

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

**AMBASSADOR ROBERT CORRIGAN**

*Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy*  
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## INTERVIEW

*Q: Interview with Ambassador Robert Corrigan concerning his career, particularly as a senior officer. This interview is being done for the Association for Diplomatic and for the Foreign Service History Center.*

*Ambassador Corrigan, how did you get into the Foreign Service?*

CORRIGAN: If it had not been for the fact that in 1934 my father, a Cleveland surgeon, who had been such for about 30 years, had been named American Minister to El Salvador by Franklin D. Roosevelt, I probably would have stayed in Cleveland, and not known very much about the Foreign Service, and in all likelihood would have become a lawyer. Certainly not a doctor or a businessman.

But, as I say, my father in World War I as a doctor had gone to Chile to head a large medical establishment there for the Guggenheim Copper Company in Chuquicamata, Chile. Then, and I guess still today, the largest open pit copper mine in the world. They had a camp there at Chuquicamata of thousands of people, and my father was Medical Director and Chief Surgeon.

So, in my very early days, I mean when I was a couple of years old, I spent two years there, but my father learned Spanish, and in the ensuing years when he returned to Cleveland he kept up his Spanish, and later went to Latin America with the Mayo brothers and helped establish chapters of the American College of Surgeons. So, he was not a stranger to the region, and had catholic and bohemian, so to speak, interests.

In any event, I had finished my second year of college at Washington and Lee University in 1934, and with my father's consent went and lived a year in El Salvador as "private secretary to the American minister."

*Q: What did you do?*

CORRIGAN: That's why I put it in quotes, I believe. I acted, I think, like a junior playboy, and enjoyed myself immensely with very congenial and attractive people, who are so maligned today, the so called Fourteen Families of El Salvador. They were indeed very rich, especially in contrast to the wide-spread poverty of the ordinary population of Salvador.

But, in any event, you know I actually did work in the legation assisting. There was only one diplomatic secretary in those days, and the consular section was a separate operation downtown, and as secretary to the minister I actually lent a hand in trying to get information on what was going on from political figures and so forth. But I must confess, it wasn't an arduous job.

*Q: Your father, did he arrange to have you initially appointed, or how did this work?*

CORRIGAN: No, no, it wasn't. The Department of State really had nothing to do with it. It was just his own nomination, as it were.

*Q: And then, from that you followed your father to several other posts?*

CORRIGAN: No. The year went very quickly, and my father said, "Well son, it's time to get back to college."

And I said, "Gee, Dad, this is much more broadening, etc."

And my father said, "Son, get your tail back to college or you'll never amount to anything."

Well, I, instead of returning to Washington and Lee, then went as a junior to Stanford in California, a state in which I had never set foot. And the reason I chose Stanford was the fact that I met several Salvadorans who had gone there. These Salvadorans incidentally in those days used to commute between California and their country, and many of them, well one chap for example, from one of those Fourteen Families, a wonderfully attractive fellow, was an All-America tackle at the University of California, Berkeley.

In any event, I went to Stanford as a junior, completed my B.A. there in 1937, then returned to Cleveland, where I worked for the Internal Revenue Service for a while. By this time my father had been transferred to Panama. I joined him in Panama in early 1939, and then accompanied him later in '39 when he went as the first Ambassador to Venezuela.

*Q: Prior to that we had ministers there?*

CORRIGAN: Yes, that's right. That's why he had the distinction of being the last minister to Panama, and the first ambassador to Venezuela.

*Q: This is when Roosevelt as part of the Good Neighbor Policy raised most of the missions, didn't he, from legations to embassies?*

CORRIGAN: I'm not sure whether it was that entirely, that was part of it certainly, but there was a trend to upgrade legations to embassies in consonance with the principle of the sovereign equality of states. It was a progression. For example, they didn't do it in the Central American countries until later. And, of course, as you know, the distinction then was obliterated. Practically all of our missions abroad are embassies, we don't have legations any more.

*Q: Well, at some point did you make the decision to come into the Foreign Service as a professional, having served with your father prior to that?*

CORRIGAN: Well, by this time I was immersed in Foreign Service life, and knew, of course, the Foreign Service Officers who were serving with my father in those three posts, and admired them. And, yes, aspired then myself to enter the Foreign Service.

However, I stayed out a few years, and in 1941, after a cram course over in Alexandria [Virginia], Colonel Campbell Turner's famous school, which prepared people to take the examination. I took it in the fall of 1941 along with people like Walt Stoessel and Fisher Howe and other notables.

In any event, it just happened that at that point the State Department was expanding the Foreign Service, and created a category called the Auxiliary Foreign Service. I applied and was accepted as an Auxiliary Vice Consul, and was posted to Rio.

*Q: What was the distinction between an Auxiliary Foreign Service officer and a Non-Auxiliary Foreign Service officer?*

CORRIGAN: Well, the Auxiliary was just theoretically a temporary corps to fill a need that was then seen, and there weren't enough Foreign Service officers, but he was a lower order of being in that he had not entered through this very rigorous examination process. And hence, I suppose, couldn't expect to rise very high.

*Q: I'm interested in what was a Foreign Service officer, a vice consul, doing during the war, say in Rio. Was there anything beyond the normal work that you did at that time?*

CORRIGAN: Once assigned to the embassy in Rio de Janeiro, I suppose one could have been assigned to almost any kind of work, e.g. strictly consular work. Some of these officers were economic analysts. It turned out that Jefferson Caffery, then ambassador to Brazil, wanted an additional junior officer in his office to do any kind of jobs that came

along. I found this extremely interesting, and hit it off very well with him, fortunately, and remained three and a half years working closely with him and his top people, including people like the then DCM John Farr Simmons and later Paul Daniels.

*Q: What was Jefferson Caffery's operating style? He's a well-known figure, of course, in the Foreign Service.*

CORRIGAN: Yes. For somebody really interested in him and the practice of diplomacy, I commend to you an article I wrote on him entitled, I think it was "Mr. Diplomat." In any event, it appeared in the Foreign Service Journal in November 1967.

He had a very interesting style. He was a taciturn man, rather shy really socially. He didn't like small talk, except with a few intimates in social surroundings. Normally he was reserved, and people, indeed, took his reserve as being aloof and unfriendly, which he really wasn't.

I remember one instance, for example, at a Fourth of July reception, where I was in the receiving line with him. My task was to greet guests as they came through, mostly Americans, on that particular occasion, and then tell the Ambassador who they were. I'd introduce them to the ambassador. Well, I was surprised when time and again he would fail to say the man's name, and yet I knew he knew the man's name. He just didn't have that facility, that hail-fellow-well-met type of thing. I think that was one of the reasons why he developed a very close friendship, and almost a dependence on in a certain way with Walter J. Donnelly, who himself later became a very successful ambassador to Costa Rica, High Commissioner to Austria, and later High Commissioner to Germany. Donnelly and Caffery were teamed for over 15 years.

Donnelly was a very handsome, attractive, ebullient, out-going Irishman from New Haven, Connecticut, who had the American business community in the palm of his hand as it were. They just thought he was the greatest fellow to come along. So, he complemented Caffery very effectively in this way. But Caffery's style itself, the actual business of diplomacy, which is getting the government to which you are accredited to do things the way you want them to, to vote in international bodies the way the United States would like them to, to act in other words, ways either beneficial to or not detrimental to U. S. interests. That was his main job, and here he was an absolute star.

He realized that in any given community, whether Brazil or later when he was in France and Egypt, in any community, in any government, there are only a relatively small number of really powerful people; people who really call the signals and call the tunes. He always managed to establish a very, very close working relationship with such centers of power. That was his style. And when he wanted something done, when he wanted to persuade the government to go this way or that way, he would go quietly and talk it over with these people, whose respect he had already gained, and then he would persuade them. And more often than not, that government acted in a way that we considered constructive and responsible.

