

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

**AMBASSADOR GEORGE ALLEN MORGAN**

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**INTERVIEW**

*Q: Ambassador Morgan it's a great pleasure, an honor for me to have this opportunity to talk to you about your very distinguished and long career. If we could begin with how you got your first interest in foreign affairs, coming as you did from an academic background, and how you entered the Foreign Service I think would be of great interest.*

MORGAN: When World War II broke out I was teaching philosophy at Duke but wanted to get into the war. So in the end I just let myself be drafted as a plain Private and began my military service that way with basic training. Then I did OCS at the Field Artillery School and served overseas. But during this period I decided I didn't want to go back to academic life; I wanted something more active and so I thought of Washington as the best place for somebody of my background to look, and so I did. I came to Washington after I got out of the Army and knocked on various doors and interviewed with various people. And it turned out that the State Department was the most likely place for me and the work I was most interested in. I got a job first in the State Department as a writer, of all things. That I did for a short time. Then in 1947 I applied for lateral entry into the Foreign Service. At that time there was a War Manpower Act, I think they called it, which was trying to recruit people at middle grade, rather than just at the bottom of the Service because during the war they hadn't had any replacements. So I got in, luckily at Class 3, was given the usual introductory course, and then an intensive course in Russian language. I expressed special interest in Russia and Russian, so I did that in the summer. Then in the fall, winter, and spring I had an academic year at the Russian Institute of Columbia and did background Russian studies. While there I wrote, for a Seminar, a big paper entitled "Stalin on Revolution", which later was condensed by the editor of Foreign Affairs and published in Foreign Affairs called "Stalin on Revolution" in January 1949. It was a huge success. For a brief time I was a world celebrity [laughter]. Although it was published anonymously under the pseudonym "historicus non de plume", Time magazine soon found out who it was and so I became known. Meanwhile, I had been sent to my first post, Moscow, in 1948.

*Q: During that period, did you have some contact with George Kennan?*

MORGAN: I can't remember where I met him first, I think I did. It may have been later.

*Q: Your first post then was in Moscow?*

MORGAN: Moscow, where for one year I was head of USIS. My position was Cultural Officer or Cultural Affairs Officer. Then the second year I was moved to the Chancery and became the sort of main Political Officer for Soviet affairs for a year.

*Q: Who was the Ambassador then?*

MORGAN: The first year it was Bedell Smith. The second year it was Ambassador Alan Kirk.

*Q: Did you work fairly closely with both of them?*

MORGAN: Well, as Cultural Officer I wasn't, of course, very close to the Ambassador. I was off in another building and doing the sort of affairs that he didn't have much time to get into, but we were on a good friendly basis anyway. In the case of Ambassador Kirk, I

was very close because of my new position as the Soviet Specialist in his Chancery and I even lived in Spaso House, the Ambassador's residence with him and Mrs. Kirk, because it was customary to have a Russian language officer live in the residence for cases when they needed a Russian speaker right there. So I got to know the Kirk's extremely well.

*Q: What's your view of Ambassador Kirk in the professional sense?*

MORGAN: Fine. I liked him very much.

*Q: In a professional sense?*

MORGAN: Yes. He was a retired Admiral from the Navy. He had been in charge of the D-Day landings, ferrying our troops across to Normandy when we began invading the continent and then he had been Ambassador to Belgium, I think it was, before he came to Moscow.

*Q: Within the Embassy, there weren't any great differences of opinion about the approach to the Soviet Union, about the policy of containment and so forth?*

MORGAN: Not that I recall.

*Q: Anything that I don't ask but that you feel is important to note, please put it in.*

MORGAN: Alright.

*Q: Anything more about Moscow in those days and Ambassador Kirk?*

MORGAN: Well there were lots of details. I don't know that for your purposes what else you would like to hear.

