

**Adolf A. Berle, Jr., Oral History Interview – 7/6/1967**  
Administrative Information

**Creator:** Adolf A. Berle, Jr.  
**Interviewer:** Joseph E. O'Connor  
**Date of Interview:** July 6, 1967  
**Location:** New York City, NY  
**Length:** 56 pages

**Biographical Note**

Berle, Chairman of the task force on Latin America from 1960 to 1961, and consultant to the Secretary of State from 1961 to 1962, discusses U.S. relations with various Latin American countries and leaders during the Kennedy administration, as well as the Bay of Pigs invasion and the Alliance for Progress, among other issues.

**Access**

Open.

**Usage Restrictions**

According to the deed of gift signed September 8, 1976, copyright of these materials has been assigned to the United States Government. Users of these materials are advised to determine the copyright status of any document from which they wish to publish.

**Copyright**

The copyright law of the United States (Title 17, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted material. Under certain conditions specified in the law, libraries and archives are authorized to furnish a photocopy or other reproduction. One of these specified conditions is that the photocopy or reproduction is not to be "used for any purpose other than private study, scholarship, or research." If a user makes a request for, or later uses, a photocopy or reproduction for purposes in excesses of "fair use," that user may be liable for copyright infringement. This institution reserves the right to refuse to accept a copying order if, in its judgment, fulfillment of the order would involve violation of copyright law. The copyright law extends its protection to unpublished works from the moment of creation in a tangible form. Direct your questions concerning copyright to the reference staff.

**Transcript of Oral History Interview**

These electronic documents were created from transcripts available in the research room of the John F. Kennedy Library. The transcripts were scanned using optical character recognition and the resulting text files were proofread against the original transcripts. Some formatting changes were made. Page numbers are noted where they would have occurred at the bottoms of the pages of the original transcripts. If researchers have any concerns about accuracy, they are encouraged to visit the Library and consult the transcripts and the interview recordings.

**Suggested Citation**

Adolf A. Berle, Jr., recorded interview by Joseph E. O'Connor, July 6, 1967, (page number), John F. Kennedy Library Oral History Program.

GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION  
NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS SERVICE

Gift of Personal Statement


By Peter A. A. Berle

to the

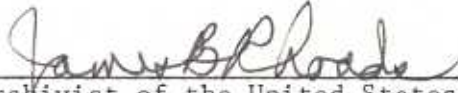
JOHN F. KENNEDY LIBRARY

I, Peter A. A. Berle, of New York, New York, do hereby give to the John F. Kennedy Library, for use and administration therein, all my rights, title and interest, except as hereinafter provided, to the tape recording and transcript of the interview conducted with Adolf A. Berle at New York, New York on July 6, 1967 for the John F. Kennedy Library. The gift of this material is made subject to the following terms and condition:

1. The interview is to be opened to general research at the discretion of the Director of the John F. Kennedy Library; his decision to be based on such considerations as potential embarrassment to living persons or their immediate successors, the interests of national security, or potential prejudice to the friendly relations between the United States and foreign nations.
2. Researchers who have access to the transcript of the interview may listen to the tape; however, this is to be for background use only. Researchers may not cite, paraphrase or quote from the tape during my lifetime, except with my express permission.
3. I hereby assign literary property rights in this interview to the United States Government.
4. Copies of the interview transcript may be provided upon request to any researcher.
5. This agreement may be revised or amended by mutual consent of the parties undersigned.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Peter A. A. Berle  
executor *in law* of Adolf A. Berle

Aug 11 76  
Month Date Year

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Archivist of the United States

Sept. 8, 1976  
Month Date Year

Adolf A. Berle, Jr.