*Q: Well, I would like to dwell more on some of these, but the object of this interview is to concentrate more on your senior career. But I can't help commenting on your set of assignments. In a way it's atypical of many officers. I mean you've gone from Latin America to African posts; to Germany and the Department of Defense. You've been in political military positions. And also I note that you have avoided Washington with a great deal of facility. Was this happenstance, this both avoidance of Washington, and your career pattern, or were you able to have some control over it?*

CORRIGAN: It's an interesting question, an interesting point, because I have often said, I may even be getting myself in trouble here. I think there was some kind of a law or regulation in your first 15 years, or something of that nature . . .

*Q: Fifteen years . . .*

CORRIGAN: . . . you had to spend at least three in Washington. And I did not do that. It wasn't by any particular design. I wasn't thinking about it, but I wasn't assigned to Washington.

*Q: As a former personnel officer, you slipped through our net. Otherwise, I would have been calling you at your post overseas and made you come back to Washington.*

CORRIGAN: I think that's probably the case, because I certainly never turned down a Washington assignment. I was never offered one that I talked myself out of. It just didn't happen, and, of course, I was pleased because I much prefer foreign service. It was a lot more interesting for one thing. Well, I can't say it was much more interesting. I shouldn't say that, because obviously jobs in policy making and in other areas are extremely interesting, extremely important. I shouldn't say that, but in any event, all I am saying is that I enjoyed working abroad, and since I wasn't assigned back, I didn't get it.

*Q: But also moving from place to place. You seem to have broken clear of the pattern of so many people who have served in Latin America; they learn Spanish, and they become Latin American specialists, and that's it. I mean, maybe appear above Tijuana once in a while to go to Washington. But you moved to Germany, to Africa. Was this again happenstance, or did you make some efforts to get yourself assigned to Latin America?*

CORRIGAN: No, no. I did not initiate in any way my assignment to Germany or my two assignments to Africa, or my assignment in the Pentagon. They just happened.

My assignment in the Pentagon, offered while I was ambassador to Rwanda, came about simply because the then Assistant Secretary of Defense, International Security Affairs, Bob Hill, a former American ambassador to El Salvador, Costa Rica, Mexico, and Argentina, (Argentina, however, after his stint at the Pentagon) offered me the job. He had just come into that job, and a colleague of mine, a dear friend, Ray Leddy, had that job, and he had left it, and the job was vacant, and Bob Hill for some reason thought about me way out in

Africa, because we had known each other in connection with Latin America. And he invited me to come. I'd been in Rwanda for about a year and a half, and knew that I wasn't going to, and didn't indeed want to, stay there too much longer. And here was an opportunity to go back to Washington into an extremely interesting job.

*Q: Well, moving to your period as a senior officer. I think probably we should start at Guatemala. John Muccio, a distinguished ambassador, had been named there. Had he asked for you to go there as DCM or not? Or were you there already?*

CORRIGAN: No, I wasn't there already. I was Deputy Chief of Protocol of the State Department at the time. And, indeed, that was practically my only stint in the Department of State, from mid-1958 to the beginning of 1960.

It was while I was in Protocol someone in your old business, Personnel, came to me one day and said, "Bob, how would you like to be DCM in Guatemala? We're looking for a candidate."

I thought about that, and I didn't have to think too long, because it seemed to be like a stepping stone, an interesting job. Muccio was named at about that time. When they were looking, as I understand the way Personnel does in those circumstances for a DCM, they themselves hit upon two or three or four names, and submit those names to the new ambassador. So obviously he approved. I doubt that he initiated.

*Q: You didn't know him prior to that?*

CORRIGAN: I did know him before, because he was a Secretary of Legation in Panama when my father was minister there.

*Q: Well now, every ambassador runs his embassy in a somewhat different way. What did you find your major functions were as DCM in Guatemala?*

CORRIGAN: Well, as you know, a DCM's main job is to backstop the ambassador, but that doesn't mean that different ambassadors don't use their DCMs in entirely different ways.

In the case of Ambassador Muccio, he gave me a great deal of latitude to manage the embassy, to resolve any disputes among personnel in the embassy, to edit and approve despatches and airgrams and reports that were prepared by the various people. He was very good in that way.

Besides that, I think, it depends with a particular DCM on his own particular interests. For example, if you have a DCM who is more politically inclined, or more economically inclined, I think he himself is going to manage to get more interested in that kind of activity. In my particular case, I had been a political officer more than an economic officer, and followed politics very closely, and really in that sense worked as kind of the head of the Political Section, in conjunction with the political officers.

*Q: Well, in looking back at it, how would you say the post was staffed? I mean, was it a well-staffed--I'm not talking in numbers as much as the caliber of the people there or not.*

CORRIGAN: First rate. Absolutely first rate. We had economics officers who were first rate officers all the way down the line. They were good.

*Q: Well, what was the political situation at the time you were there? What was happening, and what were American interests?*

CORRIGAN: Well, the president of . . .

*Q: We're talking about this is about 19 . . .*

CORRIGAN: This is Guatemala, we're talking about 1960 to '64. Right. And in the early part of that time the president, who had been duly elected was a retired general, and he was very proud of calling himself not General, but General and Engineer. Miguel Ydigoras Fuentes, a most remarkable man.

He was a free-wheeler and a wheeler-dealer, however, such as to almost boggle the mind. Indeed, the papal nuncio to Guatemala at that time told the second ambassador under whom I served there, John O. Bell, as I accompanied him on his visits to his diplomatic colleagues and on the principal officials of the government, when we called on the papal nuncio, who was an Italian, he said to the new American ambassador, "Mr. Ambassador, I must tell you one thing about this president you're going to have to deal with." He said, "This is a small country in Central America. I'm Italian. Machiavelli was around. We were responsible for him and people like that." And he said, "I've been around the world and know a little something about politics and the way political animals operate." He said, "This fellow here is world class when it comes to politics and wheeling and dealing. So don't underrate him."

In any event, his own downfall, indeed, resulted, I think, from . . .

*Q: This is Fuentes?*

CORRIGAN: Ydigoras Fuentes. His own downfall a couple of years after I got there at the hands of the military institution, who overthrew him, was due really to the perception that he was just too much of a wheeler-dealer.

I'm reminded of what my father used to say about his mother. His mother used to admonish him and her other children, "Don't be too cute." I'm afraid that Miguel Ydigoras Fuentes just became too cute, and one of the things that I think was responsible for his downfall, and this hasn't been established so far as I know in any writings, and it might be of interest to anybody following Central American events, scholars or what not who want to look into that. You may recall that this was the time of the training in Guatemala, and I guess other places, of the Bay of Pigs fighters. Indeed, it was all very clandestine. Cubans were being

trained at a finca in Guatemala. A finca owned by a very close friend of the president's. One of the things that may have led to his downfall was that this was done, I think, without reference to the military establishment as an institution. In other words, this was kind of a free-wheeling operation of Ydigoras Fuentes with his personal friend who owned the big finca, and they were training thousands of men. I guess thousands of men. It was hundreds of men certainly. And actually they were doing it at another site in Guatemala too.

But in any event, after the ill-fated Bay of Pigs, I think those chickens came home to roost, and was one of the contributing factors for the Army's being induced and persuaded to depose the president.

*Q: I'd like in a minute to return to the training of the Bay of Pigs people, but before that, and maybe included in that, is what was our interest or policy toward Guatemala? What did we want from Guatemala?*

CORRIGAN: Well, when I was at the National War College, an Air Force officer friend of mine used to make fun of the State Department. There was a great deal of jocularly among those people at the National War College, and frequently whenever my friend would meet one of his State Department colleagues in the halls he would stop for a moment and salute, and he would raise his hand and say, "Peace and economic justice." Poking fun at the State Department. So in answer to your question of what we wanted in Guatemala, I guess that's what we wanted. We wanted peace and economic justice. We wanted a consolidation of democracy, and we hoped that the then government of Miguel Ydigoras Fuentes would be replaced in a democratic procedure. There were, of course, substantial American business interests in mining, somewhat in petroleum, the other usual things. A smattering of American business activity of various kinds, including the United Fruit Company, of course, which was very big there at that time. We wanted them to have a fair shake and not be discriminated against in legislation or in implementation of rules and regulations.

