

Interview with John T. Bennett

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

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Interviewed by: Self

Initial interview date: September 1996

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I was born in 1929 in Madison Wisconsin. My father was a chemical engineer who worked for the state Public Service Commission. We moved to Albany NY in 1938, where he also worked for the state Public Service Commission, and then to Washington in 1942, where he worked for the War Production Board and then the Foreign Economic Administration. He went into consulting after the war and did that until he retired in his 70s. I went to high school, one year in Alexandria, and then to the Sidwell Friends School for three years. I graduated from Harvard in 1950 in Government and went on to the University of California in Berkeley, studying agricultural economics. I took a masters degree in 1953 and finished my Ph.D. in 1958. I left the university in 1955 to enter the foreign service but needed the additional time to complete my dissertation.

The Foreign Service attracted me when I was an undergraduate, because I thought it would be interesting, because I had always thought government service was particularly worthwhile, and because coming out of World War II, peace seemed fragile at the same time that another large war would be even more horrible.

I took the entrance exam in September 1952 after spending the summer back in Washington working for the Office of Price Stabilization. It was sort of a fluke, because I

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still had a long while to go to finish my degree so I wouldn't want to go in for some years, but the timing was convenient. I took the oral the following June—in those days, it was only given in Washington. The five-man board was running over an hour late. It was in an old apartment house on New York Avenue, near the Corcoran art gallery. The day was hot and because of no air conditioning, the transom over the door to the exam room was open and I could hear the questions posed to my two predecessors. I knew the answers—one was, what was the “monkey trial,” I remember.” It increased my self-confidence, though I certainly was not relaxed. One of the interrogators was from California and gave me a hard time about how little I had absorbed about the state. But I think it was done largely to see how one handled a hostile line of questioning. In any case, they spent more than two hours with me (almost twice as long as scheduled) and then told me I had passed with “distinction”—though it wouldn't pay more.

The Eisenhower administration had taken office then, and they stopped inducting new FSOs. It was two years before I got a call. I had to update my medical and security clearance, which took months. I still hadn't finished my dissertation, but I had complete first draft and the rest would be editing. Moreover, I had married in the meantime and our first child had been born. My assistantship did not pay enough to support the three of us, so I really had to get working. The university wasn't happy—I was being trained to teach—and I wanted to at some point, but believed that I hadn't had enough real experience to be good at it.

So we went to Washington in March, 1955. I was assigned to Basic training, but only the first half, as I would be staying in Washington—assigned to the Africa Branch of the Near East Division of Intelligence and Research. I was quite disappointed, as I wanted to go overseas—I wasn't at all sure I wanted to stay in the foreign service my whole working life. In career terms, that was probably an error—one gets known by serving in Washington, not overseas. A good Washington assignment is therefore crucial.

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INR was not a good assignment in that sense, but it turned out to be more interesting than I had expected. I also found that I got more responsibility than expected. The bread and butter work was writing chapters of the National Intelligence Survey—country encyclopedias covering a wide range of material supposedly essential in case we ever invaded the place. This included geographic, economic, political, cultural, and other country information. The information was generally openly available, but the volumes were classified. CIA funded a lot of the work. The drafts went through an elaborate interagency review, often over trivialities — factual information, which was either true or not. But when the study dealt with cultural and economic issues, the author made a real difference in how the subject was perceived and how one dealt with the underlying problems.

I got to write on Ghana, Nigeria, and the then Belgian Congo. I also got to review studies of many of the other countries, so that in my three years there, I learned a great deal.

The Department was integrating the foreign and civil service, so that most jobs would be open to FSO's when they were assigned to Washington. The compensation for that was to bring many of the civil service people into the foreign service, despite the fact that many did not want to serve overseas. It created great uncertainty and resentment and I suspect added to the growth in the proportion of jobs in Washington relative to those abroad. This became a curse of the State Department, as more and more people found reasons to stay in the States and created a larger and larger bureaucracy to accommodate them.

More interesting were the opportunities to do current intelligence—papers or briefs on breaking problems. The ultimate was to get to draft sections of the National Intelligence Estimates; that often got you involved in negotiating the agreed language with other agencies, especially Defense and CIA. Then the splitting of hairs over the choice of words was exquisite, but involved real consequences, in how the US spent money and how concerned it was about problems. Different agencies had different worries, so that this

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was where agency views got clearly stated (often in dissenting footnotes) or buried in obscurantist wording.

The desks treated us as nuisances or with contempt. One interesting consequence—the office became very closely knit as we fought the good fight. The problem countries were French north Africa and Libya where we had Wheelus air force base. Nasser had taken over in Egypt and there was the big issue of the Aswan Dam. Black Africa was much quieter, as the movements for independence moved only slowly ahead.

Late in 1957 I went back to finish the basic training course, and took three months of French. We students fought the system, which was actually very good in teaching language effectively. The problem was the attitude of the staff who were simply unpleasant. Then I was assigned as assistant to the Admin Counselor in Tehran. I was not overjoyed, as I wanted to see if my economics was of any use in the Service. My old boss thought it was a terrible assignment and somehow it got changed—I was detailed to what later became AID and assigned as Assistant Program Officer (Economist) in the mission in Tunis. I got a couple of months working in the Washington headquarters and went.

We had a good sized aid program in Tunisia, on the order of a hundred technicians and many technical assistance projects covering the waterfront of agriculture, industry, banking, handicrafts, public administration, education, etc. There was also a sizeable commercial import program—financing for such imported necessities as petroleum—and food for work and food for sale under PL 480. My job was to provide the economic rationale for a program of that size, though ultimately the justification had to be political.

The latter was relatively easy—the French were fighting the independence movement next door in Algeria and the war came over the border every few days. On one of the first few days we were in the Claridge Hotel (a rundown and misnamed dump, but the best there was) in downtown Tunis, we were kept inside because there was a huge demonstration and parade. The wind blew and the dust swirled and the crowd roared,

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hang De Gaulle, get the French out, etc. It was powerful and frightening. We were under curfew for fear of an incident involving a foreigner. The French management of the hotel was also suspicious of us, perhaps out of fear as much as anything. At night, the Tunisian army put up barricades on the roads and stopped every car, looking at papers and shining lights in the passengers' faces. Scary.

The economic justification was not so simple. The country was poor, but the drain of its military effort and the general upset made rapid growth problematic. It became a holding operation, waiting for the war next door to end so that we could perhaps do some serious development work.

Basically, the war drove events in Tunisia and we had to wait. We got a few programs going, but the Tunisians were very suspicious of the US, not without justification. Moreover, their domestic politics made it difficult to be seen cooperating. I got to know quite a few Tunisian and Algerian professionals. They were understandably bitter about the French, but less than I would have expected. They also expected more of the US than they were going to get. Individually, however, they could not have more cordial.

Tunisia at the time was authoritarian with Bourguiba still running things pretty much out of his hat. Many of the ministers and senior civil servants were competent professionals, but the government was generally not very competent and was focused on domestic control and Algerian political issues. It was frustrating for us who wanted more to happen on our watch than was likely.

We found a house in a suburb called Amilcar on the train line out to the headland and the old Arab village called Sidi Bou Said, a whitewash and blue trim traditional architecture that was considered the most desirable place to live. Amilcar was between Carthage and President Bourguiba's house and we often saw him strolling on the main road with a contingent of assistants and bodyguards. Our house was on a cliff called the Falaise Rouge, for its red soil. We looked across the Bay of Tunis to a peninsula on the other side,

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perhaps 5-10 miles across. It gave one the sense of detachment from the rest of the world, although there were a few houses nearby on the inland side.

There were the ruins of a Roman bath down the hill on one side and the ruins of a Roman cathedral down the hill on the other side. Carthage was a hill of ruins only a ten minute walk away. It was covered with French villas used mainly as summer places — many stood empty at the time because the French found life increasingly difficult and were leaving.

When it rained, the dirt often washed away to reveal Roman coins and bits of glass or ceramics. There was also the remains of a Phoenician port at the bottom of the hill. It seemed tiny, hardly big enough for a rowboat, but perhaps it had shrunk over the years.

We decorated the house in wild colors. The floors were old tile with Arabic designs. Slippery when wet and hard when fallen on (our daughter lost one tooth on them), they forced us to seek a way to liven the place up. We painted the walls in one room bright red and blue. Another was green with white trim. The walls themselves were poorly finished, so the color also distracted from their disrepair.

We had all got the flu while in the hotel and were dreadfully sick. I have never felt so bad —I ached for a week. Then I got hepatitis shortly after moving into the house, which laid me up for a week. I felt bad enough so that I thought I had a relapse of flu, but the identity of my illness became clear when I turned yellow. The illness kept me in bed for a month and sent me to Tripoli twice, to get a medical checkup at the hospital at Wheelus Air Force base. It gave me a chance to see lots more roman ruins.

My first boss in Tunis was a German Jew who was very smart, very demanding, and very prickly. I suppose the relationship was good, but it was never comfortable. He was irate that I tried to learn Arabic, arguing that my French was imperfect enough so that I should concentrate on it. He was the one who taught me about deadlines. He set them, with plenty of room, but then he accepted absolutely no excuses for failing to make them. Not

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hard to understand, but the first time I was late was the last. He was replaced after a year by a much more easy going man and I enjoyed working for him.

I also spent a lot of time working for the Director and two Deputy Directors. As the economist, I had to pass on or provide the justification for many things. It was a strange experience to be that junior and that powerful.

I got to know the staff of the mission (called the US Operations Mission or USOM, the predecessor of AID) quite well. One of my favorites was a soil conservation engineer from Wyoming who was out directing a program to create low bench terraces to prevent erosion. The terraces were built up by making a few passes with a plow running along the contour, a very efficient process. The other secret was to keep the goats and sheep off the land, so that the vegetation survived. With vegetation, the terraces prevented a heavy rain from washing the soil away and creating spectacular mud rivers in the stream beds. Where there were no terraces, we saw some that were miles across and 10-20 feet deep.

He also pushed the construction of small earth dams built with hand tools in washed areas. This was part of a food-for-work program, in which surplus wheat was used to pay laborers for the work — getting something for a make-work program. My colleague in the program office had developed this program. He was a member of the former Paris USOM, as were many of the other Tunis officials. They constituted a separate group within the Mission and were a bit difficult to deal with. He was also a Christian Scientist and a bit sanctimonious.

I was particularly an outsider, because I was State Department, as well as new boy and very young as well. Similarly, the Embassy was standoffish because we were not part of their crew. Still, we did develop friends around the Mission and the Embassy.

Outside of servants and Tunisian employees in the office, we did not have as much contact with Tunisians as one would have liked and expected. This was a discovery that repeated itself in other posts. One simply got wrapped in the routine of the office and that

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meant dealing with other Americans or writing for them. The American foreign aid program had developed its own methods and procedures and they were highly bureaucratic. Some of this was the consequence of sending people out who had very little sense of how economic development takes place. Mission directors were political appointees, and some were blatantly political with nothing else to recommend them. Congress then got into the act and insisted on management controls centralized in Washington that then became a game to get around.

At the time, I thought the system was reasonably good. One created a rationale for the program that was developed for a particular country. Later, however, I would decide that the system got bureaucracy bound. At the time, I got deeply involved in trying to make the system work.

My boss got me involved in this, through his program meetings with the division chiefs, who came seeking money for their proposals for the following year. Each program had its own plan, with activities and a budget. Part of the problem was that the US imposed its own requirements on the foreign country which rarely has the same ideas about what it wants to do and is often unwilling to follow the procedures the US advisors suggest.

The meetings were often fairly tense. Division chiefs were the peers of my boss and the Mission Director or the Deputy was put in the role of mediating or adjudicating. Few of them were anywhere near as bright as my boss nor as articulate and logical. They often felt dreadfully abused. That made it harder for junior officers like me to navigate the perilous waters of such personal relationships.

We got some advantage, however, when working with some of the juniors in the divisions, we learned that things were going on which the division chief didn't know about. One guy we discovered came in in the morning, disappeared all day, returned late in the day, and spent the intervening time in a bar. It was no wonder that little was happening in his project.

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Tunisian society was pretty badly fractured. The departure of the French (and Italians, the other large European group) and then of the Jews took the middle out of the pyramid of skills. The Tunisians would learn in time, but in the interim, there was a hole. Muslim fundamentalism was always there but was growing in this period of uncertainty. Still, the common man was reasonably well treated, and there was little violation of civil rights that was common in so many parts of the world.

All of this had its comic aspects. While I was being treated for hepatitis, my doctor simply up and returned to France without saying anything. One day he made a house call and the next, he was gone. It suggested that the French were feeling a lot more worried than appeared on the surface. And of course, the war in Algeria always raised the possibility that they would be attacked or held hostage.

Many of the Tunisian elite probably felt closer to the French than their Muslim brothers, but it was not politic to say anything. Moreover, their actions had to be guided by how they would be seen by other Muslims. They had to be very careful. Such situations allow for very little tolerance.

I was not sad to leave Tunis, as I was looking forward to something a little more stately. We left at the end of the school year, assigned to Washington for 3 months of something they called mid-career training. Having been in the service only 5 years, that seemed to me to be stretching the point. On the other hand, I took it as a compliment — that I must be doing something right. I later learned that they were having trouble getting enough people to fill the course.

Then we were sent to Curacao. It is a small island, 35 by 5-10 miles, population 150,000, dry and wind blown, covered with divi-divi trees and cactus, and consumed by goats. Its major economic activity was refining oil brought out of Venezuela's Lake Maracaibo. It was also a shipping center, and a tourist center, but with little else. The population was made up of Sephardic Jews who were the businessmen, the Dutch who were government

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employees and many of whom had come from Indonesia because of the warm climate (and the cold in Holland), blacks who spoke papiamentu (a mix of Spanish, English and Dutch with a local inflection that sounded like Portuguese but was unique) speaking “natives,” and British West Indians who were there temporarily since WWII when they were needed to run the refinery.

I was the Consul, under the Consul General and over several “locals” and two Vice Consuls and two administrative officers. The first CG there was a pain. A political appointee, he had worked first in his life for Kellogg (the corn flakes people) and seems never to have learned anything more. We got along but he was terribly sensitive to his and his job's importance.

The office was on a bluff overlooking the city of Willemstad. It had been built by the Dutch out of gratitude to the US for its role in WWII. The CG lived in a house in the same compound, really a very nice residence.

The work was not terribly compelling, but it was fun learning all of the different things that a diplomatic mission did. My primary duty was economic and commercial. But I also filled in for the CG when he was away and covered for everyone else when I had the duty or they were away. I spent hours coding and decoding messages (e.g., long NIACT circulars about nothing requiring our action) and coming in to do crew list visas for ships that were going on to the US. We also had to cover a variety of odd jobs like deaths and the run-of-the-mill tourist or business complaints that walked in the door. I also got to write most of the efficiency reports and push American products and supervise all of the routine economic reporting. We had lots of Navy ship visits which the Curacaons enjoyed, though sometimes picking up the pieces afterwards was bitter sweet—like the time we had to pay for the breakage in the government run call house because the client got nervous at the appearance of the shore patrol, took to the attic and then fell through the ceiling.

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I got to know an incredible number of people. Going downtown was a succession of greeting friends, shaking hands, and gossiping. I certainly got to know more people in Curacao than any other place I was assigned. One aspect of this was that the Consul became a member of the Lions club (the CG was a Rotarian). This established the personal relationships with most of the business community. We also dealt heavily with the government, just to keep track of what was happening. This was duly and fairly completely reported. I remember being inspected there and playing down what we did by way of reporting, only to be warned that we needed to do more reporting because something bad might happen. Back to Washington after our tour, I found that a number of things I had written and was particularly proud of had never been reproduced or distributed. So much for more reporting.

One of my government contacts was the chief of police, a very friendly Dutchman. I would not normally have had much to do with him but he transmitted rolls of film of passports of people coming and going through the Curacao airport—primarily to look for suspicious types. We also had to give him a visa waiver, because he was nominally in charge of the government whorehouse.

We had our crises—we always seemed to serve where they existed. Politics in Venezuela flowed across 40 mile strait to the island. The Curacaons depended on the crude for the refinery and could not afford to guess on who came to power in Caracas. Despite some close calls, they seemed always to get it right. Once a group of Venezuelan opposition people crash landed in Curacao and we had to get them to the US quietly so the Curacaons didn't get cross-ways with the Venezuelans.

Going to sessions of the parliament had a charm of their own. Booze was served on the floor and meetings were long, late, and thirst provoking, so the consumption got pretty high at times. But the Dutch are not angry drunks.

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We were still in Curacao, but nearing the end of the two year assignment. I was in the shower, getting ready to go to work. The phone rang and Marinka answered. The consulate had received my orders to go to Saigon. I was thrilled—exactly why I can't remember, but there was always something exciting about going to a new place.

I knew something about Vietnam, but it turned out to be very little and substantially wrong. For example, memory said ships sailed to Saigon, but the map in my atlas was so small, it didn't show the Saigon River going inland to the city itself and I remained in doubt for some time about the actual situation. That was a precursor to the extensive lack of knowledge all Americans shared about that country.

Going home by ship turned out to have its own excitement—we sailed through the armada formed during the Cuban missile crisis.

Preparation to go to Saigon was cursory. I took a two-week course at the Foreign Service Institute on Asia, which was of some use in offering history and culture of the region, but its specifics are lost in time and must not have been particularly impressive. I certainly got lots of surprises when we finally arrived in Saigon.

We arrived in Saigon at 3 in the morning. As the plane descended, the city lights could be seen far below, dim through a haze, bluish, asleep. As we left the airport, the artillery rumbled occasionally in the distance, like thunder but with no reassuring lightning. My wife asked me what it was. I responded that it was the government forces practicing.

We were met by one of my colleagues from the Embassy and moved to a temporary residence, the house of the Anglican minister, who was on home leave at the time. We were to spend the next several months in that house until my predecessor was finally ready to leave. Getting around a strange city for the first time is always an experience. Saigon where we lived had wide streets, often shaded by rubber trees that were left from the time when the area was a rubber plantation. Our first experience dealing with

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Vietnamese was riding a “quatre chevaux”, the four horsepower Renault which was the standard taxi. They were all a million years—the one we rode in had the floor pan rusted through so that one looked through to the street. The driver was nervous too, that we were four—the law limited passengers to three, so our youngest daughter had to ride sitting on the floor (not over the hole) so that she couldn't be seen. The final indignity was that the driver was uncertain about where the embassy was and spent a good deal of time wandering around—and then overcharged us—which I sensed at the time, but was unable to deal with.

I missed the battle of Ap Bac by several weeks, but had long since left Washington, so I was also unaware of the concerns that it had created there. I had met Paul Kattenburg, the officer-in-charge in the State Department and Mike Forrestal, who operated out of the White House, but their concerns were military and political and I was of low rank and an economist to boot. Nevertheless, the differences in the perceptions of how the war was going were clearly in the open in Washington, even before Ap Bac. That was never to change. To go from Curacao to Saigon was a time warp, such an abrupt change in perspective that it left one numb, disoriented, groping for an opinion of one's own but unable to form one and reduced to silence in the endless debates that flared and died back every day. It was not a rational atmosphere in which to work or make policy.