*Q: Well, for example, after serving there, seeing Stalin operate firsthand, did you revise any of your views that you'd expressed in this Foreign Affairs article?*

MORGAN: No. I actually met Stalin. I went with Ambassador Kirk when he called on Stalin, so I've shaken hands with the biggest murderer in history.

*Q: Then you moved directly from Moscow to Berlin?*

MORGAN: Yes, to my great disappointment. I wanted to round out my normal of tour of three years in Moscow because it was a fascinating post and I was delighted with it. In fact, toward the end of my stay there I wrote a dispatch which indicated that the Russians were likely to start some kind of war somewhere around the world--a proxy war maybe. I didn't pinpoint Korea, but at least it gave a kind of general alert to something like Korea being on the cards. So I was very pleased by that bit of foresight. Well, I was then yanked to Berlin ahead of time because they wanted somebody in Berlin with some sort of Soviet

background who would head a unit that would report on East Germany, in particular, and the Soviet Bloc, in general, as seen from Berlin. In those days, Berlin was not a divided city. You could go over to the East, the Soviet sector, without any difficulty and we could get the East German paper every day, which gave us their news we could report. So I went there and there were several fine officers who became part of my staff, political and economic. I was Director of Eastern Element. It had two divisions, Political and Economic, and it was attached to Berlin Element for Administration. Berlin Element had to do with local Berlin affairs. The Director of Berlin Element was the Political Advisor to the General who was the Commandant of the US sector of Berlin. So I was able to call my outfit Eastern Element because it was reporting on the East. I had a very happy time there, fascinating work and great freedom to do as I pleased and report as I pleased. I didn't have to clear it with anybody--just send what I felt like unless I was recommending policy in which case, of course, I did have to clear it with McLoy who was the High Commissioner, stationed in Frankfurt.

*Q: Were you able to travel in Eastern Europe at all?*

MORGAN: No. It wasn't feasible to travel in Eastern Europe.

*Q: Did you have a close working relationship with McLoy?*

MORGAN: Not terribly. I would go down to Frankfurt about once a week to his staff meeting and report, along with lots of the other people. That's about as close as I ever got to him.

*Q: You were in Berlin then when the Korean War began? Is that correct? June 1950?*

MORGAN: Yes I was. I was there 1950 and 1951. Late 1951 I was yanked back to the States, much to my regret.

*Q: I wanted to ask about the Korean War. When the war broke out in Korea, you'd predicted that kind of thing. Was it seen then by you and others in Berlin as a diversionary kind of activity by the Communists and that a real thrust may be coming in Europe at the same time?*

MORGAN: We couldn't help comparing the North and South Korea with East and West Germany. And we noted the arms buildup in East Germany. So, we obviously called attention to the possibility of another proxy war there. This was long before NATO and all that, and long before West Germany was allowed to re-arm.

*Q: You're saying that you then again had your tour cut short and back to Washington?*

MORGAN: Yes, they were always after my body. I wished they'd leave me alone. I had just gotten married and we were happily settled into Berlin and had only two or three months of happy married life there and had to go back. Somebody had pull with

somebody high up in the administration in the State Department. It was Foy Kohler--he was then running the Voice of America in New York--and he wanted a Russian specialist there, which was quite natural, so they axed me for it. Fortunately, when I got back to Washington I got yanked again. They were starting something called the Psychological Strategy Board in Washington, and Gordon Gray, the Director, heard about me, and interviewed me, and got my assignment changed. So I became an Assistant Director at the Psychological Strategy Board.

*Q: I hadn't heard of that before. What exactly was that Psychological Strategy Board and what was it supposed to do?*

MORGAN: It was, I think, basically a can of worms invented by the Bureau of the Budget. It didn't really do anything to amount to much, but the idea was to set up a coordinating group that would mobilize our whole Government, all our Government resources in fighting what people liked to call the "Cold War" in those days--propaganda and God knows what all. So the Board consisted of the Under Secretary of State, Deputy Secretary of Defense, the Director of CIA and possibly on or two more--I can't remember. And the staff, which was headed by the Director, first Gordon Gray, then another man whose name I have forgotten, and finally by Ambassador Kirk, who came back from Moscow and became my boss again, to my pleasure. So that lasted the rest of the Truman Administration. With Eisenhower there were plans for doing something different. So while that new organization was being ginned up, I was made Acting Director of PSB for just the interim period, keeping the old machinery going until the new machine was ready.