*Q: Were you noticing any aftermath to the complicity of our embassy, and particularly our ambassador in the overthrow of Arbenz? Bitterness or desire to get us more involved?*

CORRIGAN: No, no, not really. Of course, that was a subject that was, you know, always a subject of lively debate. I think more than anything else, that kind of gave an impression both to Americans outside of government, and to many, many Guatemalans, and most Guatemalans outside of government that the United States exercised far more influence than it really did. You know, it's a common notion that these banana republics and the powerful American ambassador, that they just do what you want. But certainly that wasn't the case either under Ydigoras Fuentes or the successor government. They operated in their own interests. They did what they wanted to do. You know, it's largely a fallacy. I think that may be true all over the world. The false impression that we have a lot more influence in a lot of places than we really do in practical terms.

*Q: Well, you were serving during the time of the Kennedy administration and of the Alliance for Progress. Was this a major effort on our part in there, and how did it work?*

CORRIGAN: Oh, yes. We had a very substantial aid program. And, you know, more and more funds were available at that time. There was a lot more hope, and there was a lot more activity in that field than there is certainly today. And that there had been earlier. But I don't know what to say other than that these various aid programs were carried out with varying degrees of success, just as in most countries.

*Q: Well, what about, returning to the period of Cuba, you came to Guatemala just about the time Castro was consolidating his hold in Cuba. And I noted in looking through the journals of the day that Guatemala was claiming a Cuban threat, and the Cubans were claiming, apparently fairly justified, that the Guatemalans were helping to train Cubans to attack them. Was there a particular threat to Guatemala from Cuba at the time?*

CORRIGAN: Cuba, (when I say Cuba, of course, we mean Fidel Castro's pro-Communist government) I think had more of an animus against Guatemala, both on account of its president, Miguel Ydigoras Fuentes, who was an outspoken anti-Communist, and, of course, had a record of trying to overthrow Castro. Witness permitting the training in his territory of troops to go over there and throw him out.

Another aspect, and I'm reminded of this in answer to your earlier question about the heritage or the residue, if you will, from the Arbenz era. It's true that there was a good deal of Communist influence in the Arbenz government. You recall that Che Guevara was there, and somewhat like, I guess, the situation in Nicaragua today, there were a whole bunch of Communist types who were brought in and were scattered around the infrastructure of government, although certainly not to the degree we see in Nicaragua today.

But Ydigoras Fuentes used to comment that one of the residual problems Guatemala had was that during the Arbenz days there had been this considerable penetration by Communists of the government, and they remained throughout the bureaucracy, so that you had always the possibility of their coming to the surface and influencing events.

There was a famous time, a meeting of presidents in San Jose, Costa Rica, when President Kennedy went down there and met with the presidents of the Central American countries. And this Ydigoras Fuentes, again to show you how mischievous and Machiavellian he could be: I think it was the foreign minister of Cuba, who had been over in San Jose, was going back home and to a hero's welcome. He was over there as an observer. And Ydigoras Fuentes contrived, by sending a couple of messages that he faked, to make the Cubans believe that Guatemalan fighter aircraft were going to intercept the Cuban airplane and shoot it down. The Cubans changed their whole flight plans. And Ydigoras was doing things like this all the time.

*Q: Well, as DCM how did you get along with the CIA and its operations? I'm speaking, you know, in what one can talk about these things today, and particularly the training. Was the embassy an active participant in this operation, or was it pretty much done elsewhere?*

CORRIGAN: The embassy itself, so far as I know, so far as I can recall, had nothing to do with this training operation of Cuban troops prior to the Bay of Pigs. This was an entirely CIA operation.

We knew about it--now I'm talking about that from the vantage point of a DCM. I do not know to what degree the ambassador himself was briefed on that subject. I personally thought, and think today, that its a bum way to run a railroad. If you have an ambassador and embassy, and if you can't trust them with details of a covert operation of that kind.

*Q: Especially one of that size. Apparently the Cubans knew about it. At least there were protests that seemed rather well founded later on. John Muccio left rather quickly, didn't he? I mean he was there about a year and a half.*

CORRIGAN: No, he was there about two years.

*Q: About two years?*

CORRIGAN: Yes.

*Q: And there was a inter-regnum for a period of time?*

CORRIGAN: Well, a few months. And then he was succeeded by John O. Bell.

Back on that Cuban thing. There was an aborted uprising against the government of Ydigoras Fuentes, apparently on the part of certain Air Force elements.

*Q: This was in November on 1960, is this the one?*

CORRIGAN: It was while Ambassador Muccio was there. And that would be about right.

*Q: Yes. That's where Guatemala asked for U. S. aid. There were patrols and things like that?*

CORRIGAN: I don't remember that aspect. But the thing was aborted, and again it was never clear. There was a suspicion, certain little signs, as I recall, that coup attempt had Cuban backing or Cuban motivation. And that, I think again, is responsive a little bit to your earlier query about Castro's attitude toward Guatemala. Maybe as against other Central American countries for whom he did not have this same animus, except, of course, yes, we have to be quick to add, of course, he had as great or as much an animus against Somoza, in whose country also, you know, troops were being trained. And I guess from which aircraft and ships took off.

*Q: Well now, you know, some countries have the reputation of being AID countries. Other countries have the reputation, speaking from the United States' point of view, other*

*countries have the reputation of being CIA countries. What was the role of the CIA from your point as DCM? Did you find them a problem or a help?*

CORRIGAN: One thing I think about the CIA presence in Guatemala in that era was the fact that in the overthrow in 1954, which was only six years earlier, of the Arbenz government, and the triumph of Castillo Armas with CIA assistance, there was built up in Guatemala a larger CIA presence than you would normally have in a country where you weren't mounting an operation to help other people of that nationality depose the government, which was the case.

And I think what happened was it was difficult to cut down that bureaucracy to size once that whole situation was over. So that six years later in 1960 we still had a rather, in my view, inordinate CIA presence. Far more than you had in a neighboring country.

*Q: Well, did you find that presence began to intrude into regular functions, political, economic and the like, of what you were doing?*

CORRIGAN: What I found, and not only there, but in Chile, earlier where I had served, what concerned me was the taking over by the CIA of what had been, and what should be I think, traditional Foreign Service functions. I mean by that, labor reporting, activity with labor unions, which of course is all part of the whole political reporting spectrum. Such things as biographic reporting, which in earlier days in the Foreign Service was a Foreign Service function par excellence.

*Q: You might explain here for the uninitiated reader what biographic reporting is in substance.*

CORRIGAN: Washington wishes to have on file biographic, personal-type, professional accomplishments, etc. information on emerging leaders in that country. People who down the road one year, two years, five, ten years, are likely to rise to positions of influence and power in those governments. And then when that comes along, we know something about them and can have a better chance than of operating, perhaps, more effectively with them.

And, indeed, this is something that in my earlier days in the Foreign Service we were encouraged always to do. You know, if you have an idle moment, you can always, you know, there are scores of people there whom you can identify as important people, and okay, write down who they are, where they were born, where they went to school, what their hobbies are, to whom they are married, how many children they have, what their political inclinations and proclivities are, whether they're, for example, inclined to be pro American or inclined to be constitutionally anti-American, and so forth.

Well, by the time I was DCM in Guatemala this kind of function was being done mostly by the CIA. They were also doing more political analysis and reporting of an orthodox, ordinary type that was one of the mainstays of the old Foreign Service.