Table of Contents

<u>Page</u>	<u>Topic</u>
1	Endorsements in the 1960 presidential race
7, 12	Task force on Latin American affairs
10	General confusion in the first days of the Kennedy administration
11, 26	Rómulo Betancourt and Venezuela
17	Berle's position in the Kennedy administration
19	Communications with various Latin American government representatives
23, 35	Increasing threat from Cuba
28	Alberto Lleras Camargo and Columbia
30, 37	Jânio da Silva Quadros and Brazil
38	Bay of Pigs
47	Alliance for Progress
50	Criticisms of implementation of the Alliance for Progress and handling of Latin American affairs in the Kennedy administration
54	Alliance for Progress successes
55	Berle's impressions of John F. Kennedy

Oral History Interview

With

Adolf A. Berle, Jr.

July 6, 1967  
New York, New York

By Joseph E. O'Connor

For the John F. Kennedy Library

BERLE: I had no contacts with him before 1960. He was a political figure. I had had contact with his father [Joseph P. Kennedy] when I was assistant secretary of state and he was ambassador to Great Britain. Those kind of contacts were a little difficult. He had a different view of American policy, as you know. Since ambassadors' speeches are usually sent back to the department for review, and I had the job in the State Department at Roosevelt's [Franklin Delano Roosevelt] time, why, I had to deal with some of his. I don't think he ever knew it. He knew the department didn't like his attempts to persuade Britain to remain neutral as the Hitler [Adolf Hitler] menace grew. I think he had this choler against the department. I don't think he ever located me as the villain in the piece. If he had, I would be merely expressing the general policies of the Roosevelt administration, not a personal villain. In government, however, I have noticed that always the villain becomes personal pretty rapidly, even though he may have not been the creator of the policy. Beyond that, I hadn't had very much to do with it.

O'CONNOR: What was your first contact with John Kennedy [John F. Kennedy]?

BERLE: I think I'd best quote from my own journal entry. This is in June of 1960. "The Kennedy headquarters called up and asked if I would join in signing an intellectuals' liberal appeal for Kennedy.

[-1-]

Ken Galbraith [John Kenneth Galbraith], Arthur Schlesinger [Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr.] and others are signing.” I said I didn’t throw over old friends so rapidly, though I would support Kennedy if he were nominated. I wasn’t clear whether it should be Kennedy or Humphrey [Hubert H. Humphrey] or some of the other men at that time. Humphrey was an old friend of mine, so I held off. I said, privately, “I think Kennedy will be nominated, but one cannot yet tell. Alex Rose of the Liberal party insists he has a majority of delegates signed up, but I think not, although he is close.”

Actually, he didn’t, as you know.

Then June 23,

“At lunch with Senator Kennedy, Alex Rose, David Dubinsky and about twenty of the liberals. Kennedy was asking for their support in New York if and when he is nominated. He made a good impression. This was partly because of a certain honesty. Someone attacked him about his stand at the time of the McCarthy [Joseph R. McCarthy] furor. He gave his record, which was one of having dodged the issue, partly because he was ill for some months during it. He wound up by saying that in the light of hindsight, it was not so good. He could and should have done more. (That is, as he thought.) But that was it; there was no point in denying it. He could have gone right in for the kill and did not. If he had tried to make out that he was all right all the time, we would have lost all use for him.

“Since I sat close to him at lunch, we talked of Latin America. He asked me if, in the case of his nomination, I would work with him on Latin American affairs. I said, of course, I would. I was very much worried about the situation because I thought the Cold War would be loosed on this continent if someone did not move fast. He had read an earlier article of mine in *The Reporter* and liked it. The Cuban news is getting worse by the minute. I believe there will be a revolt attempted in a month or so. Also, I have reason to believe that Castro’s [Fidel Castro] cobbled up a working agreement with Duvalier [François Duvalier], now dubiously president of Haiti.”

I mention that merely because I was following the Cuban affair then and continued to do so. That was the first contact I had with him. That, perhaps, gives you the view I had.

