spend a lot of time worrying about the U.S. mission or trying to harass or intimidate its staff. Some of my predecessors and the staff members in fact were harassed quite often and quite heavily. Such incidents in the three years I was there were rare. They did occur. We had people whose tires were deliberately punctured. Some were threatened or muscled off the road by aggressive driving. Houses were entered surreptitiously by security forces who took nothing, but left telltale signs that they had been there. But generally speaking we didn't suffer many incidents relative to what had happened in the past - and I gather to what has occurred in the last three or four years when the relationship has gotten more tense. As bad as the relationship was during the years we were there, it was better than it was before and after. There were frequent flights to Miami. There were three or four a week when we arrived. I'm not sure exactly what the high point was, but at one point there were two or three flights a day bringing people in and taking people out. Mainly these were Cuban-Americans who were coming back to visit relatives. We would go to the airport regularly to meet official visitors as well as friends or family who came to visit. One of the most poignant things we saw was the return of Cubans that had been up to the United States visiting family members. On their return they were allowed to bring a very limited number of things back into the country. One thing the Cubans had started permitting them to do was to bring back a clear plastic bag with cosmetics and patent medicines in it, drugstore items ranging from aspirin to shampoo which simply weren't available anymore in Cuba. They just simply weren't available to most Cubans. Tourists could buy them , but Cubans could not. They could bring back, I think they were limited to a 20 pound bag. It had to be clear plastic so that what they were bringing could be seen by the police. Cubans were regularly subjected to the most ruthless kind of intimidation every day. It was most visible to us at the airport. I have often been asked how the Cubans feel about Americans. It is very difficult

to know. They seemed fascinated, not in a negative sense generally, but very positively. We met Cubans when we would travel around the country, and we could travel freely; there was no restriction on our travel. We told people who we were and where we were from. There was a mixed reaction, but the most common reaction was quite positive and friendly on the one hand, but restrained on the other because every Cuban knew that if he or she showed any signs of friendliness or engaged in conversation of any substance or any length, they would have to explain to internal security the next hour or the next day, exactly what went on and why they did what they did. It was and still is the most controlled society I've ever been in. I think it is much more of a controlled society than the Eastern European societies that existed in the '80's. A lot of people think that if we sort of open up the embargo a little bit, relax more, send more people down, allow this presence of additional Americans and the trappings that go with that presence, this would cause the Cubans to demand more and more until finally the system would be forced to change. People that believe this do not understand the Cuban situation. It is just not identical to what existed in Poland or East Germany. There is virtually no civil society in Cuba. The civil society that exists is very restricted. The Catholic Church for years has been an object of oppression. It was not a strong church to begin with, and Castro and his government did everything they could to identify it with the old regime and they still accuse it of being attached to Miami. In the last few years the church has grown in strength. It is still a very small, inconsequential influence given the power the government has to control the people. The regime controls all of the means of communication whether it is a newspaper or a telephone line. People who do not toe the line, do not have access to those things. It's very depressing.

Q: I assume it was not really possible then given what you just said for you to have good conversations of substance with people either in the government or outside the government except on particular issues that came up.

FLANIGAN: Only on particular issues. The Cubans that I dealt with on issues in government or in the Communist Party were professionals – rigid - but competent professionals nevertheless. If there was an issue that had to be dealt with, they could get things done. Sometimes a lot more slowly than you'd like and the results might not be what you'd like, but it was business and you could do that. Beyond that though, on a social level, conversations were restricted to very mundane issues. It would be very rare for any Cuban to be willing to discuss an issue like the future of Cuba after Castro. I've done it. I have done it with some of the Cuban Communist Party members, officials and Foreign Ministry officials, sort of provocative exchanges if you will, and they do it, they will do it, but it is sort of a predictable response. It is not a conversation. You push the cassette button and you get the accepted viewpoint.

Q: What were some of the issues you needed to deal with in the period you were there? Were they mainly in the immigration area or were there some others?

FLANIGAN: There were always immigration issues. We would from time to time have incidents such as shooting incident in Guantanamo Bay, someone trying to escape to the base or something like that. We would protest Cuban actions. They would protest our actions. There were also some incidents while I was there where people hijacked or "borrowed" Cuban aircraft to fly to the United States. We helped coordinate arrangements for return of the aircraft. There was an attempted hijacking of a boat by some Cubans associated with some Cuban American group

which resulted in some deaths and the predictable exchange of public recriminations between us and the Cubans. There was an incident when a boat from a small radical group from Miami came down and fired some shots at one of the hotels on Varadero Beach. Of course, I got called over to the Foreign Ministry to receive a protest. From time to time I would get called over with complaints about U S aircraft violating Cuban airspace. The flight pattern into the airfield at the Naval Base in Guantanamo was very difficult and quite often there were allegations that our aircraft had strayed from where they were supposed to be. I would receive the complaints and send them off to Washington to be checked out. Then I would return and explain what happened, sometimes apologizing, but more often telling them that they were wrong. I recall we talked to them about more substantive things from time to time. Various times in 1990 and 1991 I was instructed to talk to them about the Central American negotiations. We asked for their support for the negotiations. We asked them to end their military support for the FMLN in El Salvador for example. They never admitted to providing military support, but they refused to promise not to in any event, explaining that they wanted to make sure the FMLN could negotiate from a position of strength. I remember we also asked for Cuban help in identifying the source of surface-to-air missiles that had been captured in Central America. We talked with the Cubans about that; they were not cooperative. Actually the Soviets were more cooperative. That was an interesting three way conversation, most of which didn't occur in Havana, but some of which did. Those were peripheral issues for us at the Interests Section, but every once and awhile they were serious enough that we were able to play a role. Also while I was in Havana we had two or three sessions of bilateral negotiations with the Cubans on immigration issues. Ultimately – more than a year after my departure – these talks resulted in some agreements. What the Cubans wanted and what we wanted were quite different things, of course. We were always concerned about the potential for a flood of immigrants. The Cubans were concerned that we automatically granted asylum to any Cuban once he got to the United States, no matter what the circumstances of his departure from Cuba. And while we said we did not want our shores flooded by Cuban refugees, refugees arriving in Florida often received heroes' welcomes. Understandably the Cubans didn't like that. This was not an easy dilemma to resolve. In the end we reached an agreement with the Cubans. They agreed to make a greater effort to restrict illegal immigration, and we agreed that we would not give immediate asylum to every Cuban who makes it to the U S. We now and send them back unless there is a reason, unless they can prove there are political refugees. That has changed the equation quite a bit.

Q: There have certainly been occasions where there has been a great upsurge of illegal immigration. The Mariel boat lift.

FLANIGAN: The Mariel boat lift was the big one.

Q: But that didn't happen while you were there.

FLANIGAN: No it didn't. That was in the early '80's. I can't remember precisely when. When I was there the number of refugees that made it across the Florida Straits ranged from a few dozen to a few hundred a month. It was not however, until the year after I left, 1994, that the number rose to a level where we became seriously concerned again. In 1994 there were thousands of people who fled in boat and makeshift rafts. The Cubans called them *balseros.* They made their

way either across the straits to Florida or around to Guantanamo. It was after that surge of immigration in 1994 that we reached an agreement.

Q: Let's talk a little bit more about Guantanamo. You mentioned the approach of aircraft and the people trying to go across the fence and I guess by raft into the navy base there. Did you ever visit Guantanamo? Were you involved in any formal way with that base or informally?

FLANIGAN: I had no formal responsibility for Guantanamo because the Cubans did not permit access from the Cuban mainland and didn't recognize our right to continue to be there. Their term for our presence was "the illegal occupation" of Guantanamo. The one thing the Interests Section did do was to deliver to the Foreign Ministry the check for our annual rent payment for the base. It was around $3,000 as I recall. It was a pittance.

Q: Did they cash the check?

FLANIGAN: No, apparently Castro keeps them in a desk drawer and shows them to visitors from time to time. I did visit Guantanamo two times while I was there. Once I flew to Washington and flew down from here, and another time I flew to Miami and flew down. It had to be done from the United States. It was interesting; I had been in Guantanamo in 1957 while I was still an Naval ROTC student and later in 1960 and 1961 while I was a Naval officer, so I knew the place a little bit. It hadn't changed much except that there were very few Cubans around. When I was there the last time in 1993, it probably was the spring of '93, we had several thousand Haitian refugees living there in tents. By then there were only about 25 Cubans still employed at the base. We had gotten rid of all the others by attrition over the course of the last 34 years.

Q: Who lived there or across the fence?

FLANIGAN: They came across the fence every day. They were allowed to come through one gate. There was one gate the Cubans allowed them to come through, and they returned every evening. Now, they were paid in dollars, but the Cuban government limited their ability to use those dollars. I'm sure that they were better off than most Cubans however. At least while they were on the base they had access to food, etc. There was a problem paying retired employees. I do not believe that has ever been resolved.

Q: My son-in-law, who is a Marine combat engineer officer and was in charge of the minefield a couple of years ago, had some interesting stories. It sounds like they try hard to keep it and maintain it.

FLANIGAN: Yes. In fact, I was at a meeting very recently where I heard, I don't know the details, that we are cooperating with the Cubans now in trying to clean up a little bit of the minefields there on both sides. I'm sure we probably have done a better job of maintaining the minefield and knowing where the mines are. A lot of the terrain there is sand, and we do know that a lot of mines have shifted on their side. From time to time people will set them off as they try to walk across - or animals, deer or cows.

Q: How about Radio and Television Marti? Did the TV Marti begin after your arrival?

FLANIGAN: No, it went on the air actually before I arrived. Radio Marti had gone on earlier, several years before. By 1989, Radio Marti had become the standard news source for most Cubans. The Cubans had initially jammed it, but over the years they had slacked off. Until TV Marti began transmitting, most Cubans found it easy to listen to Radio Marti. People would carry around radios tuned to Radio Marti. One of the many unfortunate aspects of TV Marti was that when we decided to broadcast TV Marti, the Cubans jammed not only the TV signal but also the radio signal. To listen to Radio Marti now is a more difficult proposition. A lot of Cubans still do it, but the signal is always jammed on medium wave and they have to search around on short wave; the frequencies vary constantly. That means that it is no longer easily accessible. And the television signal is totally jammed too. That was one of the issues that I spent a lot of time over at the Foreign Ministry talking about because from time to time we would shift the broadcast time or do something else to try to make it possible for Cubans to receive the broadcast. They would accuse us of violating international communications regulations, and we would complain about their jamming and go back and forth. Unfortunately, TV Marti in the abstract was probably a good idea, but in reality it is a failure. People who are proponents of it do not agree. They believe that even if it is not watched, the very fact that Cubans have to spend time and energy jamming it makes it worthwhile. The amount of time and energy they spend jamming a television signal is not a lot compared to the cost of generating one. Moreover it has had the secondary unintended consequence of undermining Radio Marti. The only people in Cuba who ever see TV Marti are the people who watch it in the Interests Section. We installed a TV monitor in the consular section waiting room, and we showed tapes of the broadcasts. Otherwise, I have traveled all around the island. I have gone out with a portable television set in a car to try to pick up the signal. I suppose it is theoretically possible that in some little valley where the signal bounces the right way, someone with a television set might possibly pick it up, but the number of television sets in those little valleys is fairly limited. The only Cubans outside of those in the consular waiting room who ever TV Marti regularly are government and Communist Party officials. They do it so they can monitor and protest.

Q: Can other commercial radio and television stations in Florida be picked up in Cuba?

FLANIGAN: Yes, they can be.

Q: They are not jammed.

FLANIGAN: Sometimes they are but not normally. There are several radio stations in Florida which broadcast to Havana which can be quite provocative from the Cuban standpoint. They manage to get through most of the time. Television is another thing. Depending on atmospheric conditions broadcasts from southern Florida are irregularly visible, but this only happens when conditions are just right. Most of the time these broadcasts do not get through.

Q: Let's go back to Castro for a minute. Your only encounters with him were in receiving lines? You never really had a conversation with him?

FLANIGAN: That's correct. I never had a substantive conversation with him. Most of the time he was relatively cordial. Not all of the time. I recall one reception for, I think it was when the President Mugabe of Zimbabwe visited. The visit coincided with our bombing campaign against Baghdad. I had the sense that he was upset from the way he didn't look at me - as we went through the receiving line he looked right over my shoulder - and shook hands in a very perfunctory fashion. He seemed to me to be emotionally distressed by having to deal with an American at that point. Otherwise, sometimes he smiled, other times he would make a joking comment, but generally he was a fairly distant figure. That was the way he dealt with most foreigners, of course. It wasn't just the Americans. All of his appearances were staged very carefully. He very rarely appeared spontaneously. Even his apparently spontaneous appearances were planned as well, and very effectively. The man has quite a bit of personal charisma and is able still to generate a lot of apparent support from Cubans. In the world community he still has some supporters as well. Don't forget, he earned a lot of admiration for his ability to tweak the U S tiger's tail.

Q: Would you be invited to big events occasionally where you would see Castro in action?

FLANIGAN: It was very rare that he went to events. When there was a Communist Party Congress, he would attend some of it, but normally we were not invited, foreigners were not invited. We were invited to some of the sessions but excluded from most. I remember a couple of events I went to where he was performing. One was the installation of the National Assembly, or maybe it was the opening of the Fourth Party Congress, but it was just a show. He also attended in 1992 a fascinating series of meetings about the "Cuban Missile Crisis" that had occurred thirty years earlier. The meetings were the last in a series organized by two American scholars, James Blight and David Welch. The goal was to assemble Americans, Soviets and Cubans who had actually played a role in the crisis and talk about it from their individual perspectives. The series of meetings began in 1988, the final one was held in Havana in 1992. In the end they were successful in getting quite a few people who were centrally involved including Robert McNamara and Arthur Schlesinger Jr. Castro attended most of the Havana session. There were also some Russian generals there as well. The Soviet ambassador at the time, I guess by now it was the Russian ambassador, had been the minister counselor at the Soviet Embassy in 1962 so he was, or maybe he was the counselor and subsequently became minister. Anyway, he spent much of his career in Cuba, so he was involved. It was a very interesting group of people. There were very few journalists in attendance but some, and a few academicians. The sessions were restricted but not restricted to the extent that people could not report on them. I think the reporting was constrained. I'm not sure what the constraints were, but all of the significant information that was revealed got out and was published subsequently in books. It was very interesting because the comments of the retired Soviet general and Fidel Castro made it clear that the concerns that much of the world had in October 1962 were well founded. I think it is fair to say that if the generals and Castro were telling the truth, we came closer to a nuclear exchange than most of us had previously thought.

Q: Even though it seemed pretty threatening at the time.

FLANIGAN: It seemed pretty threatening at the time, but one thing I'm pretty sure nobody knew in the United States until this meeting in 1992, was that the Soviet general who was tactical

commander in Cuba said he had been authorized to use tactical nuclear weapons if he so decided. We were particularly shocked because a U S military commander in a like circumstance never would have been given such authorization. Of course the Soviet general did not exercise his alleged authorization, and even if he had, the result would not necessarily have been a major nuclear exchange. The nuclear missiles he had were very limited in range. They could not have threatened targets in the U S. They could have blown up a ship for example. In the end they didn't use them. Castro said he wanted them to, and wished they had.

Q: The commander should have used his authority.

FLANIGAN: That's right.

Q: Did you have many other visitors? You mentioned this meeting.

FLANIGAN: From time to time we would have visiting academic groups from the United States which were down there for one reason or another. We also had religious groups from time to time. Journalists were allowed in on a very limited basis, but they were there from time to time. It was always difficult for a journalist. There were some who became experts on Cuba and when they would come, they would have regular contacts and they would go and see these people and get information. They would write stories that would get printed and then they would not be allowed to come back. Quite often they had to be very circumspect in the way they wrote things which journalists don't like to do. They had to balance their need for information with their responsibility to write what they learned. An interesting example of this was Andres Oppenheimer who wrote the book *Castro's Final Hour*. Oppenheimer was given fairly wide access. He was allowed to spend a few months in Cuba. The book he published in 1992 was not very flattering, however. It is a little sensational, but overall a very good book. The title overstates the thesis of the book. Nevertheless he is unlikely to be allowed to renter Cuba during the Castro years.

Q: The restrictions, of course, on the part of the Cuban government who don't allow people they don't want to, to come for too long or to have access or contacts. The United States government also has restrictions on travel to Cuba.

FLANIGAN: There are restrictions on travel to Cuba; however, journalists, academicians can get licenses to travel without any difficulty. Those are two categories where there is no problem at all. One thing I should mention is the Pan American Games. These were held in Havana in 1991 and they brought a lot of foreigners including Americans into the country. Even though they were in the throes of an economic crisis, the Cubans put on a big show. Cuba emulated its communist mentors by creating a very strong development program for athletes. Its athletes were competitive in nearly every sport and they were commanding in some like boxing and weightlifting. By the end of the games the Cubans had won more medals than any other team including the U S. Although their athletic program is very impressive, it is one of the skewed elements of the society. Promising athletes are chosen at an early age and sent to special schools where they receive special training and special foods and special access, all those things. Cuba has developed some world class athletes with these programs. They played host to the 1991 Pan American Games which is a major hemispheric event in sports. It occurs every four years. They

built a large stadium right outside of Havana and had events occurring throughout the island. There was great doubt among many people that they would ever get themselves ready in time. Of course I think that is typical of almost all preparations for games like these everywhere in the world. The Cubans did a pretty good job. The criticism that I think is legitimate is that Castro spent an awful lot of money that at that point in Cuban history he should have spent to alleviate the suffering of the Cuban people. Estimates of the cost of the games vary, but Cuban outlays included something in the range of one hundred million dollars in foreign exchange expenditures. Local expenditures were also significant but impossible to estimate given the way the Cuban economy works. But, for us it was an interesting time. We had a large American delegation. Of course the Americans were the largest delegation except for the Cubans, and they were quite talented as well. They were the second largest number of medal winners. A lot of the members of the United States Olympic Committee came down, including George Steinbrenner, Ted Turner, and the now President of the USOC, William Hybl. I recall my wife and I along with the USOC Olympic Committee hosted a reception at the residence for the various national Olympic committees. A vice president of Cuban government attended, probably the first such high level Cuban to be in the American residence since before the revolution. The President of the International Olympic Committee Juan Antonio Samaranch was also there. It was quite an event. ABC Sports broadcast those games, so Cuba got a lot of world attention at the time. I think in the end the games were a major athletic and public relations success for Castro. Castro has a flair for public relations. He attended the right events, and he congratulated the right people. Only once or twice did he get himself entrapped where he had to give a medal to an American. Most of the time he was shown presenting medals to Cubans.

Q: He also didn't have to worry about baseball players or other athletes defecting from Cuba.

FLANIGAN: That's right, he did not. Periodically obviously, that is a problem. Just before that a couple of months before, I can't remember precisely when, two members of the Cuban National Baseball Team who had been to the United States defected. Annually there is a series played between the Cuban National Baseball Team and the American National Team which is an amateur team that is preparing for the Olympics or whatever. Those series are played in a suburb of Memphis and Havana. One year during my tour two members of that team had managed to defect while changing planes in Miami. That was a constant concern of the Cuban government.

Q: You mentioned earlier talking with the Cubans some about Central America in this period. Were we talking much with the Cuban government about Africa or other parts of the world in the time that you were there?

FLANIGAN: We had engaged the Cubans in the late ‘80s on the Angola issue. In fact the Cubans had played a central role in Angola. They had as many as 25,000 soldiers there at one point. I think that is the number. Now, you can get differing views about Cuba’s motivation in helping arrange the cease-fire in Angola. Some believe they were just looking for a way out. Others give them a little more credit. In any event they did cooperate with the us, the Soviets and the South Africans to get a negotiated solution. I recall that the final session of meetings among the countries involved in that process occurred in Havana, in 1992 I believe.

Q: That I think was the year that elections were held which led to more fighting, but at least they were going in the right direction.

FLANIGAN: That's right. And the Cubans had withdrawn their troops. They all came back; we watched them to the extent that we could. It is always difficult to monitor any event in Cuba because they try to avoid monitoring. Similarly, we tried to monitor the departure of Russian soldiers, troops and personnel after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The Cuban government considered the departure of Russian troops as something akin to treason, and they tried to make sure it happened without public notice.

Q: Is there anything more you want to say about either your time generally in Havana or particularly the end of the Soviet Union and the changeover as that affected Cuba.

FLANIGAN: I think in the mid '80s Cuba as a country, as an institution, as a revolution was still a potential success, and I think a lot of people thought it would be able to maintain what you might call a permanent revolution in Cuba. By the time I arrived in 1990, no one believed that was possible. There were no longer any optimistic Cubans. Even senior members of the Communist Party, people in the Foreign Ministry, were no longer convinced that it would succeed. They were outspoken and determined, ostensibly optimistic, but clearly more defensive than optimistic about what the future held for Castro's Cuba. They all assumed it would last as long as he did, but then there would be some change they couldn't explain or anticipate. I think that is fairly accurate. It became clear in the early '90s that what had been built in Cuba was not sustainable. Without the Soviet Union, without its moral, physical, and material support, Cuba couldn't continue to play the role that it had by any stretch of the imagination. So, it was destined to play out its life along with Castro. I think he recognized that, and I think it made him more and more determined not to change anything. I think at this point his view of the world is similar to that of Louis XV – *apres moi le deluge!* He still believes the revolution as he constructed it was the right thing, that it did good things to and for Cuba, and the failures he blames on other people, on the Russians or on us. The truth of the matter is he bears most of the responsibility. Many of his programs were ill-considered, overly ambitious, and unproductive in the end. He does not take criticism or instruction very well.