The issue was always Ngo Dinh Diem and whether he and his government could win. A sub-issue was whether more or less US aid and military participation was needed. Another sub-issue was the policies that Diem's government should adopt.

Americans approached these issues in terms of how they would be regarded politically at home. They thought in terms of bread and butter motives, like land reform, agricultural extension programs, and farm loans or political issues like human rights, the vote, public education, and so on. They were not wrong, but off the mark in the sense that the face-to-face daily conduct of government became a more important determinant of public reaction. At times, we also talked about law and order and meant to end the VC's violations,

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forgetting that worse (or as bad) violations were committed by our side, and probably much more frequently since our side administered a much larger part of the population much of the time.

Underlying these more tactical issues were several strategic assumptions. One was that we were fighting for freedom in the south, a claim we never abandoned, despite the awkwardness of an allied government that rarely exhibited much regard for freedom. Another was that this was a war of aggression, a proxy war like that in Korea, conceived, supplied, funded, and masterminded by the Soviets with the active but controlled cooperation of China. Only more than ten years later were these assumptions to be challenged.

But perhaps more basic was the view that we were defending the US in Vietnam, just as we had done in Korea, against godless communism or the menace of Soviet expansionism. That view was pretty universally accepted in the first half of the sixties, so long as the price paid wasn't too high. When it rose greatly, people began to question whether US interests were sufficient to warrant it. This does not sound very logical, but it depends on how one thinks of our involvement. If the game is analogous to chess, you don't give up queens for pawns, because that puts the king in danger. On the other hand, there is an implicit assumption here that chess is the right analogy—that we are in a game that threatens the king.

The view of Vietnam as fighting communism had one great virtue—it assured relatively wide support from the American public. No one wanted to be identified as favoring the spread of communism, so criticism was muted in the early days. Indeed, most were somewhat unsure and probably thought they should try to check communism and that that was the right policy. But that also ceded control of policy to those with the best anti-communist credentials. Who better than the Pentagon?

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This gave an advantage to the idea that technology was the wave of the future and the way to win. We could not after all win by putting massive forces in the field. The billions in Asia were just too many—thus the prejudice against a land war in Asia. Combined with the idea that technology—American of course—could win, was the notion that in combination with American values and political savvy, we were unbeatable. Thus the notion of a military victory was ever present, implicit but accepted and assumed.

The one person who made real sense to me on this I only met when I returned to Washington in 1965. A retired Army colonel, John Arthur worked in AID's Vietnam Bureau. He argued that militarily we were trying to create local forces that could defend a village long enough for the main force Vietnamese units to come to their aid. Since we hadn't gotten the Vietnamese army to move fast enough, the village forces usually got cold feet about fighting hard—attacked, they folded.

But I was many years in coming to these conclusions. When I arrived in Saigon, the issues I faced were simpler and more mundane. First, I was an economic officer primarily responsible for reporting on my field.

The economic section of the American Embassy in Saigon was housed in the same building as the Agency for International Development (AID) Mission and across town from the Embassy proper where the political section and the ambassador worked. This made good sense but also created considerable tension. The Embassy economic section did not have its reputation at stake in the success of the AID programs. And we were reporting on the results with a good deal of skepticism. This also put the section at odds with the political side of the embassy and with the Ambassador.

This came up fairly quickly in my assignment, when I wrote a report on agriculture. I think it was balanced, in that it noted progress as well as failures. It went all the way for review to the Ambassador, Fritz Nolting, a career man. I assume it did so because it was critical in part and one of those clearing it along the way, possibly in AID, had asked him to look at

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it. I was summoned and while he did not ask me to change anything of real substance, he did ask for some rephrasing to change the tone a bit which I thought was fair enough. And then he made a revealing remark about the fact that he had enemies in Washington who would use anything to get him.

My boss was the Economic Counselor, an interesting character who had begun his foreign service career before WWII in Hanoi and had gone on to Hong Kong in an older, more genteel service where he was given to understand that detachable celluloid collars were the only acceptable dress. He had been political counselor in Taiwan and then Charg# in West Africa, with the understanding that he would be made Ambassador. Instead he decided he didn't like the country and ended up as the senior economic officer in Saigon, a job for which he was poorly fitted.

I hit it off badly with him when I was late returning from a working lunch. He had been questioned, perhaps by the Ambassador, on something about which he knew nothing and felt naked and vulnerable. It was a somewhat emotional scene in which he expressed the thought that I was unreliable and had betrayed him. A frightened boss is not a pleasant sight or easy to live with. I don't think I let him down again and in any case we became quite good friends. He was a man with his own rules. Although nominally the fourth ranking member of the embassy and probably the brightest in it, when he left the office, he was almost unreachable. He turned off the ringer on his telephone which thus became a one-way instrument of communication—he could call out but no one could call in. If he was at home and you were persistent, he might answer the door. He was very witty, when relaxed, for example writing funny captions for old American movie stills that were published in the Foreign Service Journal. He had picked up the stills during his stay in China, apparently in a flea market. He retired within a year of my arrival (and went on to finish his Ph.D. in Chinese and teaching at a university in Iowa till he died) and I became the economic counselor, an appointment well beyond my rank. I suspect that the new

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Ambassador, Henry Cabot Lodge, had more faith in me than in some unknown the service would assign him. But that is ahead of my story.

An embassy is a little community, inward looking and inter-dependent. The first group I had to get to know were my colleagues, first in the economic section, then in the USAID, and finally in the embassy proper, as well as the handful of military with whom I would have regular contact. It would be some time before I made many Vietnamese contacts.

The AID mission was also sharply divided. On the one hand, there were the traditional divisions dealing with agriculture, education, public administration, health, police, and industry. On the other hand, there was the Office of Rural Operations which kept representatives in each of the provinces. They were supposed to make sure that our aid got to the people who needed it and to push local civil servants to do a better job. In part this was a legitimate reaction to the failure of the central government and its ministries to reach out to the public. But having Americans monitor provincial administration failed to deal with the underlying question of motivation and to its cultural and ethical roots. Worse, as time went on and the aid flows increased and programs multiplied, the provreps were simply overwhelmed by the quantity of material that had to be watched. The solution then became to put more Americans in the provinces which created problems of its own—finding good people and supplying them, to take two small examples.

In the meantime the debate over who was winning went on, overriding all the other issues. The debate became more heated with each story about Ngo Dinh Diem's lack of understanding of the political, security, and economic problems of his countrymen. He had become particularly careful, after an attempt was made on his life in the palace bombing in 1962. American pressure on him to do more made him increasingly uncertain about American support, a concern that was ironically to be vindicated in 1963. Early that year, his views were reported to have become unreal, he became increasingly isolated from outsiders. Some of those reports may well have been exaggerated, tools used by

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American rivals in the continuing battle to dominate policy. But as the year played out, events only made it worse.

Spring, 1963 was quiet enough, until May, when Buddhists in Central Vietnam tried to hold a parade. That was anathema to Ngo Dinh Thuc, the Catholic bishop of Hue, who also exercised great though extralegal government power in the area. He called out the army, monks were killed, reportedly crushed by tanks, and the end game began.

The Buddhists did not take this lying down, but after some weeks, began ritual suicides, burning themselves on public streets with gasoline. The press had a field day, as they were given advance warning. I saw one of the first—it was shocking, because so unexpected. In the middle of a street teeming with traffic and people going about their business, an old man in orange robes sits down on crossed legs, someone pours gasoline on him, he lights the gasoline, and all one sees is a little smoke—the flames are almost invisible in the bright sunlight. In a few moments, he pitches forward, dead. But the image burned on and the political impact was devastating.

The counterpoint to the Buddhist struggle was the continuing erosion of the government forces in the countryside. Many people claimed that it was going just fine. These, however, tended to be Saigon types with a stake in reporting good news and the success of their agency's programs. Agency rivalries get into this as well, when they fight for control of a program—e.g., control of the civilian programs in rural areas—and when they fight for access to the highest levels of the US government—the Ambassador—or the Vietnamese, particularly Diem. One way to get access to Diem was to provide him with information no one else would—thus I was told, Rufus Phillips, who ran the rural operations program and was an ex-CIA type, was going off to see Diem with classified cables to show him. The atmosphere was bad and getting worse.

Epitomizing the atmosphere was a telephone call I overheard one day. I was the Embassy duty officer and among other things, answered calls for the Ambassador and listened

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in case action was required. General Harkins was calling Ambassador Nolting to report back on a trip to the countryside in which he said everything was going great. I almost hung up because it was totally at variance with what I was hearing informally from my contacts among the provincial reps. The General used the occasion to blast the press for misrepresenting the situation. Very few in the embassy would have agreed with him, as we began to believe that the only ones telling the truth were the press.

There was a danger in this, however, that we would go too far in our negative view of the situation. The Embassy created a field reporting unit in the political section to cross check what else was coming in. Jim Rosenthal was one of those drafted for this work. I went with him to Binh Long province. From time to time it had been possible to drive there from Saigon, but it was dangerous, so we flew. This was in the days well before the big buildup of American forces and the mountain of equipment. The army supplied its provincial advisory teams with a single flight every few days.

Our flight was memorable. First, as civilians we got on last, and it was not certain there would be room until the last moment. Often, the Embassy people would spend hours waiting, only to be told in the end there was no room. They got on after American military, goods consigned to the advisory teams, and Vietnamese military. Although the Vietnamese were supposed to have their own transportation, it was often not available, and it would have been very difficult working with them, if we refused them space on planes which seemed to have it. Our plane was heavy only on Vietnamese, perhaps twenty in all. The plane, a two engine, high wing cargo plane with a let-down cargo ramp in the rear was already stinking hot when we got on. As we taxied out, dense red dust blew in the rear—the choice was to close the oven or accept the dust. The plane pitched into the air, rocking in the turbulence created by the sun heated rising air columns—the trip started rough and stayed that way. The cargo master, a young sergeant, lit a well-chewed cigar. The Vietnamese, unused to flying, began to low green. I felt that way myself. They carried a small bottle containing a kind of smelling salt, and were sniffing like landed fish. Within minutes, however, one had his helmet off and blew out his stomach. The rest quickly

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followed. The noise, the heat, the smells, the dust, and the motion had done their work. The sergeant had a big smile, but I certainly could not have heard his laugh over the noise of the engines, so I must have imagined it. There was little to laugh at those days.

We bunked with the advisors in a compound in the middle of the provincial capital, a small, dusty, poor town of a few thousand people at most. Our visit became the occasion to travel all over the northern part of the province, even setting foot in Cambodia. The roads were the same red dusty laterite but the area was semi-prosperous by virtue of the rubber plantations, which were everywhere. We were able to go through a processing plant which is relatively simple—the equipment looked very old, but well kept and running.

We rode everywhere with the advisory team commander and the province chief. They were impressive, straight forward about the situation which at the time was better than it had been and better than in most provinces. However, they knew the provincial forces were poorly trained and equipped and would soon face much greater pressure. They were under no illusions about their brief good fortune. And the lesson was also clear—that things had not gone totally sour everywhere, so that one had to be careful in his evaluation. But the very ambiguity made it more difficult to argue that this was an emergency. Instead a report conflicting with most of the others tended to become ammunition in the running bureaucratic war.

I also developed a healthy respect for the men who took this duty. Both the Americans and the Vietnamese were sitting ducks for ambushes and snipers. One rode in jeeps, four to a vehicle, three people riding shotgun. But the prospects of getting through such an attack unscathed were slim.

Back in Saigon, the pot continued to boil. The younger officers in the embassy established an informal network, passing information and informal analysis back and forth. It sometimes had a conspiratorial character, in part because of the rivalries over assessments and policy.

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Events continued to run their own course. Ambassador Nolting took off for a vacation cruise in the Mediterranean. The DCM, Bill Trueheart, like all DCMs had stayed behind the scenes mostly and had relatively little contact with the government. Apparently, he was considered a pushover by Diem and his family, so that they chose that moment to invade a Buddhist pagoda right next door to the AID building, where I also worked.

I used to walk to work—it was only a few blocks. I had to walk by a girls' high school, and it was always pleasant to watch them dressed in their trim white ao-dais with the wide peasant hats. They chattered and then as they got close to an adult, their faces, a mask, they became silent. Only the youngest retained an innocence and curiosity and they could not resist smiling back, often then breaking into giggles.

This morning, I could get no closer than a block where the police turned us back with no explanation. It turned out that two of the monks had escaped over the wall between the two buildings and we had permanent guests. We were unable to get into the building for several days, while the government argued that we turn the monks over to the police. We refused and eventually the government backed down.

In the meantime, public opinion back home had become increasingly mobilized against Diem and the abuses that were taking place. Because Diem was Catholic and had lived in the US, he had built contacts and an awareness in that institution of what was at stake in Vietnam. Moreover, his anti-communist credentials were excellent and he had received sponsorship and support from elements in the US government. These people defended Diem and viewed the attacks on him with alarm, as radical, leftist, and subversive. While most Americans were only weakly committed, the effect of events was to split the hard core of support for the American commitment to Diem. The Administration had to view this as a growing danger, not just to the American effort but to its own ability to win re-election in 1964. In retrospect, its desire for good news was understandable, and its attempts to put what is now called “spin” on bad news ceases to be a mystery.

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Given all of the tensions in this period, it was remarkable that any of the normal work got done. Once, I had to go negotiate a PL 480 rice shipment with the Minister of Economy. The man was as interim appointment, when the old minister resigned or was fired because of antipathy for Diem. I had gotten to know the new man when he was the deputy. Washington had been slow about arranging the shipment of rice and now there were only days to make a decision. The Minister began to go through the details of the agreement. I was fairly blunt—I noted that there were really only two choices, given the time constraint—take what was offered or refuse it, but there was no time to negotiate details, as the rice would go somewhere else instead. He of course accepted. Afterward, I reported to Trueheart how the conversation had gone—he chided me for being so undiplomatic. After many years experience, I suspect he may have been right—Washington was engaging in a power play. There was also such fraud and misappropriation going on in surplus food sales—short and below-grade shipments that were only to become public many years later. But at the time, getting decisions out of either government was not simple.

Nolting returned to Saigon fairly quickly and there was a period in which he tried to restore relations with both Washington and Diem. This was doomed to failure, however, and he left a bitter man by all accounts. The next thing we knew was that Henry Cabot Lodge was named Ambassador and he arrived quickly thereafter.

Lodge came, heralded by rumor and scare story. His reputation for having strong prejudices and dislikes preceded him and was blown up by those who disliked/disagreed with him. My next door neighbor who had worked for him at the UN regaled us with stories about his capricious treatment of underlings (not entirely undeserved as we shall see). He arrived at night and as a I was later told, (I was not there), one of his two special assistants (Fred Flott) came running down the stairway with gun drawn as if they were about to be attacked. Fred was friendly but not very bright; he was shunted out of the main line of access to Lodge by his second special assistant, Mike Dunn, and became “expert” on

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illicit trading with the enemy, a subject that was to engage hundreds of “experts” over the coming, with very little success.

Dunn also became a terror in the Embassy, hard working, blunt spoken, very smart, a hatchet man for the Ambassador. A colonel (and ultimately a brigadier general when he became military aide to VP Spiro Agnew) on loan, he quickly became the man to see if one wanted to influence Lodge but had small chance to get at him and little stomach for facing his ire. He developed access to the informal network of youngsters who were certain that the war was being lost. I steered clear of the whole crew for as long as I could—they had little interest in economics initially—but eventually got to know him quite well and indeed, to become friendly.

In this period, Diem's overthrow was plotted. In conversations with Dunn, I argued that it was pretty clear we couldn't win with Diem. Indeed, it seemed we would be doomed to a slow but steady erosion. He seemed to agree. Or at least he dissimulated his reactions quite well so that I thought he did at the time, and he later confirmed it.

Matters hardened in September when the US began to hold back on AID. The AID people didn't like doing it—stopping meant delaying projects and destroying relationships that had been painfully cultivated—so that I was enlisted to try to identify what measures and shipments could be suspended that would immediately put pressure on the government and to see that it was done. It did not make me very popular, but I suddenly had access in AID mission that had been lacking before. In the long run, the enemies I made then became respectful friends later.

September was also the month Toscan was born. The obstetrician, Dr. Day, was the Minister of Health. I won't try to explain how he could do both. As tensions rose, he was put under house arrest for suspected opposition to Diem. But he had his own clinic—in fact a small hospital where he also lived. We began to have curfews and the question which rose in our minds was what would happen if Marinka went into labor when the curfew on

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in force. Day indicated we should roll the windows down, turn on the interior light, drive slowly, and be prepared to stop if challenged. Labor began before the curfew, so that problem did not arise—but Toscan was born during the night. I had to go home while the curfew was still in force but it was not far, the area was the upper class district, and I had no trouble.

Diem's end came in October. I was home for lunch and we had guests, the Heginbothams—Erland like me, was a foreign service officer who had been detailed to AID and Joanne Hallquist worked in the economic section with me. It was a delicious lunch and then we heard an automatic weapon firing what seemed like right outside our house. Given the generally difficult situation and lots of talk about coups and subsequent firing in the distance and planes flying over, we decided to end lunch but to forget about going to work.

There were a few tense moments subsequently, when the planes were flying over. We found the amah, Chuc, holding Toscan, then only a few weeks old, sitting under the dining room table.

The evening was worse. Matters were clearly not resolved. We watched at various times as tracers bullets rose in the sky and then fell. I was an area warden, which meant that I was the person my neighbors looked to for guidance. In order to get guidance, myself, I had a two way radio which babbled a good bit during the night but gave very little indication of what was happening. At one point around midnight, when firing had become more active, one of the wardens called the embassy and said he could see soldiers across the street. He was obviously scared and asked what he should do. The embassy asked what he meant. Should he move? The embassy calmly responded certainly not. The radios were silent after that. I think that I slept some after that, but then we were waked to hear what would turn out to be the final assault. I lay in bed, but you don't sleep when artillery is firing and for all you know, the next one is going to come your way.

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The next day was quiet and people generally stayed at home. There were crowds in the streets, and they tore down one of Diem's statues but by and large, they were orderly. The story of Diem's murder leaked out over the next several days and left most Americans with a sour taste—one which would grow bitter with time, how much we had no idea at the time. The Vietnamese took it with less emotion—they were, I suspect, relieved that he was gone permanently, so there could be no question of his making a comeback, with all of the recriminations that would have involved.

The flow of Aid was turned on again, and we all tried to get back to winning the war. Political turmoil, however, continued, as various groups began to quarrel over sharing power. The Buddhists felt they were ascendant, while the Catholics, always a minority, were apprehensive, and hunkered down to defend themselves. The military were trying to run the show but had insufficient unity among themselves to bring it off. The Buddhists went after them and never let up. Thus, despite the fact that they increasingly lost credibility with the public, they were effective in eroding public support in the US.