*Q: What did you do, write papers?*

MORGAN: Yes, we wrote papers and plans and what not. I remember one thing. The sort of gleam in the eye of all the psychological warriors in those days was what to do in case Stalin died. This would be a great occasion for a psychological warfare or God knows what. But nobody did anything about it. Finally I did write a contingency plan for the death of Stalin and cleared it at the "working level". Finally, Stalin did die, but that was on into the Eisenhower Administration and the new body which took the place of PSB was called OCB, Operations Coordinating Board, of which I was the Deputy Executive Officer for a time. But by that time, of course, PSB papers didn't count for anything, so I don't know if my paper was even looked at. But we did a crash exercise with the staff at the time of Stalin's death working on some new plans, but I don't think they ever amounted to anything.

*Q: Were there any important interagency differences of opinion towards the Soviet Union at this time or was there pretty strong consensus behind our policy?*

MORGAN: I think there was a general agreement.

*Q: George Kennan has subsequently in talking about his policy of containment of how it was so misinterpreted by our own government even and became primarily a military containment, alliances built up of the military rather than he originally had meant much more in psychological, social, economic terms, non-military. Is that a fair assessment? Was he saying that kind of thing at the time?*

MORGAN: I don't remember. I remember briefly talking to him, I think on the phone, and he was rather unhappy about NATO, about that sort of military emphasis. So I guess to that extent I did know.

*Q: Did you agree with that? That it had to be military?*

MORGAN: No, I thought the military was very important. In fact, one part of my job was to be an advisor from PSB or OCB to the NSC Planning Board. NSC then was a top-level thing with the President and the Secretaries and there was a staff level and I was an advisor on that in my capacity from PSB and OCB. And I remember once writing a memo, distributed to my colleagues on the Planning Board--saying you shouldn't call it the "Cold War"; the "Creeping War" is what you should call it as evidenced by that time in Korea and Southeast Asia.

*Q: Was the Operations Coordinating Board, were you working then over in the National Security Council or out of the Department?*

MORGAN: It was separate. It, after all, had pretty much the same members as the old PSB, except that it also included C. D. Jackson, a Special Assistant from the White House.

*Q: So its function was pretty much the same as the Psychological?*

MORGAN: Yes, different window dressing but pretty much the same.

*Q: Now these years in Washington in the early 1950s were also the years of the height of McCarthyism, Senator McCarran, anti-American ... did you get touched with that in any way?*

MORGAN: No.

*Q: What impact do you feel it had on the Foreign Service?*

MORGAN: Well, I don't know that I could speak separately about the Foreign Service, except that there were, I think, one or two rather tragic cases of persecution, but the general effect, on not just the Foreign Service but the whole government establishment, was terrible.

*Q: In what way?*

MORGAN: Well, lots of good people being hounded out of government and persecuted and whatnot.

*Q: Then your next post seems rather curious after all of this Russian and European experience, to go to Japan. How did that come about?*

MORGAN: I don't know why I was posted to Japan. All I knew was after I had spent a year as Deputy Executive Officer of OCB, I felt I had done my duty there with PSB and OCB and it was time for a change. So I went to Bedell Smith, who was then Under Secretary of State, and asked him for his advice, and he then poked up the personnel people and they assigned me as Political Counselor in Tokyo. I don't know why, but there I was and I was glad to go. It was a fascinating new experience, a different part of the world, different culture.

*Q: Who was the Ambassador in Tokyo then?*

MORGAN: John Allison and then Douglas MacArthur. Doug MacArthur II--not the General.