Q: One other international dimension Cuba has had and that is one of the leaders Castro being one of the founders I guess in the early days, the 60's, the non-aligned movement still exists, but without the cold war it is hard to see what its relevance is.

FLANIGAN: The high point for the Cubans was when they hosted the summit of the non-aligned world in 1978. For that summit they refurbished a lot of the houses, middle class houses, bourgeois houses in the area around the American ambassador's residence in Havana, many of which had been allowed to deteriorate after the revolution. Most are in pretty bad shape again. They put on a big show in 1978. Since then Cuba has been going downhill economically, politically, and from the point of view of influence. When I arrived there were something like 78 foreign missions there. By the time I left the number was no more than 65 and I'm sure it has dropped since then. There is less interest, and ultimately Cuba will have to evolve into a nation state that has something to do with its surroundings. That includes us and the Central American

and Caribbean states. I see that happening in the 10 years after Castro goes, but it won't happen until he goes. He won't let it happen.

Let me just mention one other thing. We could talk about Cuba for hours and hours. The American people are fascinated by it. One of the things I did every year was attend Castro's major speeches. You asked whether I saw him. Well there were times, yes. He normally would give two major speeches a year. One was on the 26th of July, the day they celebrated as the day of the revolution, and the other was on May 1. The speech on May Day was not of much consequence during the years I was in Cuba. His speech was short and the principal address was given by someone else. But he was there and the parade was a major event. His July 26 speech was generally of more consequence. The last year I was there, Castro actually canceled the July 26 celebration because of lack of funds, at least ostensibly. That was part of it, but another part of it was security I think. By 1993, the year I left, and I left just before the 26th. of July, they didn't have a celebration. I believe they were uncertain they could maintain control if they gathered together the 10s of thousands of people they normally did for one of those events. There was so much unhappiness. They managed to survive that crisis however.

I recall the last May Day celebration I went to. I was forced to walk out. By the way, I think these are gestures that are lost on everybody except the person who does them. I was seated among the diplomatic corps, seated among hundreds of other people sort of behind the speakers at the feet of the statue of Jose Marti at Revolutionary Square. I remember the speaker wasn't Castro. The speaker said some insulting things about the president of the United States. I got up and walked out which of course my colleagues noticed, but almost nobody else noticed. The Cubans - at least the Ministry of Interior representatives who had responsibility for monitoring my activities - noticed of course. My early exit kept me from getting a sunburn that day.

One last vignette. When we arrived in Havana in 1990 - July or August whenever it was - there were maybe 30,000 bicycles in the country, not many at all. By the time we left three years later, there were over a million bicycles, nearly all Chinese, nearly all of them weighing 65 pounds each. By that time they were a principal means of transportation because gasoline simply wasn't available. Busses, bus transportation was probably at 15 or 20% of the level it had been when we arrived. Automobiles were hard to find. Cuba had a fairly advanced highway system, which it had developed and built during the 1980's. There were multi-lane highways leading out of Havana. In 1993, if you drove 20 miles out of Havana, you would see more bicycles and horse carts than cars and trucks.

Q: Very few were in the hands of individual families.

FLANIGAN: Very few. Automobiles, yes. There were still the old American automobiles which were privately owned. The newer ones were an imperfect ownership if you will, because you had to have permission to buy and permission to sell a car. Sometimes it was hard to get either. Strange situation.

DENNIS HAYS

Coordinator for Cuban Affairs
Washington, DC (1990-1993)

Ambassador Hays was born into a US Navy family and was raised in the United States and abroad. He was educated at the University of Florida and Harvard University. Entering the Foreign Service in1975, he spent the major portion of his career dealing with Latin American, particularly Mexican and Cuban, Affairs. He also served as Deputy Chief of Mission in Burundi, and from 1997 to 2000 as U.S. Ambassador to Surinam. Ambassador Hays was interviewed by Raymond Ewing in 2001.

HAYS: When I came in, which was probably in mid-June when I graduated from the War College, and I started the next day in Cuban Affairs in June 1993 so it was just as the Clinton administration was getting its people into place. With Cuban policy there were a lot of cross currents as there always are. There were a lot of people, I think, who assumed that when a Democratic administration came in after twelve years of a Republican administration there would be a change, a rather radical change, to a policy of engagement and normalization as there had been several steps during the Carter time. Something that happened on the campaign trail changed that equation a bit. The then chairman Jorge Mas of the organization that I now work for, the Cuban-American National Foundation – whether it was reading the winds or what – had seen that Clinton was going to win, and so they had a meeting with Clinton at the Tampa Airport where they had a big bear hug, which was certainly publicized quite a lot around south Florida and his constituency. And he came away from that meeting with a Margaret Thatcheresque "Here's a man we can do business with." Whether it had a bearing on the election or not, it had a clear bearing on Cuban policy. Because Clinton felt there was a political debt or obligation or maybe an opportunity would be a better way to put it to pair off the one Hispanic American group which was traditionally, and still predominantly, Republican as opposed to Puerto Ricans, Mexicans, Guatemalans, what have you. So seeing that opportunity, he was a not of a mind – and I'm reading in here – to do anything that would unduly upset that constituency, especially in the absence of any other constituency getting a benefit which then might be to his political advantage. In other words, if you change Cuban policy, particularly in the early 1990's, you would have a million and a half people very angry at you, and you would have almost nobody or a few thousand leftist intellectuals who would be happy with you.

Q: And they probably supported Clinton anyway?

HAYS: They supported Clinton anyway, yes. So you had at the Presidential level someone who didn't want to see problems. The Vice President, Al Gore I always thought cared more about the issue and knew more about the issue, but it was basically the same thing. And then you got to the next level down of people who very much did want to change policy and I think saw this as their opportunity to make a mark on history, on policy or what have you. They wanted to change policy, but they couldn't do it directly because the President didn't want to see that happen. He didn't want to hear about it. So then you came down to the working level, that being primarily the State Department people, where you had Mike Skol who was the PDAS (Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary), Alec Watson was the Assistant Secretary and then there was me. I started out fairly traditional State Department, if you will, in the sense of "Hey, there's got to be a better

way, there must be some common ground, some mutual interests, some confidence building measures, something that we can do here to thaw out the situation which has existed for the past 30 odd years."

Q: Talking is better than fighting?

HAYS: Talking is better than fighting or not talking. It became very clear to me as I read more, learned more, talked to people and particularly dealt with the Cubans themselves that they weren't interested in that. If not enjoying a basically hostile relationship, they saw no reason to change on their side in order to engender change on our side. They were happy to have us change our policy to their benefit, but they weren't prepared to do anything for it. I scratched my head for a while and came up with the explanation that their system is built on not just on political control but on economic control. In fact, the genius of Castro is that he's figured out that by controlling the economic life of the individual you also control the political life. And so everything in Cuba is structured around funneling the individual into a situation where there's only the individual at stake. There are no intervening or softening organizations or institutions. And Castro having looked at what happened in Eastern Europe and seeing what happened in Russia and other places said there's no benefit for me to go down this road, and therefore we're not. And so they have this very hard line, I think, when it comes to anything that changes the internal dynamic of the island.

So I became a fairly hard liner rather soon into my tenure although I didn't start out that way. Mike Skol was pretty much a hard liner, Alec not so much. He had other things, other parts of Latin America to worry about and so he delegated it to Mike. As for the White House guys, in particular at the NSC (National Security Council), Feinberg, Tony Lake, and Sandy Berger, gave me the very clear impression that what they wanted us to change the policy so that when there was an outcry, then we would be the scapegoats who could be sacrificed and chastised appropriately. It would be fait accompli and the dynamic is such that you don't go back in the absence of major new issues. They weren't prepared to tell us to do that, and again, I think particularly early in my tenure if I had been told we want to find a way to do this, this and this, I probably would have saluted and said, "OK, we can certainly move in that direction." But they would never actually say that. I'm sure they thought we were dolts or something. They were sending all these signals about what they wanted without actually saying it so at no point in the future could we go back and say the NSC told us to do this.

From my vantage point down below, it also appeared that they tried to broach the subject a couple of times with the President and were rebuffed with the line that if it's not a problem, why make it a problem? My sense, and I don't want to be too harsh, for Clinton Cuba was something that he just didn't want to deal with. He didn't see any particular advantage to having it an issue. He wanted it to not to be a problem. The only time it became a problem was when it was forced upon him; the rafter crisis of 1994, for instance, which again was embedded in the midst of the Haitian crisis that was going on about the same time. So all of these pushing and pulling forces were going on there.

Q: Did anybody pay much attention to Cuban affairs other than ARA, it's Assistant Secretary and DAS?

HAYS: Peter Tarnoff was P, the Under Secretary for Political Affairs. The best I could tell is that he and the then D (Deputy Secretary) Talbott at that point, divided the world into who would look after different pieces of it and Cuba fell into Tarnoff's area . And of course, he was in close contact with the NSC, with Berger, in particular, and so I put him in the camp of people who would like to see his underlings show some initiative and do something, and if it works, then everybody gets a medal, and if it doesn't work you've been a bad boy and on you go.

Q: How about other bureaus, Human Rights for example?

HAYS: Human Rights to a certain degree, Economic only peripherally.

Q: How about other agencies?

HAYS: The Agency, of course, maintained a strong interest, and they had been burned horribly, badly. I'm sure you know the story of the video tapes that were shown on Cuban TV. Basically, in the mid to late eighties, the Agency had a full operation with lots of contacts and agents in place. The trouble was that every single one of them was a Cuban agent, and that they were videotaped everywhere they went, every step that took, every meeting they had, every drop they made was on videotape. The Cubans at a certain point decided to go public with all this, and so they broadcast it all over television for several days, as a series of reports. The entire mission was destroyed; it was rendered useless. So in this time period they were still a little shy about going back. They had people there, but my impression was they were shell-shocked, and they were not being very aggressive about getting out again.

Q: How about the Department of Commerce or the Department of Agriculture?

HAYS: Again, only very peripherally. At this point, there was nothing like the current push on agriculture exports. Things were tough in Cuba. Remember this was the time when the Soviet subsidies had been cut. Gorbachev went to see Castro in 1989 and said, "I have some bad news and some good news. The bad news is we're cutting you off your five or $6 billion a year, and the good news is we have this new thing called perestroika and glasnost and you're going to love it." And of course, Castro, being smarter in these things than Gorbachev, said, "Don't do it, you're insane, don't do it, you're throwing it all away." Well, where is Gorbachev today and where is Castro? From Castro's logic that was the worst thing that Gorbachev could have done. Castro's still in power, and Gorbachev, he's not even doing pizza commercials anymore so who knows where he is.

Q: How about members of Congress, Senators?

HAYS: At that point, there had been a long period when almost no one had gone to Cuba. There was just no interest on either side really. By this time it was starting to come back. You were seeing congressional delegations, usually one or two as compared to what you see now, seven or eight at a time. They would go down and they were the traditional members of Congress who were interested in the issues. On one side, you had Senator Dodd and Congressman Rangel and Congressman Serrano and some others who, for lack of a better term, had come from sort of the

leftist side of this. On the other side, there were three Cuban American members of Congress, two Republicans and one Democrat, two from Florida and one from New Jersey, plus others such as Senator Helms, Senator Torricelli who had been traditionally linked to the issue and was very active.

Q: Torricelli was then a Congressman, I think, wasn't he?

HAYS: He was a Congressman, that's right.

Q: Why don't you say a few words about the support or the relationship you had with the U.S. Interests' Section in Havana?

HAYS: It was pretty good. Joe Sullivan went down to Havana just about the time I came into the office. In fact, we did some of our introductory courtesy calls at the Pentagon and other places together. Joe, as you remember, was one of these guys who got caught up and couldn't get confirmed because he had various holds on him in the Senate at that point, and the Havana position was a chief of mission equivalent, although it didn't require a Senate confirmation. So he went there, and the other guy, Mike Kozak who was in the same boat for a while, went there after him.

Q: And Sullivan subsequently has been confirmed, maybe a couple of times.

HAYS: Yes, at least once and maybe twice, and Kozak also. The Interest Section at that point was beginning a complete renovation of the building which was the original embassy building. They had a fairly tough time. The Cubans were still pretty rough on them; the human rights officer was always being harassed, his car would be bumped into in traffic, and dogs would be killed, just nasty, petty stuff. Just letting people know that they, the Cuban security guys, are there. I went to Havana four times in two years. A couple of those were tied to the migration talks. The first time was the basic orientation visit for any new country director. The other thing that I think I did a little differently than some of my predecessors was to try to deal with the Miami community. I had gotten advice from one of my predecessors to never leave the transit lounge in the Miami Airport. You just don't want to do it. My sense was you couldn't really deal with the Cuban issue unless you dealt with both sides of the strait, or at least were aware of what was going on. I made an effort to go to Miami fairly frequently. I would accept invitations to speak at the University of Miami seminar or a Miami Herald journalist workshop or stuff like that. I would look for ways to go down there and then go out and try to establish some form of contact with all the different Cuban-American groups, of which there are a lot in South Florida.

Q: How about dealing with the Cuban Interests Section in Washington?

HAYS: We had the formal contact and a little bit of informal contact. There was a man named Alfonso Fraga who was the ambassador who I just saw is now ambassador to Chile. He seemed to have been in the doghouse for a few years, but he seems to have climbed out again. He was head of the section, and I'm sure he's a nice man. He came across probably not in the best way. He was almost a caricature of a Russian apparatchik. He was a fairly short and stocky man, didn't speak very good English, didn't dress particularly well and he was very dogmatic. You

could not argue any issue with him, there was no give, just absolutely none. So that dynamic was there, but on a professional basis we got along reasonably well. There was another guy Raphael Dausa, who I always assumed was one of their intel guys and is now up at the UN and who we also had contact with fairly frequently. With Fraga we actually did the first US Government - Cuban Government debate at the University of Minnesota, probably in early 1994, and then I did the same thing with Dausa at Ohio State six months later.

Q: Their main point of contact with the Department of State would be your office of Coordinator for Cuban affairs?

HAYS: Yes.

Q: But they also circulated elsewhere in government like most diplomats?

HAYS: It was a little tougher in those days. Normally Fraga would come in and see the DAS on most occasions. We tried to keep the level down to my level. This was the time that you could wander around the Department, no matter who you were. You could just sort of come in and wander around. It was strange. I remember one time he showed up unexpectedly. I invited him into my office, and I was sitting there talking to him, and it occurred to me that my computer was on and that it was on the index default setting the old computers had. One of the lines was the name of a Cuban colonel who was on the verge of defecting In Europe. I'm sitting there thinking, can he see the computer screen from where he's sitting? I was pretty sure not. His eyes would've had to have been pretty good to pick that out, but I managed to call in my deputy to talk to him and quickly canceled out of the screen. The guy eventually defected so they didn't find him. Let me mention Nancy Mason was my deputy at that point.

Q: How large was the office? You had a deputy? Were there others too?

HAYS: We were growing. At the time I started, there was my position, the deputy, there was an economic, a political, and a consular officer and two secretaries. I guess that was it when we started. We added people as we went through the rafter crisis and some of the legislative needs. We eventually grew to probably double that.

Q: Do you want to talk about some of the issues and problems that you had to deal with? Start with the rafter crisis or something else, if you'd like.

HAYS: OK, we can start with the rafter crisis. For about ten years we had been having periodic, twice a year, migration talks with the Cubans. The big issue for us was the repatriation of the Mariel excludables of 1980. In the Mariel boatlift, among other things, Castro had opened all of the prisons and asylums, the hospitals and everything else he could find to push people into the States. And so, despite this sort of blanket admission that was given, there were specific reasons some couldn't be admitted and there were people who were just never eligible. Many of them were held, and this was now twelve or thirteen years later, and they were still being basically held in detention.

Q: How many are we talking about?

HAYS: Of the ones we wanted to get back, there were about 3,000 left at this point. Some of them were extremely violent criminals, some of them were suffering from AIDS. There were all kinds of problems, not just you go back home. Actually, the Justice Department handled this, and of course INS was the other Federal agency that most directly dealt with Cuban issues. They wanted to send all these people back, and the ideal way would have been to put everyone on a plane at once and fly them down there. The Cubans, obviously, didn't want that to happen, but there had been sort of an accommodation where x per month would be sent down after a process of sending files so they could reacclimatize them to Cuban society.

Q: So they basically knew who was coming and agreed to accept them?

HAYS: Yes, they would have a name by name acceptance. In one of our early migration discussions we got to the point of saying fifty a month. So if you figure five or six hundred a year, it's going to take five or six years to empty everybody out. And often you wouldn't get that because you'd start at 50 but there would be reasons several would fall out, so on an average you might have 35 or 40 on a flight that actually went back.

The Cuban side was headed up by my opposite number, a man named Bienvenido Garcia who was the director for North America, and we worked out quite a nice system where we had home and away migration talks. So we took them to Atlanta the first time and held a couple of days of migration talks. The headquarters office in Atlanta was very supportive, and we took them to a Braves game and took them to Stone Mountain, out to restaurants and everything. It was a nice event. The next time, six months later, we went to Santiago, Cuba and had the same thing, the Tropicana. It was the wrong season for a ballgame, which was too bad. Then the rafter crisis broke out. Castro works very hard to maintain this aura of infallibility, but he makes a lot of mistakes. He usually makes mistakes in estimating how much people want to get away from his workers' paradise. Mariel, as you may remember, at first was a couple of people who went into the Peruvian embassy. He said if these gusanos want to leave, let them go, and overnight we had 10,000 people in the embassy there. And he said, OK, well, if these guys want to leave they can go to Mariel and get out of here I don't care. It was up to 125,000 that left before he said no.

One of the things that we were arguing was that we wanted to send criminals back to Cuba. The Cubans were saying two things – that we were too restrictive on our immigration policy and they didn't understand why when the law said they could have 20,000 per year, they didn't get 20,000 per year. So we would always explain, well, that's a ceiling that every country has is up to 20,000 and lots of countries don't come anywhere close to that. And there's an overall. We would have these INS guys there with charts and slide shows. But they just didn't understand and said why should we get 20,000 and we only get 4 or 5,000? This is then forcing people to go in rafts. Part of Castro's genius is he has always made it difficult for you to stay and very easy for you to leave. It's one thing to be a dissident in Havana and another thing to be a dissident in Miami. It just doesn't have the same weight. So he doesn't mind people leaving, he never has, unlike the East Germans or others. If a million leave, he's got a million more. What does he care? It's not a problem, but he doesn't like the image of people in rafts and babies and the aerial photographs of people begging for mercy to leave the country. He never liked that. So over the previous two years there had been an increase in the number of rafters who left the country. It

wasn't a lot, but it was definitely an up tick. At this time, the spring of '94, conditions in Cuba were getting very bad. The subsidies had stopped, the Cubans were sort of thrashing around to find some other way to bring in revenue, the Chinese weren't prepared to adopt them, the Europeans would do only so much and they wanted something in return and so times were tough. People were hungry, and there was a lot of internal tension and dissent.

When I came into the job, a lot of people said, "Oh, my God. We have to lift the embargo because people are starving in Cuba, everybody's hungry, everybody's starving and you need to lift the embargo." The embargo had nothing to do with people being hungry, in my opinion. What it had to do with is the fact that you had a tropical island that had fed itself for 400 years but now can't because they chopped down all the mango trees in order to plant sugar. The area is inappropriate for sugar, but nevertheless they did it. And interestingly they now import mangoes from the Dominican Republic to feed the tourists because they have cut down all the mango trees. People were hungry. There were a lot of electrical blackouts in the cities, even in Havana, although usually Havana gets the best of everything, but even Havana was suffering from blackouts. So people were angry and upset and a lot of them took to the water to get out.

The most serious incident of civic unrest occurred in early August 1994. There was a riot in the dock areas. People went after the dollar stores and the foreign hotels and started trashing them. The Cubans isolated the area, cleverly cordoned off the area to keep people from coming in and imposed a blackout of the news so that other parts of the island couldn't find out about this. Once they had it cordoned off and people got tired or drunk or frustrated or whatever, then they sent in these construction brigades who had the good jobs of building hotels but also had a political function of taking tire irons in and whacking away. So they were able to contain that, but I think it worried them. In this time period, Raul, Castro's brother, who is the guy who looks after the army was able to convince Fidel that they needed to relax the food issue, the farmers' market, they call it, and the food starvation issue went away immediately. It's still a very tightly controlled with about 9% of the land under more or less private control, and they produce something like 53% of all the food. Clearly it worked but they only let it work for so far.

More and more people were rafting out. Castro was making noises like Mariel, i.e. people were betraying the revolution and he really didn't want them and so our government was getting more and more concerned. CNN, I think on two occasions broke in to broadcast speeches by Castro live which is always a mistake and after about an hour and a half, they break in and say we'll be back but now we'll go to regular programming. Nevertheless, there was clearly a threat there that he was going to let things go. And in fact, he did, and it reached the point where the border patrol they had, the police and the army, would stand by. There was no announcement; there was not anything formal, but the Cubans would notice that the police patrol didn't come within 100 yards of where they were building their raft to get away. Once that word got out, there was much more of a flood. There were lots and lots of people; babies, grandma, everybody getting into rafts and be going. A lot of people died. No one knows how many, but there were a lot of people who were dead. And again, as I mentioned earlier, there was a Haitian migration crisis going on at the same time.