In the country side, the VC continued to make progress—how great we were not to know for some months. But the demoralization of the Diem officials was so great that they waited and did nothing till they could tell whether they would survive and to whom they were obligated for that survival. At the same time, with no cats around, the rats engaged in an orgy of corruption.

I was duty officer on another weekend. I was called in early with the cables that had come in during the night, plus one nominated NIACT, requiring immediate action on receipt, no matter the hour. I went down to the Embassy and was handed the messages through a little window which was our access to the code room. I flipped through the messages—the emergency message said President Kennedy had been killed. I remember feeling utterly devastated and embarrassed myself by cursing in front of the code clerk. As time went on, more messages came in explaining the details. The Ambassador was told and the Vietnamese. We opened a condolence book, and the procession of signers began

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dropping by. It was a sad and ominous moment. I can still remember standing in the ambassador's office, looking at the crowds in the street as dusk fell and feeling so empty.

December came and with it, the first of an interminable series of coups. Nguyen Khanh, an obscure but ambitious and seemingly energetic general took power from the anti-Diem leaders, most importantly, Big Minh, who was their nominal leader but ineffective—the same man who was to surrender to the North Vietnamese in 1975. Initially, Khanh gave a good impression and the American mission, having been unaware that this coup was coming until the last minute and unable to prevent it, even had it had the time to decide on such a matter, settled down to work with him.

My initial contact with this new regime was to be selected as part of a task force which would work closely with the respective Vietnamese to revive the flagging war effort. We rode with Lodge to a first meeting with Khanh—in a new Checker limousine, of which he was quite proud. Nothing really happened in the meeting; we were introduced, some perfunctory speeches in favor of motherhood were made, and we went away. The whole matter sank into oblivion, and we were never told why. I suspect, however, that Khanh became consumed with surviving in that tank of sharks, all of whom were out for his job. He had in fact a very shaky hold on power, despite initial American support. He was rendered largely ineffective within weeks and replaced shortly thereafter.

As time went on, Lodge seemed to sense that things were not going well and he became increasingly testy. On one occasion when I was duty officer, he came storming out of his private office, complaining that every SOB in Washington was trying to tell him how to run his embassy. Handing a sheaf of cables to Mike Dunn, he noted that the marines landing in Central Vietnam were bringing heavy tanks and self propelled artillery ashore with them, against his wishes.

Early in his tour, he had noted that the US military had been very well behaved. He particularly noted how few incidents had occurred involving fights or worse with

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Vietnamese. And then things began to happen, as our numbers increased and more Americans were wandering around with loaded weapons all the time. I think it was then that he really had the sense that he had lost control.

Life went on. The next major event was Lodge's announcement that he was going home. 1964 was an election year, and Goldwater looked as if he were going to be the Republican nominee. Lodge indicated he was going home to try to head Goldwater off. It didn't ring true to us at the time, and it still puzzles me to this day.

The next ambassador was Maxwell Taylor. A spare, unbending, and formal man, he was picked in part because he was considered a tennis playing buddy of the generals and would be able to talk to them convincingly, getting them to work together and be effective.

He was remote from the rest of the Embassy and we seldom saw him. Part of his reputation was as a scholar—he had written *The Uncertain Trumpet* about military strategy and had been very influential with Kennedy during the Cuban missile crisis. But he brought with him a deputy ambassador—who was distinguished in his own right and would become a kind of executive officer or chief of state with great clout. The title was necessary both to put him ahead among the warring agency chieftains and as a distinction intended to attract men of ability who were well beyond being the Deputy Chief of Mission as that is normally thought of.

There also had been considerable disorder in the DCMs we had after Trueheart. The first was David Ness who was very able, I thought pleasant, but with ideas of his own that crossed the Ambassador—and I suspect, Mike Dunn. In any case, he lasted but a moment. That particular history, however, alerted the State Department that it would have to go for clout if its man in Saigon was to survive. Temporarily, Bill Sullivan came, filling the slot until U. Alexis Johnson could arrive, releasing Sullivan to go to Laos as Ambassador.

I got off to a great start with Sullivan. He had a simplistic view of the relationship between politics and economics and seemed to think that poverty had created the war. He thought

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that raising standards of living would win the war. I argued that people were in fact better off economically, because the economy had picked up and because of all the aid the country was receiving. He responded that few made much, if anything, and that unemployment was rampant. I said that even apple selling, during the American depression, brought in some income, that things were better, and that he should not be deceived. I was dismissed.

The new crew came with changes that had a much more direct effect on me, personally. These included a new AID director, Jim Killen, and a new economic counselor, replacing me, by the name of Roy Wehrle who was also an assistant director of the Aid mission. The Embassy's independence on economic matters was lost. I opposed the reorganization as hard as I could. I dealt with Alex Johnson on this and found him emotionless, even grim. I was struck one day in watching a guest leave his office, that he was all smiles until the guest turned away—and then his face became expressionless. In fact, I was guilty of trying to protect my own turf, but felt I had still much to contribute, as I had already done. As it turned out, however, Wehrle was very busy, and I was still very much on my own and continued to run the section.

One of the institutions which had been in existence since I started was the Embassy weekly report, in which we summarized the significant events of the period. I was responsible for the economic contribution which at the time was rarely much. We kept an eye on prices and other significant indicators, but the data were poor and knowing what was going on was proving to be very difficult.

One of my best sources was Alain Felix, the French manager of the Banque de l'Indochine, renamed the Banque Française de l'Asie for obvious reasons. His contacts were good and he liked to talk. Since the Banque was concerned mainly with import and domestic trade finance, he knew quite well what was going on. He was also interested in what he could learn about American policy. He watched the flow of the rice harvest to the city with great interest. The movement of consumer goods like beer was also a good

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indication of what was happening. Finally, there was always concern about the ability to ship gasoline and other petroleum products to the countryside, even when the roads were closed to military traffic.

In late 1964, it began to look as if the rice harvest was good, but would not be coming to Seoul. We did two things. The first was to monitor prices. The second was to argue for rice imports under PL 480.

In retrospect, it is chastening to think that we would take over so much of the normal government activity. In this case, however, my Vietnamese employees told me that the government index was wrong and that it grossly under-measured the rise in rice prices but also in the gold price. I chose to focus on rice because we could import that. (The CIA and corrupt officials took care of the gold import.) I concluded we had no choice but to double check the price index by sending out our Vietnamese to sample prices every week (the government index was produced monthly and it took longer to prepare). It proved relatively easy to do because we covered only a handful of products, all of them the sort that moved quickly with changes in supply. It also proved to track reasonably well with the government index, when they weren't playing games with the numbers. At any rate, because it was timely and presumably from a reliable source, it was used as THE index of prices till the fall of Saigon in 1975.

On the issue of rice, I noted that prices were rising and it didn't matter whether the crop was good or not, people were beginning to hoard, concerned that the supply might disappear. Certainly, there were rumors that the VC were trying to cut the supply. I argued that the US should bring in some PL 480 rice simply as insurance. Wehrle listened to me on this but then ran into stern opposition from the new AID director, Jim Killen. Killen had been a labor union official and been very successful as AID director in Korea. He was known as tough and hard driving, chosen apparently for the same reason as many of the other new brooms.

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Killen took a fundamentalist view—that we had to force the Vietnamese to stand on their own feet and do their part. One couldn't disagree in principle, but this didn't take account of the political uproar and the disorganization in the bureaucracy. I doubt whether he really understood how precarious was the government's hold on survival. At any rate, he wasn't going to listen to me. He did a sensible thing and went into the Delta to find out what was happening. Unfortunately, he listened to the IV Corps commander, a General Khang who had a reputation for being one of the more corrupt in a group distinguished for that. Khang told him that there was no problem on rice.

Killen came back full of assurances that all was well. On the other hand, I could put what I wanted into the weekly report, and that continued to point to price increases and worries about the food supply. The worries in Washington meant in the end that I won the argument. Killen was replaced within a year. I had grown to respect him a good deal more by then, but I think the rice episode had a good deal to do with his departure. (Years later, I was told he got replaced because he couldn't get along with the counter insurgency people.)

I had personnel problems as well at this point. Killen came with an administrative assistant who was widely believed to be his mistress. His wife was a cripple, confined to a wheelchair. Killen married his assistant after his wife died a few years later. The administrative assistant turned out to be his hatchet person. If you wanted to deal with Killen, you had to deal with her. I simply stayed away. Killen had a second assistant, Bill Turpin, a State Department official who had worked with Killen and whom Killen had asked for. Turpin, however, could not compete with the mistress and was pretty much put out of the inner circle. Indeed, he was finally reduced to trying to find something useful to keep himself occupied. We became good friends, but there was a good deal of friction along the way.

Along with the rice crisis came another of the crises over how the war was going. The weekly report became a much larger production. We met, sometimes twice a week and

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hashed over how things were going. The military services had several representatives from their respective intelligence units and the CIA was also well represented. I found the debates fascinating—and was also impressed by the caliber of the people. They did not simply echo the views of their service or agency. In the end, of course, it was disheartening, as we continued to lose ground in the countryside, and matters were eroding in the city as well, as the rivalries for power in the government continued.

Some of the battles over strategy were acted out in this forum as well. This was the first place I encountered the fight over defoliation and free-fire and free-bombing zones. The debate was heavy but I no longer remember which side had the best of it. In any case, the matter was settled by the highest level. I think that once the commanding general said he needed this authority, there was no way to change it. The argument over it, however, never ended.

My own view of this matter was formed in a curious way. While walking on the street, one day, I was approached by a Vietnamese (an unusual event in my experience) and we got into a long conversation about how the war was going. I found him sufficiently fascinating, so that I brought him home and we continued talking. He was shabbily dressed but well educated and very intense. He turned out to be a Dai Viet, one of the leftist democratic political organizations which had been born in the North and Center. He claimed to have fought with the VC and explained their success as political. They would for example, occupy a village, draw French (and now American) fire, and end up alienating the peasants from the government or the French or the Americans. I tried to get people in the Political Section interested in talking to him, but they just thought he was another Vietnamese zealot, peddling his own cure and seeking his own salvation as the American choice.

That was a lesson we never learned, although some in the American military were appalled at the havoc bombing and H & I ("harassment and interdiction") fire could produce. Some, too, saw no gain from defoliation. The leaves that covered the VC also

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covered their men. The whole issue got worse in time, when agent orange was indicted for causing cancer and other illnesses and was used not only for trees, but to kill “VC” rice. The problem of deciding what rice is VC and what ours is difficult to resolve from an airplane. So we drew lines on maps and anything inside the line was VC and fair game.

Paul Harkins, the commanding American general was replaced in 1964 by William Westmoreland. Westy was part of the new broom, presumably a Taylor protégé who worked very hard at wooing the American community, but more importantly the Vietnamese military. The first six months he was there, most weeks he was in his airplane and flying around to check their units and create the personal basis on which human relations are most productive. Sometime later that year he stopped. It was ominous, because it suggested to me that we were going to take the war over from the Vietnamese—that we had given up trying to get them to fight.

Another ominous event was the arrival of a team from the Rand Corporation and a visit from McNamara in which it became clear they were hunting for numerical indicators about whether we were winning or losing—in retrospect, to settle the eternal argument among the various groups in the US government about how we were doing and what was the right strategy. Of course, it didn't work. I remember being particularly suspicious of the Randers who however, were skeptical themselves, though they couldn't necessarily speak out loud about it—their funding was coming from Defense. But the system for gathering the indicators became a creature of the agencies that were trying to prove one argument or another—and was to remain so for the rest of the war.

Of course, one justification for this was to keep public opinion at home quiet enough so that we could sort out what was really happening and what would work. So at the public level, lots of half or less truth was told, while at the internal level, we in Saigon at least pretty well knew what was happening and found ways of conveying a nuanced picture back to Washington. What happened there was really beyond our control.

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In retrospect, the press likes to say that it was the only one reporting the true situation. That was largely true in terms of the public side. But much of what they got was from dissidents in the military or the embassy (though the press almost never credits their embassy sources, at one time to protect them and perhaps later because they were out to get the senior mission people). The military too had been compelled to observe discipline, so that you had to know the young officers very well and they had to trust you before they opened up. But it wasn't true in the embassy itself. The military intelligence people gave factual accounts—and then perhaps argued about the interpretation. That was also true then of the CIA reports, at least those that I got a chance to see. And the young embassy officers, now all over the country, were also reporting, so factual stuff was getting through.

Tet in 1964 made it particularly clear how dangerous things had become. One of the AID (Public Administration) division chiefs, Gus Hertz, took advantage of the supposed truce to go out on his motorcycle and was captured, very close to Saigon. Attempts to get him back were unsuccessful and he eventually was reported to have died in captivity. It was of course, foolish of him, but certainly well-motivated, though perhaps it also spoke to the incredible naivete of many of us.

The year continued with repetitious shifts in power and of personnel, so that little seemed to be accomplished. I remember one day when there was another coup attempt standing on the roof terrace of my house and watching a Vietnamese plane circle round and round—I could clearly see the pilot and wondering what he must be thinking.

One hopeful change was the return of some of the Vietnamese who had been studying abroad. One, the much younger brother of a close friend, came back to work in the central bank, so that I acquired a good source there. However, he brought with him an older Vietnamese who became the Governor of the bank—Japanese educated during World War II but also claiming some training at Harvard, Nguyen Xuan Oanh (who also liked to introduce himself to Americans as Jack Owen) had good contacts in the Embassy. I found

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him oily and he has resurfaced in Saigon as the spokesman for market economics in the Communist regime. I find it hard to believe he was not VC all along.

As the year closed, we had the attack on Pleiku which preceded the escalation of American forces in Vietnam and soon after, the evacuation of American families. My young friend from the Central Bank came to me to warn that as the Americans took over, the Vietnamese would increasingly stop making any effort, particularly in the fighting. It was a truth that few Americans wanted to accept.

My family went to Singapore, hoping that I would be able to leave soon and travel home with them. That was not to happen. I did get a week to visit them and missed the Embassy bombing as a result. The atmosphere changed for the worse again. The soonest I could leave was June.

Vietnam, 1965-69

On my return to Washington, I had home leave and found I was assigned to Civil Aviation negotiations. I remember calling on my boss-to-be. The first and about the only thing he said to me was that I should not expect to get a parking place—existing staff had them all. I was taken aback.

I had a chance to talk to a number of acquaintances in the Department as well, including colleagues from Vietnam. They got my assignment changed and I was detailed to the Far East Bureau of AID, working primarily on Vietnam. Subsequently AID's Vietnam Bureau was created and I moved there, but the duties were much the same, though I lost responsibility for other Asian countries.

The program office where I worked was primarily concerned with budgets and the justification for program elements. In some ways it was a paper pushing operation but the missions got no money for proposals that we couldn't make a convincing case for.

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Over the next four years, I went to Saigon twice a year, spending a month each time, working with the now-joint Embassy-AID economic section. Part of the reason was that it had become increasingly difficult to get people to serve there and so I was used as a temporary replacement. The other reason was the rapid divergence of views between Washington and the mission. Real communication, despite secure phones and all the cable traffic we could wish for, proved impossible, except face to face. Each side was dealing from a different perspective and we had to get a common perspective before we could reach agreement.

The issues were much the same all of the time. I used to argue at my level that we had lost the Vietnamese when we took over the war. The response was that while true, it didn't matter, because the North wouldn't be able to stand up to our firepower and technology. It was an argument I couldn't win.

At the same time, the American buildup in 1965 was necessary to prevent a total collapse. The fine line between that and taking over the war from the Vietnamese seems to have been too difficult for most to see.

Some of this was recognized later with the pacification program and the training camp set up in Vung Tau to motivate the Vietnamese leadership. I visited the camp once and was suitably impressed by the colonel who ran it and by his program, but got the feeling it was done for the Americans and had little support in the Saigon government or would ever reach sufficient scale to affect the outcome. It was just one more of the gimmicks that someone thought would win the war.

Another of those gimmicks was the effort to carry out a land reform. A beginning had been made in the 50s under Wolf Ladejinsky, but had been partial and frequently evaded—it too had probably been done only under enormous American pressure. The VC were said to have completed their own land reform in areas where they had control. A new reform just made holders of VC title concerned about the security of their tender. Probably the best

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we could have done would have been to establish the cadastral survey and registered who was on the land, without trying to adjudicate who should get the land in the end. That or just confirm everyone sitting on the land. As it was, without security land reform meant little or nothing.

But land reform was a religious issue. On one occasion, Secretary of Agriculture Orville Freeman, whose department had found this one of the few programs in which it could play, convened a major meeting on the subject. I expressed some doubts about its effectiveness under the circumstances and got my ears boxed for lack of faith.

Rice was a similar issue. We were bringing in large amounts, to be sure that supplies were sufficient and to generate revenues from its sale to support the army and the government budget. But this, it was argued, counteracted our efforts to increase Vietnamese rice production. We were in fact able to increase rice output using a new variety, developed at the International Rice Research Institute in the Philippines. This also got us involved in fertilizer and insecticide distribution and in the training of farmers. The price incentive was there sufficiently so that a small program soon spread on its own throughout the country. Within a few years, all that was needed was to assure the supply of fertilizer and insecticide. The right variety of seed was saved from year to year and the farmers already knew how it needed to be grown.

Another aspect of this program was the use of small pumps to improve water control. The high yielding rice varieties were bred to have short stems, because high winds don't blow them down. But then, water levels in the paddies have to be kept sufficiently low that the rice can grow. The US had been funding small gasoline motors and Vietnamese artisans had found a design to use them to drive small pumps to get water in or out of the paddy when that was needed. The design quickly spread where water flows would not overwhelm the pumps.

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The rice program worked in part because it did not depend on the government to do much. It also touched many people's lives, so that it was helpful in the war effort. But again there was a problem. We were trying to interdict the flow of rice to the VC while assuring that rice got through to Saigon and the other cities and towns.

The argument was pretty vicious, both in Washington and Saigon. First was the issue of the numbers. The data were all second hand and word of mouth. The problem was not simple—the VC needed very little to survive, so cutting it off was virtually impossible. But this became the justification for dropping defoliants on rice fields and bombs on villages in areas considered to be under VC control. Of course, for purposes of buying rice, areas that were for the most part under government control could be induced with enough money to supply the VC or more likely even someone whose allegiance was not clear. Yet we spent inordinate amounts of time arguing over the facts and what to do about them, assuming that one hypothesis or another was true.