*Q: What was the thrust of American policy toward Japan at that time?*

MORGAN: Japan was just gradually creeping out from the vast losses of World War II and the main thing we were trying to do was help Japan get back economically, and to secure their alignment politically as an ally against the Soviet Union. So one of the main accomplishments, as I recall, during my day was a security treaty with Japan which secured that. But I must say considering how Japan's economy has flourished, amazingly flourished since then, we had no inkling that they were going to do as much as they have.

*Q: What did the Japanese government want from us in those early years? What was the main thing they wanted from the United States, just more economic help to rebuild?*

MORGAN: I don't remember.

*Q: They were still very much in rebuilding stage?*

MORGAN: Yes.

*Q: What did you think of Ambassador Allison?*

MORGAN: He was reasonably competent, had very good background.

*Q: Was he a political appointee?*

MORGAN: No, no. He was a Foreign Service Officer. So was Doug MacArthur.

*Q: What did you think of MacArthur?*

MORGAN: A little too self-assertive, too aggressive. But, of course, in many ways very able, very highly intelligent with an excellent background.

*Q: Did you try Japanese?*

MORGAN: Yes, I took some lessons in Japanese and learned elementary spoken Japanese.

*Q: All these years, were you continuing your real vocation or your early vocation or your interest in philosophy.*

MORGAN: No, no I had no time for that.

*Q: You'd set that aside?*

MORGAN: No time for it.

*Q: Now did you complete your tour at this time in Tokyo and go back to Washington or did somebody grab you again?*

MORGAN: I more than completed it. I had planned to take the usual three years, then home leave, then go on to another post. So I had postponed home leave for this purpose when I might have taken it after two years. But when Doug MacArthur came, he insisted on keeping me for a fourth year, to my great regret because I had hoped, in fact I had been promised, a good DCM assignment somewhere. This not only delayed it, it in the end prevented it, it because toward the end of my fourth year I was again yanked back, this time to State Department Policy Planning.

*Q: Who did that?*

MORGAN: I don't know who suggested my name. I could guess, but I don't see any point in guessing. Anyway, Gerard C. Smith was the Assistant Secretary in charge of Policy Planning and it was he who asked for me. And being part of the Secretary's office, Policy Planning right next door to the Secretary, he had pull. Doug very kindly protested on my behalf but they insisted. So I spent the next seven years in Washington, to my regret, never getting the DCM post I wanted and only after seven years the Ambassadorship to the Ivory Coast.

*Q: And those seven years, except for the Foreign Service Institute, four or five of those years were spent in Policy Planning, right?*

MORGAN: Four years in Policy Planning, three years in the Foreign Service Institute.

*Q: Now what were the main areas you concentrated on in Policy Planning?*

MORGAN: I don't think I concentrated a great deal. Probably more in the Far East and the Soviet Union, the two places where I had the most familiarity. But after one year, I think, I became Deputy. First to Gerard Smith and then to my succeeding two bosses. As Deputy I was pretty widespread.

*Q: The Secretary then was Christian Herter? Is that right?*

MORGAN: First of all Dulles. Dulles was Secretary when I first went. Then when he died Chris Herter became Secretary, and that was just briefly until the new Administration came in.

*Q: Then it was Dean Rusk.*

MORGAN: Yes.

*Q: Did you work closely with Dulles either before or after.*

MORGAN: No, I never had any personal contact with Dulles. It was my boss Gerard Smith who talked to Dulles.

*Q: Gerard Smith was mainly, wasn't he mainly a disarmament and arms control expert?*

MORGAN: He later became that. He was originally concerned with Atomic Energy. I think he'd served with the Commission. Anyway he was in the State Department doing something that was called SAE, the Secretary's Office on Atomic Energy, before he was shifted to Policy Planning.