One of its things that changed the dynamic was when we saw people drowning the Coast Guard came in closer, and they were just off the twelve mile marker. So now the equation changed. You

didn't have to build a raft to get 90 miles; you can build a raft to get you twelve miles. And so there was another huge wave of people building rafts.
In the whole time leading up to this, there was a lot of talk about no more Mariels. We didn't want to have another Mariel. The distinguishing feature of the Mariel, of course, was that people in South Florida got on boats, went to Havana or Mariel, picked people up and came back. That's how people got there. So always fighting the last war, we had great contingency plans that actually worked exceptionally well to prevent that from happening. There would be a state of emergency declared, the Coast Guard would quarantine the corridor and boats would not be allowed to leave South Florida. So that was the plan. I remember clearly at one interagency meeting asking what about people coming in boats from Cuba? The Agency had done a study from their satellite reconnaissance. They had taken a 100 or 200 mile stretch of the north coast of Havana, and they counted every boat, and they said if every boat leaves Cuba full of people maybe eighteen or 20,000 people can come out. The assumption was that if they got into a boat and came to South Florida the boat would go back. That's the maximum number of people who could possibly come out. What nobody, myself included, thought of, of course, was what if they build more boats because in order to do that they had to have the complicity of the Cuban government. We didn't quite make that leap that here's something that could happen. It was a valuable lesson.

So we started seeing people building these boats, using old tires, and pieces of wood and what have you. And the numbers kept going up and up and up. There was also a contingency plan to receive people in the United States. INS (Immigration and Naturalization Service) had a plan that we would bring folks in. There was a discussion whether under the circumstances it would be temporarily or permanent parole that they would receive. It's worth remembering that Clinton had a very bad experience with Cubans who were sent to Fort Chaffee, Arkansas when he was governor. Some people said he lost the election, the only election he ever lost, because of the handling of that. There were riots and everything.

Q: That was at the time of Mariel?

HAYS: Yes. There was a plan to use Homestead and other military bases as safe havens and then the decision would be made if any or all would be admitted to the United States or whether they would be returned or whether they would be processed through third countries. All these options were out there. The point was that there was a plan to deal with this.

Q: You said people were also leaving Haiti at the same time and there was a question of differential treatment? Perhaps that's what you're coming to next.

HAYS: Yes. For instance, we were looking at where we can hold people. Surinam, for instance, came up. CINCSOUTH went to Surinam and met with some of the people I refused to meet with later on. Nevertheless, he made a deal and there was an arrangement there to take refugees, both Haitians and Cubans. They actually sent in some construction teams to build some slabs, but they never got around to it. For one thing it is a long way away from there. There were other third country teams going all over the place asking countries to take large numbers of refugees. Some of them, like the Turks and Caicos were willing to take refugees, but someone pointed out that the odds in any given year of hurricanes hitting the Turks and Caicos is something like 70%.

What happens if a hurricane comes and you have 20,000 people in tents? It's probably not a good thing. So all of these things were bubbling around here. It reached the point where there was a perception that the numbers coming out were so great that it was going to overload the system in South Florida. In 1994 there was an off year election and it was coming up. The governorship of Florida, for instance, was coming up. Lawton Chiles was running against Jeb Bush and how this played was obviously of some concern. When Castro opened up the floodgates and let everybody go, we were seeing 600, 700 or 800 a day that were coming out. They were being picked up, and then they would be ferried to South Florida and processed through the system. The system actually was able to handle that number. It was working. It was tough, it was expensive, but basically, it was a process that was working.

The perception, however, was that we had to stop it. In order to stop it, we had to get rid of Castro, that was it. The argument that myself and a few others tried to make is that we always see this as us having a problem. We forget that the other guy has a problem too. In our case, we clearly had a humanitarian issue. All these people showing up and families separated, people drowning and all this stuff which is not good. From the Cuban perspective though, it's a different thing. Inside Cuba it had reached the point where basically the country had come to a standstill. Everybody was either getting onto a raft, building a raft, selling material to build a raft or standing around and watching all of the above. So basically the country ground to a halt. Nothing was going on. And that has regime-threatening aspects to it. It was my opinion, we never seriously considered what that meant in terms of policy or in terms of negotiating power; understanding that Castro had a problem too. It wasn't just our problem that we needed his help to solve. I mean he had a problem. He needed our help to solve it also.

Q: We were talking about your assignment as Coordinator of Cuban Affairs in the early 1990's in the early Clinton administration, particularly the rafter crisis. You had described it in quite a bit of detail. Maybe we ought to turn to the resolution, particularly how the policy issues were dealt with at that time.

HAYS: As August 1994 went on, the number of rafters kept increasing more and more and more each day. It is important to note we, the U.S. government, had a plan to deal with the rafter crisis. Primarily it was a plan that was written in the wake of Mariel. If you remember what happened with Mariel, people from South Florida got in boats and they went to Cuba and picked people up and brought them back. There was a way to deal with this which was basically the Coast Guard would shut down the ports in South Florida which would then prevent people from getting to Cuba. The thought was that would minimize the outflow. We actually thought about people who would get on boats in Cuba, and as I remember the Agency had done a survey and had looked from one end of the coast to the other and there was a feeling that if every boat in Cuba was used, about 25,000 people could get out. This was working on the assumption that the boats would not be returned to Cuba. The people would get out, and they would either capture the boat or it would sink.

Q: Not much attention was given to the possibility of building new rafts?

HAYS: That's correct, and because the Coast Guard and Navy knew that people were drowning, they moved in closer right up to the twelve mile mark and therefore you didn't have to build a

boat that would go 90 miles, you only needed to build a build a boat that could go twelve miles. So the numbers were increasing and pressure was building, building, building. South Florida had a system in place to process the level of people that were coming out so we were in a crisis but it was not an overwhelming crisis. Two side issues impacted on this; the first one was that there also was also an outflow of the boat people from Haiti at this time and there were the questions of distinction between Haiti and Cuba. The short answer to that, of course, was we had used military force to restore "democracy" to Haiti whereas that was not an option that anyone was considering with respect to Cuba. The second thing that was happening was there was a gubernatorial race with Lawton Chiles running for reelection again against Jeb Bush. These were factors.

When the various options were looked at, as to where we could put people, one of the problems was that there weren't any real good places. We could do third country placement up to a certain point. We looked around, including at Surinam, interestingly. That was an option, and they went so far as to put down concrete slabs to prepare for that. But it came back again and again, just like it has with the current immigration, to the fact that in Guantanamo Base we have an area outside the U.S. jurisdiction and it's a military closed area with nowhere to go.

The decision to turn people back to Cuba or rather to send them to Guantanamo was never fully vetted in the interagency system. In fact, the decision was made, and I'm pretty confident about this, by Mort Halperin who was at the NSC at this point basically typing up a resolution and taking it to Tony Lake. The two of them then took it to the President, who I understand asked, "Is everyone OK with this?" He was told, yes, this will work. I can tell you for an absolute fact that no one else in the U.S. government knew this was going to happen. I was called by Senator Graham who was asking me because he had heard rumors, and of course, I said, "No, nothing like that is going on." I was in the room with Janet Reno who had no idea that this was going to happen, the Agency didn't know and certainly, the State Department didn't know. There was a fait accompli that basically went out from the White House that changed 40 years of U.S. policy. Then it was a question of scrambling to implement what the president had decided. Needless to say, there were a lot of loose ends. There were a lot of Cuban refugees who were in Miami in the final stages of processing; there were some who were just coming off the boats; some that were on boats who had not yet come ashore and there were some that were ten or twenty miles out. Where did each of these groups fit? And there were some executive decisions. The county administrator in Miami at one point just told the bus drivers to keep moving, and he got people out of the detention centers – probably about five hundred people – that otherwise would have been locked up in these containment facilities.

So as we were scrambling, of course, there was political fallout from that too. There was a delegation that came up the following night from Miami including Jorge Mas Canosa, members of the Miami City Council and some prominent Cuban democrats who met with the President. They basically provided their blessing in return for certain actions of tightening up on some travel remittances and some other areas. The sub-note on this is that the community in South Florida did have a slightly different view in 1994 than it did in 1980. Again, in 1980 it was people who themselves at risk to go back to Cuba to pick up immediate relatives: their mother, a grandmother, a brother, a cousin, the guy they went to school with, somebody. They had a purpose for going. In 1994 it was more random of people just coming out so there were not the

same family ties there. So although the community very much was opposed to the idea of sending people to Guantanamo or, Heaven forbid, sending them back to Cuba, there wasn't the same sort of familial tie to this crisis as there had been to the earlier one.

Now we were sending people to Guantanamo and in return for this, of course, Castro was going to tighten up on the exits, but there was still a fair number of people coming out and Guantanamo was getting more and more full. I remember there were a lot of conversations about how many people could be in Guantanamo at any one time. The Turks and Caicos had about an 80% chance it was going to get hit by a hurricane, and so nobody wanted to put people in the Turks and Caicos even though they were prepared to talk to us. In Guantanamo the figure was always about 25,000 and that included the Haitians of which there were about 10,000 or 12,000 at that point already there plus the Cubans. They said, "Oh, my God, we can't take anymore, we can't take anymore. There's no room, there's no space." Finally, after the fifth or sixth meeting one guy asked, "What if we use the golf course?" And without missing a beat, the DOD (Department of Defense) guy said, "Then I think 150,000." So they weren't prepared to volunteer to give up their golf course, but it was there if somebody asked the right question which they finally did, and we never did have any more discussions about space.

As all the people were pouring into Guantanamo there was a realization early on that this was not sustainable over time. The question was what can we do with all these people? And again, remember this was imposed on the Federal bureaucracy against our judgment and will, but there it was. So there was a discussion of different options, one was the Hong Kong option where you turned Guantanamo into a free market colony which would be an example of what Cuba could be as opposed to what it was. Someone added up how many billion dollars that would take and that was dismissed. So instead, it was well, what we can do to help keep this operation self-sustaining, and the military had some very legitimate concerns about what would happen when you kept all these people locked up. The population was predominantly young males, although there were little kids, young girls, pregnant women, old folks, there was the whole mix. What we were doing was for a humanitarian purpose. I don't know that we ever articulated this as a policy, but everybody knew that we would try to get the most vulnerable people in Guantanamo out on parole on a humanitarian basis. Pregnant women, there's an easy one. Elderly people who had medical problems, there's another easy one. Then you get into kids, particularly the kids who had immediate relatives in the States already, and then you got to young girls, who I don't want to say became prostituted, but who suddenly became subject to a lot of stress and strain. What you're doing is that you're taking the people out who to some degree are the calming, stabilizing part of the population, and you are left with young males who can only play so much volleyball before they really get tired. A few people voluntarily went back to Cuba, but not that many.

In my trips to Gitmo (Guantanamo Bay Naval Base) I was struck that the Cubans did a pretty good job of organizing themselves by camps. They had camp leaders, if somebody was a doctor, he took over that role, if somebody was an architect, he started designing and building new latrine systems. Whatever it was, they were doing a pretty good job of it. Every time we took a new group out, we tried not to advertise it, although the areas of South Florida wanted to hear that the pregnant women were coming out. Castro, of course, didn't want to hear it, because his point, with some legitimacy, was that if you make it look like it's just a weigh station – you go to Gitmo and play volleyball for four months and then you go to Miami – that will increase the

outflow. So every time we lowered the population of the camp we would worry about rising numbers of rafters coming out. We were faced with how to resolve this problem. The best option we had, which wasn't much, was to tell the Cubans, "Look, this is not sustainable." We wanted to get the message across that this time we mean it. We would basically grandfather in everybody who was in Guantanamo, except the hardcore criminals and the insane, but in the future we were going to be really tough and would only do third-country placement if people were caught.

We were now up to April 1995, and it was time for another of the semiannual migration talks. The Cubans had bumped up their representation from a year ago, and had gone from basically my counterpart which is where the talks had been up to that point to Ricardo Alarcon, who was arguably the number three guy in the hierarchy there and President of the National Assembly. Originally, they had scheduled these talks on the seventeenth of April which, of course, is the anniversary of the Bay of Pigs, not a good day to have this. So I suggested we push it back a day to have it on the eighteenth. When we got to the talks in New York at the Cuban mission, my instructions were to find a way to get the Cubans to agree to our continuing to draw down numbers at Guantanamo without having them threaten to open the floodgates again. Unbeknownst to me, there were secret negotiations going on between Alarcon and Tarnoff, the Under Secretary for Political Affairs. They were meeting in Toronto. On the seventeenth, the day we didn't meet, they had a meeting, and then we met and then had a break, and they met a second time.

Q: Unbeknownst to you?

HAYS: Unbeknownst to me. Why was it unbeknownst to me? I suspect it was because what was proposed, I felt, was not very well thought out. We took a deal that wasn't in our best interests and wasn't what we could have gotten. In fact, we didn't ask for anything and so we didn't get anything. If I had been asked earlier, I would have bureaucratically, like a good Foreign Service Officer, written a memo and sent it around to everybody and said, "Here are some things, and here are some other things, and we can ask for this, this and this. At a minimum for this particular deal to go through, we need to have this, this and that." So it didn't happen. I think the White House was interested in resolving this issue. This gets back to something I'm sure I said earlier; it was a nice doggy, don't bother me type of approach rather than a more pro-active one. In any event, as I was going back and forth with Alarcon, and I had my team including INS (the Immigration and Naturalization Service) and other people all sitting around with none of them having a clue what's going on either, the other discussion was taking place. Curiously, Alarcon pulled me aside during the second day, and he gave me a hypothetical which was in fact the deal that was offered. As I remember I said something like, "Oh, that's very interesting. We'd like to look at that." And I sent it back in cable form. Here's a proposal. However, he's asking for this, without giving that and what have you. I didn't think much more about it other than it was an interesting kind of idea. The talks concluded inconclusively, other than an agreement that we would meet more frequently like in three months rather than in six months.

Q: These talks were alternating between Cuba and New York?

HAYS: Before the crisis, we had a good deal. We would take the Cubans to some place in the United States, like Atlanta which had been the previous one, and we would go to a Braves game and see Stone Mountain and that sort of thing and they would take us to someplace in Cuba. The one I went on was to Santiago and we already had it planned out; we were going to go to New Orleans and they were going to take us to Trinidad. It was very collegial and we did some serious business, but we could also see something of each other's country. Once Alarcon came in he insisted that it either be Washington or New York because they had missions there and he had to be at his mission. And Washington was out for us, and so we ended up with the Cubans always going to New York and in return they always sent us to Havana.

As an aside, after I finished these talks, I had a scheduled speech that I was giving in New Jersey which has the second largest concentration of Cuban Americans. Although I'm generally perceived as a hardliner on the issue, I was attacked as some form of "communista" by this particular group. In particular, they said, "We know there are secret negotiations going on, and you're not telling us about them". I stood up there and said, "Look, I'm telling you, if there were secret negotiations going on, I would know about them. So I can assure you there are no secret negotiations going on at this time." I went back to Washington, and I had the flu, and so I took a day off and then I started getting phone calls, "Something's happening, something's happening" from a friend in DOD. The Agency said, "Hey, what's going on? What's happening? Something's happening." And again, I didn't know there was anything in particular, but there were enough phone calls that it was clear that something was going on.

Let me very briefly talk about my specific concern with the decision, which was to forcibly return people to Cuba. In the agreement that was signed, it specifically said that the government of the United States and the government of the Republic of Cuba jointly guarantee that no adverse action will be taken against people who are returned to Cuba. That's interesting because if you see what is told to migrants now by the Coast Guard, the little form that they read, it says the Republic of Cuba guarantees. Somehow the United States was taken out of the guarantee in the things that we tell people. In theory, an inspection is supposed to monitor and travel around to do that. The reality is that they were totally incapable of doing that other than on a very cursory and spot check basis. Furthermore, the very first guy who was sent back under this program, Professor Zamora, was fired from his job, booted out of his house and his wife was discriminated against. We protested, and the Cubans said, "Well, we're going to continue to pay his salary but obviously, this man can no longer have anything to do with impressionable youth." He was a university professor, and he can still get his eight dollars a month to live on, but nevertheless, it was clear that adverse action took place. The very first guy that went back!

If I had been asked before all this happened or even while it was happening what we could do, I would have said my moral objection is that we have to be sure, in fact, that the Cubans live up to this. In order to do that, we should use this opportunity to try to get the Red Cross or Amnesty International or Human Rights Watch or any internationally recognized human rights group to have full access to these individuals when they go back in to Cuba. And I'm absolutely convinced, as much today as I was in those days, that we could've gotten that because the Cubans had a problem and they had to solve it. As I talked about earlier, I don't think we took that into account. We just saw our problem, and we had to solve it. If we had, we could have said, "We want you to change the law that makes it a criminal offense to try to leave your country."

This is what a lot of these guys are hit with now, they're imprisoned because they tried to escape, they got caught and so now they're doing three, five or seven years in prison. I'm absolutely convinced that if we had said this law violates every international standard there is and you need to repeal it, they would have done it. We were not asking Castro to commit suicide or whatever. We were asking about something specifically related to the action at hand. If we had just had the balls or the guts to request it, we would've gotten it, but we didn't. So I finally got called in by my boss, Alec Watson, Assistant Secretary for American Affairs, who said, "Dennis, look, here it is. Here's what happened."

Q: So the agreement had already been signed in Toronto by Undersecretary Peter Tarnoff?

HAYS: Yes, and it was going to be announced the next day at the noon briefing. He told me at five o'clock the evening before. This came as a shock, as you might imagine. I asked the exact same question; did we get this, did we get that and the other thing? No, no, no, we didn't get anything. A deal's a deal, take it. I went back and told my deputy, Nancy Mason, about this. We shook our heads and went home. Interestingly, both of us independently decided to resign, both Nancy and I. As luck would have it, as I parked my car in the State Department parking lot the next morning, who do I see walking next to me going to the elevator but Peter Tarnoff. I think that was the first and only time that that had happened; we just happened to be at the same place of the same time. I always liked Peter, he's a bright guy. I don't agree with what he did, but I understand why he did it. I told him, "Look, I can't do this, because as Coordinator, I would have been responsible for carrying out this policy, for actually overseeing the forcible return of people in chains, literally, back to a system where they would have no protection." So I got to my office and Nancy came in and told me she couldn't do this and she was resigning. And well, me too. So it went from there. Parenthetically, let me just say, it does not mean because it's the wrong policy, the President doesn't have the right to do it. Somebody has to be in charge. I accept that fact. If I had been included in the decision-making process and had an opportunity to express my concerns and reservations, would I have stayed? I might have, but given the set of circumstances and the fact that we got a bad deal and that I would be in charge of implementing this deal and I had given my word that there were no secret deals and in fact, there were, I'm either totally incompetent or totally out of the loop or both. This is entirely possible on all accounts. It was not something I could do. So I left and Nancy left.

Q: This was within a matter of hours, days?

HAYS: This was the very next day.

Q: This was April, 1995?

HAYS: We had met toward the end of the week, there was the weekend, and then I think it was Tuesday when I saw Alec.

Q: Toward the end of the month of April?

HAYS: It was May 2. I know exactly what day it was. It was May 2 when this all broke. I didn't resign from the Service; I just asked to be reassigned from the position. Although my expectation

was I would get a choice table down in the cafeteria and sort of bide my time and hang out until I went away. Fortunately for me, there was a fair amount of press interest in this and questions asked, and Warren Christopher, bless his heart, said something to the effect of, "Well, we understand why Dennis and Nancy did this and we respect their standing on principle and there'll be no adverse affect on their careers."

Q: The Secretary of State?

HAYS: The Secretary of State said that, so I said God bless Warren Christopher. I had already been in the process of going to Surinam as ambassador at this point. I know there was discussion of why bother with him, he's a dead issue here, let's give it to somebody else. Again Mike Skol, the PDAS (Deputy Assistant Secretary) and my other bosses pushed me forward. Friends have told me the story that the NSC guys and the political guys weren't too concerned because they said, "Let's let his name go forward because it will get axed at the White House and then it will be somebody else is doing the dirty work, and we're clean." What they forgot to remember though, was that it's not the NSC at the end of the day that chops off on ambassador's appointments; it's the Office of Presidential Personnel who work very closely with the political office of the White House. As a side effect of this, of course, I was extremely popular in South Florida; they loved me. I was very clear, I didn't attack the President, I didn't question him and this sort of stuff and I didn't talk to the press, not much anyway except for a few old friends. They liked me, and so I was literally the first name that came back approved, which caused some consternation and head scratching. I know this for a fact.

In the meantime, I went off to be Director of Mexican Affairs. There were two vacancies in ARA, Caribbean Affairs and Mexican Affairs. With Caribbean affairs you picked up Haiti, and I had questions about our policy in Haiti, and I said I'm not going to go from one Caribbean island problem state to another and then have something horrible happen there. I don't want to do this again. Once is plenty for a given career. So Mexico seemed like fun. And I, in fact, had a wonderful time being Director of Mexico, although it was only for about eight or nine months.

Q: So that took you into 1996?

HAYS: Yes, into 1996. I was held up eight months after the confirmation hearings mostly by Janice O'Connell on Senator Dodd's staff who didn't like my Cuba policy and many other things. So bureaucratically, she was able twice to kick me off the business committee hearing by doing a letter asking questions at five o'clock the day before, which then takes a day to work through the system. In the meantime, Senatorial privilege being what it is, my name was removed. Instead of going to post as I was supposed to in August or September of 1996, I ended up going in March of 1997.

Q: She basically kept it within the Foreign Relations Committee? You had a hearing but then they didn't take action on your appointment?

HAYS: I couldn't get out of the business committee.

Q: So you finally went in early 1997. Anything further on Cuba or from your time working on Mexico?

HAYS: Nothing particularly noteworthy.

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Q: And I know you took a position with the Cuban-American National Foundation. Would you say just a few words about that?