On July 6,

“To Averell Harriman’s [William Averell Harriman] house for cocktails where were

[-2-]

Senator Fulbright [J. William Fulbright] and Bill Benton [William B. Benton], David Lilienthal [David E. Lilienthal] and others. Harriman is pledged to Kennedy. Half the

men in the room were running for secretary of state. My own feeling is a little simpler. A man capable of holding that job ought to be smart enough not to want it if he can avoid it. We went to the farm via Croton where we dined with Marion and Max Ascol [Marion Ascoli; Max Ascoli]. He's blue and so am I. It looks like Kennedy for the Democratic nomination and Nixon [Richard Milhous Nixon] for the Republican. On the record, not much in the way of great leadership can be expected from either, yet if ever great leadership was needed to get us out of a mess, now is when. I take a little comfort from the fact that the presidency can, and often does, make men bigger than they are."

Then Kennedy was nominated.

Then July 12,

"Last night Archibald Cox of Harvard Law School called me up. He's on Kennedy's wagon. He has asked to meet me on Thursday. I don't know exactly what he wants, probably to mobilize intellectuals for Kennedy. Kennedy's nomination now is certain. This is a triumph of machine over matter. Most Democrats are looking for someone else and don't see him."

You'll notice that I'm not sparing the record for the....

O'CONNOR: Yes, indeed.

BERLE: This is July 14,

"This morning to meet Professor Archibald Cox, presently on full-time duty with Kennedy at the Century Club. Kennedy had asked Cox to get in touch with me without specifications. I told him that Kennedy had asked whether I would work on Latin American affairs, and I said that when he's nominated, I certainly would help him against Nixon. I'll ask Cox to note and make it plain to Kennedy that I did not wish to be committed until after July 29. Cox wanted several things. The Senator is holding some unannounced seminars to discuss various problems and hopes to have one on foreign affairs at Hyannisport in the next couple of weeks. I said, except for the weekend of the twenty-ninth when I should be in Puerto Rico, I'd be glad to join.

[-3-]

"Second, he asked if I would generally help along as a consultant on speeches and policy declarations. I said I would be glad to do this. Obviously, I'll have to know more about Kennedy's ideas.

"Third, he hoped I would try to work the outline of a Latin American policy. This has not been a region to which Kennedy's given much thought. I said I would be glad to

do that, but by now it was tied into the world situation. I thought the situation would be considerably worse before it was better, what with Cuba, the rapidly deteriorating situation in Haiti, and the danger of turning on the Cold War in the mainland.

“Fourth, the Senator will have to make one speech for the Liberal Party in New York, presumably in September. Perhaps I could think about a draft. There was no point in going into my own emotions with Cox. We really need someone with a touch of Winston Churchill. I would back Kennedy, an untried young man, as against Nixon, not much older but representative of policies which have failed. There’s no point now in wondering whether Kennedy ought to be different or not. It is clear that he would like, as Roosevelt did, to gather in as many segments as he can. Some good folks I have tangled with.”

A note which may be extraneous:

“It is beginning to appear that the Communist hard core group running Castro’s government went too far in yelling for Khrushchev [Nikita Sergeyeovich Khrushchev]. It was, of course, all right with Khrushchev. He’s carrying the Cold War straight into the enemy’s camp. But the rest of the hemisphere reacted like a shot, or, at least, most of it did.”

This is July 21,

“I’m not sure how far the organizers of the inter-American movement—presently it is more anti-American than pro-Communist—have been able to persuade anyone that they not only do not want the United States as senior power in the area but do want Russia, but there is a vacuum here. A sympathizer with communism or anti-American groups at once allies himself with that organization and goes to work. Anyway, the whole base of these relations has to be recanvassed.

[-4-]

The meeting at Hyannisport was called off. He was probably working on something else.”

And I have a note that,

“On September 13 the Liberal Party duly named Kennedy and Johnson [Lyndon Baines Johnson].”