The surefire ideas for winning the war never ceased. One was the proposal for putting together a major development plan for post-war South Vietnam. David Lilienthal, the hero of the Tennessee Valley Authority, had a consulting firm called Development and Resources Inc. and was called in by the White House to create the plan. It was produced over a period of a year and had the monumental dimensions of a TVA. The major features were to develop a system of dykes and canals throughout the Mekong Delta sufficiently extensive to provide water control over virtually all of it. Big pumps would pump water out of and into dyked sections as needed. Canals and dykes were the really costly items, however. AID funded the planning and I got to be one of the contract officers. None of this could be done while the war continued, but the idea was supposed to capture Vietnamese public opinion (more hearts and minds)—actually, it probably was supposed to capture the good opinion of Americans as being a human war, as well as salving the conscience of the Administration.

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Later, for neat ideas, we had Herman Kahn with the notion of building special canals along the borders of the Mekong Delta and patrolling them with high speed patrol boats that would stop infiltration. It was the same sort of quick-fix as using tiny detectors broadcast along the approach lanes to what ever we wanted to protect. Patrol boats along the existing waterways of the Delta had not had much success.

Early in 67 it was clear to us economists that inflation was out of control and that part of the problem was the US effort, with an unlimited checking account to buy on the local market and a mandate to win the war. One day, one of the economists from Systems Analysis in the Defense Department walked in my door. We began discussing our agency problems and out of that grew a friendship. More importantly, we began working together to apply economic analysis to the war effort.

In the beginning, we had only crude figures on what the US was spending for Vietnamese goods and services. Nevertheless, it was clear that the level was highly inflationary. We then had to sell the idea around the government—and because it implied that the US had to cut back on its local spending, that was not a popular idea. Still, the problems procuring locally and the fact that skilled labor was in such short supply that construction was often impossible to finish made the point. I was giving briefings, suggesting that over-committing had resulted in lots of projects being started but not being finished. It would be better to start one airfield and finish it so it could be used than to start two, but not have them finished for several years.

We won our argument and got annual piaster spending budgets established. But it was never completely successful, in an argument against military necessity. Systems Analysis was not highly regarded by the professional soldiers in the Pentagon. It occasionally got amusing—Westmoreland was reported to have asked whether it would help if he (and presumably everyone else) wore unstarched fatigues. He was of course correct in principle, but lacked a sense of proportion.

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One issue leads to another. The Saigon port was bringing in enormous quantities of military and civilian goods. So much that the port became jammed and ships were lying offshore for as much as three months as I remember. The military thought the solution would be to make the port run more efficiently. Solution—get Teddy Gleason, the head of the portworkers in the US to help reorganize how it was run. Gleason was a tough old goat but owed the Democrats and was patriotic. So we got the people he could supply us with. But this failed to account for one of the reasons the port was tied up—some people found it was advantageous to get overtime wages and to be able to steal like crazy. The payoffs were reputed to go very high, but of course we never tracked it down. Moreover, we never got the military (or anyone else) to consider that the best run port in the world has a finite capacity and that we would be better off reducing the amount coming in. It was like the airfield example—parts of road building equipment necessary to do something were on two separate ship—it didn't matter which one got in, if the other didn't.

The port problem was never really solved. Another related problem was the PX. Actually, there were a whole chain of them all over the country. They were full of things that soldiers didn't really need, like hair spray and cosmetics—unless it was for their Vietnamese girlfriends. It was also full of things like TVs or Zippo cigarette lighters that were readily saleable on the local market or sent home by our Korean troops. Korean nationals seemed to be deeply involved in the management of the system so that whenever a new shipment of desirable things came in, Korean troops would be lined up to buy them and send them home. Still another facet of the system was that whole convoys of trucks with new stuff were hijacked on the way to the PX. Even escorts did not prevent trucks from disappearing out of convoys, once we had decided to try to stop the “pilferage.” We also found when we looked into it, that there was no control over the inventory—the stock was what had been delivered less what had been sold through the cash registers. No inventory and no basis on which to estimate how much or what had been stolen.

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As we tried to trace the lines of authority for the PX, we found that no one in the Saigon command had any say—the line went from the PX to Okinawa to Hawaii and then seemed to disappear. We did find that the PX was “run at a profit” which went to a foundation to finance relief for service families in trouble and good works like that—so there was no disposition to look at where the profit was coming from. Indeed, we heard at one point that the Vietnam PX's provided half of the profits, world wide.

The PX's were Army-Air Force at this time. The Navy had its own separate system and had run the Vietnam operation under the command of Captain Archie Kunsey who became known as the “mayor of Saigon.” I met him frequently on the golf course, so he was well plugged into the local scene. He lasted for many years until he was found to be skimming profits—and was eventually court-martialed, giving an opportunity for the Army and Air Force to take over. The Navy was said to have got the original assignment because at the time, it had had no role to play in the fighting, but the ecumenical spirit required that it get a piece of the action.

Because the war was not popular on Capitol Hill, though for a long time it was viewed as unpatriotic to criticize, we often got shot at for what seemed trivial reasons. Indeed, there always seemed to be some AID scandal like the battery additive. AID financed the stuff in small quantities. It proved to be totally worthless to do what it claimed—add years to the life of a car battery. The gimmick was to sell it for many times what it was worth and then the American supplier would kick back some of the dollars AID had paid it to the buyer in Saigon who was using this method to get money out of the country illegally—he would not have been allowed to convert his piasters at the Central Bank. Given the vast amounts of money involved, it was a constant battle to try to stop the corruption and games.

Another stick used to beat AID was the amount of imports we were financing from Korea. This particularly involved things like zinc coated iron sheet that was widely used for roofing

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or fabricated into useful things. Senator Birch Bayh was a particular thorn, driven by steel companies at home that would have benefited from the sales.

I was rarely directly involved, but did prepare testimony. It is unbelievably time consuming, gathering the material, preparing drafts, and then dry-running the stuff with the actual witness, usually AID's Assistant Administrator for Vietnam. I had to admire the coolness and patience they exhibited through all of this, first Rud Poats, the Asia man and then Jim Grant, the Vietnam man (when Vietnam got a separate Administrator).

On the one occasion I did have to go up—to testify with others before John Dingell—I found that he was not interested in our answers but in getting his questions on the record and demanding a whole lot of additional material in writing which he could print in the Congressional Record. Not an edifying experience.

The Rand team that had come to Saigon earlier, first in Saigon itself and later in the White House, working for Robert Komer who had returned from running CORDS (Civil operations and rural development) to roost in the White House, along with W.W. Rostow and Bill Leonhart. I found the Rand people easy to work with (Charles Cooper, Dick Moorstine, and Hans Heymann—Charles Zwick had gone to Florida to be a banker) but Komer was a bull in the china shop. On one occasion I had to bring the AID man who ran the agriculture program to see Komer. My existence was never acknowledged—Komer neither looked at me nor spoke to me. Komer's modus operandi seemed to be to try to light fires under people by being totally unpleasant.

The relationship with the White House was always uneasy. I remember once getting a call from Komer who asked if I had talked to a reporter about some minor problem. I said I had. He asked what I had said. I told him. He said why. I told him because it was true. Without another word, he hung up.

CORDs remained a problem throughout the war. Bill Colby went out with great fan fare—he was going to turn the war around. He talked to the Washington AID people, full of

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optimism, but the most impressive thing in my memory was his broken leg, suffered in a skiing fall. Somehow prophetic. I suppose that he went with the Phoenix program in mind—the symbolism of the burned bird rising from its ashes was simply too much for the PR types who by then were desperate to find a way to blunt the growing anti-war movement.

The hamlet evaluation system was, in retrospect, another one of the efforts to make the war palatable. Theory—progress in the war could be measured. Fact—each report showed the war up and the war down, but putting a direction or trend to the points either failed or seemed to be slowly sinking. That it was a complex measurement system should not be doubted—but that men whose promotions and reputations depended on success should be the objective reporters was asking too much of human nature.

Another aspect of the AID problem was the annual appropriation. Everybody in the mission came in with funding requests. The totals were in the billions. It became unacceptable to try to cut the requests—they were essential to winning the war. Everything was justified if it helped to that end. But it flew in the face of economics—that resources are always limited and that the attempt to spend too much money would end up in management getting overstretched.

Two solitary heroes out of this period. Douglas Pike, a scholar and Vietnamese speaker who studied how the VC and the NVA worked, came up with the only explanation of their success. Their documents showed that while they may have joined initially for patriotic and class reasons, they stayed out of intense loyalty to their 3 man cells. That seemed to me the best explanation of the difference between their Vietnamese and ours.

The other hero was Gerald Hickey, an anthropologist lacking a Ph.D. which made him academically unacceptable but who had done pathbreaking work among the montagnards, the tribesmen who had been in Vietnam first but had been driven out of the coastal areas and into the mountains where they eked out a primitive though satisfactory life. They were

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constantly harassed by the Vietnamese whose increase was driving many of them out of the coastal areas for lack of land.

Despite the many trips I made to Vietnam, I missed Tet, 1968. I had been planning to go, but a new employee had never been and wanted to go, so I sent him. He arrived a day or two after, on one of the last civilian in for some days. Nobody met him at the airport and when he called the embassy, they were shocked that he was there. They told to get back on the plane and go home—but the plane had gone and no more were scheduled. He spent a couple of disconsolate days before he could get out again.

I went in May. The devastation was immense. Multistory buildings, particularly in Cholon, had been bombed and rocketed into piles of rubble. The account of the attack on the embassy building has been written up those present, particularly Allen Wendt who was in the economic section and had the misfortune to be the duty officer that night. Another one of the econ officers had decided to wander around and see what had happened the next day and got caught in an aid building under construction which was held by the VC—he was wounded and hiding in the building for a couple days before they cleaned the VC out but was lucky to survive. One had to be slightly crazy to go to Vietnam at that point.

This was also the time when Saigon came under rocket attacks at night. I was staying with a friend in downtown Saigon which became the area most frequently hit. They started coming in before light in the morning. You got up very quickly and found a place in a closet under a staircase where you would most likely survive. Hits were scored two houses down and around a park across the street. They did damage, they killed a few really unlucky who happened to be in the way, but they were demoralizing. As one of my colleagues said when he left the office at night, “well, back to the bull's eye.”

Another feature of this time adding to the sense that the war was closing in were the flare ships at night, dropping little suns almost all night long and lighting up the area. It was like the 4th of July but lasted 12 hours or so at a time. Another was to finally get to sleep,

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only to be waked later in the night as the bed shivered from B-54's carpet bombing 20 or 30 miles away—you couldn't hear the bombs, but you could feel the earth and the house shaking.

Tet shook the official American community as nothing else. Don MacDonald, the AID Mission Director, was very quiet and steady, but he had been knocked off his feet by the concussion of a bomb the night of Tet. His injuries were from the fall, but the real damage was psychological. The American mission as he described it to a meeting of officials in Washington, could only be described as panicked and demoralized. It wasn't supposed to have happened, and how could it have if we were winning. Saigon got really jumpy. Everybody kept automatic rifles and grenades in their houses, just in case. I remember one night sitting quietly reading. It was after curfew and the city was silent. Then I heard a motor bike purring down the street—a shot rang out, the motor bike, no longer bearing a load and presumably on its side, briefly roared and then all was silent again.

Our biggest problem after Tet was the hoard of refugees who were “generated.” AID was expected to feed and house them and ultimately to resettle them. It was an impossible task because we lacked sufficient land that was secure from attack, particularly in the central provinces. It was a problem we hadn't solved by 1975 when the South collapsed.

One of the people I met in Saigon along the way was John Parker Robinson, the Deputy AID Mission Director. We first encountered each other in the late 60s at a cocktail party and got into a frightful argument, ending in a shouting match. Everyone was tired and up tight—and Saigon had little use for us Washington types. The next day he called me and apologized. We became friends and worked closely together. The next think I knew, he asked me to be his Deputy when he took over the AID Mission in Santo Domingo. I was thrilled, though I wasn't sure the Department would let me go.

It turned out there was another problem. Nixon was president, the job was political, and I was questionable. Somehow, that was surmounted, though I don't quite know how—

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unless Robbie and others strongly insisted. After a few months of Spanish at Berlitz, off we went.

The Dominican Republic had had a rough passage. Getting rid of Trujillo was difficult. Juan Bosch, the successor, was overthrown in a military coup that ultimately put Balaguer back in office. There had been a lot of fighting and the US had sent in the marines to save the resident Americans. The country was deathly poor, overpopulated, undereducated, and a major source of legal and illegal immigration to the US. The country had stabilized, but growth was slow to non-existent. And the elite were rich and intent to hold on to their positions.

The AID mission was under pressure because lots of money had been committed but had yet to be disbursed. That was unacceptable when one went up to the Hill to ask for new appropriations.

The technical assistance side of the program had also grown like topsy. Part of this was designed to track capital projects and to spend the local currency (pesos) generated from balance of payments support, including commercial imports and PL 480 foodstuffs brought in and sold on the local market. The capital projects had pipelines of funds that had built up for years. Because the projects on which funds had actually been spent were often defective, we had another set of problems; the reaction in the mission to date was to get more and more restrictive in supervising the projects.

But the real test of the program was whether the economy was growing or not, and if not, why. It was pretty clear that the peso was overvalued (set at parity with the dollar since 1932, despite rampant inflation at times), savings and investment were inadequate, and exports were not growing because of the overvalued exchange rate.

Frank Meloy was the ambassador and he needed to be persuaded, before we even got a crack at the Dominicans. He was somewhat austere initially but became really very

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cooperative and helpful as time went on. We became close friends, so that it was a real personal loss when he was murdered in Beirut.

The persuasion process began by getting a Rand economist by the name of Bob Slighton to come down and put together a study of the economy and its problems. This had the effect of establishing an objective outside evaluation and also ultimately to provide us with an academically respectable document to back us up. It took more than a year to bring this off and get the ambassador on board. Then we began meetings with the Dominicans, with the ultimate of getting a briefing for President Balaguer. When finally scheduled, it was to last for an hour—it actually went on for three. The ambassador attended as well. We thought we had made a major impression. Balaguer was to get back to us with his staff about what ought to be done. The meetings with his staff dragged on over the months, but nothing happened and nothing changed. We had been had.

The overvalued exchange rate was the major initial target. The World Bank people were helpful but the Dominicans hid behind the IMF which argued privately to us that it could not recommend changes unless the Dominicans asked for their advice. Of course, the Dominicans never brought it up. Instead they argued everything was just fine. All they wanted was a clean bill of health from the IMF. They didn't quite get it—they were always in arrears on paying for current account expenditures, sometimes by many months.

For us, it meant stalemate on our major objective. We did tighten up on capital and technical assistance projects. The pipeline ceased to grow and may actually have been reduced. We cut the number of people by a substantial amount. And we talked to any Dominican who would listen about what we thought needed to be done. There were problems with this approach—we had to be careful not to appear critical of the Balaguer government, but we also tried to build support among the public and even his opposition. On an individual basis, we made considerable progress, but even Balaguer loyalists were afraid to approach him on this subject.

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We eventually recommended that the AID program in the DR be phased down and out. The Ambassador approved. It didn't happen. Washington inertia and the Cold War—nearby Cuba was always seen as a threat.

It is an interesting problem of leadership in an organization to keep people gung-ho and committed at the same time one is dismantling some of their favorite projects. We did not succeed in all cases, which meant that we had to replace some of the most difficult cases. Robbie was really smooth at it and at identifying good replacements with whom he could work well.

There were plenty of problem examples. The DR has a climate somewhere that will grow almost anything. So we had projects for everything. Some, like cacao, were not making much progress and even if they were, would change few lives. Others were conceived too narrowly—a major land development project considered only reclaiming the land and putting in canals. Storage, transport, and a fair price for the crop seemed to have been forgotten early on. Getting them added late in the day proved almost impossible.

Old projects that had gone sour were also a pain. A big American invested export tomato operation went bad when the tomatoes wouldn't grow on the land they had picked. We closed it down, amid screams. A big banana plantation on the north shore also went bad. It was covered by US government guarantees but we managed to close out the American investor without much loss because it had failed to meet its contractual obligations. This all meant living with lawyers and finding ways to persuade the Dominican government that closing them was in their interest. By deeding the land to the government, which then announced big plans that we knew would never be carried out, we brought it off. The lesson from this, however, was that projects conceived in haste, as these were right after the anti-Bosch coup, are not likely to be worth much. They pleased Washington at the time, but were since forgotten.

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The DR has great beaches and mountains and a climate that ranges from desert-like to tropical rain forest. There are mountains and flatlands and a complex history, with lots of interesting people. It was nice too, to be able to take the ambassador out on some of these trips, though he was frequently reluctant to get too far away from his responsibilities.

One facet of our travel lives was the danger from the violent opposition. The air attach# had been kidnapped while horseback riding early one morning right in the city and held for ransom for some weeks and after we left, the USIS director was similarly seized and held.

I had a habit of walking to work or riding my bicycle there every day. It wasn't far. I was told after about six months that I was a target and that I could no longer go anywhere without a bodyguard. It was ludicrous to see a fat bodyguard in his trunks with a pistol jammed in the waistband at the beach. But I hoped it might intimidate whoever was after me. The down side: my teen-age daughters found their presence unpleasant—they objected to being ogled.

The real issue in the DR was political change. Dominican society has its elite plus the murderous Trujillo past which to many cried out for justice or revenge from those who had been its victims. We in the AID mission got into a real fight with the embassy over American interests in the DR. We were the liberal activists and the political section of the Embassy was the conservative down-rock-the-boat types. The issue came up several times.

On one occasion we got to redraft a section on the US strategy in the DR. The first draft from the political section basically said everything was okay and the US didn't have much interest in change. That was not my or Robbie's view and we spent the next several weeks writing drafts about what the US interest was. We fed these to the Ambassador who seemed to be happy with them—in fact our draft became the one everyone was working off. That is, until the DCM, Frank Devine and the Political Counselor, Jim Haahr, realized that they had been aced out and rebelled. Both Devine and the Ambassador were kind

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men and realized how destructive it would be to his staff; we switch back to the political section draft. We managed to get a few changes in it, but that was all. On the other hand, in the great scheme of things in the DR, the exercise changed nothing. The paper sank like a stone in Washington, as did most of these exercises.

On another occasion, the ambassador was to make a speech with substantial potential political impact. We got our licks in but then the ambassador got cold feet. He didn't want it to be "too strong" or capable of being misinterpreted. He really squirmed, I think he was torn between what he really wanted to do and what he thought wouldn't create too many waves—as well as healthy skepticism about how difference it would make either way. The country's subsequent up and down history bears that out—revolutions, which some of us essential, only come with generation changes and when a government is repressive as was the Dominican, it may take more than one generation to move the tectonic plates of society.

The elite were the old families, particularly from Santiago, the military, some businessmen, the bureaucrats many of whom were incompetent but held office because they were loyal, and the holdovers from Trujillo times. The military and the police were particularly difficult. We continued an advisory effort with both of them, but it was not very successful. A tough Marine colonel ran the military and AID the police side. But changing a culture in which the police and the military were little gods, with guns, is not quick work. Everywhere we went in the country, the military and the police were watching—we gringos were rightfully regarded with suspicion. In one example, we had a program to replace worn out handguns with new ones. The deal was that we would give one new one for each old one turned in. I personally picked up several hundred, put them in a motor boat and dumped them in a thousand feet of seawater. We were observed and it took a half-day to clear the matter up.