HAYS: I was all set to do trade promotion for the Mid-Florida Economic Council, which I thought was going to be fun and I had one day a week with them and I could teach at one of the universities there, maybe global politics.

Q: You would've been in Florida?

HAYS: Yes, in Florida. I was all set. This was the Elian Gonzalez time. There was a feeling, which I think was correct, in the Miami community that the passion was overwhelming the message and that Cuban-Americans along with blonde college males were the only two groups in the country that you could attack indiscriminately without getting into a PC (Politically Correct)-type drawback. The community was suffering and the policy was suffering because of this. There was a sense that having somebody in Washington who could not be accused of wanting to put people back on the plantation or take books out of their hands. I care about Cuba, as you know. It was an interesting offer and for a lot of reasons worked out well. It brought me back to Washington which I like. So I took it, and I've had a wonderful time. The thing with Cuban policy is it's always new but it's always the same. You fight, fight, fight all these battles and you wake up and you find out you've got to do it all over again. So three years again, sort of using my Foreign Service mentality of three years and then it's time to go do something else. This was a good time to break.

Q: I don't think I asked you in terms of your coordinator position; how often have you gone to Cuba?

HAYS: I guess a total of four times; orientation trips and then the migration talks. The first time I went I was given a very large mahogany box full of Cohiba cigars. The second time I went I got a medium sized box of Montec. I think that sort of reflects their impression of how helpful I was going to be to their cause. The second time I went was for the migration talks. We went to one of the safe houses, and we had a very nice dinner with our counterparts. And we had coffee and more coffee and they came around with coffee again. It was clear that we were waiting. The presumption was there was a possibility that Castro would come and meet with us briefly. After we had waited probably an hour and a half in that mode and it was clear to us why we're waiting, we weren't going to get up and say we've got to go. Finally, about one in the morning it was have a nice evening, good night, see you later. We got back on the bus and went back to our hotel.

Q: So you never met Castro?

HAYS: No. I met the big brother, Ramon who looks an awful lot like him. And every other guy on the delegation was propositioned every half an hour, there were people knocking on the door, and me, nothing, no one ever came. I don't know what they were waiting for. I guess there was some advantage to being the head of delegation there.

STANLEY ZUCKERMAN
Director, Latin American and Caribbean Affairs, USIA
Washington, DC (1989-1992)

Mr. Zuckerman was born and raised in Brooklyn, New York and educated at the University of Wisconsin. After service in the US Army, followed by newspaper reporting and a position with the Governor of Wisconsin, he joined the USIA Foreign Service in 1965. He subsequently served as Information, Press and Public Affairs Counselor in Congo, Belgium, Mexico, Canada and Brazil. He also had several senior level assignments in Washington at USIA and the State Department. Mr. Zuckerman was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2004.

ZUCKERMAN: Actually the first thing I had on my plate on the first day I walked into my new office was a request to sign off or comment on a memo on the creation of TV Marti. Now we already had a radio Marti, which was widely listened to in Cuba, very hard to jam, and of very good content. I listened to it to satisfy myself that they were doing a professional job, and they were. It wasn't an endless harangue. It was a good news report with the emphasis on Latin America and where we had information on events in Cuba that might not circulate widely in Cuba itself. But this new idea was to deliver a television signal that could be see in Havana and elsewhere on the island.. I did some research on it, I didn't have much time, but it became abundantly clear that television not only would be a much greater threat to the Castro regime than radio, that they would take steps to jam it, but that it was much easier to jam than a radio transmission. Even though it would be an expense for Cuba because they would have to use energy to fire up jammers, they would be compelled to do so. No question about it. So we would be cranking up staff that I think is now about 700 people, and sending TV news and other programs to Cuba that few if any Cubans would see. I have seen the result, and it is a pretty good newscast, but since it was clear to all but a few zealots that it would not be seen by Cubans, it was obviously meant only to satisfy the Cuban Americans in Miami, although it would have no effect at all on the movement of information to Cuba. I said that in the memo, and I was told "thank you very much", and it went on the air.

The first signals were sent from a tethered balloon in southern Florida or some island off Florida. It broke loose once. To this day despite the fact that much money and effort has been put into the attempt to penetrate Cuba with a TV newscast, it hasn't worked. There was an outfit we later had dealings with when I was working on my final assignment in the State Department in the office of the Undersecretary for Political Affairs. The Air National Guard of Pennsylvania had a plane that could beam information radio or television signals and get under radar. I understand they

have recently had some success in Cuba, but they are not going to be able to keep that up. So it's a vain attempt.

We pushed other efforts. We placed an officer in Cuba, serving on the staff of the American liaison office, technically an element of the Swiss embassy in Cuba. We were allowed one person in there. We sent good people down there who could really operate on their own. We talked to the Cuban Liaison office here about being able to get American scholars to Cuba as part of our speaker's program, and had permission from our side of the aisle to try to make it happen. Joe Tulchin was head of the Latin American division at the Wilson Center, and he agreed to go to Cuba as our first speaker. It took a long time for the Cubans to respond, and we started getting resistance from some on our side because some felt we would be aiding Cuba in this effort. I didn't feel that sending an American speaker who could represent non-government views on the situation in Latin America and on current scholarship on the continent was more of an asset to Cuba than it was to us. It was a means of starting a dialogue, and of testing whether or not they really wanted any kind of information on an official basis. At the last minute the trip was cancelled; the Cubans declined to give him a visa. I am sure that it was as much a matter of consternation within the Cuban bureaucracy as it was in ours. Since then I think we have gotten some people in who carried out programs. Our presence there is important. Certainly it is important in giving whatever help we could to those people, intellectuals and artists, who have been mistreated because of their opposition to the Castro regime. But American policy has remained in the hands of largely those Cuban Americans who feel that the way to get rid of Castro is with an iron fist rather than a velvet glove. It hasn't worked thus far. There are some signs of change I guess, but the recent moves by this administration to make it more difficult for Cuban Americans to send assistance to their own families could have an effect on the Cuban population in south Florida. I hope it does. I think our policy has been wrong for a long time.

Q: Well we have been trying to get rid of Castro now for about 45 years. Obviously we are not really talking about a successful policy.

ZUCKERMAN: No that is pretty self evident.

Q: Did you have the feeling that you had agents, spies or friends of the Cuban American Florida community in your agency keeping track of what we were doing?

ZUCKERMAN: Not on my turf, but certainly they had their own bureau. They had Radio and TV Marti within the bureau of broadcasting. That was their home base. They controlled personnel there. They controlled who the newscasters were; they controlled who headed it. The first head of it was a man who was a chemical engineer, Tony Navarro, who was Cuban born, conservative, and a very decent man. We were on good terms, but he was the Ambassador of the Florida Cuban community to Washington, and he had to represent their interests as best he could.

Q: Well did you get any feel, Stan, about a gap between the older generation, people who left Cuba, and kept thinking about they would return, and the next generation who had been born, really became rather than Cuban Americans, became more American.

ZUCKERMAN: I didn't have that much contact with them because there was only a limited number of things you could do in Cuba. I wasn't allowed to travel there to visit our operation because there was a USG rule against anyone of my rank visiting the Island. There does seem to be less passion about returning to Cuba among American-born Cubans than among those who left Cuba for America. Our general counsel at USIA and I became friendly, and worked together on a number of issues, including of course Cuba. He was Cuban born and came to the US with his parents. He name is Alberto Mora, and his father was a doctor in Cuba, and his mother Hungarian. He seemed to me a very bright, level headed guy who was realistic about what we were doing in Cuba. He was probably a good influence on his Cuban friends, but I doubt if he had any independence when it came to the Radio or TV Marti undertakings and had to handle the legal end of it. I can't say that I knew Jorge Mas Canosa well – he was the head of the Cuban American National Foundation and his son took over after his father's death. He was a powerful force in Washington. TV Marti was his baby. He was at almost every meeting on a Cuban subject that I attended, and I think his presence had a stultifying affect on the discussions, because his influence within the Reagan and Bush administrations on Cuban matters was enough to ruin a diplomatic career. He was a self-made millionaire and single minded on US-Cuban relations, seeing to it that no activities took place that would indicate an accommodation with Cuba as long as Castro was alive. And upon Castro's death, he envisioned a return to the island by him and his friends in Miami who would be welcomed as heroes and would create a capitalistic, democratic Cuba.

I am sure there are great divisions and all shades of political feeling within the Cuban community about this. What I am afraid of, what a lot of people are afraid of, is that when Castro dies, there will be a struggle between the people who stayed in Cuba and resisted and those who stayed behind, with the Communists waging a rear-guard battle..

The people in Miami seem to think that with the money that they gave and with their influence, they will go to Cuba and remake it, reclaim their property, all the rest of it. I am not so sure that is going to happen. I think it is going to be a very difficult matter for the United States to handle because the people who stayed are going to have a very legitimate claim to keep what they think were useful contributions of the Castro era – health and education mostly – and throw out the rest.

Q: Well as somebody who has been around countries where they have had problems, I mean you almost know the outcome. The people who stayed in the country have little to no regard for those who left. We are seeing this in Iraq, we are seeing this in Germany back after the war. It just doesn't work. The people who have gone away, they are seen as traitors.

ZUCKERMAN: Well Willy Brandt had that around his neck, and yet he did become chancellor of Germany. But in Cuba, the proximity and the enormous disparity in resources between the Miami Cubans and the island itself is going to make it more conflictive. One would hope that by the time it happens, there would be greater sensitivity, if I can use that word. I understand it is out of favor in Washington, but greater sensitivity among the Cubans in Miami as to how to handle their return. It would be wonderful if a delegation went into the interim government of Cuba after the fall of Castro and said, "What can we do to help?" Instead of saying, "We want our property back. Get out of my house."

Q. Was much of the Latin American program information program directed at limiting Cuban influence?

ZUCKERMAN: To a great extent by the time I was running the Latin American operation, Castro's influence in Latin America had diminished very greatly.

One of our major focuses at the time was to encourage the growth of free markets in Latin America. I remember there was a very major program organized jointly by Treasury and State which would feature a conference in Latin America with David Rockefeller as the star attraction. Before he left, we had him do a number of interviews with economic writers in a number of countries in Latin America by WorldNet. He was talking to people who had once been very taken with the socialist transformation of Cuba but who, despite retaining an admiration for Fidel for standing up to the U.S., had seen the Cuban economy atrophy under Castro's rule. Rockefeller was greeted with some suspicion, since there's always suspicion and paranoia in Latin America and elsewhere when we start talking about free enterprise. He was able to lay out very frankly what our hope was, and that was for a growth of trade between the United States and Latin America on a more even basis. Much of the turn towards open markets and freer trade in Latin America came as a consequence of that effort, but the return of economic difficulties in the continent has led to the return by some of those governments, with the possible exceptions of Chile and Mexico, to the old protectionism of the past.

SALLY GROOMS COWAL
Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Latin America
Washington, DC (1989-1991)

Post Retirement Activities
Washington, DC (1999-2003)

Ambassador Sally Grooms Cowal was born in Oak Park, Illinois in 1944. After graduating from DePauw University she joined the United States Information Service as Foreign Service Officer. Her service included assignments as Cultural and Public Affairs Officer at US Embassies in India, Colombia, Mexico and Israel She subsequently held a number of senior positions in the Department of State, including Assistant Secretary for Latin American Affairs and Deputy Political Counselor to The American Ambassador to the United Nations. In 1991 she was appointed Ambassador to Trinidad and Tobago. Ambassador Cowal was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy August 9, 2001.

COWAL: The other thing of significance to the region is Cuba, which although it was not a part of my portfolio at the time, I suppose watching it and knowing something about it led me some years later to a much more active role in Cuba. Cuba affects the rest of the region in many ways. I think the English-speaking Caribbean is not very well equipped to deal with it. It was either forbidden fruit and there should be something terribly fascinating about dealing with Cuba, and

they should do it, and they must get on with it, the way they've never felt about Haiti or the Dominican Republic, which are perfectly willing to have closer relations with the English-speaking Caribbean than Cuba really was, or at least openness in terms of dialog. Or it's the sort of monster in the closet. They worry about it not so much that Communism is going to engulf them, but more that if we come to a political settlement with Cuba, then the United States' interests, once again as they were pre-Castro, would focus on Cuba. Cuba would get the sugar quota back and that would hurt the rest of the Caribbean. They would get all the tourism that began to spring up in places all around the Caribbean really in the '60s and '70s when Cuba got cut off as the tourist destination. So they love and hate it, and that affects the rest of the region.

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COWAL: Well, Elian Gonzalez was a little Cuban boy who had been taken by his mother on a small craft to leave Cuba, to go to Miami, in November of 2000, when he was about six years old. The boat capsized and Elian's mother drowned, but Elian and a couple of other people survived. They were rescued by the Coast Guard and were brought to Miami. Then his relatives, his father's uncle in Miami, thought that he should not be repatriated to Cuba, where his father, of course, wanted to have him back. They said Cuba was not a free country and he would grow up free in the United States. They said he would grow up as a little Communist puppet of Fidel Castro if he went back to Cuba. So they launched a large battle about the future of Elian Gonzalez, which eventually went all the way to the Supreme Court.

But at one point it was decided that he should no longer stay with his Miami family, which refused to give him up. There was a raid by the immigration authorities to capture this child from the family against their will, making it an enormously prominent case in the United States and abroad. The Cubans had retained Greg Craig as the attorney for the father, to argue his case before the Court, and it became obvious that the child was going to be, one way or another, taken from the Miami family and put back with his father. The father agreed to stay in the United States until the issues had worked themselves through the Court. They needed a place for this family, this child and this family, to stay. The Cubans insisted that Elian should be back in the Cuban school system as soon as possible. They would send his first grade class, or parts of it, to be with him. Suddenly it was not just Elian and his father, and his stepmother, but Elian, his father, his stepmother, seven of his first grade classmates, the schoolteacher, the psychologist, I believe, and the parents of these children. The United States said, "Well, it's not Fidel's little *finca* (farm), he can't just send off children who are age six. If the children are going to travel they'd better come with a parent." So each child came with a parent.

So when Greg called me that day, he said, "We really need a place for this to happen, and would the farmhouse be available?" and I saw it as a way to really get some attention, not only to Elian, who had all the attention, but to deeper understanding of family issues and international issues and children as peacemakers and how would we see this play itself out. So I, that Sunday afternoon, got my board on the phone, or at least my executive committee of six or eight people and said, "Well, we've been approached to do this. Now we approach three thousand American families every year and say, 'Will you take kids from abroad? Will you play a role in something larger than yourself, will you have a teenager from Ecuador or Germany or Russia come and live with you?' We're now being asked to take a child from Cuba, a country with which we don't

have a good relationship, into our organization's home. How can we say no?" The board said, "OK, go for it," and that's how my phase with Cuba began.

Q: All right, well, we'll pick it up at that point.

Today is the 17th of December 2003, the 100th anniversary of flight, manned flight. Sally, might not talk about manned flight, but talk about the – in the first place, what happened with the – did you find yourself deluged with Cubans trying to break into the quarters and all that?

COWAL: Well, first of all, a comment on flight. We didn't go back a hundred years in my family history, but actually the Wright brothers were related to my grandfather. He was related to them. He had come from -- my mother's father – had come from Dayton, Ohio. His mother's name was Sobie, and her mother's maiden name was Wright, and they were somehow connected in this whole thing. If you ever saw a picture of my brother, now deceased, he looks a lot like the Wright brothers. So I guess there really is somewhat of a family connection there. I had been reading up on this anniversary thing and remembering a little bit of our own history.

Anyway, to the topic of Cuba. Yes, I think we found ourselves in the middle of a an interesting moment, I guess, in U.S. history, and also a circus involved in this event of Elian. He had been picked up at sea, in a remarkable rescue, which seemed to many of the Cuban-Americans living in Miami as almost a religious experience. They tried to put that spin on the whole thing, most of them strong Catholics as well as strong patriots. They wanted to see the modern Elian as sort of a parable for the Christ story. He had been out there at sea, by himself, for three days, and three nights, when suddenly he was discovered, and everyone around him had already died, including his mother. I don't think, since the principals in this are already dead – the truth will ever be known. They certainly believed that his mother was deliberately taking him to win freedom for herself and for her child, and that Elian's father, Juan Miguel, knew this, and approved of it.

This he certainly then disputed, and the truth about Elizabeth Brotons, who was his mother, is somewhat unclear to me. It would appear that she left Cuba more for personal reasons of having taken up with a man who had moved to the United States and then come back, than for real ideological reasons. I'm sure that many people who leave Cuba do so for ideological reasons as well as for personal reasons. I think that's also true about immigrants coming to the United States from many other countries. It's primarily driven by poverty and restrictions on their own liberty, whether that's imposed by the government or something imposed by the poverty in which they lived. We see millions of people arriving here both legally and illegally, from all over Central America and the Caribbean.

We have enacted many strange and sui generic laws in the United States with respect to Cuba. There is this ordered migration of 20,000 a year based on a lottery system in Cuba. Much over subscribed, obviously. Unlike our policy with other countries, an illegal Cuban immigrant seeking to stay in the United States has only to get his or her foot on dry land. So it's called the "wet foot, dry foot" policy. If you are found at sea, then you can be repatriated to Cuba, and that is now being done more routinely than in the past. But if you should happen to evade the Coast Guard or anybody else who is out there protecting the shores of the United States, and you manage to get your inner tube or your raft or your piece of wood or your little motor craft or your

airplane to land on Key West, or any other place of U.S. soil, you are immediately paroled into the United States. You avoid being confined in the detention center, which is what happens, for instance, to Haitian immigrants who are similarly motivated and almost as convenient geographically as the Cubans, to be able to take unseaworthy craft and try to come to the United States.

A Haitian who gets his foot on the soil of Key West is immediately – and this applies for refugee status – put into a detention center. Then the refugee status is adjudicated, which usually takes about 18 months. With Haiti's rise and fall in political stability and political freedoms that somewhat varies with the times, but I would say most of those claims are unsuccessful. People are found not to be fleeing a well-founded fear of persecution, which is the reason for which you can legitimately claim asylum, but they're founded in people who are fleeing poor and desperate circumstances in Haiti, of which there are obviously many. The contrast between that and our policy on Cuba is simply one of the anomalies that exists.

Q: There's an accusation of racism, which …

COWAL: There is an accusation of racism, although it's also true that now, I suppose, 50 percent of the Cuban population has, at least, mixed African heritage and ancestry. I think most of the Cubans who came early on were certainly of Spanish heritage, or at least looking Caucasian. That's probably no longer true, but it certainly is a discriminatory policy. That gets into why I got involved in the Cuba Policy Foundation, which comes a little later in this story. It's one of those anomalies in U.S. policy that I think is not particularly a healthy one.

At any rate, back to the child, Elian. He never, himself, in this inner-tube, reached the United States. He was rescued by a fisherman, I believe, who brought him to the United States. He was, of course, a minor child. That is what the whole, essentially, crisis was about: who had the right to determine for a minor child whether he should stay in the United States or should go back to Cuba. His father, who was living in Cuba, made it clear from the beginning that he had no intention of leaving Cuba, and that he was the sole remaining legal guardian of this child, and requested that he be sent back.

I think it would have been smarter for the Clinton administration to have put him on the first plane and sent back to Cuba. Instead, we allowed the whole thing to be thrown into a long and protracted court adjudication causing passions to rise on both sides of the Straits of Florida. These passions were very cleverly manipulated by Castro, who was in many ways running out of steam. He was able to use Elian as a rallying point. No one, any normally even semi-patriotic or loyal citizen of a country, wants to believe that another country feels its very way of life and system of government are so evil that a child brought up there could not possibly have a normal life or turn out to be a well-balanced human being. When your own way of life is attacked, it's a rallying point to say, "Wait a minute, look at all those other countries. And at the United States, things aren't so great there, either, if you happen to be poor, or black, or an immigrant."

So by the very delay in the thing and the fact that it was also leading up to the presidential election time, it became, in a way, symbolic of the struggle over U.S. policy toward Cuba, which had been going on for 35, the last 40 years. We didn't become the center of that firestorm. Our

organization was involved only in a purely humanitarian phase of trying to provide a place of sanity and refuge for this little extended family from Cuba. Cuba agreed to allow the U.S. courts to adjudicate the case, but requested that father and son be together while this process played out. We immediately had not only the little extended family, we had a lot of news people who were interested in what was going on behind these wooden fences. We had 54, I think, U.S. Marshals around the clock, who were sent there in order to protect the family, particularly the father. There had been some credible intelligence that some of the more radical people in Miami would find it very convenient if the father were no longer in the picture. In other words, if he were assassinated, then, once again, to whom does this child belong? It would become a real question. And by the way, I think initially, when Juan Miguel received the call from the authorities in Miami, that his son had been found and was all right and was alive, but was in the hospital for observation, he asked that his uncle be called. There had been relations between these families.

This is a civil war which has been going on for 40 years, and personal relationships remain strong between people who have immigrated and people who have stayed. So his first thought was to call his uncle and ask his uncle to go and receive Elian from the hospital, and they would talk later and sort out how he would come home, and so on. I don't know, never having met the uncle, whether the uncle went and picked him up always with the idea that they would petition for him to stay, or whether there was a subsequent you might call it manipulation. You might just call it persuasion of the more political elements of the Miami community, that this child had to stay in the United States. At any rate, yes, we had demonstrators coming from Miami, we had the ordinary curiosity-seekers who wanted to know who had seen this child. Of course, one of the things that made this case more interesting was that this was such a cute kid. The U.S. media loves to play around with symbols. I think if he hadn't been as cute as Mickey Mouse the story wouldn't have had the length that it had. Here was this cute, six-year-old boy and the story simply wouldn't go away even though not very much happened in the period of time that they actually stayed with us.