I was honorary chairman of the platform committee. The following night at the Liberal Party dinner both Kennedy and Stevenson [Adlai E. Stevenson] spoke. Because of the Catholic issue, we had Reinhold Niebuhr—he’s a very old friend of mine—introduce Kennedy. A stroke of genius I think. The speeches were good. I discerned a couple of paragraphs in the



speech I wrote for Kennedy which found their way into his, but it was his own job and a better one than mine.

“The campaign is slowly getting off the ground. I should say not better than an even chance for Kennedy. The Catholic issue is more talked about than the really great issues in the campaign, economic motivations, planning (to use a bad semantic word), growing catastrophe in foreign affairs.”

I know that that estimate turned out about right. It was just about an even chance up to the last flick of the die. “Lunch with Dean Rusk.” He was not then secretary of state. “We had American Assembly at Arden House, and we discussed the secretaryship of state.” It’s a theoretical matter.

O’CONNOR: He hadn’t been asked at that point, of course.

BERLE: No. Kennedy hadn’t been elected, so this is very early. October 20, “The ground swell seems to be setting in favor of Kennedy, but it’s still an unknown quality, an unpopularity contest to find out who we like least and vote for the other.”

O’CONNOR: An unpopularity contest, that’s very good.

BERLE: Well, I give you all I have here. I am not trying to invent it.

O’CONNOR: People don’t keep journals like that very often anymore. It’s a shame they don’t.

BERLE: I did not for egotistic purposes, but when you’re in public life, as I was then, you like to be able to tag back to know what you were doing and what you were thinking for a reference later when you have to defend a position or state one. So this isn’t a literary diary or—it’s not a diary

[ -5 - ]

at all. It’s a kind of journal.

October 31,

“A good deal of incidental campaigning. It now looks as though Kennedy will carry New York comfortably. The polls indicate he’s likely to be elected. I don’t think anyone can yet tell, however. But many currents usually inactive in campaigns have been energized.”

A lot of miscellaneous stuff here about Latin America. A good deal of Latin American information goes over my desk. Election eve, I was having dinner with David

Rockefeller [David Rockefeller, Sr.]. Perhaps you may know, Nelson Rockefeller [Nelson A. Rockefeller] is my very good friend. I was relieved that he was not nominated—nothing personal, but because he and I have been friends since Roosevelt.

November 9,

“Kennedy apparently elected, though the vote is terribly close. Immediately thereafter, a letter from Tegucigalpa where the president of Honduras wanted to give a personal invitation to John F. Kennedy.”

O’CONNOR: He sent it to you?

BERLE: Yes. You see, these men are friends of mine. Some of them have been hunted exiles and now have got to be presidents. The democratic movement in the Caribbean is beginning to have some success. And I replied on November 21, referring to his personal invitation, I said,

“Your invitation arrived in full campaign time. At that time, nothing could be done. Now, of course, Senator Kennedy is president-elect, although he will not take office until January 20 next. I’m sure he would enjoy a visit to Honduras, but all the more so because the invitation comes personally from you. But, as you know better than anyone else, the pressures between election and inauguration are extreme, and the work of organizing the government is enormous. I accordingly sent a copy of your letter to him for his action. I think I can, in any event, express my appreciation and his for your courtesy in thinking of him. And I know of his interest in the problems of Central America, Honduras, and of his hope for a closer relationship between the United States and all and each of the Latin American countries.”

[-6-]

Slightly State Department. And my letter quoting it to him, what I said was, “since Villeda Morales [Ramon Villeda Morales] is chief of state, a courteous letter on your behalf certainly will not be amiss in the difficult Caribbean days which must lie ahead.”

November 25,

“About three in the afternoon, Ted Sorensen [Theodore C. Sorensen] telephones. He’s Kennedy’s man Friday and organizer. He asked if I would be the head of a small task force to report in the latter part of December to Kennedy on Latin American affairs. The others are Robert Alexander of Rutgers (University), Lincoln Gordon of the Harvard Business School, and Ted Moscoso [Teodoro Moscoso] on Muñoz Marin’s [Luis Muñoz Marin] staff. I said I would do this. This, of course, is it. They want a set of suggestions on things that will come up right away, not a study in depth, but what to do next.”