*Q: Now these were years of a lot of activity with the Soviet Union. The 1960 Summit, the Paris Summit meeting, the U2. Were there important interagency differences toward the Soviets in those years or was there still the same kind of consensus that had existed earlier?*

MORGAN: I think it was pretty much the same view. I don't remember any big interagency differences.

*Q: Were you involved in preparing the Summit?*

MORGAN: No.

*Q: You're saying then that as late as 1960 we were looking at the Communist world still pretty much as a monolith?*

MORGAN: As a bloc, yes.

*Q: Did you get involved in Middle Eastern affairs much during this period?*

MORGAN: I don't remember any.

*Q: The Arab-Israeli conflict?*

MORGAN: I don't remember any.

*Q: Were the Third World regimes, like Nasser's regime, Third World conflict, Pakistan-India, were they seen by the Policy Planning Staff primarily in the Cold War bipolar context or was the Nationalists Third World movement seen as a kind of separate phenomenon taking place?*

MORGAN: I don't remember.

*Q: What about any studies about what to do with Africa. In 1960 all of the African states were becoming independent at the same time and was there much consideration given to how to deal with Africa during the late Eisenhower or early Kennedy years by the Policy Planning?*

MORGAN: I don't remember any.

*Q: How about the Berlin Wall when that went up in 1961? Did that cause some reevaluations of anything?*

MORGAN: Not much as far as I can recall. We knew that before the wall lots of East Berliners and East Germans were bleeding out of there into the West so it was a great handicap to East Germany and so I, for one, though it was no surprise that they built the wall. It was very natural that they should.

*Q: How did things change when the Kennedy Administration took over from the Eisenhower Administration for you, for Policy Planning? Didn't Chester Bowles come in as head of Policy Planning?*

MORGAN: No, Chester Bowles was Under Secretary. In those days it was Under Secretary; I believe it is now Deputy Secretary. He was the number two at the State Department. Under the new Administration the first head of Policy Planning was George McGhee. Walt Rostow later succeeded him.

*Q: You obviously worked closely with both those gentlemen.*

MORGAN: I was number two.

*Q: Could you give us some impressions of them?*

MORGAN: It's been a long time. I mainly remember George McGhee was eager for cranking out lots of papers. So we did. And Walt Rostow was a very prolific writer himself and he did a lot on his own. About the only thing I remember doing under Walt, and at his request, was writing a paper on how to develop areas of common interest with the Soviet Union, which I did, and in my recommendations I said they should be developed with dogged caution. [laughter]

*Q: Maybe we ought to get that paper out and look at it today.*

MORGAN: It was suppressed because soon after it was produced they had the Cuban Missile Crisis and the White House ordered the paper suppressed. [laughter] I don't know why, the paper did no damage.

*Q: Chester Bowles was also very interested in Policy Planning, was he not?*

MORGAN: I don't know.

*Q: You didn't have much to do with him?*

MORGAN: No.

*Q: The Cuban Missile Crisis, did that come as a great surprise to you?*

MORGAN: No, I really wasn't following those things. I think I was already Director of the Foreign Service Institute so out of Policy Planning then, not following current affairs. Anyway it was a bit of a surprise, I think, to many Soviet specialists because as far as we knew the Russians had not previously placed atomic weapons in another country. That much risk, so to speak, was new to us.

*Q: Did anybody in those years, did anybody in Policy Planning or elsewhere in the Government, even dare suggest that the Communist regimes in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe could change through peaceful means the way it's happening today?*

MORGAN: No.

*Q: The assumption always was that the Communist government would act brutally to keep that from happening wasn't it?*

MORGAN: Yes. There was no inkling of this kind of development. I think possibly in the long run it was envisioned by George Kennan in his containment thesis that if after many years they were successfully contained, they might mellow internally.