*Q: Did you ever collide? Any examples of collision between you might say the Foreign Service approach and the CIA approach?*

CORRIGAN: Yes. There were examples of that. On one occasion for example, I found that the Labor Attaché, who was part of our political section, was working in a complete vacuum and writing reports and making analyses about certain developments in the labor field that were entirely inspired, and I supposed financed, by the CIA. But without reference to and without knowledge on the part of the labor attaché the CIA was engaging in activities that were causing certain events and movements in the labor union field. That's one example.

Another example is reporting. On one occasion I saw a CIA message that had reported that the man who had been named head of government following the overthrow of Ydigoras Fuentes was about to name himself president. We had been tasked by Washington to keep an eye on this to discourage it, because we were hoping that the country would return to democratic elections, and have a democratically elected president, as soon as possible. And, indeed, the military establishment which took over after Ydigoras Fuentes consistently and constantly assured us that their wish was really the same as ours, to return to democracy.

I saw a message that the CIA had sent, without reference to anybody in the embassy, that these people who were in control had made the decision that this head of government would declare himself president. As I say, the development would not be good news to Washington. I scratched my head in perplexity, because this did not jibe with what we were hearing in the embassy. So, I ascertained from an extremely reliable source very close to this head of government that this was simply not the case, and so informed Washington to the anger and consternation of the station chief.

*Q: But then in a way we're in a situation which one really dislikes seeing two sides reporting two quite different things without at least having a joint communique saying we see it one way and they see it another. Which is a perfectly fair way of doing it. But they were by-passing you.*

CORRIGAN: Precisely. And it was simply symptomatic, it was just one instance that brought this into relief, but it was symptomatic of a failure to have a complete in-house dialogue on these matters that are of common interest to our entire government in Washington, not just to the CIA. In other words, that particular CIA person could have saved himself that embarrassment by coming to us, because we had very good political contacts. We had a couple of fellows in the Political Section, one of whom, Frank McNeil, for example, himself became an ambassador. A very distinguished officer. We had top-flight people, and they were out talking to people and listening to people and reading all the papers, and were absolutely nonplused by this report that came out of the blue. How much better it would have been for these CIA officers to get a little meeting of three or four of us together and say "Hey, look, this is what we hear. What do you hear?"

*Q: After this was there a little bit of knocking heads so you all got together more?*

CORRIGAN: No, no. There was no noticeable effect.

*Q: How about Washington? Obviously Guatemala was not on the top of our concerns in those days. But do you get much direction from Washington, or not? Support from Guatemala desk, pressures from Congress?*

CORRIGAN: No, my recollection is that we were adequately backstopped by the State Department. We had good Guatemala desk officers. And what was that other part of your question?

*Q: I was wondering, were there any pressures from Congress, or even media accounts and all that caused you to be concerned, looking over your shoulder at events in the United States that affected your operations?*

CORRIGAN: No. No, I don't recall any kind of Congressional pressure really. In the back of my mind there may have been a couple of visa cases. This type of thing.

*Q: This is par for the course. What about the role of our military in Guatemala? Either military assistance officers or military attachés, did they have a strong influence there? .*

CORRIGAN: The military attaché's office was staffed by capable people who had good rapport with the Guatemalan military. They were able to know what the Guatemalans were up to; were perfectly cooperative with us in the embassy with respect to what was going on and provided input for our general reporting on conditions there.

We had a military group (MILGROUP) as well, an Air Force section and an Army section, and they were managing what was then a fairly substantial military assistance program, which has, of course, disappeared since those days. There was a lot of technical work in connection with that, you know. Equipment would come in, and there would be training in connection with the use of that equipment, and rapport with the top people in the Air Force and the Army and so forth. I think, really nothing particularly noteworthy to report with respect to their presence. They were helpful. The Guatemalan military certainly welcomed them.

*Q: But there was not a heavy hand as far as our military was concerned of trying to over-strengthen the military, or you felt that they were somewhat of a loose cannon within the country? I mean, I'm speaking of our military.*

CORRIGAN: Well, there was one rather amusing incident that showed an extremely heavy hand on the part of one mil group commander. It was after the overthrow of Ydigoras and Colonel Peralta, who was also minister of defense and had been minister of defense at the time of the overthrow, was head of government, not the president. And there was a good

deal, you must keep in mind, in those days in Guatemala, guerrilla activity. And so there were safety concerns. And occasionally there would be these curfews.

Well, it just happened that there was a curfew. By curfew I mean you have to be off the streets by say 9 o'clock until 6 o'clock the next morning. And it just happened that one of these periods of curfews coincided with the visit of a very high-ranking Congressional delegation from the Armed Services Committee of the Senate. And one of the Senators was none other than Prescott Bush, the father of the possible next president of the United States.

*Q: Vice President George Bush.*

CORRIGAN: The father of George Bush. And so as a consequence the ambassador named the mil group commander the control officer. And we talked it over in the embassy, and decided that since there was a curfew we would abide by it. It would have been the easiest thing in the world, of course, to go to the authorities and say "Look, these are very important Senators. It's a shame to send them back to their hotel at 9 o'clock." But we thought that might not be a bad idea. Let them see how things were. But we arranged for them to have all the meetings they should have. And so the ambassador decided on a buffet dinner, which would start at 6 o'clock, and would end say about five minutes to nine, giving the Senators time to get back to their nearby hotel. And the ambassador's wife had gone to great pains to provide a very sumptuous buffet. And the head of government was there, and all of the principal people with whom these particular Senators should talk. And things were going beautifully until about 8 o'clock the wife of the ambassador said "Well, the buffet is ready." Open the doors to the dining room and everybody could go in there. And the mil group commander called me aside and said, "Well, we won't be eating here, because I have invited the Senators to dinner at my house." (laughter) Frustrating the whole idea, plus certainly downgrading the ambassador's wife's fine dinner.

But in any event, as an aside I might say that this really got the ambassador's dander up, and that fellow was out of there within a few days.

*Q: Well, returning to the military, you moved from Guatemala to be basically the political advisor to our military in Panama. Is that correct?*

CORRIGAN: Yes. I was a political advisor to the Commander in Chief, United States Southern Command, based, as you know, in Quarry Heights, what was then the Canal Zone.

*Q: Could you describe a bit about what that, how do you pronounce that, USCINCSOUTH, or something? What was their responsibility?*

CORRIGAN: Well, the USCINCSOUTH, or CINC Southern Command, was a four-star Army general. In my particular case, a very fine man. One of the finest men I've ever met, Gen. Robert W. Porter, Jr. He had gone to that job from being commander of the First Army in New York, Governor's Island.

But, in any event, what were his functions? His command had a function, one, to defend the Panama Canal; and, two, to manage the military assistance programs throughout Latin America. And this had to do with equipment as well as training. Therefore, the Commander in Chief, U. S. Southern Command, rode herd, if you will, over these mil groups such as we had in Guatemala and which we had in practically all of the other countries.

The Southern Command was made up of United States Air Force Southern Command, United States Army Southern Command, and U. S. Navy Southern Command, which was also the 15th Naval District.

So a good deal of our time was spent on the road traveling to the Latin American countries, where the CINC would meet with the principal military figures of those countries, and often with civilian figures too because this particular man had a very broad interest. And he would like on occasion for example, to call on the foreign minister, if the respective embassy thought that appropriate. He was very careful about coordinating his activities with our embassies in each country, and, indeed, a principal task of the political advisor was to be a liaison with the embassies. And often when the general was in a given country, Bolivia or Chile or Brazil, wherever, while he would be off visiting military installations and military figures, the POLAD or political advisor, would meet with the embassy people, picking their brains about how they thought the mil group was functioning, whether it was succeeding, whether it had a heavy hand, for example. Whether it had good people, and how well it was cooperating with the embassy. And occasionally we would find areas of weakness where a given in the eyes of the embassy was not cooperating the way he should. And in those instances that fellow would get the message from the CINC. And if he didn't improve in that area, why he wasn't there very long.