We had some demonstrations, lots of security, lots of curiosity-seekers, and lots of news media.

Q: That area is close to – there's a very large Hispanic, not necessarily Cuban, but Hispanic community, isn't there?

COWAL: Not particularly. This organization was located right next to the National Cathedral. Over in Cleveland Park. Northwest.

Q: Oh, I see. That's right. There wasn't much of Cuban community in Washington …

COWAL: No, the Cuban community that we had an interaction with was the official Cuban community. We haven't had an embassy there for 40 years, but since the Carter administration twenty-some, 25 years ago, I guess, there was an agreement negotiated between Cuba and the United States that we would each maintain an interest section in the other's country. Both of them are managed under the auspices of the Swiss embassy. So there's a Cuban interest section on Columbia Road, up in the more Hispanic part of Washington. It's up near where the old Mexican embassy was, and several of the embassies from an early period of time were located up there. I think this is a building that dates back to the early 20th century, when Cuba became

independent from Spain with a lot of help from the United States. The United States maintains a large interest section in Cuba. In fact, I think there are more people assigned to the U.S. interest section in Cuba than to almost any foreign embassy in Cuba. It's a big, tall, modern embassy that was built in the 1950s, on the Malecon near the sea-front. It provides a great rallying point for Cubans who wish to demonstrate their opposition, or at least their trumped-up opposition, to U.S. policy.

The Cubans that we had most contact with over this period of time were the representatives of the Cuban interest section. This was a very interesting experience for me. Throughout my whole Foreign Service career, and remaining probably until this time, any contact with official Cubans was an action which warranted a report to the FBI. I knew a couple of Cubans in my time in New York, or at the Cuban mission to the United Nations, but had certainly no social contact with them, and really no professional contact with them. That was not supposed to happen, and it was something that required a little bit of inconvenience on your part if it did happen, because you had to sit down and document it. I think the FBI was always looking for possible defectors, and looking for possible sources of information, but I didn't have any real contact with Cuban diplomats. I found the group of Cuban diplomats assigned to the interest section in Washington to be very professional and good representatives of their country, perhaps because it's such a difficult posting for them. It seemed to me that they were as talented a group of people as the diplomats I had met from any other Latin American country, including Mexico, and Brazil, important countries.

I think that also began to, somewhat, shape my own transformation and views about Cuba. Maybe I'm getting ahead of where you want to be in the story …

Q: No, not at all.

COWAL: I had daily contact with the family, Elian's family, primarily his father, and stepmother. His father is just a lovely, dignified and honest person, and that comes across.

Q: He was a waiter, wasn't he?

COWAL: He was sort of a cashier in a middle class, Cuban resort in Varadero Beach, which is a famous resort. In addition to the luxury hotel – into which Cuban citizens are not allowed – there are some day resorts for people coming out from Havana. Pesos are the currency used, and not U.S. dollars. They're kind of water-sports parks, where families can come and have a little lunch and picnic on the beach. So he works as the kind of cashier, assistant cashier, in such and establishment, and continues, as far as I know, continues to this day to do this.

He was very clear that all he really wanted was his son. We had, in our many, many lunches and dinners, sometimes including members of the interests section, and sometimes not, we had a lot of conversations about life, and raising children and goals for what we wanted out of our lives. I thought he was just a remarkable human being. He kept his cool throughout. At one point we had to change all the phone numbers because some of the far right elements in Miami had discovered the phone number in this house where they were and began to call and harass at moments of the day and night. So I think he stayed pretty cool and withstood this pressure and was very clear

that he didn't want anything out of it other than the right to raise his son as he wished to raise him.

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COWAL: So I had some real push factors. Then the pull factors were that out of this experience – at the same time that the Elian experience was going on, it was really opening up, in a way, a lot of Americans' eyes to what was this Cuba thing all about? What was our Cuba policy all about? It was kind of a grassroots feeling. Suddenly this child opened eyes and minds, maybe, in a way that other things hadn't, because they weren't the stuff of *telenovelas*, or soap operas, and Elian was the stuff of a soap opera. So you had this groundswell coming up from underneath. At the same time, just by coincidence, you had a Council on Foreign Relations Independent Task Force going on about U.S. policy toward Cuba. It presented a report, which issued no sweeping finding on whether we should have an embargo or not, but did point out that many things in the U.S. policy toward Cuba were not really in the United States' best national or economic interest. This was an independent task force of people from all political stripes, the Council on Foreign Relations, which remains probably the most prestigious of these kinds of organizations in the United States.

So there was suddenly, from the top, a willingness, or really, a recommendation that this policy be re-looked at in the terms of a new century and not a 50 year old argument. From the bottom up was this whole hoopla about Elian. My organization, a youth exchange organization, had played a small role, but nonetheless a role. Elian went home, when the Supreme Court decided it would not reverse the decision of the 11th Circuit Court, that he was a six-year-old child and he belonged with his father. His father had the right to take him wherever he wanted to. That was immediately appealed to the Supreme Court, and then the Supreme Court refused to take the case, and so it was all over in a moment.

But we had played a small role in that, and the organization, where they had stayed, felt very passionately by the end of their stay that U.S. policy toward Cuba needed to have some revision. In many other situations in the world, we'd seen a little bit of it. There were efforts to have an end to the Israeli-Palestinian problems through grassroots exchange organizations, primarily working with newer generations, the successor generation, the young generation. There is a program between Israel and Palestine called The Seeds of Peace, which had been quite successful in bringing teenagers from both countries to the United States each summer to see whether, outside of the communities in which they are so boxed in, they can find that there are commonalities between them.

Youth for Understanding, this organization, had been involved with USAID money in a couple of projects to do the same thing with teenagers from Georgia and Abkhazia, for instance, and Armenia and Azerbaijan. A six week program in the summer, in the United States, in which you'd bring equal numbers of these kids. Not anticipating that these were peacemakers, but that these were peace builders. If you picked the right kids, 30 years from now, or 20 years from now, or 10 years from now, because these are quickly emerging societies, and a 16 year old at 26 or 28, may well be in a significant position as a leader. Their attitudes about these other people will be very different, because they've had a chance to know these people in a different context. So

Youth for Understanding decided that it wanted to continue to be involved in Cuba after Elian, by designing and running a program for Cubans and Americans. That quickly modified to being – because we thought that it was probably too tense – to have this be a special program for some teenagers from key countries in the Americas including Canadians and Mexicans and others. And we realized it couldn't be an academic year program because the academic systems are too different. We would try to do a summer program of six weeks of bringing these kids together, in Havana and in Washington. They could discuss how each of their societies is dealing with common problems, such as aging, and the environment and AIDS, and other problems which we all face. In a dispassionate way they might show different approaches and whether they were successful or not, and which were successful in which way.

I had participated in this and learned something about it in my days serving in Israel. After the signing of the Camp David agreement, we began to find ways to have Israelis – not teenagers, but professionals, in professional groups – be in professional groups with their counterparts from Jordan or Iraq or other places in the Middle East. Ostensibly, and really, this was to learn something about city management, or electric power plants, or cleaning up river resources. But underneath that, to say, here's a chance to know the other as a human being and as a professional, and not as the enemy.

So we put together a proposal and we began to raise money for the proposal, realizing that, unlike our programs in eastern Europe, or the Balkans, we would not seek or want or receive U.S. government funds for such a program. I knew enough after having spent my six weeks with the Cuban diplomats that they felt all USAID money, which comes under something for Cuba, which comes under a special agreement called Section 109 of the Helms-Burton Act, is really meant to bring about regime change in Cuba. In other words, they spend a lot of money and the Cuban-American community is having people invent scenarios for what happens after we get Fidel Castro out of power. So the Cubans naturally regard any money coming that way as being tainted and something that they would not prefer to deal with. We set out to raise money from the Ford Foundation and from the Arca Foundation, and from anyone else whom we thought would give us money.

Anyway, making a very long story short, we were quite successful with getting together money for this project. I was recruited away from Youth for Understanding by a group of people who had been involved in the Council on Foreign Relations Task Force on Cuba. They thought, instead of another study group on saying what's wrong with U.S. policy, that you take the task force as a starting point, and begin to try to implement some of the recommendations of the task force toward normalizing relations with Cuba. That would clearly need to be something that brought about a shift in public opinion in the United States and also a shift in Congressional opinion, and administration opinion.

So a foundation, called the Arca Foundation, decided that they would give the first …

Q: Arca is spelled how?

COWAL: A-R-C-A.

Q: Does it mean anything?

COWAL: No, it's a family foundation of a gentleman named Smith Bagley who had been involved in …

Q: I've interviewed Elizabeth Bagley, who was ambassador …

COWAL: Right, to Portugal. Well, the Bagley family, as you probably know Smith, is the heir to the Reynolds tobacco money, or at least to some part of it, there were two or three. His mother was a Reynolds, and she was, I think, of a generation where there were three of them. There's another foundation in New York called the Christopher Reynolds Foundation which is his uncle, and he's long dead, but at any rate, his mother began the Arca Foundation with some of her money out of the Reynolds, and Christopher Reynolds began one called the Christopher Reynolds Foundation. And they have been around for 25 years or so, and had been interested in Cuba for a long time, for a great deal of those 25 years. They had been interested in Cuba as a foreign policy issue, and then many domestic issues in the United States having to do with voting rights, and campaign financing and so on, and certainly known – I would say known as a very liberal foundation.

They had given some money over the years to some very leftist, I would say, or at least left-leaning, or at least very liberal groups who had sought to bring about a change in our relations with Cuba. Now they had decided, I think, after Elian, and after the Council on Foreign Relations, that it would be useful to have a reorientation of this debate. So they essentially recruited me to set up a new foundation, to begin to reorient the debate in the United States at large, and particularly in the United States Congress. They looked for a pragmatic approach, and people who would be not perceived as necessarily supporters of Fidel Castro, certainly not Communists or Communist-supporters, but just people who said, "Hey, after 40 years of failure isn't it time to look at this again? Do we have the right policy?"

Q: Well, I think, too, that the Elian case really became – the anti-Castro forces in Miami became rather repugnant.

COWAL: Yes.

Q: They were so extreme, most Americans said well, we're talking about a six year old kid.

COWAL: Right.

Q: His father wants to go back. His father's not a monster

COWAL: Right.

Q: These people are fanatics.

COWAL: Right. And they revealed themselves as fanatics. I think you're absolutely right. That cast them in a different light than simply as patriotic freedom fighters. So with a little bit of

persuading I decided that it was something that could be done and should be done. So we put together a board of directors of some very distinguished individuals. Bill Rogers was the chairman of the board was a former assistant secretary of state and undersecretary of state for economic affairs in the time of Kissinger and Nixon; so certainly good, Republican, credentials. Diego Asencio who was an ambassador to Brazil and ambassador to Columbia; Harry Shlaudeman who had been ambassador in a dozen places; Martha Muse who is the head of the Tinker Foundation which has been giving grants in Latin America for 25 years and well known, distinguished; Paul Simon, who recently died, ex U.S. senator from Illinois. That type of people, not known as left-leaning, Fidel loving part of American society which has always been there. It just has never been very big or very powerful other than in its own community. We set up a little office in Washington and began to try to reconstruct this debate.

Q: When did you set it up?

COWAL: We set it up in April of 2001. I must say it was a somewhat painful experience. There were some exciting moments in it. We managed to set up a bi-partisan working group on the Hill of 25 Republicans and 25 Democrats, member of Congress who have been responsible for these changes in voting on the Hill. Now fairly regularly there are votes on Capitol Hill in favor of changes in this policy which today have always been, never been able to really take effect either through fear of vetoes or through manipulation by the Cuban American members of Congress. You know, all of this having to do with a lot of electoral politics in Florida particularly but elsewhere. I think it's clear that the will of the majority in the House of Representatives and the Senate is really being frustrated, is really being held hostage to this small group. I think we brought that debate out more into public. We debated the members of the Cuban American National Foundation who are the group that Jorge Mas Canosa founded in the 70s and which has been very powerful.

Q: When did he die?

COWAL: He died about 5 or 6 years ago.

Q: So this is THE major power.

COWAL: The major power. I must say when they founded the Cuban American National Foundation which I think was early in the 80s, they did so based on the model of AIPAC which is the America-Israel Lobbying organization. And Mas Canosa was really taken under the wing of the Israelis and taught how you do effective lobbying work on Capitol Hill and how you support that by supporting campaign contributions to the members of Congress whose vote you would like to influence. After he died it is currently run by his son. It's never had quite the same power but nonetheless remained the most important voice on the subject until perhaps things like Elian and the discrediting and the Cuban community I think split over that also. Many more Cuban-Americans were willing to express their opposition to that kind of extremism than had been willing to express it before. And generationally it changes. Those who came in the 60s are still around, but they are now probably a minority in the Cuban-American community. Many of their children born in the United States or brought here as very small children feel quite differently than their parents. Much of that has not yet expressed itself because their parents are

still alive. Within the sanctity and the close relationship that a Cuban family has, their children are unwilling to be on the record about this. But I think on its own time is beginning to change this. At any rate, we challenged the Cuban American National Foundation to a series of five debates around the country, public debates, on-the-record debates about policy. Much to my surprise they accepted this challenge. They had not ever before been willing to come out in daylight about it. But, I think, realizing they were under some stress and that things were changing, they agreed to this.

We did the debates at Harvard University, George Washington University, the Carter Center in Atlanta, and the Council on Foreign Relations in Los Angeles and were able to get quite a lot in the press about this changing feeling in the majority of Americans about our policy toward Cuba based on the question of "what do you think is in the U.S. best national interest?" Then appealing to groups such as rice farmers in Texas who wanted to sell their product, we would support our advocacy by sponsoring studies showing what would the potential be for the rice farmers to sell. For instance we did a state by state survey of which states would sell what to Cuba. It was a computerized model but based on the commodities they produced and what the Cubans needed and where the Cubans were currently buying and what they were buying for and what they buy from the United States. At the same time the legislation was proceeding to finally allow the sale of agricultural products to Cuba which is now legal. So we came up with the fact, for instance, that Arkansas would be the top beneficiary because of chicken farms and rice farms and things that the Cubans wanted. We were able to get the governor of Arkansas who is a conservative Republican and a friend of Bush to write a letter and say "this policy should be changed." We had a press conference in Little Rock and the four Representatives and two Senators from Arkansas showed up for this press conference to say, some Republicans and some Democrats, how they were all in favor. The press conference was to announce the findings of this survey. I can't remember the dollar amounts anymore, but in aggregate about a billion dollars for U.S. agricultural products of which Arkansas would be in the number one position with 300 million. All in favor of that.

What happened? I think a bunch of things happened, but one of them was I again got a new reflection on Cuba out of this. That was that whereas I had been persuaded that many people also wanted a change in this relationship. I think it's now fairly clear to me that among those is not included Fidel Castro who continues to run Cuba without any doubt. So, I think, the final and the reason the Foundation decided that this was not a time to pursue its activities was after a Congressional trip to Cuba in April 2003, two years after we had begun this. Six members of Congress went down and as has become the custom for these visits, they saw many people in the Castro government but then they also asked to see a group of dissidents. They saw six or seven dissidents, four or five of whom are now in prison. As the government in April of this year decided to crack down once again and put about 75 people in jail for up to 25 years for crimes such as trying to publish an article, or use the internet, or meet with members of Congress. So obviously, I think, there have been examples in the past where it is arguable that the Helms-Burton Law which was passed in 1996, which is a rather Draconian measure further strengthening the embargo which has been in place since the 60s. But there was a lot of initial opposition to it on Capitol Hill and it probably would not have been enacted except days before the vote was to be taken the Cuban government shot down two little planes, killing four people, who had been admittedly provocatively, nonetheless, benignly using these little planes to fly

over Havana and drop leaflets on the streets about you have "nothing to loose but your chains" "revolt" and so on. They shot down the planes. Why did they pick that time to shoot down the planes? The planes had been flying for some time. I must say the Cuban government had been protesting to the U.S. government these flights and the United States government didn't do anything to stop them. Nonetheless the decision to shoot down those planes right before this legislation was to be voted on guaranteed that the legislation was passed and that the President, who was Clinton at the time, said "I have no choice but to sign this." Everyone was outraged about the shooting down of the Brothers to the Rescue.

I think in April of this year we saw the same thing. They executed three people who had taken a ferry and tried to go to Cuba with the ferry. Now, admittedly, they were hijackers and we take a very dim view of hijackers. Nonetheless, what seemed to many people in the United States a summary execution, the three people were tried, sentenced, convicted and shot within a week after the incident took place. The 75 people were put in jail. So we came to believe that first of all, these were repugnant acts, that the organization, the Cuba Policy Foundation, could not support and that we saw them as symbolic of the lack of desire on the part of the Castro government to see any real reforms in the policy. Most of us, including myself, felt that as people much closer to the end of their careers than to the beginning of them, that we had other things to do with our time than be very frustrated. I have to say, that that was the cause celebre for the ceasing of activity on the part of the Foundation. I also came to believe that the Bush administration and I think we've seen this in many ways, has absolutely no willingness or desire to reexamine the relationship either. And in fact has done many things to tighten the travel ban against the will of Congress and the American people who vote. In public opinion surveys overwhelmingly that they don't think their freedom to travel should be restricted in such a way that they can't go to Cuba. Not per se they can't go to Cuba, but they can't spend money in Cuba; it's a Treasury Department restriction. But in fact if you can't spend money, you can't go unless somebody is willing to pay your way.

Under the Clinton administration things were eased quite significantly to allow educational exchange of many kinds. That's how I was trying to do this program under the Clinton administration rules. Now the only educational exchange which is allowed is degree students, in other words, people in formal academic programs. Whereas in the past that had extended to a National Geographic group to look at the sea reef and an historic preservation group to look at the buildings of Old Havana and a Hemmingway studies group and the alumni association of the University of Wisconsin. Anything could be quote unquote academically orientated in which people didn't just go to the beach but sought to have person-to-person contacts with Cubans was licensable, now it's not. Now they are prosecuting people much more who are going to ride bicycles or sell bibles or whatever they are going to do. It was clear to us that despite the opening which was presented in the end of 2000 by the Elian case and the Council on Foreign Relations study which gave the opening of the window, we decided by April of 2003 that that no longer existed.

Q: Were you getting from people who had been following Cuba for some time a reading on Castro that was saying, "look you can do what you want but you really have to wait for the demise or decrepitated Castro"?

COWAL: I think most of us felt that we shouldn't allow Castro to be the only point of this policy. There were many reasons to suggest that the United States ought to be reaching out in any way that it could to establish good working relations in areas like drugs. We have narcotics agreements with every country in the Caribbean save one and that's Cuba. Therefore, if you were a drug trafficker wouldn't you seek to use the one place that doesn't have an agreement with the United States to ship drugs? We felt that by flooding Cuba with American tourists we would send out lots of ambassadors for America who could present their own stories to Cubans in ways that they are not able to receive because their media is so censored and they are fed a constant line of propaganda about what the United States is all about. These kinds of things would begin to establish the basis for a new relationship whether that happened before Castro's demise or not until after his demise. That American commercial companies being involved in Cuba and having agreements and selling things, and receiving money would begin to pave the way for a new kind of future. But it would be like oxygen spreading around the planet, these things would be "not containable." As the Cubans to began to -- much as has happened in Mexico which began with NAFTA, very commercially orientated agreement, but which most people would say was the beginning and end of the Pri, an authoritarian rather than a communist regime, but that economic freedom does lead to political freedom. We have President Bush out there preaching that all the time as he sponsors and supports the growth of the Free Trade Agreement for all of the Americas. These are lines which he would use: "that economic freedom leads to political freedom". It is very clear that the reason we don't use that litany with Cuba is because there are important interests in Florida who don't wish this relationship to change.

Q: And that was cemented by the election of the George Bush.

COWAL: Absolutely.

Q: You can say that if he hadn't had a strong Cuba policy that vote was vital to his election. Really vital!

COWAL: Really vital to his election when it came down to a very few votes in Florida and the Cuban American community in Florida voting overwhelmingly in favor of him. Although I must say, Gore tried to get the votes of that community which of course was livid because of Janet Reno making the decision about Elian. At least Janet Reno's Justice Department removing Elian from the home of the Miami relatives really grated, this really offended the Cuban American community. I think Gore saying he supported continued embargo and isolation; he probably could have saved his breath and maybe have won more votes by saying at least he was principled than he was able to win in the Cuban American community, which was virtually nothing. So you could certainly say that Bush owed his election to that community. I'm sure others could make that case. But it was a vital part and therefore unlikely to see any change which he would support. I think before that became known there was a feeling that maybe Bush would be good for this, that maybe Bush could be like Nixon going to China; that a Republican could do this more easily than a Democrat. Let's see what happens in this election, if he is reelected and in a position where he then can't be reelected again maybe we'll see a change. But I must say, people thought and expected and wanted a change in the second Clinton administration and never got it. He was never willing to repudiate that policy.

Q: Well when did you shut down, was the whole organization shut down?

COWAL: We had been realizing increasingly over a period of months that this was not likely to lend itself to either doing extensive fundraising which was needed to support the organization because the hope began to die, I must say. So in October of 2002 I made a recommendation to the board that I cease being paid as a full-time employee, which I was. I was the president and a salaried employee. That I remain on the board, and that the board hire Brian Alexander who was a young man who I had hired to be my side-kick, my policy officer, to be the executive director. That we step back a little bit, stay in existence, follow legislation, do what we could to continue to be helpful, but sort of a watching brief. So it was in October of 2002 that I came to work at PSI, still remaining on the board. Then with these arrests and executions in Cuba earlier this year, the entire board resigned en-mass, in protest over these actions and feeling that this might be seen in Cuba as an important step because the Policy Foundation was actually regarded very well by the Cuban government as a group that was sane and logical and important and prestigious and was accomplishing something. I don't know because I haven't been to Cuba since then whether or not it had the desired effect. So there were two stages, the first one being a stepping back and the second one being a dissolution.