*Q: Did you have anything to do with President Kennedy?*

MORGAN: Not particularly. When I was Director of the Foreign Service Institute, I did accompany the students in a new course on counter-insurgency to visit President Kennedy in the White House, because he was specially interested in it. In fact, I had been assigned to FSI because he wanted such a course developed. Secondly, before he went to Berlin the President wanted some elementary instruction in German. So Mac Bundy called me over and asked me to arrange it, and I did. I sent my best German teacher over to Kennedy so he could say, rather incorrectly, "Ich Bin Ein Berliner". He should have said, "Ich Bin Berliner". The "Ein" wasn't proper, but anyway it's in history.

*Q: Based on your career thus far, what were your credentials for being chosen to head the Foreign Service Institute to establish counter-insurgency in Southeast Asia? You had a special interest in it? You'd written something?*

MORGAN: No, I believe in Policy Planning one of our men had written a paper on counter-insurgency, but it wasn't my paper and I don't think I was chosen for that reason. Why I was chosen exactly, I don't know, but they wanted somebody who was highly regarded in the Service, and very possibly my academic background gave them a clue too. At that time President Kennedy was trying to create a new kind of Foreign Service Institute which would have a different name, perhaps called the Academy of Foreign Affairs or National Academy of Foreign Affairs, something like that. There were a whole bunch of people developing plans for that purpose. So my job at the Foreign Service Institute was really getting on with the business meanwhile. But the National Academy was never achieved. For one reason, they didn't consult Congress, at least adequately. So there was no support in Congress for this kind of thing. Then, of course, Kennedy was assassinated and that was the end of all that.

*Q: Were you pleased with your assignment to direct the Foreign Service Institute?*

MORGAN: No, I was heartbroken, but I had to go. The Secretary wanted me to go and the Foreign Service is like the Army, you take orders. No, I was dying for an overseas post, hopefully an Ambassadorship, but anyway having been all these years in Washington, to have to do three more was painful.

*Q: What did you accomplish as Director of the Foreign Service Institute, in your opinion?*

MORGAN: Well, I launched that counter-insurgency course--I forget what we called it, interdepartmental seminar or something or other--and I developed a course on science in foreign affairs, and a course for Foreign Service wives, which my wife designed incidentally, very ably.

*Q: That's still going on too.*

MORGAN: Is it? Good. We developed a whole field of area studies to match language studies so that officers who went there to study a language would also learn something about the area in which that language was spoken, so they'd get pertinent background.

*Q: I benefited from that because I was in Arabic Language Area Studies in Beirut just at that time, 1962-63.*

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS:

*Q: How was it you were chosen to become Ambassador to the Ivory Coast?*

MORGAN: I don't know.

*Q: The Ivory Coast was quite a change for you after your previous experience all in developed industrialized countries. How did you enjoy it?*

MORGAN: Very much. They were friendly, intelligent people, governed by a great President, just getting started with independence after many years as a French colony. I was happy to serve in such a different part of the world, in such a different culture.

*Q: Were you able to travel around the country much?*

MORGAN: Yes, a great deal, and I did so.

*Q: What were the principal goals of the United States at that time in the Ivory Coast given the dominant position of France?*

MORGAN: We had no major goals, just being helpful in a tactful and friendly way.

*Q: Did you have any problems during your period of Ambassadorship with interagency differences or with persuading Washington to pursue the kinds of policies you recommended?*

MORGAN: No interagency differences. I had some difficulty persuading Washington to help finance a dam to generate electric power, but I finally succeeded.

*Q: What led to your decision to retire from the Foreign Service?*

MORGAN: I wasn't offered an interesting assignment.

*Q: Could you please say something about your very active post-retirement activities, and particularly the book which you had published?*

MORGAN: A year or two after I retired, I decided to write a book on the philosophy of my friend Eugen Rosenstock-Huussy, then an emeritus professor at Dartmouth. So I

obtained all his writings, took elaborate notes and finally wrote the book, Speech and Society: The Christian Linguistic Social Philosophy of Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy. The book took me about fourteen years.

*End of interview*