At the same time there would be occasions, of course, where the military fellow in a given instance might have been right and the embassy might have been wrong, and I as the POLAD would lay this out to the CINC and say, "Look there are two points of view on this particular issue." The general might decide in favor of his military man and I might even agree with him, even though it would go against my own service. But I didn't report to the Department. I was given by the Department to the general to work for him. In other words, I was not working for the State Department but rather for the general.

*Q: I recently interviewed Ambassador Maurice Bernbaum concerning his time in Ecuador and Venezuela and also in other Latin American posts. And he said that the American military didn't play a very large role in much of Latin America, and one reason was that many of the officers sent down just weren't that fluent in Spanish. And that fluency in Spanish is such an important factor in that area that without it your effectiveness is down. How do you feel about this?*

CORRIGAN: Yes, I think that's well taken. It's true with certainly a number of notable exceptions. But by and large that is true. These fellows were usually colonels, and fairly senior colonels. And they, most of them, did not have a very good knowledge of Spanish.

*Q: It was a retirement post in many cases?*

CORRIGAN: Well, unfortunately in many cases it was. One of the things we used to be unhappy about was the fact that your really top officers, the ones who were going toward flag rank and general officer rank, more often than not did not have such assignments. And that was a weakness.

On the other hand, more important, and what I think made for success or not very much success, or even failure, on the part of some of those fellows, were other factors. Because 1), most of the high ranking military people in the countries with whom they worked spoke English; and 2) they always had capable younger officers on their staffs, captains or majors, who did speak the language. So they were able to communicate. There wasn't any problem there.

And the other thing is they just didn't intrude as a general rule into the political thing. In other words they were not, in most cases, a thorn in the side of ambassadors or embassies.

*Q: Well, did you find that sitting sort of at the center of this military network that the general with whom you worked, General Palmer, was . . .*

CORRIGAN: Make that Porter.

*Q: . . . Porter I mean, keeping a very close watch to make sure that our military groups and attachés were doing what they should be doing, and not getting themselves immersed into what were particularly in that time a series of governments run by military men. And one would think there such an affinity between military man and the United States being the source of all the military goodies that we might find ourselves getting more involved than we wanted to. Was this a problem in keeping herd on our effort?*

CORRIGAN: Not a very great problem at all. It certainly occurred in some instances, but it wasn't a big problem. As I say, they were pretty well convinced that they had to stay within the bounds of their military functions, and not try to be political wheeler-dealers. And in the few cases where they strayed from that path, they were certainly put into line by General Porter . . .

*Q: Can you give any examples?*

CORRIGAN: . . . because he had a great feel for this type of thing.

He had, incidentally, been, what was it called, CENTO. In Turkey. He had been commanding officer out there, which was more of a political job, of course, than--yes. So he had excellent cooperative and working relations with our people, and he was just very finely tuned to this type of thing.

*Q: Where was he getting his political instructions? You were an advisor, but was there a line? He got his orders straight from the Department of Defense.*

CORRIGAN: Yes. He reported to the Joint Chiefs of Staff. But he got his political knowledge, or information, he was reading a lot of the same messages I was reading. We were on distribution for embassy political reporting besides, of course, getting all of the reports from his military group people. And, he made frequent trips to Washington.

We would come to Washington very frequently, like once a month. And he always made it a point to go over and talk to the Assistant Secretary for Latin American Affairs, as well as, incidentally up on the Hill. He used to like to go and "ring doorbells", i.e. talk to Senators and Congressmen. The ones, for example, who had the Latin American Subcommittees of the House and Senate Foreign Relations committees.

*Q: In 1968 you left that post to go as Consul General Sao Paulo. How did you feel about that assignment?*

CORRIGAN: I'll get to that in just one second. I want to come back to the caliber of these military people we were talking about. There were exceptions, and most of the exceptions seemed to be concentrated in Brazil. And I suppose one reason for this is because Brazil is a very large country. So a lot of the people who went to Brazil to head the Army, Navy or Air Force section of our military group were really up and coming fellows.

For example, Thomas D. White, who was there as head of the Air Force section at one time, because, of course, one of the most eminent military men we've produced, Chief of Staff of the Air Force, etc.

Well, to go back. Yes, I was then named Consul General in Sao Paulo. Delighted with the assignment. Knew a lot about it, of course, from my days in my first post in Rio. Knew that it was a post viewed by many people of the Foreign Service as equivalent to an embassy. Being in a city of, I guess, only about 10 or 12 million in those days. They say up to around 18 million today. And a fantastic, vibrant, interesting, exciting place.

*Q: Sao Paulo has the reputation of being the other capital of Brazil. Rio being one, Brasilia being almost non-existent as a capital. But one thinks of Sao Paulo having the equivalent weight, almost of an embassy.*

CORRIGAN: Yes. For example, in the Nixon administration you may recall that the president named Nelson Rockefeller to head a mission to Latin America and report back to him. This was a famous mission where in a number of instances ambassadors were pushed aside, because this mission was supposed to make its own independent judgments, and not be influenced by bothersome ambassadors. It was made up, you may recall, of very eminent people in various fields, like the field of education, the field of finance. One of the fellows, for example, who accompanied Governor Rockefeller was Houghton, the brother of the man who had been ambassador to France. Or, indeed, he might have been the fellow who

was ambassador to France later. He had a high military guy who happened, incidentally, to be General Porter, who had since retired. At all of the stops on the mission's itinerary we were required in a very short space of time to arrange high level meetings with the eminent people in that particular place in the various fields. So you had to get the top education people. You had to get the top military people. The top banking people. The top cultural people. It was, therefore, very much more difficult to arrange than a simple mission where you're only concerned about the head man, Governor Rockefeller in this instance. And Sao Paulo was the only noncapital city on that itinerary. Therefore, we were the only non-embassy required to come front and center and arrange this extremely complicated visit and fulfill these very demanding requirements of the governor and his people.

*Q: What were your principal responsibilities as Consul General in Sao Paulo, that you saw then?*

CORRIGAN: Well, since we were in such an important part of Brazil and the nerve center of business and finance, our job was to report on what was going on in the business and financial community. This included, of course, rapport with a large group of important American business representatives, because very large companies, you know, Goodyear, General Motors, Ford, Clark Equipment, Eaton Manufacturing, and on and on, had plants. They were manufacturers there. With huge responsibilities and interests, and so a good deal of our interest was in keeping in touch with those fellows, keeping them informed and working with them.

Another thing, of course, since you're in such a big and important place in the scheme of that country, there are constant social and representation functions that take up an inordinate amount of the Consul General's time. And, of course, we were in a sense an adjunct of the embassy in Brasilia.

Our consular district covered a number of states in a very large area, including Mato Grosso, the sort of Texas of Brazil, way out to the west. And also large cities.

*Q: What was the political situation that you saw in Sao Paulo?*

CORRIGAN: The political situation, of course, in those days did not loom anywhere near as large as it does in Brazil today where you have a very complex democratic situation. It was still under military rule. In other words it was still consequent to the 1964 revolution where you had a series of military governments. You still had one in those days. But there was still a great deal of ferment. The old political parties and the old political personalities and new ones coming up, student elements, labor union elements and the like were restive under an authoritarian government, were certainly very active. One of our main jobs was to keep in touch with those people.

*Q: Was there a problem in keeping in touch with what was basically the opposition? Were there protests from the military government?*

CORRIGAN: None whatever. None whatever. The Brazilians are very sophisticated in that regard. They knew that was going on. They had no objection to it really. They had problems with those groups and dealt with them in their own way, sometimes in a heavy-handed way. But as far as our either getting into any difficulties with the Brazilian government, or pulling any punches, or withdrawing from contacts with and friendship, indeed, with a lot of those elements, there was never any problem.