SARAH HORSEY-BARR
Deputy Chief of Mission, Organization of American States
Washington, DC (1992-1995)

Mrs. Horsey-Barr was born in Maryland into a Foreign Service family. She was raised in the Washington DC area and abroad and was educated at Georgetown University; and Loyola University in Rome, Italy. Her service with the State Department took her to several posts in Latin America dealing with both consular and political/management affairs. Her last assignments were with the Organization of American States, where she served in various senior capacities with the U.S. Mission. Mrs. Horsey-Barr was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2000.

HORSEY-BARR: Well, Cuba, of course, since Castro has been a member but nonparticipating member of the OAS. It was suspended technically not because of its government but because of its export of revolution and that situation has continued to the present day. It's rather tenuous legally at this point, since, of course, Cuba didn't export any of its revolution anymore since the end of the Cold War. But nonetheless that's still a situation that's really active. From the United States' perspective, one of our great concerns was how to ward off any sort of concerted attack by significant players in terms of bringing Cuba back. That has been the whole U.S. approach.

Q: Our basic policy was just keep Cuba out, not looking at conduct or anything like that.

HORSEY-BARR: Well, it's kind of hard - you're right - it's kind of hard to look at conduct now, at least in terms of the conduct that led to its suspension, certainly doesn't apply anymore, because it's not exporting revolution anymore. So what the United States looked at is the same

sort of issues that we talked about bilaterally with Cuba, the sort of structured economy, the human rights question, the totalitarian, if you will, form of government, but those are tenuous in terms of a defense in the OAS inter-American system, because while certainly the charter of the OAS talks about respect of human rights and participative democracy, in fact other governments have been members who have flouted these aspects.

Just go through the Latin and Central American states and you can subdivide the rest of the continent in different ways and come up with countries that fall into just about every one of the objections we have against Cuba today. So that was a great concern, because legally it's rather tenuous and politically, of course, the Western Hemisphere with Canada in the forefront believe as do Americans that the best way to effect change is wrap them in a shroud of isolation. During the time I was there, and I think the case is still true today, there certainly was no wavering in terms of what to do, what the position should be, on Cuba, and we had a number of difficult moments, mainly caused not by Cuba, who seems to be quite happy with the situation, but caused by accomplishing other issues that made countries sort of coalesce together in opposition to the United States, and so Cuba was sort of a handy other issue for them to get started on. But the day will come, probably before we have changed our policy the way things are going, where it will be a more serious threat for the OAS from the perspective of bilateral policy.

Q: What does it take to make membership?

HORSEY-BARR: Well, it's non-functioning membership because Cuba is a member. In fact, if you look at the flags of the OAS whenever they fly the flags, the Cuban flag is there. They are a member. The whole quota system is based upon if Cuba were paying, so there's always that small percentage that had never paid because Cuba had been suspended, so they don't pay nor do they get any benefits. So they are a member, they are listed, their flag is flown, they have no seat at the table, although I kind of wonder whether that's a political statement or practical issue, because there simply isn't room with all the new states that came in the '70s and the table in the room has never been changed. You kind of wonder what you get. We had dealt with the Cuba issue, the United States had dealt with it, both on a political level as discussed earlier and on a practical level. I can't remember the name of the amendment, but there is an amendment that's been appropriated, this longstanding appropriation, legislation which says that - I think it applies to all international organizations because of course I can't see how it would apply to the United Nations, but it does apply to the Inter-American System - if any of the OAS money, Inter-American System money, goes to Cuba, that much doubled if subtracted from what the United States will pay to the Organization. So we dealt with the Cuba issue on sort of two levels, if you will, at the OAS.

Q: When you were there, were you all individually or collectively tweaked by the other countries by saying, "Why are you doing this?"

HORSEY-BARR: Yes, we were tweaked, we were tweaked publicly. People would make references to Cuba in their various speeches in appropriate sort of contexts from their perspective. It would be done publicly in the form of sessions. It would also be privately. But I think most people recognize that the locus of US-Cuba policy making was not in relation to the OAS. Much like when I was doing Ireland work, the desk, the Bureau was not the Ireland policy, US-Ireland

or US-Northern Ireland policy. No, that was in the White House, because it was going to have a domestic constituency. I think the people, the foreigners in the OAS realizes that the same thing is true. It's still the policy. There wasn't anything we could do about. So they could rattle our cages privately, and what could we say, and publicly they could go so far but they didn't go that far, because they did not want to alienate the United States. This is where we get back to the imbalance in the American system between the United States and everybody else, both on a political and a very pragmatic level. They would never mess with the money aspect of Cuba business in the Inter-American System because they just knew. They rant and rave and about how we're paying our quotas as we have heard the last few years at the UN, but in the end it wasn't going to make any difference. We were not going to pay the money, so they never strayed from the prohibition about directing resources towards Cuba. I can't remember exactly. There were some rather tense moments. I can't remember why or how they came up, but one of those is what forms the basis for my statement that our position in terms of the OAS and Cuba is rather tenuous.

JOSEPH G. SULLIVAN
Principal Officer, US Interests Section
Havana (1993-1996)

Ambassador Sullivan was born and raised in Massachusetts and educated at Tufts, Georgetown and Yale Universities. Entering the Foreign Service in 1970, he served in the Department of State in Washington, DC as well as in posts abroad. His foreign posts include Mexico City, Lisbon, Tel Aviv and Havana. Mr. Sullivan served as US Ambassador to Angola from 1998 to 2001 and as Ambassador to Zimbabwe from 2001 to 2004. Ambassador Sullivan was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2009.

Q: Well we will pick this up the next time. We are talking about what '93? You went to Havana…

SULLIVAN: Right in '93, the summer of '93.

Q: Okay why don't we stop here and pick it up in '93 when you are off to Havana.

Today is the 16th of November 2010 with Joe Sullivan. We are going to move to when you were off to Cuba. You were in Cuba from when to when?

SULLIVAN: From July 1993 until, I believe, July 1996.

Q: Well now, how political was this appointment, particularly the Miami Cubans and all this. Are you familiar or were you involved in sort of the maneuverings before you went out there?

SULLIVAN: Well I had not had direct responsibility for Cuba. My then boss, the Assistant Secretary Bernie Aronson, had been dealing with the Cuban-American community on a number

of issues and had basically a good relationship with them so I imagine he would have told them that I was a good guy, I trust him and so on. But, I never felt any resistance from the Cuban-American community prior to my departure. As I said, that was an appointment that, even though I had the title of chief of mission, because it didn't have the title of ambassador, it did not require Senate confirmation. So I didn't have to jump through the hoops that might have been more complicated with some members of Congress extremely close to the Cuban-American community. That said remind me of this point a couple of times as we go through on Cuba in case I've forgotten anything on the impact of the Cuban-American community. I, for instance, chose deliberately on my way into Havana to stop in Miami; that was almost obligatory in order to catch the charter flights to Havana at that point in any case. I visited with several different elements of the Cuban-American community. I chose to do that at the beginning so that I could be in a listening mode, I could hear them and yet I would not need to respond to them. I eventually decided that I wasn't going to make such meetings a regular occurrence on my trips back and forth. I wasn't going to be reporting to them, I was going to be hearing their views early on but then leaving the subsequent interaction to Washington and there was certainly plenty of that particularly, between the Cuba desk in the State Department and the Cuban-American community.

I guess one of those early encounters that was memorable in that the Cuban-American National Foundation, CANF, as it was called was run at that time by Jorge Mas Canosa, since deceased. But he was very hard-line and very assertive. He himself was not present, he was reportedly traveling but I was left with several members of the board. I would say that they basically sought to give me my marching orders, whom I should meet with, whom I should not meet with, which members of the opposition community they trusted and, therefore, that I should meet with, which ones they did not trust and, therefore, I should not meet with. Indeed, as it turned out several of the people that were on their trusted list proved to be double agents in effect reporting to Cuban state security. That said it was a listening exercise and sort of confirmed my view that I simply didn't want to be in regular contact with that community otherwise I would be in a position of being asked how I had obeyed their instructions.

In Cuba at the time I arrived it was a very interesting time.

Q: Before I leave that subject did you get the equivalent to informants within the Miami Cuban population? Were there various schools, factions or was the Mas pretty much the dominant?

SULLIVAN: Well there were others. There was one group of I guess you would call them supporters of the Democratic Party, the Clinton administration was in office at the time, there were Cuban-Americans that had been working with the Clinton campaign. And the Clinton Administration was very focused on the electoral importance of Florida and the hope of eroding some of the traditional 85% Cuban-American support for Republican Party candidates. I met with the Cuban-American Democrats as well; they were more moderate obviously, more cognizant of the fact that the administration was looking for ways to not necessarily be confrontational in every instance but to advance US interests on Cuba. Not at that time but I guess later my conclusion was that even most of that community when it really came down to it, at least through the nineties, wound up being out shouted by the hard-line community. When push came to shove, moderate Cuban-Americans were not willing to stand-up and argue for

moderate positions, so the dominant voice clearly was that of CANF and other hard-line elements within the community. This affected Radio Marti and other instruments of US policy at the time.

Q: Okay, so what did you arrive to?

SULLIVAN: Well I think probably to the low point in terms of the Cuban economic situation and to some elements of political crisis as well. The Soviet Union had obviously collapsed, the subsidy of about $5 billion a year had essentially come to an end. There was an enormous and a drastic economic crisis that affected every Cuban. There was a tremendous shortage of gasoline, of petroleum. The public transport that there used to be was virtually non-existent. Instead the people were to the degree they had to make long distance trips were riding in the backs of trucks, hundreds at a time, because there was no other means of transportation. The state was coping very poorly with all of this. At the beginning of that period I recall that summer of '93 there were large scale blackouts throughout the city due to lack of fuel to run power plants. Water was also a problem. The Cuban government had allowed the water supply system to deteriorate mightily over the years and had compensated by delivering water by tanker trucks through the poor neighborhoods. Now they had a fuel crisis which made water delivery trucks increasingly problematic to keep going. There were also some small indications of unrest bubbling up, crowds assembling in front of neighborhood Communist Party offices and throwing rocks through windows under cover of the blackout's darkness, things that were very unusual in Cuba, since the bulk of the population had long since been intimidated; this was not usual.

That economic crisis continued and I did travel throughout the country even fairly early on. I think within two or three months of my arrival I made a trip out to the northeastern province of Holguin and had to deal with that shortage of gasoline, for instance. We had to go to the local provincial party office in order to get them to open the gas tank so that we could buy some gasoline in order to proceed with our trip. I saw many manifestations of this crisis and outside Havana, it was even worse. There were not just frequent blackouts, but virtually permanent blackouts in many of the regional cities. So there was great unrest, there was a lot of uncertainty and I think the government and the Communist Party at the time, including Fidel himself, appeared to be off balance and not really certain of which way to go. There had been some small steps taken earlier to no longer penalize people for having foreign currency and this was helpful over time because it encouraged Cuban-Americans to send more remittances to their family members. Previously, some remittances had been delivered furtively to family members, but those family members had been required under law to convert them into virtually worthless Cuban pesos. But once holding dollars was legalized and the U.S. also took steps to permit the legal transfer of limited remittances to family members, remittances increased greatly. The Cuban government also began setting up dollar stores in order to absorb these dollars and importing the coca cola, shampoo and other goods from Panama and Mexico and then selling them to the public at a profit so that the Cuban government got some indirect foreign exchange benefit from remittances sent to relatives in Cuba. But it did take a while and that whole year, I would say, was a year of crisis.

There was a great shortage of food; there were a lot of Cubans who were eating nothing but rice, not even beans were available. Others were eating very little, there were some indications of

malnutrition. We actually began approving assistance of medical supplies to Caritas, which is the Catholic Relief Organization in Cuba. We used to have pretty good relations with both that organization and the Catholic Church as a whole and they worked out a means of verifying that the medical donations from the US were used properly and not diverted by the Cuban government. The Cuban government dominated the health system and all hospitals, but through a network of Catholic doctors, Caritas was able to monitor that these were not being siphoned off into the system but rather used appropriately for people who needed the medical supplies.

When I arrived, the Cuban government showed more than usual interest in engaging with me. The Interests Section had traditionally been confined to mid-level contacts in the Foreign Ministry, but soon after I arrived, I was received by the Foreign Minister. But the sticking point became, and I certainly had enough meetings in Washington to have a clear picture of Clinton Administration policy on Cuba. In the past, at various points the U.S. had signaled that Cuba abstaining from promotion of international guerrilla movements and ending military cooperation with the Soviet Union would be good enough to establish a much better relationship with the United States. Our position by 1993 was that we also would require changes within Cuba itself. That was a condition the Cuban government was absolutely and totally unwilling to yield on so the degree of our contacts diminished.

The US Interests Section benefited from diminished state controls, which were declining for lots of reasons, including fewer funds to enforce them. In addition, the famous Committees for the Defense of the Revolution in many cases became virtually inactive; the neighborhood watch committees became inactive. The heads of the neighborhood watch committees were involved in the same small scale corruption as the rest of their neighbors in order to be able to feed their families and were thus not in position to "snitch" on their neighbors. So many of the regime's traditional controls were breaking down and we were able to take advantage of these openings to be in touch with more people. There were more opposition elements beginning to take chances to move around and we met with them. We did a number of things to try to provide them with materials; mostly open materials, press articles and this sort of thing. The Cuban government didn't much like that. I recall being called into the foreign ministry and told that our activity was noted and was not welcome. We had even met with some of these elements and that was not welcome. So there were significant tensions and the tension grew. I would say the Cuban government was uneasy about its own what they saw as slippage in its own control.

The Cuban government paralysis I would say for the most part continued right up through the summer of '94 when tens of thousands of Cubans escaped the island on rafts and small craft. We could travel to beaches just outside Havana and watch people saying goodbye to their families as they climbed on board a raft; international media coverage made this a public spectacle and an embarrassment for the regime. The Cuban government did not encourage the phenomenon, at first, but did not devote the same resources that they had in the past to preventing unauthorized departure from Cuba. The U.S role in this phenomenon was ambiguous. The US government did not wish to see mass migration from Cuba of the sort that occurred at the time of Mariel in 1980, but much of the Cuban-American community was cheering on the exodus and USG-funded Radio Marti was covering the exodus enthusiastically. Both the Cuban-American community and the U.S. government hoped that the growing crisis might lead to some change in Cuba. One Cuban-American group, Brothers to the Rescue, flew small planes to find rafters at sea and the

US Coast Guard stood some six miles offshore to pick up these people on rafts and bring them to the safety of the US Naval Base at Guantanamo.

At this point, in the summer of 1994, the most spectacular event of public protest took place, commonly referred to as the "Maleconazo", the Malecon being the waterfront in front of Havana. In the midst of this wave of rafters, one day for unknown reasons, a rumor had spread throughout Havana that there were going to be ships or a fleet of small vessels similar to the Mariel boat lift that would evacuate anybody who wished to leave. Based on that unfounded rumor, probably as many as 10 thousand Cubans gathered in the Havana waterfront waiting for their opportunity to get out. Well no such boatlift occurred and the police were unable to control the crowd. As late afternoon settled in and it appeared that no fleet was coming, the crowd turned to rock throwing, throwing rocks through the dollar store and helping themselves to things out of the dollar stores that many would not have had the dollars to purchase otherwise. There was a famous incident in which Fidel came down in a jeep and confronted the protesters and the Cuban version of that is, of course, that his heroic action turned back the crowd and everybody agreed to go back to being a revolutionary once again. Other versions are that there were numerous layers of protection behind him and readiness to assert force as necessary in order to deal with the crowd; I believe the latter.

From that moment on, Fidel and the Cuban Communist Party and government decided to reassert themselves to retake control of the streets. They had for the past year basically left the streets empty and those streets had gradually found space for opposition and even mobs as had occurred in the "Maleconazo". That very weekend, the Cuban government called one of its massive demonstrations with everybody from their work place told that they must attend and sought to retake the streets and reassert its security presence. While this increased assertiveness did not end the reasons for Cuba's economic and political crisis, they did once again mobilize Cuba's instruments of state security, which are the critical means of maintaining state control.

There was another decision that plays into the current Cuban developments with Raul now in charge. I don't have total documentation of this but I think it's highly probable. There was, as I said, a growing food shortage. I met several Cuban economists who favored increasing incentives for production. These economists appeared to be being encouraged by Defense Minister Raul Castro and the Armed Forces. Cuba had experimented once before with agricultural markets in the early 1980's as a way to address food shortages. But at that point, the only ones who had been allowed to participate in these agricultural markets were the tiny percentage of private farmers in Cuba. The official perception of that 1980 experience was that these markets helped address the food shortages, but also made that small group of private farmers wealthy and so the experiment was ended after several years. The process that was eventually approved in 1994 was to allow even the agricultural collectives and the cooperatives to participate in the farmers' markets. Once they had satisfied the quota that they owed to the state, they were allowed to sell off any excess food production in these agricultural markets. And the sales were to be in dollars or a newly created convertible peso, which many Cubans did not have, but those receiving remittances from relatives abroad or with access to tourist dollars did. The collectives or cooperatives could use these more valuable proceeds to meet other needs of the collective farm. So this was an effective policy in the sense that it encouraged collectives and cooperatives to meet their quota to the state, which many of them previously not done. Because

products were only sold initially dollars and then later in a newly introduced convertible Cuban peso set at one dollar to a convertible peso, these markets helped soak up the dollar remittances that were coming into the country. The part that I believe took place, but I don't have confirmation from anybody who was a participant is that Raul and a number of generals met with Fidel and they basically told him, "Commandante in Jefe, we support you and will always support you, etc., but it would be easier if we gave the people some food to eat. So let us try this experiment and see if it works." Fidel did allow that to happen and I would say it was a largely successful experiment that continues to this day. It gave greater incentives for food production and gave those Cubans who had access to foreign exchange a way to obtain food. Some of them undoubtedly shared with their relatives who didn't have such access. It helped to diminish the shortages and probably encouraged some additional production. So that policy reform as well as the reassertion of political control helped the regime began to regain its footing and recover from the acute crisis which had marked the early 1990's.

Q: Right here.

SULLIVAN: Okay, I guess the only other thing I would add to that is in that period as well there was some liberalization toward very small private enterprise activities, small half steps by allowing people to open small restaurants or "paladares" in their homes, to rent out rooms in their houses, to work independently in small occupations like "button sewer" or driving bicycle pedicabs to take tourists around. I recall actually being quite wrong on this issue as I thought, "Wow this is an interesting opening and once people get a little bit more economic independence, they won't be as dependent on the state and it will be increasingly difficult for the state to maintain control of the population. Our political officer Bob Witajewski was more cynical and more correct. He said, "Watch, they'll start cutting this back over time and regaining control of it," and indeed the regime did. They both began taxing the relatively small private income quite heavily and imposing increasingly bureaucratic restrictions, diminishing greatly both the effect of those small changes as well as any sense of independence by the people who were beginning to earn some money of their own. Whenever the Cuban regime has had to choose between maintaining its political control and improving the economy through liberalization, the regime has come down in favor of maintaining its political control.

Okay, you tell me how you would like me to proceed. Would you like me to just keep on talking on this or…

Q: Yeah, let's talk a little about the embassy, the staff there. How did you find the Mission?

SULLIVAN: Right, right. I think everybody who went to Cuba in that period had the hope that they would be there at the time when Cuba would begin to change dramatically. We were in the old embassy building right on the Malecon. We were only occupying, I believe, three out of the six stories as we had a fairly small operation. That changed dramatically in 1994 and I will come to that, but initially we were pretty small. It was in the initial period that we got permission from the Cuban government to renovate that embassy building and that actually took a lot of effort and planning and logistical preparation in the isolated environment that was Cuba. Even though the Cuban government had initially promised us that they would not interfere in the project, they inevitably did interfere and caused all kinds of complications in completing the renovation. We

used to say that whenever bilateral relations went into a crisis, Fidel would assume the role of desk officer for the US and even small decisions on bringing in building supplies or shipping out empty freight containers would get subsumed into the political crisis.

But our staff was good and enthusiastic, even though with the exception of the ambassador's residence, we were totally dependent on the Cuban government as to which other properties we could use as our residences. Over time, we gradually improved the quality of the residences for our staff, although they were still less than what we have in the US or in other countries. There was undoubtedly a lot of monitoring of our activities, somewhat constrained by the economic crisis early on, but increasing as time went on. Morale was pretty good, it's a beautiful country, it's a beautiful city. Cubans themselves are interesting people and were much more open to talking to Americans than they had been in the past. They didn't fear the state as much as they used to. They, themselves, in many cases had resumed relations with their relatives who had gone to the U.S.; some of those relationships had been virtually broken off with what the state called "worms" who had left Cuba. But now the Cuban people were very anxious to resume relations with Americans, both because they hoped for some degree of economic support but also because they saw the world changing and the world that they had been told would be a Socialist international conquest was not going to take place. And for our own staff, their ability to have friendly relations with Cubans increased greatly. I personally and a number of our staff used to bike all over the area and have contact with many Cubans in the process. These were not political contacts, but did give me a good feel for how Cubans lived. In addition, as Cuba sought to make itself more attractive to tourism, this increased the recreational opportunities for our staff. There were downsides, of course. Housing was mostly mediocre; food shopping in dollars was initially limited to the state's "diplomercado;" and communication outside the island was difficult. So it was an interesting period. Over time, there were some openings, but some closing in as well.