My tour drew to a close and I was assigned to senior training at the Stanford Business School. I was not particularly pleased because I thought with a Ph.D. I didn't need more academic training. Instead I had hoped to go to the National War College. However, on the

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training preference report, I had listed Stanford as my third choice. Apparently nobody else wanted it, so I got it. It turned out to be an exciting year, the best school experience I can remember.

We arrived in Palo Alto in late August of 1972 and quickly got involved. The class in the Sloan program consisted of 42, all men then, one third each from US government (NASA, Air Force, etc.), private American business, and private foreign business (Europe, Hong Kong, and Japan). The Department can no longer afford Stanford which is too bad. Computers were taken seriously at Stanford and because the Department didn't yet get it, I hoped to learn enough to bring about some changes—it took another five years and the department has never caught up with the technology, partly because of security concerns and partly money. Economics and statistics, interestingly, turned out to be fascinating, because it was almost 20 years since Berkeley, the discipline had changed, and the teaching was first-class—I finally understood things that I thought I had learned long before. The strict business courses varied in interest but subjects like organizational behavior and business strategy had relevance in any organization. The one disappointment was “doing business abroad.”

We were at Stanford that spring when I got the call. Robby was going back to Saigon as the AID Director, as he had thought he might when we had talked in the Dominican Republic (or maybe later, by phone in Palo Alto?). He wondered if I would be interested in going as his deputy. I was. The orders came a month later, including assurances that my wife and son could come and he would have a place in the fourth grade at the Phoenix School (for foreigners, mostly Americans, named for having risen from the ashes of the evacuation of dependents in 1965).

We traveled separately. I no longer remember the flight. But I do remember arriving and getting off the plane, only to go directly to a meeting with Minister of Finance. They were about to announce the imposition of a VAT (value added tax)—a sales tax levied at all levels at which goods and services changed hands for money. But the tax was only on

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the value added, since the tax paid at prior levels was deductible. Ultimately it was a sales tax which was relatively difficult to evade. The Vietnamese government's dire need for money explained its imposition. In a sense, it was a good sign that it was being adopted—the government was acting more responsibly. But it was also a source of great public opposition, particularly from the middle class and professionals who saw that they would bear much of the burden. Their ability to sabotage the tax was demonstrated and although the tax was imposed, the Minister of Finance was soon replaced. He was a real loss. Although he was young and perhaps naive about the VAT, he was very able otherwise and really dedicated to doing a good job.

Other than renewing Vietnamese acquaintances or meeting the people in the oversized American mission, the immediate issue was to understand and get control of the AID program. It consisted of hundreds of Americans and thousands of Vietnamese, scattered around the country, spending hundreds of millions of dollars in scores of programs. We were constantly subject to charges of waste and mismanagement and of failing to take care of the wounded, the refugees, the orphans, the uneducated, the hungry and malnourished, etc. Both Robby and I shared the view that there was plenty to improve in the Mission, but we also had to be careful about how quickly we moved, as every program had its constituents, often powerfully connected through Congress. If it still survived at that late date, it was someone's pet.

The trick was to identify broad objectives—raising food output, resettling refugees, providing medical care, improving tax collections, etc—and then translate them into quantitative goals, identify a strategy, and make it concrete in a program with people and money. Once that was done, everything else could be thrown out as irrelevant and, more importantly, distracting. I cannot say that we succeeded completely, but we did make some progress against great resistance and resentment. In retrospect, however, the attempt was beside the point. The war itself picked up and problems with refugees and other rural programs swamped the other efforts.

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Perhaps it was naive to expect anything else. On the other hand, not to take the truce approximately at face value would have been to give up without trying. So we tried, hoping to succeed but not expecting to. Still, losing hurt just as much.

Another matter was setting clear guidelines on what was to be done and by when, an injection of management by objective that had never been applied before. It was stoutly resisted and we just kept hammering away. It was done during weekly staff meetings and was humiliating for some of the people who had never really been held to a performance standard. They tended to think of themselves as heroes for having come to Vietnam in the first place—and in a sense they were right. But there were a lot of people for poor reasons—the money was good and there were lots of women for the unmarried or for those who were no longer happy with their mates.

The AID divisions competed for resources among themselves as well. Many projects had immense funds in the pipeline and those had to be cut back. But it was very hard to persuade people that they were never going to spend that money and they fought on.

Another aspect to the problem was that the field operations were in the charge of others. Each of the four regions and of the provinces had its own bureaucracy of AID and military officials who reported to the Special Assistant to the Ambassador, George Jacobson, known as Jake. Thus they had their own direct line to the Ambassador or to other protectors or sponsors. Still, we made steady progress even against that line-up, in large measure because Robby succeeded in winning the confidence of Ambassador Graham Martin.

Still, we were up against declining AID levels. One of my projects in 1974 was to come with a rationale for five more years of AID, a specific level, and a strategy for making the country self-sufficient in that period. The hope was that it would prove attractive to Congress—a last effort to head off those who wanted to get out of Vietnam as soon as possible. It was a good idea that might have worked a year earlier. The Hill sent staffers

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out to examine the concept, but we just got laughed at—the skepticism was thick. The support was even weak in the Executive Branch.

The decline in AID levels was not so important in and of itself as was the signal that US support was waning. This made everyone more cautious, not willing to take chances or use resources for fear they would be used up and not be replaced. There was an incredible amount of stuff, both military and civilian, in the country. When we had finally decided on Vietnamization, we had been very generous. Much of it ended up going to waste—even down to the ammunition which was saved against a final assault but then ended up being captured by the other side.

We came under attack from anti-war critics very quickly. The charge was led by a new group of journalists, eager to follow-up on the successes of an earlier generation and with eyes on a possible Pulitzer Prize—e.g., David Shipler of the New York Times. They were followed by the Congressional critics—Bella Abzug, Don Fraser, and Ted Kennedy stand out in memory. In their eyes the US government could do no right, but get out. Major objections were to the human rights record of the government—free elections, corruption, imprisonment and torture of captured VC or political opponents. But even the friendlies from Congress—e.g., Millicent Fenwick—made it clear that support for us in the US was only from a minority and it wouldn't be easy to turn around.

The critics had a good deal of evidence on their side. Torture and corruption are impossible to defend. Indifference to hunger, sickness, war injuries, or poverty is wrong. The question was what we could do about them. Here, again, the Americans were driven to doing it for the Vietnamese or see it not done. We did it to the best of our abilities. It wasn't enough.

Each group of visitors could find plenty of examples of wrongs. New refugees were “generated” by military action and tended to swamp the ability of a provincial government to feed and house them, much less provide them with health care and schooling. There

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was considerable reason to believe that the VC deliberately initiated military action to increase the number of refugees because it added to the burden carried by the government, which was then less able to take military action itself. It was probably only an unintentional side effect, that it cost the US support at home. The effect was compounded by the Vietnamese military who adopted some of the bad habits of the Americans—h & i artillery fire directed blindly into inhabited areas did hit civilians.

Even our own AID officials in many cases believed that the Mission as a whole did not devote enough money and manpower to their fields. Criticism from inside was particularly effective because it seemed so authoritative, either to the press or to Congressional investigators. Complaints also came from political opponents of the regime.

Ambassador Martin was in his element in dealing with these critics. He insisted that no negative press item go unchallenged, if there were a sound basis for it. Washington, on other hand, seemed too frequently to wish the whole business would go away. They were tired of the war and of fighting for public support—or so it seemed to us in Saigon.

One of Martin's tactics when Washington failed in his eyes to respond appropriately, was to write his own response, counting on one or another party to leak it in Washington. (Someone always did, from the right or the left—we found we could count on Kennedy's prot#g#s in the Department to do it if the Kissinger types wouldn't—and it had the same effect, getting people angry or making them laugh, as the case might be.) I got involved in drafting a number of these replies, to set the record straight. In retrospect, the tactic didn't work because almost no one's views were changed—but it did buck up our spirits in Saigon. Everyone enjoyed reading the latest epistle according to Saint Martin. In the beginning, he himself did the final drafts, adding a bit of venom here and a needle there, a soupcon of super-patriotism to contrast with that of our critics or a morsel of invective or a posset of faint praise. Once we got the hang of it, however, it became entertaining to see who could write the nastiest piece—we got so good at it, that Martin began to send them back with little or no change—much to an author's satisfaction.

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On further thought, of course, this must appear childish—in a class with schoolboy tricks on the teacher. I will not try to defend it, except to say that we often felt alone and powerless, and it was really astonishing how these restored our willingness to struggle on.

It is also necessary to admit that we often personalized our sense of rage. Among the reporters, the one who was most frequently the object of our scorn was the New York Times correspondent, David Shipler. He had an uncanny ability to get under Martin's skin. But he was easy to score off, as he was so strongly committed to the anti-Embassy-and-anti-government view, that he was sloppy on his facts and tendentious in his writing. I myself never met Shipler—I treasured him as an enemy and if I had known him, I might have grown to like him. It was much better to preserve him as the embodiment of evil.

Projection on to individuals also became convenient in dealing with Congressional visitors. Bella Abzug used to come regularly. It certainly wasn't for the shopping. She arrived with her lap-dog husband who trooped along, a little colorless man, almost invisible next to fat, gravel-voiced Bella (that is a misnomer) with her big floppy hats and her aggressive manners. She was always well-informed, able to tap opponents of the regime and gather more material for her criticism of our efforts. Again, she became the personification of what we opposed.

Martin always went out of his way to entertain and joust with her. He used to lard out compliments and explanations, wrapping himself in the flag and in virtue, frequently referring to his preacher-father. It was a bravura performance, like that of a bull fighter, stepping around the bull with great style, while Bella lumbered on, charging and missing and charging again. But in the end she won, because we lost—and even as the pantomime went, there was a sadness to it, because we knew we had little support at home.

What motivated Bella? I have no idea, other than the fact that she believed what she said—and because it appealed to her constituents. She stayed in the headlines, and it was

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long after Saigon fell before she was defeated, despite the fact that she was frequently charged with being a communist. Perhaps her district changed and no longer wanted someone like her.

One of the most interesting features of my job was that I was on the Mission Council, which met weekly, almost always with Martin presiding and the chiefs of the major mission agencies present and reporting on their activities. It gave us a chance to hear what was happening around the country in everybody's jurisdiction. Martin did not let people off with nothing to report—but several managed to get round him by reporting twaddle. Most interesting were the often bleak military assessments, given either by the Station Chief, Tom Polgar or his military intelligence specialist, Frank Snapp. They often contrasted with the MAAG assessments, which in my experience are almost always optimistic, full of operational detail about what the members of the MAAG are doing and justifying their salaries, expenses, and manning-levels. Their assessments were also somewhat guarded because Martin would spring on any expression of faint-heartedness. This was understandable, as the situation was likely to produce excessive pessimism, if anything. One could always find plenty of reasons for things going bad. But that was not useful for encouraging maximum effort from the worker bees. However, the CIA people saw Martin often enough so that he got no surprises in the Council meeting and they could be frank.

At the same time, Martin could be brutal. In my first or second meeting, he went after John Murray, the head of the Advisory Group. Murray was small, wiry, certainly able logistician, who had done (or not done) something that displeased Martin—I've long since forgotten what. But I do remember getting increasingly angry for what I thought was totally unwarranted bullying—and if he were really troubled about Murray's performance, he would have been wise to take it up privately instead of in front of the whole mission council. I suppose he thought it inspired respect—when it evoked nothing but dislike or worse. I came close to getting up and leaving the room, it bothered me so.

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My other personal responsibility was to oversee the economic reporting. We tried always to be factual and balanced. The fact was that the situation was not very good, inflation continued to be a problem, and the government was not terribly effective in dealing with it. On the other hand, production increased where there was security. Rice yields were growing in areas with the new rice strains and access to fertilizer and insecticide and small pumps for water control. The Vietnamese were pretty inventive in developing activities and products that responded to market incentives. Two examples. Tin plate misprint (the stock for cans on which the printing was faulty) was widely available. The Vietnamese made all kinds of things from toys to luggage out of it. They also developed low lift water pumps from sheet metal and a small gasoline motor. The sheet metal was made into a pipe, into which a propeller and shaft were inserted that was driven by the motor at the top end. Not elegant and not very efficient, but cheap and serviceable.

There were some aspects to the job that were fun. The fact that AIR AMERICA was AID-funded meant that we had access to planes and helicopters virtually on demand. I frequently had to make trips to inspect how programs were going and also to give the sense to field that we were concerned and following up. Were supplies getting through? Were the government representatives cooperating? I was able to take my wife and whatever youngster was at home on a lot of these. There was danger in such trips—people still shot at our planes, but the pilots were skilled and had good intelligence about what areas to avoid and were careful, both of enemy action and bad weather, of which there also was a lot.

On one occasion, my wife flew to Hue with Yvette Lehmann, the wife of the DCM. Our 11 year old son went on that trip. We have a picture of him at the controls, looking back at the camera rather than where he was going. Such perks gave the assignment aspects which were rare in a career. One's family felt very much a part of what was going on.

We also flew with the Economic Minister, Pham Kim Ngoc, an English trained Ph.D. economist on several different occasions, once to a beach up the coast, another time

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to tea plantations in the Highlands, or visited him at his house in Vung Tau. He took the whole diplomatic corps that was not afraid to fly in Vietnamese planes or the VC in the areas we were going to.

Ngoc was to be one of our closest friends there and after the evacuation at the end of the war. He lost his job as Minister, went into real estate development, and then started an agricultural bank which opened just two months before the end—he had not given up and did what he could.

As the war deteriorated, new Vietnamese were brought into high economic office, many of them American trained but with their own ideas and supposedly acceptable to us. None of it helped much, because the lower levels of government had insufficient incentive or ability. It was a government where individuals could function but the whole did not. It lacked connections all the way to the end that delivered services, particularly in the countryside.

There were also changes on the American side. Martin brought in a new economic counselor, Danny Ellerman, who after a few weeks asked what he was supposed to do. The action was in the AID mission as was most of the reporting while he was put in the Embassy proper, almost out of touch. This was near the end, and he must have wondered why he had ever been so foolish as to accept the assignment.

A new head of USIS, Allen Carter, was also brought out during the last year. At his first mission council meeting, he alienated everyone with the chip on his shoulder about how poorly the USIS was being treated and how we were mishandling the press. He never seemed to recover and the cloud hung over his head right through the last day, when he was unable to get his employees out on the last helicopters—they were left sitting in a compound, somehow forgotten. Carter lacked the personal connections that he could have called on for help. I will never understand why he came, given his attitude.

As time went on, I made more and more field trips, trying to assess what was happening in the provinces and checking on how our programs were doing. In fact they were closing

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down, as day-to-day security deteriorated. One knew that “they” were out there and one couldn't go anywhere outside of a town without a company of soldiers.

These trips often gave us material to use with the government. In 1974 we began meeting with some of the staff in the Prime Minister's office every week at which both sides brought up problems. It took some time to establish mutual confidence, but it did seem to move matters along. The most important thing was to keep our requests down to a few. That way we could expect and usually got appropriate actions. Our ultimate goals in this were several. Most clearly, we wanted to help the government function better and to stay that way—in the past improvements unless nurtured, regressed. There was the matter of confidence in the future among the government people as well; it had not been high, but seemed to be improved by the closer cooperation.

Although things were not going well, we had not had any time off or out of the country since arriving. In February, my wife, my son, and I decided to go to Indonesia for a week. As in the past it was wonderful to get out from under, even for such a short time. The one impression I came away with—Singapore had transformed itself in ten years. A low rise city had become a city of skyscrapers and the city bustled with energy. I knew the country had done well, but this was a revelation in how well a country might do—pushing the feasibility. The contrast with Vietnam was both sobering in the relative failure and inspiring in the sense of what was possible.

The end in Vietnam was a slow cascade. The fall of the province capital in Long Khanh province, north of Saigon on the Cambodian border, and the subsequent abandonment of the entire province was the tip of that iceberg. The NVA had rolled in with tanks and the wire guided anti-tank weapons we had provided the Vietnamese were not enough. But it might have been retaken, though at some cost.

Everyone was of course aware that the Congress had voted to pull the plug and that Nixon was in trouble over Watergate. We could expect no help from the White House.

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The next loss was Ban Me Thuot. This seemed to panic the government. The president Nguyen Van Thieu, decided to pull his troops out of the central Vietnam provinces, but it was a botched decision. The embassy only learned of it from a meeting Robby and I had had with the senior economic official, a deputy prime minister in the government—who passed it on almost as an afterthought. We took it in without comment and immediately conveyed it to the Embassy. Martin was furious—and the sad tale was to get worse.

The actual pullout was a nightmare, fully reported elsewhere. But it was a personal nightmare as well. I had to coordinate with the military who were bringing in ships to evacuate people from the CVN ports. First we had to get ships—civilian ships on charter to the Navy or operated by the Navy. We also had to arrange to get food and water by helicopter to the people on the roads fleeing from the inland cities to the ports. We bombed them with it, as the helicopters dared not land. Many of them, of course, got caught on the road and were shot up or captured.

Each day was a round of meetings and frustration. We had to get the Vietnamese government people to do what they could, which was little—they had no more control of their bureaucracies than we had, and perhaps less, because we had people in the provinces who responded to direction.

At first they were landing people at Vung Tau and the refugees headed for Saigon. That frightened the government and we were told they had to be taken elsewhere—like Phu Quoc, an island of the southern tip, famous for its nuoc mam or fish sauce. There had been a military camp there but it had been abandoned. I had flown into the airfield, but it was a bad dream—the runway ran across the prevailing wind and was lined with planes that gone out of control and crashed. Facilities had been allowed to decay, so there was no housing and no water. We started flying it in.

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The first ship that arrived there was pulling a barge with refugees on it. Some of them were soldiers and armed—they refused to get off and insisted on going to Saigon. We had to let them stew in the sun till they got more desperate.

Other ships were taken over by deserting and frightened soldiers who were robbing the unarmed passengers as well as trying to control where they went. There were stories that they were raping women as well. Then there was the story of World Airways.

Daly, the president of the airline, a military charter operation, had flown in personally at one point, ostensibly to fly orphans back to the US. He was not allowed to do so, but managed to scarf up a bunch one night and took off with them. His next outrageous act was to fly a plane up to Da Nang, to pick up refugees. He was told he had no clearance to take off but went anyway. On landing, his plane was overrun with refugees and deserting soldiers. Daly almost got left behind himself, but it was just as well he escaped, as we would have had to go get him. This was the famous flight in which a man got caught in the wheel well so they were unable to retract the landing gear and had to fly low with wheels down all the way. One or more of the people who had climbed into the wheel wells also were unable to hold on and fell to their deaths. Daly, who was said to be usually drunk, undoubtedly thought he was acting altruistically, and his posturing was popular in the press, so he had to be handled with kid gloves.