Parenthetically, I note there's a difference between the scholarly study and the round-up of what you've got and the laying it on the line for an immediate decision.

“There are all kinds of snags. These run all the way from the navy in the Caribbean intercepting attacks on the mainland from Cuba, a touch-and-go situation in Venezuela, Brazilian exchange, and about everything else. This does not mean that the same group will take over in State, but its suggestion will have first guess when the Kennedy administration comes in January.”

This is the way these affairs do work from my experience. And, in fact, they did.

“Since the election, I've been wondering whether I'd be asked to work in Latin American affairs in the new government or whether I would be left out. If I were not asked, my vanity would be wounded, but my relief would be extremely great. As between the pangs of wounded vanity or the salve of relief, I wonder which would win. Anyhow, my vanity is salved. Relief will come if we do not have to go to Washington. Of course, it does not follow from being asked to report on policy, but it's quite likely. The trouble with this kind of assignment is that it should have come ten years ago. There's no hiding the fact that at sixty-five one does not field as many tennis balls as at fifty-five or forty-five.”

[ -7 - ]

The task force was organized. I note on December 1, “There is not a secretary of state as yet. This will be the last thing.” At December 2, “Robert Alexander came in. He was one of the men designated by Sorensen who also was designated with Whitaker [Arthur Preston Whitaker]. We cantered over the ground to be covered by the Latin American task force.”

O'CONNOR: Did you receive much guidance from the President on what he wanted?

BERLE: No. No, we didn't. But to be perfectly blunt, I don't think he had many ideas. He had asked for an Alliance for Progress, but, while I don't know for certain, my impression is that the phrase had been made up by Dick Goodwin [Richard N. Goodwin] and that he was really trying to latch onto the Good Neighbor policy of Roosevelt which had been successful and indicate a commitment in that direction without any supporting detail or analysis. This not infrequently happens in campaigns. It seems to me that it happened. If anyone had any really detailed view of it, I don't know who it was. The only man around him who had any touch with it at all was Schlesinger. Schlesinger and I had worked on alleviating the war between Nicaragua and Costa Rica a couple of years earlier. I know there was one; nobody here heard of it, but these little wars that you have to try to settle up are important. But beyond Schlesinger's brief experience there, I don't know.

As soon as the task force was started, then, of course, all the pressures began to bear in. One of them was excellent. It was Muñoz-Marin, who's governor of Puerto Rico. And

Muñoz-Marin proposed to send a telegram to Senator John F. Kennedy, then president-elect, and he asked his aide Morales-Carrion [Arturo Morales Carrion], who, at my suggestion, was also assigned to the Latin American task force, to clear it with me, not on behalf of Kennedy, but on behalf of Muñoz-Marin who was also an old friend of mine. The telegram was to read,

“Your election has fired the imagination and warmly encouraged the democratic forces in Latin America which feel the urgent need of setting in motion hemisphere policies to achieve technical, economic, and social progress within our common heritage of freedom. I am certain that a statement from you as president-elect reaffirming to our good neighbors your thinking on the great Alliance for Progress and freedom in this hemisphere will give further impetus and confidence to Latin American democratic forces in their battle against want, will awaken a new sense of the quality and significance of the United States democratic

[ -8 - ]

forces, and will pave the way for a new old program after your inauguration in which all freedom loving citizens will join.

“I cleared the telegram from Muñoz and agreed to try my hand to draft an answer from Kennedy to Muñoz-Marin and clear it through Goodwin. It cannot be cleared until Monday morning.”

O’CONNOR:            You were really on both sides of this particular exchange.