*Q: Did you have any problem in reporting things in a straight manner? Overplaying the role of--I mean, sometimes when a country is under a great deal, you might say, of media pressure from the United States, that the United States should have a larger role in trying to bring this country to democracy, there's a tendency to be a little bit careful on how you report the actions of the military, the police, on repressing people, because if that gets back to Washington it will lead to the press, and this causes more trouble. Did you feel that pressure in that matter?*

CORRIGAN: No, I wasn't aware of any pressure, and frequently my reports would be critical of certain heavy-handed activities on the part of the Brazilian military in those areas, but we didn't pull any punches reporting it, and I don't recall any incidents of leaking of that and causing us any problems.

*Q: I wonder if you could comment on the terrorism that seemed to break out particularly in the period you were there, including the kidnapping of Ambassador Elbrick while you were in Brazil.*

CORRIGAN: Yes. That was a very difficult time in Brazil, including in Sao Paulo, and subsequent to Ambassador Elbrick's kidnapping as Consul General I had a great deal of protection. I was picked up every morning by police who had been assigned by the state government to protect me. And they were in a station wagon with sawed off shotguns, three or four of these fellows in a station wagon with shotguns on the floor in front of them, and one fellow riding shotgun in the right front of my car. And the last couple of years I was there this was the situation.

The Japanese Consul General in Sao Paulo was kidnapped during that period. We had intelligence supports that I was a target, that the Portuguese Consul General was a target, and all in all it wasn't a very pleasant way to go about your business outside the office.

*Q: Did this have much of an effect on the effectiveness of the Consulate General, the whole staff getting around?*

CORRIGAN: No, not really. And I was the only one who had this kind of protection. The others took their chances. Fortunately nothing ever happened.

Indeed, shortly after I got to Sao Paulo, before this terrorism thing got as serious as it did later, although it was extremely serious for Captain Chandler.

There was an American Army captain called Chandler, who was a student. They have a program, I think they're called Olmstead scholarships, where promising Army officers are permitted to go abroad and study a year or two in a place of their choice. This is not to be confused with FAST, Foreign Area Specialist Training, but it's something like that. And this particular very fine young captain was there with his family studying at the University of Sao Paulo. Well, he was a gringo, and so he was fingered for elimination, and they did, indeed, eliminate him one, Saturday morning. He was leaving his house with his young son and, as I recall the situation, he had backed out of the driveway into the street, and the son, maybe a ten year old boy or something like that, was closing the gate to the house. Fortunately the boy had not yet got back into the car with his father to run an errand. And two or three of these little VW bugs, there was such a proliferation of those in Brazil that you wouldn't believe it. You never saw so many VW bugs in your life. And anyhow two or three of those converged and guys got out and opened fire hitting Chandler with very, very many shots and he was killed immediately.

*Q: Was this at all in reaction to Vietnam? Did Vietnam have much of a role?*

CORRIGAN: Well, it was all part of that, you know. Yeah, Vietnam certainly was one of the things, and that was the height, of course, of the Vietnam conflict. But, you know, general anti-Americanism and terrorism of these Communists also figured. There was a man called Marighela who was a famous terrorist, who was credited with being a leader of a lot of this, who was finally done in.

In any event, that was always there during most of my time in Sao Paulo.

*Q: Well, I'd like to move on now to your assignment to Africa. You had served as a young officer in Africa at where?*

CORRIGAN: Dakar.

*Q: But it seems you were a Latin American specialist, and all of the sudden you were appointed as ambassador to Rwanda. How did this come about?*

CORRIGAN: Well, there again I just don't know how those things work, but I got a telephone call one day from Bill Rountree, who was then ambassador in Brasilia. And he said that he had heard from Cleo Noel, an officer in personnel, and they wanted the ambassador to ask me whether I was interested in being ambassador to Rwanda. He was to get back to Mr. Noel. And Bill Rountree telephoned me, and at first I thought it was a joke, except I knew that Bill Rountree was not a man given to levity. Anybody who knows him, he's a rather serious chap. A very fine man, serious however. And then when I realized he was serious I said, "Where is Rwanda?"

And then I got to thinking, and naturally I told him I'd call him back. He said to give him a ring the next day. Whereupon I went to the books and looked up Rwanda and so forth, and found out that the capital is a place called Kigali, credited with some 25,000 inhabitants.

And then I looked at myself in Sao Paulo with about 12 to 15 million inhabitants, and I wondered whether I could take that cultural shock at my advanced age.

*Q: Are you married? I haven't asked about your wife and family. How have they found the Foreign Service?*

CORRIGAN: Oh, they thrived on it. My wife misses it. She misses the traveling from country to country. When she came back, however, she entered an entirely new profession. She studied and became a registered nurse, and worked at that in critical care nursing for a while, and then finally evolved into a management position out here at Suburban Hospital in Bethesda, where she's Director of Quality Assurance, which is a very responsible job.

In any event, we have five children. One born in Chile, two born in Guatemala. One in 1960 when we went there, and the other one, the youngest, not too long before we left in 1964. So, of our five children, two were born in Guatemala, one in Chile, and two in the United States.

However, our oldest boy is about 34, learned Portuguese, of course, in Brazil, went to high school there, and later, after college and graduate school, was employed by Manufacturers Hanover Trust Company, and went back to Brazil as their manager in Sao Paulo. So, that stood him in good stead.

But, in any event, that was a consideration, of course, going to this little place, what kind of education facilities. And, as I recall the situation, I called Bill Rountree back the next day and told him I'd thought it over and it was just too much of a switch at my stage of my career, approaching retirement, and I said I didn't think so. And he said, "Okay."

I said, "What would you do?" I still was uncertain.

And he said, "I can't give you an opinion, because it's too important. You've got to make up your own mind."

So that was my tentative feeling, and I told him in Brasilia, and he got back to Cleo and told him negative. And then I got to thinking what a fool I'd been to pass up the chance to be an ambassador. And I called my brother in New York, with whom I had a good relationship, and we kicked it around, as the saying goes, and finally it was the consensus yes, you're foolish to pass it up. It's a fantastic experience. You've already been in Sao Paulo for three years.

My wife was sort of like Bill Rountree. She was very careful not to try to sway me one way or the other. It had to be my decision.

So anyhow, after all this, and there were a lot of "ham" radio operators around Sao Paulo. And this was about a day later. Through one of my "ham" operator friends I got Cleo Noel

on the telephone and I said "I know Bill Rountree has probably been back to you by now, Cleo. That thanks but no thanks." I said, "Is it too late to change my mind."

He said, "No, Bob. Delighted." Whereupon that was that.

*Q: Well, when you went there, looking again at the Foreign Service as a career pattern, and each area region sort of has its own cadre. And you very obviously were from the American Republic cadre. Did you find some resentment when you moved into Africa, taking a slot away from an Africanist or not?*

CORRIGAN: I wasn't aware of it in my period of orientation in the department with the people in Central African Affairs and so on. There might have been such resentment.

*Q: Well, there does seem to be a certain pattern to reward career officers. Those people who have had Far Eastern Affairs ended up also as ambassadors to Africa. But because of the political appointees that Africa seems to be at least then, probably not now, one of the few places where there were some openings to reward career people with ambassadorships. Did you feel this might be part of a pattern to that?*

CORRIGAN: That what? That Africa . . .

*Q: In Africa, that ambassadorial posts in Africa. Were you as part of the career ladder, despite ones expertise in other areas?*

CORRIGAN: Well, as I recall in Africa at that point there weren't very many political appointees. There were more political appointees in Latin America. Hence, more Latin American posts were foreclosed to Latin Americanists who were coming along and would be eligible for embassies. And, therefore, I suppose maybe that's one of the reasons that I got an African post, in that I was foreclosed from a Latin American post.