The toll on our people was considerable. Some just picked up and left without a word to anybody. We were constantly telling our staff that they could leave if they wanted. Some we were sending out because they could no longer function as advisors. Many of the latter fought leaving, arguing they were essential when of course they couldn't do a thing. One never knew what compelled people to come to Saigon—service, personal ambition, getting away from a difficult family situation.

One of my subordinates, a close friend, began calling me to ask what he could do to help. I gave him assignments outside his normal duties, mostly with respect to refugees. They

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didn't get done right and so I gave him less to do. Then he began calling me at all hours of the night, pleading for something to do—we realized then that he had been pushed beyond his capacity to cope and gone off the deep end. We gave him the alternative of a strait jacket or sedation—he took the latter—and we shipped him out. That was the end of our friendship—he felt betrayed. I saw him years later—I was not sure he fully recovered and there may have been deeper roots to his breakdown and Saigon only precipitated it.

The next blow for me was the Ambassador's decision to send Robby home and put me in as acting Mission director. I never understood that. Robby retired as a result. Robby took it very hard, though I felt he was also relieved in some way. Seeing him off at the airport was not a joyful experience. I never saw him again and talked to him only once on the phone—he was less than friendly.

In addition to our travail with refugees, we now were called on to get tugs and barges up the Mekong to Phnom Penh to feed that city. Each day, Cliff Frink, our logistics man, would go try to hire tugs and crews and arrange insurance. He also had to find rice to send them—increasingly difficult as the war closed in on Saigon. Prices went up each day and we were never certain we would get either rice or barges. Late at night, Frink would return home and call me with an account of the day's problems. The VC were shooting from the shore so we shielded the tugs with barges full of trash on each side. For each cure they found a new mode of attack. We got closed out when they put mines in the river. Frink was pretty disheartened at that point, as we all were. Phnom Penh fell shortly thereafter and we briefly got their American refugees along with our others.

One day toward the end I was called and told that we would have a C-5 flying out with orphans. AID had the contacts with the orphanages, so we had to round them up. In addition, it was decided that unessential adults should accompany them. The plane took off in the late afternoon. Within a short time, we learned that the plane had had mechanical problems, had experienced decompression of the rear cabin door which had damaged the rudder controls, had attempted to return to the airport, but had crashed short of the

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field. No word on deaths, injuries, or escapes for hours. My wife went out to the field to help. The people on the lower deck had taken all the casualties, as it hit the ground first; people on the upper deck were uninjured. Hours later my wife came home with a young man whose fianc# had been killed—we fed him, got him drunk enough to sleep and put him up for the night. The flight was a publicity stunt, meant to counter criticism coming out of Daly, but it backfired in a cruel way. That man's ghost carries a lot of baggage.

Saigon soon came under a regime of curfews that sent people home at dusk. The silence of the city at night was ominous. The activity in the city at first light in the morning was more so—it was like an anthill that had been kicked—the ants came swarming out and into the streets in an aimless but frantic burst of activity, searching and searching again, for what could not be observed but was ceaseless.

We began then a more systematic draw-down of people, selecting who were essential and forcing the others to go. I was given personnel ceilings each day and made the decisions with the senior AID staff, based on what we thought we could do. Those selected to leave were often heart-broken. Because the sense of catastrophic danger was rising and those who were left often moved in with others in the same boat with no formal notification, I decided that I needed to be able to get hold of everyone quickly and established a telephone tree through which everyone had to report each night. It gave me a better sense of how people were faring, as well as a means of communication.

We began also to get our Vietnamese out as well. We scheduled flights and seats just like an airline. I would get so many each day. We generally arranged to pick them up in buses from private houses which served as collecting points. They would slip in at odd times during the day with their families and the few belongings they were allowed, in order not to attract the attention of the Saigon authorities. Again the criterion of essentiality was applied and some who had to stay got left behind and did not get out for years if ever.

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Sometimes it was heartbreaking. A woman in my office said she wanted to leave. Then she asked to withdraw her request—it turned out her husband had left without telling her and she was left to take care of his crippled sister. Life can not have been easy for them in the new Vietnam.

Another case was an ex-Vietnamese minister, a close friend. One of my colleagues who also knew him well picked him up on the street and took him out to the airfield, but left him on the civilian side, assuming he would have no trouble getting to the American military side. He didn't make it—he was recognized, picked up, interrogated all night, released, and appeared on my doorstep the next morning. He had come all apart—pale and shaking and incoherent. I called the Embassy and got him picked up and taken care of—but I also got a call from the Ambassador telling me I wasn't controlling my subordinates adequately—it was one of those calls where he told me what he thought and hung up. I didn't blame him, but this was terra incognita for all of us.

It was a poor time to develop a tooth ache—but I did. My dentist said it couldn't be filled—it needed a root canal. Fortunately she knew just the man, American trained and all. He took me right away and I was to come back in a week for the completion. A week later I arrived at his office, a store front. It looked deserted. It was. His next door neighbor said he had left the country the day before. Fortunately, the temporary filling held.

The next ominous event was the closing of the PX. One day it was there and the next, it was closed and they were shipping the stock out by plane. It was a moment when one truly had the feeling that things were coming to an end and that it was close.

Our son came home from school the penultimate Monday and said he wanted to go back to the US. The school wasn't closing but he felt more comfortable leaving. On Wednesday, most of the kids announced they were leaving and the school closed the next day. Our son had already left—it took him three days to get to San Francisco, as it had blown its tires and burned out the wheel brakes in Guam and had to lay over another night for

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other repairs in Honolulu. We of course did not hear this until much later, but the first my parents knew he was in the US was when his plane was met by President Ford and he was shown on TV, marching down the stairway. He had a difficult time—a colleague who was supposed to be keeping an eye on him simply failed.

That Friday, I got a call from the DCM, Wolf Lehmann and asked to come see him in his office across town. I did. He asked if I knew why I was there. I said I guessed I did, that he was telling me that my wife had to leave as soon as possible. He said right. Just then the Ambassador walked in and asked me what I was doing there. I told him and he asked me if I wanted her to go or not. I said no, he said she didn't have to, and turned around and walked out of the room. Lehmann was fit to be tied. I wondered what I had done, but was still thankful to have her with me, as I knew she wanted to stay.

We also took the last mail out to the military post office at the airport. It was deserted, but there were packages and bufes (ceramic elephants, for which Vietnam was renowned—the acronym stands for bloody ugly f—ing elephant, but they are really very nice) lined up along the wall outside the service window. I also learned that there was a ship leaving the next day and I could put anything I wanted on it—we threw a few things together, but did not expect it would make it. Instead, we had been given to understand that we would be staying indefinitely and kept most of our things in order to survive what might be a long period with little outside contact—things like my record collection.

This was also the day that I learned that there was a DC-4 available for charter and AID chartered it to get more people out. They were scheduled to leave on Sunday. We assigned people to fill the plane and I went out to the airport to see them off. Twenty or so didn't show and the plane was no longer full. I ran into four Filipino employees who just happened to be there looking for a way out and put them on board. I found an American AID employee who had come back to get family members out and told him to get on the plane—he agreed but then absconded when I wasn't looking.

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Being at the airport and near the golf course, I decided to pay it a last visit and perhaps play a quick round. It was deserted, the building closed and dark, no one around. But water was running on a sprinkler at the first tee and I decided to play. Fortunately a greens keeper appeared from nowhere and pressed me to let him caddy. It was a lucky move—he warned me that several of the holes had been mined, as the VC had crossed the course during Tet in 1968 to attack the general staff headquarters. Given the circumstances, three holes were enough and I tipped the greens keeper generously. I suppose I was the last one to play there.

That Monday, we kept working on the draw-down. I was feeling feverish in the late afternoon, had nothing more to do, and so went home. About five bombs or artillery could be heard at no great distance and small arms fire started almost everywhere. My first thought was that this was the general uprising the communists had always talked about. Instead it was the North Vietnamese who had captured several South Vietnamese planes and used them to bomb the airport. I had a drink. Then I began worrying about where my wife was.

She also got involved in the evacuation, working as a volunteer in the consulate. Mixed marriage couples had gone to the States or elsewhere and left children with grandparents. They now wanted them shipped out. The consulate had to find them, get endless paper work done, and then arrange for their air travel—which became increasingly difficult when the airlines stopped flying.

I heard from her several frantic hours later. She had been at the airport, dropping off three young children with someone she dragooned into being responsible for on the flight. She was driving back to the Embassy but was still within a few blocks of the airport when the bombs started falling. All she could see was a plume of black smoke and had to pray that her kids and the plane were all right. The panic shooting in the city impressed her enough so that she stopped at the first house of an American and took shelter there till we could tell what was happening. Once she felt safe, she came home. I went to bed with my fever,

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only to be called by Jake in the Embassy and told there would be a meeting at midnight to discuss the draw-down for the next day. I said I was sick in bed and would it be all right if I didn't come. He said yes. Then I thought better of it and called the Ambassador who said he wasn't going to be there and I didn't have to go—and then proceeded to spend about an hour discussing the day's events. He was smoking as usual and coughed as if he were ill—a precursor of the pneumonia that he was diagnosed several days later.

Feeling charged up and less sick, I went to the meeting. It was a two hour wrangle over whose Vietnamese evacuees would get priority and it got very bitter, particularly from the CIA station. As it turned out, their unhappiness was justified, because many of their people who were in great danger were left.

I got home, went to bed, and the artillery and rockets opened up. The rounds seemed to be landing all around us, but not close. My wife couldn't sit still and got up but I decided to remain comfortably in bed, better to die there than wandering around. There was no more sleep that night and at 5:30 I was called and told to come to the embassy with my wife. By 6 we were there. I wandered into the ambassador's office, thinking that was where the meeting would be, only to overhear him saying, "Now Henry, you can't do that." He was on the phone to Kissinger, arguing about the evacuation.

When we did meet, we were told to accelerate the draw-down. I went through my list and got on the phone, telling people to go. It was fortunate I had my telephone tree, or I would not have been able to get in touch so rapidly or reliably. We were taking them out through the military side of the airport but for the most part, initially they had to get there on their own.

The pressure was building. We learned during the morning that the attack on the city had included the airfield. The military had a gymnasium at the airfield, and it was full of people who would be evacuated at first light in the morning. It had been hit by a single rocket, shattering the roof, but unbelievably, hurting no one. Two marines who were guarding the

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gym were not so lucky—they were standing outside their bunker and took a direct rocket—the only American deaths in the evacuation.

Martin was told that most of the Air America helicopters we were planning to use if evacuation to ships was necessary, had been damaged and that the airport had been cratered so that fixed wing planes couldn't get in. Later in the morning, he decided to go to the airport to see for himself. The airport was unusable and I think it was then that he decided to further accelerate the draw-down. He brought his wife back to the embassy and she, my wife, and a few others were on their way to the fleet of evacuation ships before noon. Moment of panic when the ambassador returned—the gate was opened to let his limousine in and the crowd surrounding the embassy made a rush to get in—people came flying from everywhere and only got it barely closed, as they pushed out while the others pushed in. It was not opened again that day.

I went to work getting more of my people out. When not doing that, I sat in the office of the political counselor, Joe Bennett (no relative) sorting his files for shredding. We tried at one point to take people to Newport, a military port up from the main Saigon port where there was an American ship about to leave. We couldn't get through—part of the roadway was under small arms fire.

Periodically during the day we met to compare notes and get the latest word. The Embassy was next to the French embassy and there was a gate between them—it had been open during the morning and was the easy way after our gate was closed, to get outside. The French closed their side in the late morning.

Odd people turned up—a young diplomat from the Japanese Embassy, who came to consult on evacuation of their people, was caught inside and went out early on one of the helicopters. The Minister of Labor and head of the trade union confederation, a long time friend, was flown out in a state of hysteria or perhaps a stroke—had he been captured, he was unlikely to have survived.

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And then things just stopped. Upstairs, we could hear the communications people sledgehammering the coding machines. We kept working on the files. Outside the street was alive with people and there was a din of noise, despite the fact that there was supposed to be a curfew. In one meeting, I sat down and realized how tired I was—the room went black, my ears buzzed, and I passed out—but I don't think anybody realized it and I was okay again before the meeting wound up. If one listened, outside he could hear occasional small arms fire—single shots and even a grenade once. From inside it was hard to imagine.

At that meeting we were told that everyone was going and that the helicopters from the ships were first empty those held at the airport and then start on the embassy. We had hundreds at the embassy, many lined up and waiting at the swimming pool—PX compound next to the embassy. I went over to see who of my people were there at one point and to try to cheer them up—not easy, but they were okay. In the early afternoon, another symbolic gesture occurred—the enormous flamboyant tree in the parking lot was cut down, so helicopters could land there.

That led to the first of the snafus. The helicopters didn't come and we sat for hours, waiting. Communications were poor and someone did not get the word that the full pull was to occur.

Anyone still outside the embassy was to go to the airport. We had four buses. I got a call from the chief bus driver—an AID division chief who had among other things been in charge of setting up the evacuation centers where people were to gather. He told me one of the assigned bus drivers hadn't shown—would I authorize another division chief to drive. I asked if he had ever driven a bus—answer, no. Was he willing to try—answer, yes. I said okay.

The bus convoy was to take the press corps out, among others. They got to the airport and the first bus got through the gate. The second followed and took a round through the

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drivers window, so the three remaining buses turned back and began circling through the city while the embassy tried to find a way to bribe the gate guards. No luck.

My neophyte driver got caught at one point in a cul-de-sac. Up to then, he had done all right, but backing up was beyond his abilities—he bulled his way clear, taking out cars parked on both sides.

Eventually, we tried to get the bus passengers out through the Saigon port, but the crowd there made it dangerous to unload the passengers—just opening the bus door for a second and a stream of panicked Vietnamese tried to get on. Eventually, they all went back to the embassy and had to be lifted over the wall.

It was dark when the choppers finally began to come into the embassy. Because there was so little light and the pilots feared small arms fire, we had to use smaller choppers than originally planned and take off from the roof of the embassy. Fortunately there was little wind, because the pad was small and there was little room for error up there.

The pace picked up in the early evening and the flow was regular. We discovered we still had people outside who had been waiting to be picked up. We found a van and picked up 20 people at various places, including the Vietnamese who was still running the phone system—we had put him off for hours, arguing that we had to have the phones.

Later still, I had got up from Joe Bennett's desk and wandered into the old switchboard room. No one was on duty. The board lights seemed all to be blinking on and off, suggesting that the whole world was frantically calling. I picked up the instrument and someone was on it—he turned out to be a Vietnamese AID employee, who had been waiting all day to be picked at one of the AID buildings. I told him to hold—not to hang up, because I couldn't get back to him—then I called one of the other people controlling security at the embassy on another phone. He said if they got to the Embassy, we could

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pull them over the wall, but the question was how to identify them. I suggested they use the front cover of the embassy phone book. It worked—they were ten minutes later.

About 8 in the evening, I was told I was no longer needed and should go. I walked up the stairs to the roof. Almost nothing was happening. There was the marine contingent, commanded by a lieutenant who was stamping back and forth and cursing that everybody was downstairs drinking cocktails and no one was coming to go out. He was right—someone had broken out the booze and no one was there. I went back down and started pushing people up the stairs. It seemed that no one was telling anyone what to do, and they were milling around waiting to be told. The line got so long, I ended up having to wait till midnight to get out myself.

It was an eerie sight, flying out. We could see tracers arcing across the ground and in a couple of places, it looked like ammunition dumps were burning and blowing up, a fourth of July celebration.

The marines had taken away guns from anyone getting on the choppers—and some had them—and they also made them leave Selectric typewriters and other choice odds and ends that had been liberated. On the ship where I landed, a helicopter carrier, we checked in and they took away anything else that had been government property—like mobile phones. I had a calculator, a clean shirt, and my toilet kit in a briefcase—I guess I had anticipated what would happen, though not very wisely.

They put me in an upper bunk of one of the deck officers, a young lieutenant. It was right under the deck and all night long the choppers would bang down with a frightening whang, so I got little sleep. The next morning I ate breakfast with some of the other evacuees, but we were a pretty disheartened bunch. The USIS chief, Alan Carter, was complaining that almost all of his Vietnamese employees had been left behind—no one had come to pick them up. I wondered where he had been and what he had been doing. It should have been his top priority, getting his people out.

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We waited for several days while more choppers and small boats loaded with people came out to sea and rescue. It was a sad sight to see a chopper full of refugees get unloaded and pushed over the side as the carrier had no room for more than its own complement. The captain, an ex-chopper pilot took advantage of this to take a spin in one before it was disposed of—made his day.

Days later I found out what ship my wife was on, boarded a chopper that made the rounds of all the ships in the fleet, and joined her. We were very fortunate that the captain was sleeping in his bridge quarters, and he gave us the use of his formal cabin, which actually had a double bed.

We hung around waiting for several days more. There was a freighter next to us, loaded with Vietnamese refugees all of the deck. The ship was in ballast and so high that much of its rudder protruded from the water. One day we noticed a naked woman standing on the flat top of the rudder, but no one did anything about her. The next day she was gone.

Some of the American evacuees on board were very angry. Frank Snepp was seething, though he would say little about what, so I was not surprised by his book. One of the wives was distraught at not having heard from her husband—attempts to comfort her, no matter from whom, were rebuffed. We were not a happy ship.

We landed at Subic and flew up to Manila where the AID mission was very helpful. The next day I went back to the island at Subic where the Vietnamese refugees were being held to cheer them up and check on conditions. They seemed surprisingly good, under the circumstances.

Marcos would not let American evacuees stay longer than 3 days, so we had to plan our trip out almost immediately. We were lucky to manage a trip home via Tehran, Constantinople, Athens, Rome, Vienna, Amsterdam, and Madrid—a day and a half in each as a reward for Saigon, and as decompression.

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I got a call while in Manila telling me I was assigned to Seoul. I said not to bother me. I would discuss it when I got back to Washington. While in Tehran, I was at a dinner party with the Governor of the Central bank, I got another telephone call from the department—how they found me is a tribute to the Shah's secret police, as I had not told the department my plans, was staying at a hotel I had found at 3 in the morning, having wandered from one to another, and certainly would not have know of my dinner plans (I had steered clear of Embassy/Tehran).

When I got back to Washington, I sought a job as DCM somewhere. Friends in the LA bureau put me in touch with the ambassador to Jamaica who agreed to put in for me. Instead, Habib called me and told me I was going to Seoul. I said I wasn't and left his office. Later I got a call from the Director of Personnel who said it would be Seoul or Geneva but not Jamaica. I gave up and took Seoul.