In 1994, as a result of that rafter crisis, Fidel, almost simultaneous with his getting his feet back under him on the economy, also decided to call the U.S. on the contradictions of its own policy. U.S. policy on the one hand was we didn't want another Mariel mass migration that would cause problems for the U.S. internally. On the other hand, the US Coast Guard was going to rescue every rafter who made it out to the six-mile limit, often pointed to the rafters by Cuban-American pilots from the "Brothers to the Rescue" organization. In addition, US-sponsored Radio Marti broadcasts became increasingly provocative in encouraging Cubans to take to the seas. So Fidel gave one of his patented three or four hour interviews on television in which he said that Cubans were no longer going to take any efforts to prevent people from leaving.

The Friday night the Cubans decided to force the issue by ceasing to enforce control of their borders, I was personally faced with this ambivalence in Cuban policy. We had heard of the Cuban intention to stop enforcing their border controls and the State Department desk, reflecting US concern at the prospect of Cuban mass migration, asked that I express concern to the Cuban Government. I called our designated Foreign Ministry interlocutor and expressed concern that the Cuban Government measure could encourage people to put their lives at risk. Later that night, in his three-hour interview on state television, Fidel referred to the call from SULLIVAN, said with the full Spanish pronunciation and claimed incorrectly that I had threatened Cuba. That was only one of dozens of arguments Fidel made to justify the change in Cuban policy. It is never comfortable to be called out on national television and I did decide to call off my planned bike

ride in the morning, but I never did feel any public reaction to me or the US during my time in Cuba. Even the previously common ritualistic marches of protest at the US Interests Section had been put on hold. And on Saturday evening, I attended, as planned, the national day reception at the Bolivian Embassy. My diplomatic colleagues were friendly, as usual. But I remember best a well-known Foreign Ministry official approaching me and saying, "Nothing personal, just business." My "Godfather" moment.

Once Cuba stopped efforts to prevent illegal migration, the numbers opened up and there were many thousands of additional Cubans who took to the sea on rafts. The U.S. picked them up until we wound up with 30 thousand of them. We adopted an interim policy of taking them to Guantanamo and housing them in Guantanamo. But as the number grew over 30 thousand this was an increasingly untenable policy as well. The U.S. negotiated privately with the Cuban government, Peter Tarnoff, the undersecretary for political affairs, was the US negotiator and Ricardo Alarcon the Cuban negotiator and they agreed on a new migration accord with the Cuban government under which the Cuban government would once again begin to control its borders and the U.S. would be entitled to return Cubans to Cuba that we had interviewed and decided were fleeing for economic reasons rather than having a well founded fear of persecution. As well, we would grant 20 thousand Cubans per year entry into the U.S. above and beyond any number that were admitted as refugees. There had been a mutual misunderstanding of an earlier 1970's migration agreement with Cuba in which the U.S. had agreed to take up to 20 thousand a year. We interpreted the agreement to read that we would take up to 20 thousand, if that number qualified, whereas the Cubans interpreted that as a US obligation to take the full 20 thousand each year. So, in effect, we adopted the Cuban interpretation of that agreement in order to discourage continued mass migration.

The new bilateral migration agreement resulted in the need for us increasing our consular staff greatly, tripling approximately the size of our consular section and adding as well I think six INS officers in order to both give expedited refugee hearings for refugee applicants, but also eventually to grant additional numbers of people entry through humanitarian parole procedures so that we could meet the 20,000 entry quota compared to the 3,000 or so Cubans being admitted annually in immediately previous years. So the Interests Section became a much larger operation and processed over 25,000 Cuban entries per year. One new and important part of our duties became receiving the Cuban migrants who were returned by the Coast Guard to the port of Mariel and then taking their contacts in order to go visit them across the island to make sure they were not being persecuted for reasons of their having departed the island, as was specified in our new migration accord. That opened a whole new set of activities for us and allowed us a window on much of Cuba that we had not previously had, including into what Cuban life was like even in the most remote villages and most remote provinces. I remember back then in 1995, we actually began using GPS in order to find the location of these remote places where people came from and be able to go back there several months later and visit them again. Those returnees did not find it easy to get employment, but then that had already been difficult before their flight.

Q: I guess jungle grows so fast that it obscures everything.

SULLIVAN: While the US had made no commitments on what to do with the 30,000 Cubans housed at Guantanamo, the US came under a lot of pressure particularly from the Cuban-

American community in Miami and wound up taking almost all of those 30 thousand directly into the U.S. In order to issue 20 thousand entry visas at the Interests Section, we actually began having a lottery in order to reach the quota, because there weren't enough family qualified members or political refugees to come close to the agreed number of 20 thousand. So we began having a lottery with over 100,000 entrants dropping their applications in a lottery box at the Interests Section. The individuals who won that lottery had to demonstrate that they wouldn't become a public charge and weren't otherwise disqualified in order to get an immigrant visas to go to the United States. Most of them could find a relative somewhere in the US who would promise to support them so they would not become a public charge. This huge and publicly visible popularity of emigrating from Cuba was embarrassing to the Cuban regime, but they tolerated it for the most part. We began taking in about 25 thousand Cubans every year so it really changed the dynamics substantially and probably from the Cuban government perspective it helped. They had always regarded migration and even the refugee process as escape valves to take some of the most discontented off their hands.

Q: Did you and your staff have any sort of campaign of tweaking the Cuban authorities or would this have been counter productive?

SULLIVAN: Well, tweaking them mostly took place out of Washington, and note there were plenty of strong statements out of Washington. It also took place in the form of our maintaining contact with those the Cuban government regarded as dissidents and we regarded as human rights activists or opposition. We reached out in various ways through public diplomacy and information, cultivating contacts with a wide range of groups. There were very few non-state institutions, but to the degree we could find them we went looking for them and we cultivated contacts for instance with associations of scientists, even the old Masons who were mostly in their eighties; establishing contacts like that. We also did promote a certain degree of contact with let's say encouraging for instance as I recall a cultural contact between the city of New Orleans and the city authorities of Havana because there had been a shared history. There were common interests in that history, those documents and, therefore, we facilitated that contact. Now we thought this was positive both because it opened channels of communication between non-official Cubans and Americans and allowed people to talk to one another. I'd say the Cuban government was probably ambivalent about such contacts, and those with their principal responsibility for security were downright suspicious of contacts they did not control. Frequently as we would set up those activities we would get mixed signals and sometimes would even have the activity blocked by the Cuban government.

One other thing on public diplomacy, immediately after the bilateral migration accord, reflected interesting light on perspectives from the two sides. The Cuban government after the migration accord had some hope, that this would open new avenues of contact and new prospects for improved relations with the Clinton administration. My public affairs officer, a very good officer named Gene Bigler, was in touch with their television authorities. They agreed to a television interview of me that would be broadcast on Cuban television. Now I don't think I or any of my staff had ever appeared on Cuban television or radio but Gene negotiated well that they would agree to broadcast the interview in its entirety, no splicing and dicing and so on. I don't claim credit for a great interview, but one careful and precise statement that I made in that interview, when asked the predictable question about would this migration accord lead to other

improvements in relations between the United States and Cuba. My response was that the United States was indeed interested in improving relations with the Cuban people and we would seek every way to have a better relationship between the American and Cuban people. That interview was broadcast and apparently it provoked the ire of Fidel or others in high places and some people in Cuban television got in trouble. Fidel was in the enviable position of not having to take any responsibility for decisions, but if in the end, he did not like the outcome, someone else would suffer the consequences. Needless, to say, we were not given any other opportunities for on-air interviews. On the other hand, the BBC correspondent in Cuba reported that I had said that the U.S. government was seeking improved relations with the Cuban government and would be anxious to have increased agreements and contacts with the Cuban government. The BBC report is what made it back to the US through the wire services. At the State Department Nick Burns, the Department spokesman and a good friend, was going to have to answer the question about what is it that the chief of the interests section said in Havana about improving relations with the Cuban government. Nick called me; I told him precisely what I had said and Nick had no problem in answering that question from the podium. But this does show the two different sides and the political sensitivities on the two sides of the Florida straits.

I should also relate an effort by the Clinton Administration in the fall of 1995 to create an opening with Cuba. The initiative unfortunately reflected the policy ambiguities of Clinton Administration Cuba policy. In the U.S. and especially in Miami, the initiative was presented as a means to open up Cuba and loosen Castro regime authority. While in Havana, I was instructed to explain to my interlocutor Ricardo Alarcon that this new initiative could result in gradually improving relations between the US and Cuban governments, provided that Cuba liberalized internally. Well the Cuban government had, by then concluded that it had no interest in liberalizing its control and was more likely to believe that our intentions were what we said in Miami; i.e. to undermine the regime. I remember vividly Alarcon's reaction, which was to say that they were not fools and recognized that the US was seeking to create vulnerabilities in the regime and that Cuba saw no benefit in the offered opening and thus was not interested. The lesson I drew from that is that we should not make something we determine to be in the US interest dependent on Cuban government action, since their interests are rarely the same.

Q: How much at this time did you feel that Castro was calling all the shots?

SULLIVAN: I would say particularly once he reasserted himself he was calling most of the shots and with respect to the United States whenever things reached a crisis stage or anything that was a major issue he rapidly became the desk officer for the United States. That exemplified itself in certainly the migration crisis, the rafter crisis, his deciding to take, in effect, to provoke the United States on this and call us on the contradictions on our policy. It also, I think, you could see it even in little things like the refurbishment of our embassy whereas previously it had been handled at relatively low levels and they probably did get high level sign offs on it when they gave us assurances that there wouldn't be any interference. But whenever there would be a crisis you could see that this had now reached high levels and Fidel would become the desk officer and whether or not we got the next set of supplies to do the next stage of the refurbishment or whether we got permission to ship out the containers from the previous shipment depended on very high level approval and it just didn't budget because he was using it as an instrument of

leverage against us. He was in overall charge and with respect to the United States sometimes that got down to the very minute levels of detail when he became the "de facto" desk officer.

Q: Well did we have any leverage on the Cubans?

SULLIVAN: Well we had the ultimate leverage, if we were willing to improve the broader relationship. The Cubans wanted that very much but they wanted to do it in a way that did not diminish the Communist Party's and Fidel's control of the island and its people. The Clinton Administration wasn't prepared to enter those negotiations. On more discrete issues, there were things, such as narcotics, on which we could have cooperated more. But there I would say that the Administration's concerns about the Miami community trumped in most cases any willingness to expand official contacts much beyond regular meetings on migration which had begun with the migration accord. So it really was a little dance that never got very far and at the end of the day the Cubans, I think, concluded that this was not going to work in their advantage and they became increasingly more interested in doing everything they could to assert their domestic control and not prepared to do anything in the interest of having an improved relationship with the United States that would diminish their internal control.

Q: Well speaking of our control and people I've interviewed who dealt with Cuban affairs in an earlier period talked about Fidel's almost systematically eliminating in one way or another of any possible rivals. Did you feel, I mean was there at all another group?

SULLIVAN: Yeah, I wouldn't call it a group but there were individuals whom he might have perceived as potential rivals. Probably the number one example in my time there was a young Foreign Minister Roberto Robaina who had been a Communist youth leader which in Cuba typically means right up until the age of about 35 or 36, so youth is defined loosely. Robaina had been a university student leader and then later a youth leader and shortly after that, probably only in his mid to late 30s became foreign minister. He was flashy; he dressed a little bit like a rock star. I remember he took a number of diplomats, including myself, on a trip to the Isle of Youth. We did the usual things visiting the island. Then at one point he walked down the main street in the capital and as he walked down the street with a number of us accompanying him, a crowd of some dozens gathered along the side of the street. They recognized him and would wave to him or come up and greet him and shake his hand. In my own mind I said this is not going to last, this is not going to be welcomed by Fidel. I'm not saying that one incident was it but his readiness to cultivate a public image was not welcome. The only one who really was able to maintain a public image was Fidel himself; he didn't want anyone else…

Q: What happened to the gentleman?

SULLIVAN: He lost his job maybe a year later with no public explanation and a few rumors of corruption. Typically what happens to people these days is they aren't executed, they aren't put up against the wall, they are put into, as the Cubans call it, into "pajamas" so that they are no longer seen and when you ask a Cuban official where such an individual is, they'd say well can't see him he is in pajamas. That was it, you know, he was invisible. That happened more recently with Carlos Lage, who for some years was the economic minister and later vice prime minister up until about a year ago. He was, I would say, much more careful than Robaina. He was low

profile, he drove his own Lada around; he didn't have a big public escort. He was not looking for public glory. But even then, about a year ago, he was deposed. He had probably become too prominent and with all the agitation at that point about whether Cuba was finally going to reform with Raul, a more pragmatic figure in charge rather than Fidel, and people knowing that Lage had originally been promoted by Raul, speculation increased about whether Lage might be a potential successor to the Castro's. But certainly the word successor is not a word that you want to have to describe you if you expect to stay in a permanent position in Cuba.

Q: Was Raul seen, at the time you were doing this, as certainly I don't want to say the great white hope but as maybe a possible opening of something happened or…?

SULLIVAN: I think the little story I told earlier about he and army generals going to Fidel, I think, reflected the image that he had. He tended to promote relatively pragmatic economists, give then a little bit of space; he was more pragmatic, less theological than Fidel, even though he had been a Communist well before Fidel became a Communist. He also took a pretty low profile role for somebody who was minister of defense and already then the designated public successor to Fidel. He gave his ritual speeches, he wasn't very charismatic. He had little contact with foreigners, or at least with Westerners and deliberately stayed in the shadow of his brother. I think the assessment of him probably was correct that he is somewhat more pragmatic than Fidel. He is no more willing than Fidel to cede Communist Party and Castro control over the island but he is more willing to adopt pragmatic and economic policies and do things that make more economic sense and more interested in giving Cubans a better life so long as it doesn't endanger the political control.

Q: One of the things that happened in Eastern Europe and even in the Soviet Union towards the end was the almost complete disappearance of faith in Marxism as it was taught.

SULLIVAN: Right.

Q: Was any of that happening in Cuba?

SULLIVAN: Well I would say among the great public, it was happening almost universally. The analogy I used to use in my time there that say if you date this to the mid-'90s I think it was broadly accurate. Almost everybody over 35 who had remained in Cuba (because many had the opportunity to leave and had not taken it), had at one point viewed Fidel as their father. He was their father figure and maybe their grandfather figure now. In any case, that generation of now 50 plus had a special feeling towards him, even if they wished their father would retire and let them be normal people in a normal country. I think that still continues for the most part among that generation, but that generation's faith in Marxism had largely disappeared except for the very small coterie, the thousands of people in the higher levels of the bureaucracy, Marxism and socialist internationalism had largely disappeared from their vocabulary; it didn't work for them. I met many, many Cubans some of them had volunteered to fight in Angola on behalf of what was then the Cuban ministry of interior which was running that show. One fellow said to me, "I wasted my life, I put my life on the line for something that was an illusion." In the under 35 generation, they had not really made an active choice for Fidel or for the revolution or Marxism, but had grown up in the system without ever really having an alternative. I would say the vast

majority in that group either wanted to leave the island or they wanted a job where they could earn dollars being a busboy or chamber maid in a tourist hotel where they could make some dollars and earn some money. Even the sons and daughters of the Cuban security elite were anxious to get jobs in tourism where they could secure a bit of foreign exchange. So, there was wide spread disillusionment with ideology per se, with the exception of the fairly narrow circles of power.

Q: What about the Cuban equivalent of the secret police or the KGB types? Were they harassing you all much or not?

SULLIVAN: I would say in the beginning, constrained by the economic problems that affected the whole island, they didn't have as many resources to follow us. But as time went on, and probably again marked fairly accurately in the summer of '94 when Fidel decided that he needed to reoccupy the streets, priority resources began to be devoted to the security services and they had more resources to follow us, to interfere with us. They were not as nasty as they had been sometimes in the past. In some past years there had been incidents of defecating in people's apartments just to send a message that they had been there and making sure you knew they had been there and gone through your stuff. It wasn't as much flagrant nastiness but it was there and to the degree that we were active with the opposition and with the human rights activists they were particularly on us about those activities. We had a human rights officer who at one stage I remember she was regularly used to being followed in her car going down Fifth Avenue. On one occasion, she had just made it through a traffic light. The security services' car behind her went through the red light and got hit from the side and flipped over. Robin Meyer stopped her car and went back and found the security officer following her extremely embarrassed, but not seriously injured. Certainly she was very used to being followed and by 1996, they became increasingly aggressive. When we get to '96 I'll tell you just how aggressive.

Q: Today is December 2, 2010.

SULLIVAN: I thought I should elaborate on the people-to-people exchanges that I mentioned earlier and which were part of Clinton Administration policy toward Cuba, as they are part of Obama Administration policy today. I believed in these exchanges strongly, not because I thought they would change the Cuban regime, but because the Cuban and American people are destined to live 90 miles apart and it was and is important to have our two people know each other and each other's cultures. This is an enduring reality long after the Castro regime is a footnote in history. The other part of my belief in the value of people-to-people exchanges is my skepticism of the argument that the relatively small proceeds which the Cuban government gains from such exchanges will somehow be the difference in preventing the Castro regime from falling.

One area in which we were more open was in allowing Cuban and American musicians to travel more freely. Chucho Valdes, a famous Cuban jazz pianist, who had not been able to travel to the US since the 1970's, received a visa to visit the US, and I remember him saying that he did not sleep in New York because he did not want to miss one minute of opportunity to listen to and absorb American jazz. I'll give some detail on how obstacles on both sides complicated even cultural exchanges. Upon his return, Chucho came to my house and asked if we could bring

American jazz pianist Billy Taylor, a Kennedy Center institution, to give jazz instruction and participate in the Havana Jazz Festival. Because of the resistance from Cuban-Americans in Congress to spending any US government funds on such an exchange, the US had to secure private funding to sponsor the cultural exchange, but we did so and Billy Taylor agreed to come and participate. In the meantime, Chucho Valdes, while he was in the U.S. had recruited two very good musicians Roy Hargrove and Steve Coleman to come with their groups and play and they did come. Billy Taylor's wife had a fall and he was not able to come but the cultural exchange went well, notwithstanding, and Roy Hargrove wound up recording a Cuban-themed album together with Chucho Valdes. The other side of complications with cultural exchanges was demonstrated by the Cuban government, probably because Valdez had gotten out in front of them in coming to my house asking for our assistance in bringing Billy Taylor to the Havana Jazz Festival. The Cuban government punished Chucho by removing him as the director of the Havana Jazz Festival, even though he continued to be the leading Cuban musician at the festival. Valdez was sort of banished for awhile. When he was invited to our July 4 reception, my last in country, Chucho waited until all the Cuban government watchers had left and came by about 10:30 at night just to say goodbye. It was difficult for both sides, with constraints and hardliners who resisted even cultural exchanges.

Q: Did you sometimes feel you were a shuttle cock caught between literally both sides on this?

SULLIVAN: Sure, absolutely. The most troubling incident of my whole tour in Cuba is even a better example of that. I remember the date of February 24, 1996. The group called itself Brothers to the Rescue, small aircraft pilots, typically using Cessna's. They had initially founded themselves to find Cuban rafters out in the sea who could then be picked by the Coast Guard and brought to the United States. Well after the migration agreement of 1994, that mission had largely evaporated and yet this group wished to continue being active. It became public later that the organization had been infiltrated by one Cuban who had come to the U.S. as a refugee but was still working for the Cuban government. In any case, one day in late January or early February, rather than just patrolling the island around the seas to see if there were any Cubans possibly out there that needed to be rescued, since there were very few these days, as the Cuban government was enforcing its borders again, one or two Cessna pilots flew over Havana and dropped leaflets on Havana. This was considered a terrific act and a great act of heroism on the part of these people by some circles in Miami.

Well, in the following weeks the Cuban government got itself increasingly exercised about this. They went to the State Department to indicate how irate and concerned they were about it and they called me in to tell me the same thing. Now I think there were talks held with this organization and with Miami activists to try to persuade these people not to take chances and not to provoke. We also urged the Cuban government in Havana and in Washington not to overreact. That withstanding I think the U.S. message was probably tempered on both sides because the US was in the middle and seeking to not alienate the Miami community. When Brothers to the Rescue flew again February 24 the Cuban air force was prepared with information from their infiltrator and they followed the Cessna's and shot down two of those Cessna planes, killing several of the individuals involved. This caused great uproar in the US and internationally and led to the then US representative to the UN Madeline Albright quoting from the Cuban pilot who had been monitored by us to have yelled out "cojones", balls, that he was going to shoot this guy

down. She used that tape, in effect, to dismiss the Cuban claim at the United Nations that they either had no responsibility or that the act had occurred inside Cuba, but we had documentation that they had deliberately shot down unarmed small planes.

Q: Well in a way somebody would try that over Washington today they sure as hell would get shot down.

SULLIVAN: True, true. These were Cessna's but they were still provocations and yet because the United States was sort of being equally careful about Miami in ways that we were anxious that no clash occur, but were not willing to act in strong ways to prevent these people from flying. Simultaneously with that and on the same day, the Cuban government conducted a major sweep on human rights activists and dissidents on the island rounding up many of them and putting them in jail. There were many such arrests over the years, but this was the first large-scale crackdown in a number of years. So I think it coincided with a Cuban decision to crack down in general on internal and external threats as they saw them.