Since then, however, the man most recently in Rwanda was a political appointee, and I think he was the first one.

*Q: It shows the political appointees are getting hungrier. What were our principal concerns in Rwanda?*

CORRIGAN: Well, in Rwanda our principal concerns were ---- I suppose, the principal concern, other than hoping that this would remain a stable country not cause problems for the United States, was its voting in the United Nations and subsidiary bodies. So one of the main tasks of the ambassador was frequently to go to the Foreign Ministry and expound on the desirability of voting our way on one of the matters that were constantly coming up for votes in the U. N. General Assembly, etc.

*Q: Well now, Rwanda, in most cases would have very little concern one way or another in many of these actions and problems on the parts of the world. But how did they react to your persuasion?*

CORRIGAN: Well, Rwanda's main preoccupation at that time, and the message that they constantly gave me over and over again, and indeed the only message, was very simple. "We are the poorest country in the world, you are the richest country in the world. You should be giving us very much more aid than you are."

In point of fact, our aid was minimal. I mean almost nothing. There was a contingency fee of, I think it was something like \$50,000 . . .

*Q: Good God.*

CORRIGAN: . . . that the ambassador had at his disposal to promote self-help projects. I found from my colleague in neighboring Burundi, a very enterprising fellow, that he had had this amount increased many fold, or considerably in any event, I forget the exact amount, but he was way ahead of us in this regard.

So my main concern and an objective of mine was, therefore, to get as much more as I could. But you couldn't do that without finding projects. And often you would have to generate projects. So we went around and tried to identify projects, and in some cases generate them. And they were self-help projects, as you know. It was a matching contribution on our part to monies or contributions that were put up. So, we found a lot of those, and did a lot of those.

*Q: Did Belgium play much of a role there as far as aid went?*

CORRIGAN: The Belgium presence was the dominant foreign presence in the country, because in colonial days prior to 1960 they were running the place. So they had a large embassy and were easily the number one donor. And they had people scattered throughout the bureaucracy and civil servants as advisors and what not. The Belgians were easily the number one foreign power there.

Other aid programs fairly generous in relative terms were provided by the French, the West Germans, the Swiss and the Chinese Nationalists.

One of the sad things during my incumbency there was that one day the Chinese ambassador, this is Republic of China in Taiwan, was called to the Foreign Ministry and told that he had 48 hours to leave the country, because they were going to recognize the Peoples Republic of China. And this fellow literally was out of there within the 48 hours. This seemed terribly abrupt and cruel and without sufficient warning to the representative of a country that had provided them a great deal of assistance, particularly . . .

*Q: Why did this come about?*

CORRIGAN: Well, there again, in the strange, obscure ways of Africa, at least of Rwanda in those days, there was no prior indication of this, certainly on the part of the Chinese. He was the most surprised man in the world. We had no knowledge of this whatsoever. And as far as I know, even the Belgians, no foreigners. It just happened. And they had done it, they did it for their own reasons, which, well, for the same reasons, I guess, that a lot of countries have done that. They just felt it would be in their self-interest. Obviously they had been approached by the Peoples Republic of China representatives, no doubt, who had offered them assistance, this, that and the other, and they must have thought that this assistance would be greater than what they were getting from the Republic of China.

*Q: What type of government did Rwanda have?*

CORRIGAN: Rwanda had an authoritarian government. Gregoire Kayibanda was the president. He supposedly was elected in a democratic election closely watched by the Belgians at the time of independence. And he represented the majority Hutus.

Both Rwanda and Burundi were and are made up of a very large majority of Hutus, and a relatively small percentage of Tutsis. The Tutsis were the aristocrats, who for centuries, not only generations, but centuries, had treated the Hutus, the shorter people, the Tutsis being the tall ones . . .

*Q: The Tutsis are very, very tall?*

CORRIGAN: . . . the tall ones treated the Hutus as serfs. As a lower order of being. Absolute serfs.

Well, Belgium, of course, was running these places under United Nations authority, and for some reason prior to independence in Rwanda, the Hutu majority had gained power in an election supervised by the Belgians. So that when independence came, shortly thereafter, they were already in power. For some reason in neighboring Burundi, the same size, the same population, roughly the same percentage of Tutsis versus Hutu, that did not occur. Their elections had produced a Tutsi leader. In fact, he was a king. So that at the time of independence Burundi became a kingdom under a Tutsi king, with the mass of the Hutus in a subservient position. In neighboring Rwanda the Hutus, the majority, were in power from the beginning, and Gregoire Kayibanda, the George Washington of Rwanda if you will, was the head man.

There was at independence time in Rwanda considerable fear on the part of the Tutsis that they would be persecuted and discriminated against, and indeed killed at the hands of the now-powerful Hutus. And a good deal of that happened. Several thousand of them were killed, I believe, and a greater number fled to neighboring Zaire and some, of course, to Burundi, and a lot of them to Uganda. So you had large colonies of Rwandan Tutsis in those countries.

However, that was nothing to what occurred in Burundi while I was ambassador to Rwanda in early 1973, when we started getting reports from our embassy in Burundi that literally thousands of Hutus were being slaughtered by the Tutsis who were in power. It was no longer a kingdom, by the way. After some years as a kingdom they did revert to a republic, but power remained in the hands of the Tutsis. And these Tutsis rulers, fearing, which they apparently do periodically, fearing that somehow the huge majority of Hutus will overthrow them, contrive to eliminate the "educated" ones. And I'm afraid in that instance in early '73 that an educated Hutu was almost anybody who had anything like a sixth grade education. Just to nip in the bud any possible emergence of a dissident leader.

It was estimated that in those first few months of 1973, upwards of 200,000 people in Burundi were slaughtered and dumped into mass graves. Something the world knows very little about, and seems to care about even less.

*Q: Was there anything our embassy there could have done?*

CORRIGAN: Not so far as I could see from my vantage point in Rwanda. They simply wrung their hands. They doubtless made representations.

*Q: How were relations with the Belgians in Rwanda?*

CORRIGAN: They were fine, absolutely fine. We had the same general objectives. We were delighted that the Belgians were in there to the extent they were, and helping economically to the extent they were. They made us feel cheap in a way in that they were so generous and were so interested and we weren't.

*Q: Well, was this a bit of spheres of influence? In other words, as long as the Belgians are doing their share, let's concentrate somewhere else with an American aid program, would you say?*

CORRIGAN: Well, I don't know. As a matter of fact, I don't know whether back in Washington they were thinking along those lines. I do know that in Tanzania there was, in relative terms, a fairly large aid program. I remember driving through Tanzania seeing large signs on a road project here, on some other housing project or whatever there. These signs would denote US AID. I was shaking my head and was quite unhappy about this disparity, particularly when I realized that Tanzania was voting against us in the United Nations on almost any issue; while Rwanda was voting on our side on every single one. When I got back to Rwanda I delivered myself of a report on this, how I thought this was a little bit out of balance, and couldn't we redress that imbalance somehow. I remember the then American ambassador to Tanzania became quite upset with me for having reported in that fashion, because he feared a possible result could be to reduce his program in some fashion.

*Q: What sort of direction were you getting from Washington? Very little?*

CORRIGAN: Yes, very little really. The simple message was, you know, to just keep doing what you're doing, and if you can find more of these worthy self-help programs, go ahead and do so and ask for the money, and on our end we'll do everything we can to try to get a little more money for you. But these amounts were so trifling compared, for example, to what was going on in anti-American Tanzania that it wasn't even funny.

*Q: Well, we're nearing the end of our discussion, but you moved to the Department of Defense for your final job. Could you describe what that was?*

CORRIGAN: Well, I was over there in ISA, International Security Affairs, which is sometimes called the DOD's Little State Department. We were kind of structured along the same lines of the geographic areas, a Deputy Assistant Secretary for Latin American, which I was, another one for NATO and Europe, another one for the Middle East, and one for the Far East.