I was also invited to lunch with AID's Assistant Administrator for Vietnam, Arthur Gardiner Jr. It was first set up for the executive dining and then changed to the cafeteria. It lasted for 20 minutes and I paid for my own lunch. He couldn't get over the fact that we had not got our accounting and other records out. I think I responded that I thought we had been lucky to get our people out. It was a cold meeting.

In thinking back over Saigon's fall, a whole lot of issues arise. Nixon's Watergate obviously caught us as well. It certainly might have ended differently had he not been so wounded politically, because he could have brought air power to bear and our Vietnamese might not have been so demoralized.

I discovered that the Embassy and Martin in particular was strongly criticized for its conduct of the evacuation. Neither Kissinger nor Assistant Secretary Phil Habib had any great love for Martin. They believed that we should have taken far more people out earlier than we did. Perhaps. But they weren't in Saigon and had no sense of how fragile control of the city was. I always believed we would have gotten fewer people out, had we started

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earlier and order broke down. Even if it hadn't broken down, the difference would have been in who got out, not how many.

I also think that Martin, as tough and nasty as he could be, kept everyone soldiering on in an effort widely thought of as hopeless. It was a remarkable performance, never acknowledged—in fact, somewhere I have a memo from Phil Habib saying that no one in the Embassy was going to get any recognition because they didn't want Martin to get it. Some years later, we turned that around, so that the lower level AID people did get recognition—I wrote a lot of the recommendations.

The tragedy of Vietnam was in some large measure America's fault. We were always divided—should we get in farther or pull out created a constant tension over policy and was responsible for many of the imbecilities that occurred—because they responded to one side or the other in the policy argument. Had we been more unified in our understanding of the goals and strategy, we might have done better or gotten out earlier at less cost. But limited war will always be difficult for the US, because we ask people to go in harm's way but with no commitment to win and thus weak justification for death.

I am personally persuaded we could have won with a clearer goal and strategy. Trying everything produced confusion, lack of focus, conflict among technocrats and managers, and above all a mixed message to our Vietnamese colleagues. To win, we had to get better performance from them. We did, but not good enough soon enough. In the end it had to be classed as a management failure. I put much of the blame on Washington which tried to micromanage and which used very simplistic thinking to make its decisions, domestic politics aside. For example, letting the Secretary of Agriculture make agricultural policy in Vietnam, designed to help win a war, was bizarre.

Did we spook the Vietnamese by our cutting off AID at the end? It didn't help. On the other hand, consider that we had made a major effort for ten years. You can't keep betting on a losing horse for ever.

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I do not agree that management was misled by faulty information. There was plenty of truth around—it was just misunderstood or misinterpreted.

The 1972 truce can be viewed as a sellout. But it was the best bet to recover something that we could have made. We could not have kept our troops there any longer. Absent Watergate, it might have worked out.

Of course, now we get to see whether we lost the war but will finally win the peace, as the new Vietnam begins to change itself economically and probably politically, following the Asian model. Having China come alive helps, because the Vietnamese have traditionally feared their Northern neighbor.

Guatemala

By 1977, I was becoming itchy about staying in Korea. I had lost my chance for the DCM's job when Sneider decided to replace Dick Ericson with Tom Stern—the two traded jobs, and Ericson went back to become the number two in Political/Military Affairs. Sneider explained that I was doing such important work so well that he couldn't afford to replace me. The Department seemed to think nothing was likely to open up elsewhere that would be very interesting. It looked as if I was trapped in Korea and confronted poor career prospects.

When my wife went back in May of 1977 to look after her mother who had become ill, she also talked to friends in the Department, including Tony Lake. He apparently took an interest, and I got assigned to Guatemala as DCM. I was delighted.

When I arrived in Guatemala, it was already known that I would be Charg# for some period of time. That was gratifying, though it cost me the DCM job in Bangkok, where I had been requested by the new ambassador, Mort Abramowitz. That would have been an even

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greater job. Unfortunately, the Guatemala assignment was already in concrete — it was too late to get another person there in time, and he would have to be Charg#.

I arrived in the midst of a general strike over a rise in bus fares. They had risen from 5 to 10 centavos (less than a US cent), after years of being held constant. But this was a poor country and so the cost was significant for the multitude who depended on public transport.

The strike had been developing for some time. The government had asked the US to sell it tear gas and that required State Department approval. Consideration bogged down in a fight between the country desk and the Human Rights Bureau which thought quite rightly that Guatemala's record in this area was dismal.

But the government was running out of tear gas and was getting frantic. After a few days, I realized that this looked like turning into a disaster. Lacking tear gas, the police and the military would use rifles and bullets to maintain order. It was a case where the new arrival could see the likely outcome easier than those on the scene — probably because I had most recently talked to the people in Washington and had the best sense of what was bothering them and how they thought.

The talks I had had before hand were not very informative. Neither the country desk nor the human rights people had brought up the impending strike or the request for tear gas. They were interested in the overall situation but not the immediate crisis that was building. The human rights guys were more interested in Korea than Guatemala and on that I had a good deal to say — mainly to the effect that it was often bad, but people weren't being killed (there were rare exceptions). Indeed, overall, Korea was constantly improving life for its people.

And the tear gas business did turn out badly. Approval of the tear gas was delayed, the police did use rifles, and people were killed — I no longer remember how many. It had done no good to send a message suggesting that this was likely to happen. This incident

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was the first direct experience I had of the system totally ignoring what was supposedly the best advice that their people in the field could give them. There would be more.

Guatemala had come highly recommended as a tourist attraction. That was to prove to be the case. I began traveling as often as possible, going out into the countryside. My wife and son joined me when they arrived. The country had spectacular weather in the highlands — cool year round, with a dry and a rainy season. Both the Caribbean and the Pacific were within a few hours driving distance, so that it was possible to warm up and to swim or fish. The volcanoes were near by, they could be climbed, and some were active. Mayan ruins and artifacts from earlier periods (e.g. Olmec) were everywhere. Indians continued to live in what I conjecture was a Mayan form, modified by centuries of Spanish influence — their Catholicism was certainly heavily overlaid with pagan belief and forms. There were the relics of the Spanish era, particularly in Antigua which has a picturesque quality despite the ruin wrought by repeated earthquakes.

The piece de resistance was the Peten — the section of the Yucatan Peninsula which Guatemala had not lost to Mexico or Belize. We made several trips there, two by air and one by car that was a bit of a nightmare for a time.

The embassy had vehicles, I got one full-time with a driver, and I had to take at least one bodyguard for most of the things I needed to do. The car trip to the Peten was our first there. There had been torrential rains for a time and bridges were out in many cases. The road itself was unsurfaced, nearly washed out in many places, and no gas has come through on trucks for several days, so the stations were unreliable. We went anyway. It took two days, one day almost to the Caribbean coast where we stayed overnight. And then another to the ruins at Tikal. At one point, we stopped off at an army post and were able to beg five gallons of gas — which was just enough to get us through. No one would say yes or no, but kept referring us to someone else down the chain of command. Finally, a private who was actually in charge of the pump, decided how much we were to get. And then didn't accept any money — though we gave him some cigarettes.

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Tikal itself was something to see. A city of temples in the middle of the jungle, with the whole works — strange animals, monkeys swinging through the trees, a heat and humidity hard to describe. Facilities were primitive with a capital P. The cabins where tourists stayed were the crumbling facilities that had been used by the archeologists who opened the site years earlier, the beds of rusting iron, the linen stained from years of washing in muddy water and the walls, moldering. The food wasn't much either. Showers delivered a trickle of questionable water. We worried about drinking the water, but in that heat, one had to keep his consumption up. In any case, we all had borderline diarrhea.

On a second trip, we visited another site, Yaxa. My wife drove up with people from the Canadian Embassy and I flew. It had not previously been open. They had cut a road in, indeed they were still doing so as we arrived. We stopped where they were working. The man supervising the crew cutting trees was an American — he was called Butterfly Bob because he collected them in vast quantities. This was his idea of a vacation. He showed us the skins of the snakes — big and poisonous — he had killed in the course of that day. He later presented us with a glass lamp base with dried butterflies collected there inside it.

Nicholas Helmuth was the leader of the expedition. An archeologist, he lectured and raised money in a campaign against the illegal traffic in artifacts that was endemic to the region, as well as developing new sites.

He had not been the first in this area. The raiders had beaten him and had known exactly where to dig — for example, at the foot of memorial stones (stellae) and into the huge piles of stone that constitute the temple buildings. The stellae, covered with glyphs describing the site and when and by whom it was built, often were badly damaged or destroyed in the process.

We found Mayan graffiti scratched into the soft surface of the stone (more like clay) that had been used to build their structures. We climbed to the top of one temple, entered a chamber that had a view across the top of the jungle, and there were what appeared to be

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crude sailboats scratched into the wall. It made us wonder if they had had sailboats back then, sometime between BC or up till 1500 AD as it was thought. There were small lakes around, more like ponds, and they hardly seemed navigable for any purpose.

But all of this lay in the future. I had first to meet the hundreds of people who worked or were important to the Embassy. At one end there was Juan Maegli, a classmate at Harvard who I had not in fact met till one of our class reunions. At the other end, would be the Foreign Minister, Ramon Castillo Valdez.

In the Embassy, I had to pay attention to the political counselor, Arnie Isaacs, and the economic officer, Gene Schreiber. The Admin officer had also to be a concern — he wanted hand-holding and I was going to drive him in any case, as this subject area was always a problem in embassies. The administrative people tended to be the least competent and often the most worn down by life in the foreign service as demands and complaints filled their days. Finally, the consular section was a big operation, one which created more ill will for the US than any other. The consul, however, was both competent and sensitive as to how much and what I wanted to know in order to be satisfied that things were going well.

I was also concerned about Embassy security, after my conversations in Washington. The building was a modern blocky design of concrete with lots of glass. The fence around it was iron pickets, so that those outside could see what was going on inside and could undoubtedly get over it easily.

The entrance to the Embassy building led into a large open lobby at the back of which were the Marine guards, standing behind a desk. My worry was that people were in the office area as soon as they got by the Marines. There was no really secure section, short of the vault and the code room where classified material was kept and transmitted to Washington.

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A second worry was that the consular section was on the same ground floor, providing two other entrances to the office area, though each was closed off by a door. The waiting room could contain more than a hundred people. Often, the line of people waiting went out the front door and around the corner and down the street. A couple of terrorists could join the line and acting quickly would have had no trouble entering and perhaps taking over the building.

We did have Guatemalan guards as well as the Marines. But they normally stayed in the basement garage, where the car pool was located. They were Guatemalan police whom we trained, armed, and paid a salary supplement. I felt certain most would act correctly in an emergency, but I had little faith in their initiative. Their physical condition was best portrayed by the fact that only one of my five body guards was able to climb Agua, the 13,000 foot volcano that obliterated Antigua Guatemala (the old Antigua) several hundred years earlier. He was still a soccer player. The others had gotten fat and out of condition doing what body guards do — sitting around waiting for something to happen.

It was clear that nothing major would happen about improving the security any time in the next year because there was no money and it turned out to take years. I talked with the Security Officer about what could be done without newly appropriated money. One thing was to put locks on doors between sections of the Embassy — simple bolts that could be closed from either side in an emergency. A second improvement was to install video cameras, so that we could tell what might be happening in halls without exposing ourselves. A third was to install metal doors and keep them closed with key or combination locks so that access was denied to anyone not authorized.

Late in my tour, I also went out for target practice with the Guatemalan guards. My son joined me and got to shoot the same weapons at the range. Firing an Uzi or a shotgun from the hip was a new experience. My point, other than curiosity, was to indicate that the charge was interested in their training.

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I was also concerned about the AID mission. There were actually two, one bilateral with Guatemala and the other, ROCAP, the Regional Organization for Central American Programs. It had been started to cooperate with the Central American Common Market. Both were relatively small. The Guatemalan program was doing a handful of things that were marginally worthwhile. Activity was limited by the ineffective and corrupt government and more importantly, the right wing, particularly the military and the old elite, who didn't want Americans messing about with their power structure. However, ROCAP programs operated mostly in El Salvador and the civil war there made it impossible to do much. Many of the specialists lived in Guatemala and commuted to Salvador a few days a week. Moreover, Nicaragua was showing signs of coming apart, and programs there were slowing to a crawl. I talked the Ambassador into agreeing to sending a message to Washington recommending closing ROCAP down. The ROCAP director predictably fought it. But his arguments were pretty weak. In the end, Washington kept it, because John Bushnell, the senior Deputy Assistant Secretary for Latin America, thought closing it would send the wrong signal ("that the US lacked interest in the area") at a time when we were trying to get Somoza out of Nicaragua without having the country blow up.

Finally, there were both a military (Army) attach# — a colonel who I thought very well of — and a Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG) run by a Navy Commander who I never trusted, believing that he was off on his own doing things that should not have been done.

There was also a CIA contingent with which I came to work very closely. While I was charg#, they were as open as I could ask, their instincts were good, they kept me informed, and I think we did some good work.

Gene Boster, our Ambassador, was a likeable professional. He had decided to retire in order to take the job running Radio Free Europe. He had been close to the previous Guatemalan president, Laugurud (Norwegian extraction), in large measure because the US was providing substantial assistance to rebuild the country from the devastating 1973 earthquake. However, he had no special relationship with the current president — another

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ex General by the name of Fernando Romeo Lucas Garcia who is best described as remote, taciturn, and probably not very smart or honest.

Boster had largely cut his contacts with government officials whom he thought were scoundrels or worse. In particular, he disliked the foreign minister, Ramon Castillo Valdez, who should have been his major contact — a fact that I did not really understand until we went for his farewell call and to receive his medal which all departing American ambassadors got — the order of the Quetzal, second class (who got first I never knew, but I suppose visiting heads of state), or some such name like that. Boster was kept waiting and became increasingly agitated to the point where he was about to leave. I suspect the minister of doing it deliberately, based on what I came to know of him. He had to give the medal, but he could also indicate his distaste.

The politics of the country were new to me. Guatemala was poor and divided on racial lines among three groups — the Indians, the Ladinos, and the Europeans. The Ladinos were Indian racially but had become urbanized and lost their deep connection with their Indian roots and Indian culture. They had become a kind of middle class and clearly felt squeezed.

The Europeans were mostly white, descendants of the original Spanish or relatively recent arrivals, rich, often educated outside the country. Many were Americans who had come in successive waves. For example, one group comprised descendants of Confederate officers who had emigrated after their defeat in the Civil War. Other Americans had come with United Fruit which remained a political power in the country, a law unto itself, even unwilling to have much to do with their embassy. Others had come during World War II — for example, to build the airfield which had become a way-station for planes flown to Europe via Brazil or to buy chicle (collected from trees that grew wild in the Peten) so our soldiers could have chewing gum in their field rations.

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Another subgroup had been washed up before World War II from Europe. For example, the Czechs who had started Bata shoe were there and were still rich, although they had lost control of the Czech company. There were Jews who had found the country a haven when no other country would take them (except Trujillo in the Dominican Republic).

The Europeans as a whole (including the Americans) were reactionary in the extreme, supporting the repressive military government, and I believe were directly involved in the violence. In any case, they were not greatly opposed.

For example, the wife of one I knew well had been kidnaped by a group of extortionists, and he had had to ransom her. But he had also put out a contract on the kidnapers, and, he said, they had all been killed. He argued that the justice system didn't catch criminals and didn't punish them even in the rare cases when they were caught. That attitude pervaded the elite.

The ministers other than the foreign minister seemed to be non-entities. The Minister of Economy was a notorious lightweight, but the Embassy and AID had to deal with him. He signed off on projects and also gave some help to the Commercial and Economic officers.

The Finance minister was a colonel in the army — presumably he was put there to make sure the graft didn't get diverted. We had little to do with him, but he once summoned me. It turned out he had a long cock-and-bull story involving communist plots to take over. What he really wanted was US backing for his bid to become the next president. This would have put him in conflict with the army high command, the leader of which became the next president in the normal course of things, after having spent a term as Minister of Defense. I passed his offer of anticommunist cooperation with the US to Washington — which could do little with it and never responded.

The military and the church were the two “institutions” which ran the country. The influence of the Catholic Church was hard to measure. It suffered from growing competition from

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evangelical protestant denominations that had had considerable success in proselytizing. But its hold on the Indian population and on the establishment seemed to guarantee it a role. Its problem was the lack of Guatemalan clergy — many came from abroad, and they were coming in inadequate numbers. The Guatemalan church also did not know how to deal with many of the young foreign clergy who were radical. Liberation theology brought them into direct confrontation with the establishment.

The military were interesting. Recruits were Indians and Ladinos, just picked off the street in a press-gang operation. By a mixture of terror and privilege, carrot and stick, their loyalty became assured. If they failed to buckle under, they were killed like so many others, probably after a good deal of torture. At the same time, the officer corps became the avenue of upward mobility for small-town poor but bright Ladinos, leavened with some Europeans like Laugurud. They were educated in the military academy, but more importantly, the day-to-day contact with their fellow soldiers made them street-smart in how the military worked — the key to surviving.

Politics had established the military as the normal successors to the presidency. A senior general went from Chief of Staff to Minister of Defense to President. One always knew who the next president was going to be, for two successions. That stopped being the case after we left — a civilian Christian democrat, Venezio Cerezo, won but was rendered powerless by the military who kept up coup threats until he stopped trying to reform anything.

My point of contact became the Foreign Minister. He spoke good English, having gone to school in the US. He was a Mormon, married to an American from Utah and had a pack of kids — but the wife and kids, except once, stayed in the US, we presumed for their safety while he was a minister.

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We became friends of sorts. I did go visit him on his chicken farm one weekend, with my family. He must have had quite a bit of money to own a business of that size. But otherwise I always saw him in the office.

Although Boster was very critical of him, I decided that if the US had an embassy there, it better talk to him, if for no other reason than to keep track of what was happening and what they were thinking.

It took me quite a while before he felt free to talk. Initially, I fabricated a couple of reasons to go chat. I turned these into pleasant sessions for him, during which he would go on and on about his beliefs. They were strongly held but irrational in a peculiar way. Lots of Americans thought he was nuts. That was not too hard to conclude. When I would go for a 15 minute appointment and he would run on for an hour or two, I began to think I was making some progress.

Guatemalans were paranoid about the US. Castillo Valdez, like the others, thought the US determined their destiny. He had endless examples of how unwise, if not malign, the US was. The generalizations left me feeling there was no way to get through to him.

One of their peeves was the US human rights policy. I used to argue with him about this, but that would only get him going. Finally, I decided to try to stick to specifics.

Grist for the mill was first the war in El Salvador and then the one in Nicaragua. Indeed, Nicaragua soon became the preoccupation. Somoza was asking for military help from the Guatemalans who were tempted. He even made a secret trip to Guatemala which, however, did not produce anything. Castillo avoided ever saying that he knew about the trip. But he used to have fits about what the US was doing. I kept arguing that he should be supporting us because we were trying to produce a democratic coalition to succeed Somoza. He didn't believe we could do it, and he was right at the time, though he gave us no help and indeed, did everything he could to make the task more difficult.