I guess one of the interesting side lights of this was a conversation on that Saturday with the individual in the Foreign Ministry charged with U.S. affairs. There was an interesting dialogue, at first, as the Cubans were trying to measure how we were going to deal with this. Were we going to deal with it as an unfortunate incident, but not seek to hold the Cuban government totally responsible? I, of course, acting on instructions from Washington, made it clear that we knew they were totally responsible and we would make it clear to everybody that the Cuban government had made a deliberate decision to use its air force jets to shoot down unarmed small aircraft. At a certain point, the Cuban tone changed radically and I could feel basically Fidel Castro assuming full control again of the U.S. desk, as he did whenever a crisis arose and the Cuban message sharpened greatly. Basically it was saying the hell with you, you are not getting any apologies, we are not going to be expressing regrets, they had it coming, you should have known better and that was it.

At that point relations took a nose dive and the Clinton administration was looking at means to retaliate. It wound up dropping its opposition to the Helms-Burton legislation, suspending all charter flights into Cuba for at least a number of months, and then, disastrously, in my view, limiting the travel of Cuban diplomats in Washington, notwithstanding our advice that this will just give the Cuban government a great excuse to do the same things to the US Interests Section. And that indeed was what happened. I would say from that point on, this led to a progressive spiral downward in relations.

Q: Were you getting good reports on what is almost a foreign power and that is the Miami Cubans. One, they were clearly violating international law by what they were doing. Were they trying to provoke this? It doesn't sound like they were coming out ahead on it.

SULLIVAN: I don't think that they planned their own deaths. That is certainly more than they wished, but certainly to be provocative and aggressive in the face of the Cuban authorities, was certainly an attractive position in Miami. As I mentioned before, Cuban intelligence had, in fact, infiltrated a pilot within that group who I'm sure was able to tell them precisely when they would be traveling and that infiltrator departed Miami on that Saturday for the Bahamas and

subsequently for Cuba. He abandoned the "temporary" wife that he had taken in Florida, came back to Cuba and reintegrated with the regime. So the Cubans knew what was coming, perhaps even more than American authorities..

As far as the Miami-Cubans, I think Washington, the Department did have direct contact with them. Washington was in very frequent contact with several elements within the community, and I believe there was a prior contact with his Brothers to the Rescue operation to seek to dissuade them, but I don't think the message was as strong as it might have been.

Q: What happened now? Was the Coast Guard still at this point intercepting people and bringing them back?

SULLIVAN: Yes and they continued to. I think there may have been a stall for some weeks or even a month but eventually those returns continued. We continued to be able to travel out to visit the people who were returned. The travel of our own interest section staff throughout the island was constrained, made more difficult; we had to provide advance notification although at that point it was only to provide advance notification and didn't require us to wait for approval. Subsequently, I think some years after I left, the Cubans imposed the requirement that people wait until that approval came through, and as used to happen in Moscow, that approval never came through. So typically Interests Section staff could not travel any longer around the island. Eventually that restriction became to confine American staff to the city limits of Havana, which was extremely restrictive.

Q: What did this do to the morale of your group there?

SULLIVAN: Well it made it more difficult. The period that I was there because I left in the summer of '96, people were still able to travel but with the uncertainty of whether the authorities might stop them from traveling. The hostility of the Cuban government was greater and particularly our human rights officer had to deal with the incident I described earlier when she was being followed so closely that she made it through a red light but her Cuban follow car didn't and wound up getting broadsided and flipped over. The agent who was following her was very upset when she came back to check on him. But still there were other instances of unpleasantness too, but it was not as bad as in the '80s. Certainly it was more difficult for everybody and there was pretty significant tension. The ability to have relationships with private Cubans was also inhibited, as the regime began putting pressure on Cubans to shun us. We were also increasingly focused on those human rights activists who had been arrested or harassed, which attention the Cuban government detested.

Q: In our going out and checking on people and all what about the area near Guantanamo? Was that pretty much off limits for everyone?

SULLIVAN: No, we could go there. I mean there were very few instances of people penetrating the base in order to seek asylum and most of the people I would say the majority of the people who fled the island were from either Havana or from the provinces along the northern seafront where they would seek to cross the Florida straits to the US or the Bahamas. But I visited the province of Guantanamo one time myself and my observation certainly was that while the central

government showed its great hostility with respect to our presence in Guantanamo Bay, the local residents in many cases, particularly the older ones, remembered when relations were pretty amicable with the base on the other side. Some Cubans continued to work at the American base for many years, although those numbers were diminishing; they were being replaced by Jamaicans over time because the Cubans had begun to put up barriers to our hiring new Cubans to work there.

The only way I was able to get to the US base at Guantanamo was flying on one occasion from Miami basically around the island without any overflight of Cuban territory on a Navy plane and then visiting I believe for two days, talking to American officials there and then flying back out the same way. So the Guantanamo Base was totally separated from Cuba and from us in Havana. One interesting thing that occurred in that time was that the U.S. military and our Coast Guard and narcotics authorities all had some interest in having an improved relationship with the Cuban government to pursue their particular interests. In the military side it was first and foremost that relations along the base be amicable and that there be no incidents of the sort that occurred in that famous Jack Nicholson movie …

Q: A Few Good Men, I think?

SULLIVAN: That's right.

Yes, so the U.S. changed base commanders about every six months. And each time that they changed the command there would be a high-level visit typically from CINCLANT, which was the responsible regional command to be present and have a few words with the Cuban regional military authorities. So the Cubans certainly welcomed this and liked the idea that somehow they might be able to have an improved military-to military relationship. The U.S. military, at least for that narrow purpose and probably in some instances even hoping for a little bit more, was also interested in that. One CINCLANT commander who had great aspirations, Jack Sheehan, got a little bit too close and his video-taped encounter with the Cuban general, calling him "Mi General", My General, was used against him in the Cuban community in Miami and perhaps damaged his prospects to rise to even greater heights within the US military.

Q: Well did life within Havana for you change at all as time went on?

SULLIVAN: Well it changed in the sense that certainly after February '96 the Cuban government began to be more aggressive with its own population and be more aggressive and less flexible with us in the interest section. People would get harassed, mostly in minor ways but would be harassed. I think the Cuban people, for the most part, were still interested in having contact with us. They increasingly had found their lost relatives in the U.S. and many of them had the ambition to get there themselves. Others saw the U.S. as their protector in their pursuit of human rights or greater political openness so we still had, I think, pretty good access to the Cuban people. Our contacts with the government were increasingly stiff and formal with no real aspiration on either side that that relationship would improve in any near term.

Q: Where were they getting their oil?

SULLIVAN: At that point on the open market largely. There was plenty of oil out there on the open market, but they were paying top dollar price for it as opposed to the Soviet subsidy, which had subsidized an enormous portion of the cost for them, to the degree that they were notorious wasters of petroleum because it basically came free. But the high cost of petroleum was an enormous constraint on Cuba and that is why they had set up this system of trying to get more dollars by means of remittances, through dollar stores, through more tourists coming into the island but it was certainly a far tougher existence than it had been in the years of reportedly calculated up to $5 billion a year Soviet subsidy.

It was in that period that Fidel received with some ceremony Venezuelan Colonel Hugo Chavez, who had just been released from prison where he had served time for an attempted military coup. Fidel and the Cubans were certainly placing their bets on a future sugar daddy. It certainly seemed a long shot at the time, but has resulted in a new source of subsidized petroleum for Cuba.

Q: I can't remember if there'd been any progress in getting medicine and stuff like that in?

SULLIVAN: Yeas we did and I think I may have covered that we did almost from the beginning of my time there in '93-'94 had agreed to license shipments into Cuba by, in effect, the Catholic Church of the United States. These were shipments of medicine that they would go to CARITAS, the Cuban Catholic organization which would in turn distribute it to Cuban hospitals and also monitor it to make sure the state didn't abuse or sell it. CARITAS had Catholic doctors or nurses assure them and so the US would allow medical supply donations to continue. We had not yet opened up as yet to sales of medicines and of food to the Cuban government in that period. In my farewell cable, I recommended that we relax the embargo to permit sales of medicine and food. This was one element of the embargo that had very little justification, since the Cubans would still have to come up with the cash in order to purchase from the US. Eventually the Clinton administration did, I believe in about 1999, end the embargo on medicine and food.

Q: I got the impression, this is just from reading the papers, that the Helms-Burton Act was mainly aimed at Canadian outfits or was this effective or was it hitting anybody particularly hard?

SULLIVAN: You are right that one of the main provisions in it called for any individual or corporation utilizing expropriated American property to be blacklisted and face certain potential risks in doing business in the United States. There was at least one large Canadian company, Sherritt, that was running the old American nickel mining operation in Moa in the northeast that became one of the most publicized cases. The broad provision of extraterritorial punishment though was so unusual that it produced great anxiety particularly in the European Union and led to every US Administration, including the Bush II Administration, waiving the penalties as applied to third country individuals and corporations. But where this came from was the mistaken belief that the Castro regime was about to fall and all that was necessary was one last twist and cutting off one last source of foreign exchange in order for that regime to fall. I actually had a conversation just as I left Cuba with the responsible individuals in Congress, including Congressman Dan Burton, the House sponsor of this legislation. I remember him looking intently at me and asking me, "Now that this legislation has passed, is this going to topple the

regime?" I said, "With all due respect, Congressman, no it is not." He replied, "Well you just tell me what else we need to do and we'll do that and we'll bring them down." It was almost an ideological view that US action could produce the desired results.

Q: You left there in '96, is that it?

SULLIVAN: That's right.

Q: Did you feel because you hadn't brought down the Castro regime that you were some how tainted or not?

SULLIVAN: I don't think so. Everybody who goes in there has the hope that they will be there when change comes. In some people's cases their parents or their grandparents had honeymooned in Cuba and they could come back or this could be a much more open place. But I think I gradually became aware that that wasn't going to happen, but I don't think I was held personally responsible by many except perhaps by Congressman Dan Burton.. I had also maintained contact with was the Cuban-American members of Congress, maybe once a year or so. I'd go call on them to hear them out and give them my honest views of what was going on. I had some familiarity with them and tried to get them to understand as well that they should not have excessive expectations. Underneath their public pronouncements in many cases, I think they recognized that this was not likely to happen in the near term and the administration had had every reason to have similarly modest expectations.

I would give some credit to the Clinton administration for opening increased people-to-people exchanges, and then even after the aircraft shoot down, for maintaining the increased exchanges, the people-to-people contacts, etc., which really was a long-term policy rather than a short-term policy. No one should expect that anything you can do in the short-term is going to change Cuba. But people who are 90 miles away will be our neighbors forever and we should do what we can to improve that people-to-people contacts and relationships.

Q: I can't think of the whole situation over the boy refugee; that was after your time?

SULLIVAN: The boy refugee, Elian Gonzalez? Oh the young boy, that was actually in 2000, four years after I left and it probably did affect Gore's vote in the 2000 election.

Q: We may have covered these earlier on but what about foreign leaders? I've been interviewing Jim Cason who's said, "Foreign leaders would come and fall under the spell of Castro, the mystique of Castro." Did you see much of that particularly as time went on when you were there?

SULLIVAN: Well, I guess probably the most interesting case were the Spaniards because certainly Fidel is and was very charismatic. Congressmen or other prominent Americans, who came and got the six hour treatment beginning at 1 a.m., usually left under some sort of a spell that this guy was at least charming and a great raconteur. The Spaniards, of course, had a special case; Cuba was their last and favorite colony until 1898 and they had a certain degree of resentment against the United States for intervening on behalf of Cuban independence. So the Spaniards made a major effort to improve the relationship and to convince the European Union

to open up to Cuba. In fact, their foreign minister came to Cuba and made a major public effort. That, as well as a number of other initiatives, were crushed in part by the February 24 shoot down of the aircraft. Even people who would have thought the pilots were foolhardy and the U.S. government should have done more to prevent it could not forgive the Cubans sending out their air force MIG's to shoot down unarmed Cessna's and many of those initiatives for openings went under.

Fidel is always very clever so at the same time some relationships were taking a hit he was always cultivating others. I recall that in the period after Hugo Chavez had attempted a coup and spent some time in jail, he was received in Havana airport with Fidel going out to receive him at the airport like a head of state, clearly building a relationship that paid off a few years later.

LESLIE M. ALEXANDER
Diplomat in Residence
Miami, Florida (2000)

Ambassador Leslie Alexander was born in Germany of American parents and grew up primarily in Europe. He was educated at the Munich campus of American University, after which he came to the United States and, in 1970, entered the Foreign Service. Speaking several foreign languages, including German, French, Spanish and Portuguese and some Polish, he served in Guyana, Norway, Poland, Spain, Portugal, Italy and Haiti, where he twice served, first as Chargé, and later as Special Envoy.. From 1993 to 1996 he served as Ambassador to Mauritius and from 1996 to 1999 as Ambassador to Ecuador. Ambassador Alexander was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2005

ALEXANDER: I was living in Miami. I went there again as a diplomat in residence. I already owned a house in Miami which I had bought the year before, so I went back to Miami and started consulting. I did okay, I mean, I didn't set the world on fire.

Q: I hear this again and again, "then I went into consulting." What, in your case, did consulting mean?

ALEXANDER: It meant advising U.S. business. It's funny, a lot of large corporations have international divisions, but if you ever talk to the vice president of international of the ABC Corporation, in most cases I find the person doesn't speak a foreign language. Really, they might have served two years in the London office or the Paris office, that's the extent of their overseas experience. They don't really understand much of the international spectrum, not all of them but a lot of them – the ones who don't hire expertise. Latin America, I hate to slander Latin Americans, particularly since I really love Latin America but let's face it, the corruption is just off the charts in most countries. If you've got, I think we spoke about this the first day I came in here, if you have a $10 million or $15 million investment and some minister or some other functionary comes to you in a position to interfere with your operations, saying, "unless you give me X, I'm going to shut down your operation or make it impossible," and again you've got a $50

million investment, what do you do? You start looking for people who have ideas on what to do, so there was work for people like me. That may be a sort of a melodramatic example, but that's what I think a lot of us do when we get out of this business. I didn't want to go and work for a corporation; I didn't want to be a corporate man. I'd been a Foreign Service officer for almost 30 years and the only other work experience I had before that was a couple of years with DoD, so I had been very much an organizational man and I just didn't want to do that anymore. I just didn't. So I had my little consulting business for a couple of years and then I moved back to Washington because my FSO ex-wife had been assigned to Washington and I wanted to be able to spend time with my kid, which was always paramount and a very personal reason why I left the Foreign Service. So when my ex was assigned here I immediately moved here. I had a house here which I'd bought years before and I moved into my house and I gave up my little enterprise in Miami with absolutely no regrets. I'm here probably for another year or so then I'll go back to Miami and probably pick up where I left off..

Q: Can you give me a feel for the politics as it pertained to Cuba and to the rest of Latin America down in Florida?

ALEXANDER: Oh yes. Oh, absolutely. The Cuban community in Florida is a very accomplished, very admirable community in a lot of ways. I come across Cubans all over Latin American, some of them were the official Castro Cubans; others were those who had fled. I had never come across them in large numbers until I lived in Miami, and they very much run Miami. We used to jokingly call, my Cuban friends used to call, Miami Havana of the north. And it's easy to feel, particularly in certain parts of Miami, Dade County, that you're in Cuba or a suburb of Havana— enormously dynamic community, really, really dynamic community, extremely impressive people, hard working, serious, ferocious determination. Again, there are so many Cuban success stories it's just amazing.

Q: Did you feel the American dynamic was working there and the next generation coming up was beginning to get away from this, the Cubanness?

ALEXANDER: Yes and no. In fact, I would say that the first generation, unlike other immigrant groups, they would have been my age, are already enormously successful. Even in the Foreign Service, I've got two or three Cuban friends who have been ambassadors, one is the standing ambassador to one of the most important countries in Latin America. He came to the U.S. when he was 11 or 12 years old. So it's not the follow-up generation, it's that generation that's already enormously successful. They've got congressmen, senators now. A funny thing about the Cubans; they became "American" in quotes, very, very quickly, but they retain a certain Cubanness and part of that is this notion that it's their very Cubanness that keeps them together unlike let's say Italian-Americans who came over. They didn't flee the old country, they left the old country. Cuban Americans were tossed out, fled and so there's a beef there, there's a gripe. They can't go back. They can't go and visit unlike almost every other group. They're kind of like the Africans who were brought to the New World against their will. They couldn't go back. The Cubans in a sense had ironically and perhaps perversely, a dynamic that's not unlike the African experience. They were cut off from where they came from. So near, yet so far away. This created an anger and a frustration that I think is just as real today as it was in 1960 and 1961; that heat is still there. If you're talking about a 16 year old Cuban, born in Miami Dade or New Jersey or New Mexico

or Minnesota, no, I don't think they have it. But if you're talking about a Cuban age 30 or over, that heat is there. And that may be part of the reason, part of the problem that we have.

Our Cuba policy doesn't work. Obviously it doesn't work. I mean, Fidel is still there. Charles de Gaulle was the president of France when Fidel took over, just to give you perspective. He's still there and he's still laughing at us. I think the problem is, I happen to agree with the Cuban Americans, the Cuban community, the biggest beef, as much as I like Latinos, the biggest beef I have with my Latin friends, is this thing that they have for Fidel. They all admire Fidel and like Fidel because he thumbs his nose at us. I tell them, I say, "none of you would ever, ever, ever tolerate living in a regime that has been around as long as his regime has. You people went through all your trials and tribulations in the '60s and the '70s and the '80s to rid yourself of dictatorships, military regimes, of Somoza, whoever, yet when it comes to Fidel you turn a blind eye. You applaud him because he's anti-gringo. The son of a bitch is a dictator of the worse sort, yet you admire him. What does that say about yourselves, that you're so professionally anti-American that he can do anything as long as he's against the gringos." It suggests to me a very pathological view of the U.S.; more so than a great admiration for Fidel. There is something in the Latin character that they have been so pathologically conditioned to dislike the U.S. that this dysfunctional state called Cuba is held up in high esteem in their eyes. But part of the problem is the Cuban American community because they have been – I hate to say it – pathological in their approach. They have personalized this to such a degree that there is a natural clash between the rest of Latin America and the Cuban community, all over the persona of Fidel. What's supremely ironic in all this is that this is the way we do our foreign policy. We personalize it.

Q: I know it.

ALEXANDER: We've done this since day one, since the inception of the republic. We either demonize someone like Saddam or Noriega or we beatify them like an Aristide. We seem to always do this, we can't help ourselves. Our policies hang on an individual, so they rise and fall with that individual. We get ourselves in all kinds of trouble all over the world because we can't get out of that habit.

Q: I'm reading a biography of Alexander Hamilton and it's brought home by Thomas Jefferson, who fell in love with the French Revolution, and it's worse. Here is this so-called saint of Monticello and he's talking about bring on more guillotines just because he couldn't rid himself of that love for sort of a change in France.

ALEXANDER: Yes, he lived the life of an American nobleman.

Q: Yes.

ALEXANDER: Well.

Q: One of the questions on this, were you seeing Chavez in Venezuela as becoming the new idol of the anti-Americans?

ALEXANDER: Yes, yes to a certain extent. Fidel is getting old, he's not going to be there forever. He just doesn't have the physical capacity anymore to project his personality on the scene. And Chavez is trying to fill his shoes. Chavez will not fill his shoes because Chavez is not Fidel Castro. This is the 21st century, but he does have resonance in a lot of quarters in Latin America and he has figured out, like Fidel did, that he will garner a lot of support simply by thumbing his nose at us. I think the persona of President Bush has helped him. I hate to say it, he's the commander in chief, but I don't think Bush has helped much because we make this a contest of personalities and he makes it even easier for Chavez. I think we handle Chavez extremely stupidly.

The night that the coup was successful, at least for a few days, where he was actually thrown out of office, and the head of the poches met with our ambassador, I think it was a very unwise thing to do. Chavez is absolutely convinced that we were complicit. Anyone who knows anything about U.S. foreign policy knows that that's giving us too much credit. There may have been certain sympathies, but the notion that we could successfully plan that kind of a coup is, well, unfortunately we can't. I wish we could sometimes, but we can't. But he's convinced that we were behind it and it's hard not to blame him when he sees the ambassador meeting with the poches and our rhetoric has done nothing to convince him otherwise. So now we've gotten into some pissing contest which is great for him but for us it's-

Q: He can only win.

ALEXANDER: Yes, he can only win. We've lowered ourselves to his level. The discourse is now the most pedantic, vulgar, silly, nonsensical one. And he wins at that game. I think the best thing we could do is just completely ignore the man. The notion, and again, creating this bogeyman out of Hugo Chavez, serious people imagining that he really is in a position to project power in Latin America is so nonsensical as to make me wonder who's running our Latin American affairs. Anyone who knows Latin America would know that this is nonsense. Chavez can't do anything to us outside of Venezuela and even in Venezuela he still has to sell his oil and he's still going to sell it to us. He's got too many CITGO gas stations in this country to risk an open break with the U.S. The damage we could do to him is infinitely greater than what he could to do us, yet we engage him. We should just ignore the man and we should privately go to him and say, "we screwed up, we're sorry. You go ahead and you do whatever it is, we're not going to do anything to you, mea culpa." He won't believe us, but if we just leave him alone I think eventually people will get tired of Chavez and he'll be tossed out on his ear like every other tin pot would be dictator. But no, we give him stature.

Q: Yes.

ALEXANDER: We give him a much bigger stage than he would have ever had.

Q: Well, on that happy note, I guess we can end this at this point.

ALEXANDER: Alright. Thank you.

Q: Thanks.

End of reader