There again, we were interested in the activities of these same military groups down there. We were interested in, the military assistance programs and their continuation in the various countries. We had the same preoccupation with respect to geo-political strategic considerations about Cuba and the presence of Cuba and Cuban activities in other countries as the State Department did.

We worked very closely with the State Department. We had frequent meetings with ARA on all of these questions.

*Q: Well, how did you, looking at this being from the State Department, but in the Department of Defense, were there two policies going at the time we're talking about? This is 1973 to 1975. Or did you feel that they were pretty well enmeshed, the Department of Defense and the Department of State?*

CORRIGAN: They were generally well enmeshed. I suppose the principal point of difference was a general feeling in our shop, a view shared by the Joint Chiefs, that we were, perhaps, missing a bet by being too quick to do away with military assistance and to do away with, or drastically reduce, the military missions. We felt that was a useful function. We felt that it kept us closer to the military people in those countries who, as you know, exercise differing degrees, of course, in differing countries, but a very high degree of influence, and that we were letting these kinds of relationships erode to the eventual detriment of our overall relationships in the region.

Now, whatever the reasons that finally led to an almost complete abandonment of military assistance in Latin America, (except now, of course, in Central American where we have special cases of countries at war, Salvador and Nicaragua), we have, indeed, lost a tremendous amount of influence. And our relationships with a number of those countries, it seems to me, are in far worse shape than they conceivably otherwise could have been, notably countries like Brazil.

*Q: Well now, how did we view giving weapons to these countries, when most of them aren't really fighting wars? There aren't great external threats.*

CORRIGAN: I know. That's really awfully difficult. You can argue it. In fact, you know, when I was in Chile, I served in the American Embassy in Chile from '54 to '57. And in those days military assistance to Latin America was predicated and justified on the notion that in a war in some other locale than Latin America, in which the United States might be engaged, we would have been provided forces, land, air or sea, which would be equipped and trained in a way that they could join United States forces. And that was the rationale.

It's kind of a hard rationale to take seriously now when you think about it, because, you know, you just can't picture if we're going to war let's say in Europe, picking up a group of Chilean soldiers and Chilean tanks and transporting them over to France and Germany.

*Q: The Brazilians were probably as much of a bother as not in World War II because of the logistics problem.*

CORRIGAN: So then that rationale shifted in later years, and as this terrorist threat grew, the kidnappings and all of the other terrorist acts, it then became counter-insurgency; the rationale then became to help these other armies and other military establishments---to help them mount forces that could deter insurgency or deal with it when it erupted. There again, that's forcing it a little bit too. So that really, in both cases, under both rationales, I believe it was mostly a political thing. Mainly, 1) you're helping them economically in that if you're providing military material, they're not going to go into their coffers using monies that should be used for economic development and social programs. So, we're helping them economically and politically in that sense. And 2) in the other sense you're keeping a rapport and a relationship with the military who, if not running the countries, are powerful elements of influence within the country. So it becomes, therefore, political.

*Q: Well, we're reaching the end of your time here. I wonder, a question I try to ask in this type of interview. Looking back on your career, what would you say gave you the greatest satisfaction, and then the reverse. What was your major disappointment?*

CORRIGAN: That's a hard one to answer. I sometimes facetiously say that I got my greatest satisfaction, or one of my greatest satisfactions, because you could actually see an accomplishment, was when I was Deputy Chief of Protocol, I looked at the Diplomatic List, that blue book that is published every couple of months listing the personnel of all foreign embassies in Washington. And I found it was a hodgepodge of titles and nomenclature. For example, an ambassador of Bolivia would be called Senor Antonio Duarte. And then in the case of Chile the man would be called Don Antonio Duarte. And his wife would be down there as Senora de Duarte. And then you'd go over to Brazil and it wouldn't be Senora de Duarte, it would be Madame Duarte. And well, the Don, of course, is a term of respect like sir. So, we, therefore, the United States, for everybody to see in a United States government publication, were listing the Chilean ambassador in a more respectful fashion than the Bolivian and listings were in various ways.

*Q: Especially in protocol, this is can be important.*

CORRIGAN: Yes. And I found out that this had been going on for years. I thought how ridiculous this was. So I cooked up a memo, did a lot of research and whatnot, and proposed a complete change of format where everything would be in English. All ambassadors would His Excellency Mr. or Dr. or General, if he should happen to be. And then down below would Mrs. whatever her name was. No more Madam or Madame, Senora or Don, because they were all mixed up in a hodgepodge.

And I got this up. I worked with John Burns, you may recall.

*Q: Yes, he was my Consul General in Frankfurt.*

CORRIGAN: All right. John was an old friend of mine, and he was working for Loy Henderson. And Loy Henderson was, you know, the Under Secretary for Management. He could sign off on this thing. So I had carefully planned, and, of course, I had persuaded Wiley Buchanan, the Chief of Protocol to go along with me. I gave this to John and I said, "We want your okay on this, John, or rather Mr. Henderson's okay."

Lo and behold, it sailed through. We got the okay, and from that time on the Diplomatic List has been clean, and in English and uniform. And, so I consider that quite an accomplishment after many years.

*Q: It was important.*

CORRIGAN: And in aside I might say that there was no problem from any embassy except we got a formal note from the Ambassador of the Netherlands to the Secretary of State taking exception and wondering how we had the nerve to do this and no longer call his wife Madam whatever her name was. She now was an ordinary Mrs. so and so. I looked at this, and since this was my baby and it had been routed to me for action, I just kind of put it aside, because I knew Wiley Buchanan was going to be out of town the following week, and I would be acting Chief of Protocol. So the minute Monday morning came, and Wiley was safely out of town, because I just didn't want to bother him with this detail, I told my secretary please to get the Dutch Ambassador on the telephone.

I formally identified myself as the Acting Chief of Protocol of the United States, and informed the Ambassador we had in hand his note complaining about our change in nomenclature in the Diplomatic List and wondering why he had not been consulted prior to our action.

And I then said, "Mr. Ambassador," Is it the custom for the Dutch Foreign Ministry to consult with the American Embassy in the Hague about such matters?" I probably embellished it a little bit, but I really gave it to him.

*Q: Is there anything that you wish you could have done that you weren't able to do that sort of sticks in your craw? Or frustration?*

CORRIGAN: My general frustration is what I see happening to the Foreign Service in what I perceive to be a very great plummeting of morale as a lot of new rules are instituted. And particularly the downgrading of using the career service as a source of people to run our top jobs.

Now, if you don't like these people, get people you like within the service. Certainly, and there are certain ones whose philosophy or what not you may not like in any given new administration, you can look around in a vast field of talent and find people with whom you would be perfectly comfortable. And go with those people to head your embassies, to head your main jobs in the State Department. And not use these jobs as rewards to people who are perceived to be great friends of the administration.

Incidentally, I notice in the cases of people who've gotten jobs in Mr. Reagan's government in high positions, positions which should and could be filled by capable Foreign Service people who have worked themselves up through the ranks, a lot of them ironically are people who were never for Ronald Reagan in the beginning anyhow.

*Q: Well then, how do you feel about the Foreign Service as a career today? Would you recommend it to people, or qualify it or not?*

CORRIGAN: Well, I'm of two minds on that. I want very much to recommend it to people, because we've got to have absolutely top flight people, you know, if our interests are going to be best protected and advanced in the world. But I'm hesitant to do so when I see what happens within the service, and the capriciousness, if you will, of a system which frequently fails to advance people the way they should or to give them the rewards they should have.

*Q: Well, Mr. Ambassador, I appreciate very much this time you've given here, and thank you very much.*

CORRIGAN: You're very welcome. I thank you.

*End of interview*