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I reported these conversations at length back to the Department which never gave any sign that it saw them, much less was horrified or reacted in any other possible way. I know they were read because visitors mentioned them, but they left the Department with little leeway to act and thus do anything about them.

My own role in the Nicaragua affair was minor but interesting. Bill Bowdler, then the Assistant Secretary for Intelligence, had been picked to try to negotiate with the opposition and Somoza. He had to fly through Guatemala City, and I would go out and chat with him while he waited for the plane to continue on. He would tell me what was going on and often show me his instructions. He kept a copy in his pocket — he wrote them himself, and then got approval. But he did not send out much information on the negotiations because the cables, even those with the highest classification, kept getting leaked by the right or the left in Washington. That all but made his negotiating position impossible.

At one point, the Nicaraguan military attach# in Guatemala was picked as a possible Minister of Defense in the coalition government we were promoting. He had to be flown to Costa Rica clandestinely to be interviewed and to come to some sort of understanding about his policies and role. The US Air Attach# for the region was stationed in Honduras. He flew his plane to us. I smuggled the man into the military side of the air field, using my official car, thus avoiding the immigration people. They took off with no questions asked. They didn't stop their engines or get out or file a flight plan. It was simply billed as a routine training flight. It was the same drill the next day, early in the morning when he came back. I worried but not much. It went off without a hitch.

Perhaps the one thing I managed in the negotiations with the foreign minister was to keep him from really understanding what we were up to. It threw them off, but they at least didn't do anything really stupid or harmful.

At the end, however, I was asked to get them to lend us back some powdered milk and flour we had given them under a food relief program. It was to be flown to Nicaragua

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because food supplies were running out. Castillo Valdez strung me along for several days — I had the feeling at the time that he was doing so and made my doubts clear in my messages. Eventually a chartered plane came down from the US to pick it up. And the delays continued. We finally got some, but not what we had asked and it was late to boot. I conjecture this was the US' reward for doing things in Nicaragua the Guatemalans didn't like and for our not being up front with them.

Another interesting exposure was the visit of Congressional groups. The one that struck me as the most bizarre was that of Tom Harkin, then a Representative but later a Senator from Iowa. He brought committee staffers with him to look into the human rights situation. They seemed to feel that the Embassy was not on top of the situation, that it might even be in league with the government in its misdeeds. We gave them a car and driver and turned them loose — to go see opposition politicians without their telling us. I could not have cared less who they saw — in fact, the more they saw the better in my view — but that was not what they wanted to believe. In addition to being suspicious, the staffers were rude as well, accepting invitations to a meal and then being late and unapologetic. My wife was furious.

We were as open as we could be with them. I did not feel that there was much the US could do. The aid we gave was small, conditioned, and often responded to our needs, particularly in having the military attach# and the military assistance group represented. We kept careful count of the murders that we believed were political, and used the running total as a scorecard to see if things were getting better or worse. We had also made clear our governments censure for the whole business. When one of the liberal political opposition, a presidential candidate, was assassinated, I went to the funeral home, shook hands with the politically important mourners, and signed the condolence book. I did the same when the Minister of Defense was assassinated in his car. I didn't much care for him, since he was probably involved in past murders, but what was sauce for the goose was sauce for him too.

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The pattern of torture and murder was several hundred years old, contrary to what newspapers report as starting since the overthrow of Arevalo in the early 1950's. It started with the Spanish settlers who ruled by force in the area between the capital and the Caribbean coast. They had mined the land, as well as the people, overgrazing and overcropping until it became an arid, eroded waste heap. The Spanish settlers and their minions had then carried their bad habits elsewhere, first to the Indians living a poor and isolated subsistence farm life in the highlands west of the capital. The damage there was limited by lack of access; the area was really only opened after World War II when the road was put in that connected with Mexico. Before that, if you wanted to go from a city on the Mexican border, you took the train down to the Pacific, a boat south, and then another train back up to the capital.

The most recent area to open was the Pacific coastal plain, which fell at first quickly and then gently from the mountains to the ocean. This area had been settled after World War II when AID built highways into the mountains and along the coast. Big landowners had become rich growing corn, sugar cane, cotton, and cattle. Many lived in the capital and commuted by small plane to their ranches daily. It was more comfortable and much less dangerous. As a result, Guatemala had the largest private plane ownership per capita in the world — even larger than Alaska where it is often the only way to get around.

The down side of this coastal development was that it depended on highland Indian laborers who spent a good part of the year away from their homes and families working at derisory wages. They were, moreover, kept terrorized and badly treated in that they were often compelled to work in dangerous conditions, e.g., when insecticides and herbicides were sprayed from airplanes without regard as to whether they hit humans. The solidarity of traditional Indian village life could not be preserved under such conditions. Yet they were driven to it by population pressure on the highlands farm land which was increasingly deforested and cropped to death. The description of corn farming told the story — they cut the trees down on the mountain sides, tied a rope to a stump and swung down the steep

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hillside cultivating their corn and beans. Guatemala's torrential rains soon washed away what little top soil there was. Hunger and malnutrition were the initial consequences. The second was the migration of landless and land-poor to the Pacific coast farms. Off-farm labor was not new — the coffee fincas had also depended on it for many years, but mostly only during the harvest season and the distance from home was much less.

Another area of increasing contention was the areas where the mountains went into the Peten. This area had long been closed by the lack of transport. Roads opened up these new areas to settlement, but it was widely understood that military officers were acquiring control of large parcels and working them with the same mistreated Indian laborers.

Domestic politics also got me involved. The mayor of Guatemala city, Maldonado, was another politician. Affable and handsome, he claimed to be liberal and seemed to impress many Americans. He made me uneasy, too good to be true in a political arena dominated by tigers.

The vice president, Villagran Kramer, was also a civilian who in Guatemala was widely considered a communist, which was consistent with the elite's support of Attila the Hun. How he got on the same ticket with Lucas Garcia escapes me, but there he was. And unhappy with the way things were going. He invited me to pay a call early in my tour which I promptly did — but getting there proved to be somewhat alarming. His military assistant came by for me. I didn't understand the need for such arrangements, but I suspect he did not want the government to know whom he was seeing. In any case, I had my own car follow, with body guards. He wanted to review with me his plan for the reform of the country — naturally with him as the chosen instrument. I duly reported this, but also suggested it took no account of the power relationships in the country. In any case, I liked Villagran — he seemed a decent person — but it would have been quixotic for the US to get tied up with him.

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Life for him became increasingly precarious so that he eventually resigned and left the country, taking refuge with the Inter-American Development Bank which kept him fed and safe until he could safely go back in the mid 80s. When we returned to Washington in 1979, we saw him a few times socially. He had seemed sad, but he clearly enjoyed being in the US — relieved from the threat of assassination, I suppose — continuing, I think to play politics at home and among the exiles.

Another figure who was informative, Jorge Skinner Klee, a lawyer with a powerful cynical streak that led him to say things he didn't mean, was fun to talk to but also informative. At the time, he was staying clear of politics but eleven years after we left I read he had become a member of the National Assembly. He was quoted in the New York Times, but his irony over the fact that the government was responding “unequally” to the murder of an American (compared to our official concern over the murder of Guatemalans), had been taken literally by the newsman. Still he was a lost soul, bearing witness but a prophet without honor.

At the time, our intelligence people were mainly concerned about the leftist terrorists who the right charged with most of the murders. They were no doubt there and effective, but like the Minister of Defense they killed, it was often retaliation or a political act, designed to get them support, through fear as much as anything. These people were no saints. They had assassinated an American ambassador years earlier, and we continued to fear they would strike an American again. Hence the extreme security measures — the Ambassador had seven body guards, at times, including two Americans brought down when conditions got particularly threatening.

Our knowledge of what the left was up to seemed to be quite good. I was surprised to find that we knew almost nothing about what right wing terrorists were up to. I saw to it that we learned. Not just what they planned to do, but what they had done — I did not believe they would claim responsibility for actions that they had not committed as they were clearly ashamed and would be hurt if these were admitted publicly. It was not reassuring and I

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sent a message to Washington to make sure that these reports were widely read. The right, it was clear, was up to the same stuff as the left — and in a much better position to carry it out, using the army. In retrospect, I was astonished that we hadn't focused on this question earlier. But that seemed to be the case.

By spring, I heard who the new ambassador was — Frank Ortiz. He turned out to be very pleasant, but also very secretive and up tight about his own prerogatives. Feeling there would be little scope for me, I decided to ask for a transfer.

One of my last assignments was to attend the Chiefs of Mission conference in Costa Rica. It turned out to be a revelation about the area. Two of the people I had known well, Frank Devine, the Ambassador in El Salvador with whom we had served in the Dominican Republic and Larry Pezzulo, the Ambassador in Nicaragua whom we had known in Saigon. These were the two Central American countries about which the US worried most, followed by Guatemala.

Devine described the problems of dealing with the Salvadorans — an oligarchy with the same lack of self-control and bloody-mindedness as the Guatemalans. He seemed to be very cool on doing anything with that government, as he described the embassy being fired on by the right wing.

Pezzulo described his negotiations with Somoza and others. It was fairly frightening — he did not seem to trust his own Embassy staff and was quite uncertain about his personal security. He described meeting with Somoza and John Murphy, an American Congressman who had been a classmate of Somoza's at West Point. Murphy did much of the talking. In other words, the US was negotiating with itself. Pezzulo's arrival had been recent, so of course, some of this was a function of his being the new boy on the block.

The bottom line of this meeting was uncertainty about what was to come and what to do. The inability of the US to influence the Nicaraguan government — we never had a chance of controlling it — led to the Reagan (and CIA director Casey) position of total hostility and

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confrontation. Nicaraguan society seems to have been changed by the Sandinistas and I suppose by the American intervention creating the Contras, so that the subsequently return of the more moderate Chamorro government seemed unlikely to produce much progress.

I left the Ambassadors' meeting, confirmed in my view that I was right to ask for a transfer. I met my successor, Mel Sinn, who like me I learned later, found Guatemala professionally hard to take and retired after his tour. He, his wife, and their dog apparently did manage to enjoy their time there however.

Since I had to ride everywhere and needed exercise, I played tennis at the Ambassador's court when I could find a partner and it was free. I also jogged at the Marine House. It had an acre of wooded flat land in back, with a wall around it and a convenient path through it. I would put my body guards out on the corners (making them face out, not in looking at me) just so that I wasn't a sitting duck and then run for an hour, practicing my Spanish dialogues as I did so. It passed the time and kept me in reasonable shape, as well as improving my Spanish — which had grown rusty with disuse, after we left the Dominican Republic. So I had begun to relearn it almost from scratch, listening to tapes, watching television shows (mostly US series with Spanish dubbed in) and doing daily hour-long lessons with a tutor. I got pretty good by the time we left. But it goes so quickly when not used.

One of our favorite spots to spend a night or a weekend was Antigua. Our favorite place to stay was with Paul Glynn, a retired USIA officer. He had bought two old houses that were next to each other and had remodeled them, making them very pleasant. He expected to make a good bit of money out of his investment, but the market is narrow and the political situation unsteady, so we never learned how he made out. He also exported craft items, both wholesale and retail, and we bought a good deal from him. He had developed his own sources of manufacture and provided designs, capital, and marketing. But the output was so limited, that he had to keep his suppliers secret or his customers would go directly

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to them. We spent one Easter with him, thus seeing all of the elaborate ceremonies that have grown up around this event. The processions in the street lasted all day, but the murals “painted” in flowers on the cobble stones, were soon sacrificed to the glory of God as the crowd walked through them.

We had other friends in Antigua, including an archeologist, and the widow of the one who developed Tikal, the most famous Mayan ruins in the Peten. Talking with them taught us a lot about that field, including the jealousy and rivalry that made cooperation among them difficult. There were also a number of rich Guatemalans who had houses there — and rich Americans who came down for the winter to get out of the northern cold.

Another favorite place to visit was Chichicastenango. This had a famous market on weekends, at which Indians sold their crafts and an old church full of Indians who seemed to follow their own ritual, praying and burning incense to receive a boon. They seemed wrapped in their own cocoon of preoccupations, lost to the rest of us who could not comprehend their beliefs or communicate more than a few words for the simplest things. It is astonishing how isolated people in other cultures seem. The Guatemalan Indians were by no means the most remote.

I returned to Washington briefly in August to attend the opening of the new class year at the National War College. It wasn't long enough to learn very much, but as usually happens, it gave me the chance to meet my new colleagues. Then back to Guatemala to begin to introduce the new ambassador and pack up.

The National War College was then the most prestigious of the four war colleges. The others, each connected with one of the services, are more specialized and cater to the more specific needs of each. The State Department sent about 20 students there and another 20 or so were from civilian agencies like the CIA, the FBI, the Energy Department, USIA, and Agriculture. The rest were colonels or lieutenant colonels from each of the services and were chosen in the expectation that they would become generals or admirals.

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Part of the idea was to give them a liberal education so that they could become part of the inter-service bureaucracy, work closely together burying inter-service rivalries, establish an old-boy network that included civilian agencies, etc.

The State Department had been instrumental in setting up the NWC and continued to supply students and faculty. As the senior State Department person, I was shown considerable deference. But the stated duties were minimal — some administration and a light teaching load, if I wished. The one thing I did have to do was attend lectures for the whole class. Sitting in the front row, next to the Commandant — in my first year, a Naval Air Officer who had last commanded an aircraft carrier and in my second, a soldier, on their way to retirement — and looking up into the speaker and the lights, I often was hard put to it to stay awake but had to fight — I would hear of it from the students if I drifted off and my head bobbed.

The curriculum was divided into three parts. The first concerned how the US made foreign and defense policy. The second examined international relations, with some attention directed to the problems of each of the major regions of the world. The third then looked at defense. There were also electives and the college wide lectures, as well as lectures that were joint with the Industrial College of the Armed Forces. People like the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, Henry Kissinger, and Stansfield Turner from CIA spoke at these sessions. They varied in quality, as did the people — but clearly some felt freer to talk than others.

The State Department did not in many cases send its best people as students. Instead they were often someone who they needed to put on hold for a year or who deserved a rest. The military officers assigned also turned out to be a mixed bag. About a third were not interested or stimulated and spent the year jogging and little else. The others participated to the best of their ability and I think did learn.

It turned out that the College was competing with the Foreign Service Institute which wanted to become THE sole institution for training State people. That tended to siphon off

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many of those who would have benefitted most from the War College — people who were particularly interested in security affairs and who would be involved with military assistance programs or disarmament.

I found a course on American wars to be particularly interesting, but did not have much time to go to it. My wife went and as a consequence, we both went on a civil war tour with the class to the Antietam battle field. That became the beginning of fifteen years of battlefield treks with Jay Luvaas, a military historian from Allegheny College (Erie PA) and later the Army War College. He had started the treks in the 1950s with his father and had continued them ever since. He took students from Allegheny, from the War Colleges, from West Point, and especially with a group which had evolved over the years — faculty from various universities or contacts from his past. The trips had come to dominate his weekends and were considered a major cause for him and his wife to split. At any rate, between 1979 and 1989, I had been on one or more a year and covered most of the major battles of the war.

The other war course that was fascinating was taught by a young maverick professor, Ned Lebow, whose historical view on which he was writing a book, was that most wars started as mistakes — as misunderstandings of the situation or for domestic political reasons or just drifted into. His eccentricities of dress and behavior drove the commandant up the wall and he was fired, a sad outcome for the college but I think that Ned made out — his book was published and he got tenure at Cornell.

One of the major intellectual revelations from the course work was that the US was wasting a lot of money on defense. We were building too many different kinds of strategic weapons and we had overreached in our commitments using conventional weapons, especially to NATO. Even the military officers at the College — most anyway — came to the same conclusion. It was confirmation of a conclusion that I had reached in Vietnam — that the American military often knew when something was wrong, but service loyalty and discipline made it impossible for them to change the decisions.

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My one extended excursion into teaching was conducting the basic seminar for a three month stint. I had a good group and the seminars went well. These groups became closely knit and for some years, mine got together annually to party and renew their ties. But that too faded, I suppose because its members were either promoted or retired for failing promotion.

During my second year at the College, I was asked to be a member of a review panel reviewing foreign service officers who had been identified for selection out — they were being fired, and this was their last chance. The panel went over the record of each. Every one of them had had problems and by and large the decision to let them go was appropriate. But we unanimously agreed in one case that an officer should not be, that he had got a bad deal. On the record, however, we had to vote him out. I learned later that the Personnel people really wanted to keep him. The written record on him was very strange, not to say suspicious — we concluded that something was being hidden by both the individual and the Department — but there was no way the panel could find out as we had to deal with the record as it existed.

A consequence of this duty was that I found out my decision to leave Guatemala had crossed the system and that I would have a difficult time getting another assignment that I would want. I had in a sense, blotted my record by deciding to ask for a transfer. This seemed to be confirmed when I made an attempt to get a job in Congressional Relations — the one area in the Department that I felt would be challenging and needed greater effort. I was turned down, I suspect because of Guatemala, but also because I was too senior and threatened the senior people already there.

The politics of Washington were also becoming clearer. The candidates were Carter — who, I agreed with the public, had not done well at foreign affairs — and Reagan, who as a new man would put the department through the contortions that occurred whenever there was a change in administration. It was actually worse than that, and I thank my lucky stars that I was not in Guatemala when Reagan became president (Ortiz was fired as

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ambassador for not being sufficiently anti-communist and on board) and Latin America became the charge of Ollie North and Elliott Abrams.

The final event was the discovery that people who had retired years earlier had pensions that were more than what many of us still working were paid. This consideration became more compelling when the Department announced a special bonus for those who retired before a certain date. Two of the people who worked for me took advantage of it — and after much turmoil, I decided to do the same.

I made the decision in September or October before the election. It is curious that while considering it, I thought that I had talked with my wife about it at great length — only to discover later that she felt largely in the dark. I still find it difficult to believe, I guess because it was a major preoccupation in my own mind. It was harder to let go than I had expected. The problem is to give up a role you have played for most of your adult life — and the sense of security that goes with operating in a closed system, whose rules you understand. I think too, that I felt somewhat disappointed with my career — although objectively speaking, I had done very well in getting good senior assignments and had had a much better than average career from the point of view of my own intellectual interests. In any case, my prospects for getting an embassy were not great and I was no longer sure I wanted one, even if I could get it. There were other pursuits that would be compelling and stimulating.

In any case, when I talk to youngsters thinking of a foreign service career, I tell them that I was lucky and had a great time, when I think about it. I also say I don't think they are likely to be so lucky and that the service goes through it ups and downs, which make it wise to be prepared to leave and start a fresh career. One can learn a lot and it can be rewarding —when it is not, it is time to leave. I sometimes add that shouldn't take my advice too seriously. Like all of us who were deeply committed, I was deformed and perhaps crippled by Vietnam.

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End of interview