BERLE:                You frequently are. You must never conceal it. I don’t want you to get the impression that I would say to Goodwin, “Muñoz-Marin would like to send this telegram.” Or that I would wait and draft an answer concealing the fact that I knew the telegram was coming from the other end. Frequently, it’s very useful to be on both sides if everybody knows it. They obviously knew I was working for Kennedy. “Goodwin called up at noon. I dictated to his secretary the draft of the telegram from John F. Kennedy to Muñoz-Marin. They may add a clause saying that the Senator expects to get out something pretty soon.” And that telegram we sent, although I haven’t a copy of what went out with me. Kennedy had both.

December 10,

“To take Raúl Prebisch out to breakfast. This pursuant to instructions from Senator Kennedy’s office. Whether this was a brush-off in my direction or a real desire to have me talk to Prebisch about his plan for Latin America”—the common market, which never did bear fruit until a few weeks ago when Johnson went there--“I do not know.”

“I’ve known Prebisch for many years and was glad to see him again. He said the whole job is to give economic and social content to the idea of freedom, and a strong

statement by Kennedy along these lines would be a great help to him. He was all for Rómulo Betancourt, President of Venezuela. In his view, this was an historical moment and required everyone to get on board. I observed I'd be sixty-six in January. He registered shock. He was about to become sixty himself and had thought of retiring to write books. Then we began to discuss various possibilities of a Latin American common market and whether the United States should be in it or merely a cooperating outsider. I had dinner with

[ -9 - ]

Sam Gates [Samuel E. Gates]. John Oakes [John B. Oakes] of the *New York Times* was there. He says Kennedy's having trouble getting people to take the jobs he's offering them. Hence the editorial in the *Times* saying that accepting office was a public duty unless considerations of health imposed. He is right as far as he goes, but there are a few other considerations as well."

O'CONNOR: Did you find much confusion, by the way, at this time...

BERLE: Pardon?

O'CONNOR: Did you find much confusion at this time in the sort of leadership Kennedy was providing? There's been much talk that there was a good deal of confusion and rivalry between groups during the period between election and inauguration.

BERLE: There was. It does not strike me as unusual. I think there always is. The post-campaign struggle for position in the incoming administration is always intense, and it certainly was so in 1930 to '33. And as I've seen it two or three times in my lifetime, that was merely normal. A lot of confusion—a great many people seek to be closest to the throne, seek to speak for the throne, sometimes assume without authority a position which they later are able to hold. The president elect is unable to cover personally all situations. He has only his campaign staff to work until his government is set up. I've yet to see a candidate for president set up a shadow government before his election. And doing it after election, which he really does do, is somewhat confused in the process. I think that the statements about confusion are accurate. The problem of who had leadership in any field probably also was great. On the other hand, I think it is a built-in situation of a government in organization which is not resolved until the cabinet is chosen and announced, so the lines can group around the men who are to have official leadership. There's always the problem of whether a brain truster should try to take leadership. I thought he shouldn't, both in the Roosevelt period and later in the Kennedy period, as it will appear. I'm not sure whether that is a sound instinct or not. I've been in the government when the president was not on speaking terms with his own secretary of state a couple of times, and to contribute to that situation is a disservice to the United States. Consequently, my own sense has always been that the man who is not to become officially responsible ought not to try to complicate relations between the president-elect and the man

with whom he is going to have to work and on whom the responsibility will devolve. I gave effect to that later and probably made a mistake. We contributed perhaps a little to the confusion.

[-10-]

On December 16,

“The task force which had mobilized telegraphed to Theodore Sorensen, care of John F. Kennedy, Senate Office Building: ‘Task Force Latin America suggest following for immediate action: Area now major and active Cold War theater without serious doubt. Continued inaction may entail grave risk’.” I want to give you a little background on that later. “‘One, bill setting up State Department under secretaryship Western Hemisphere, thus ending stepchild status of this area in U.S. policy’.”

This was the first recommendation of the task force, that the State Department officer handling Latin American affairs be not an assistant secretary four echelons down, but be under secretary with adequate position and authority, both to maintain himself, defend himself internally, and to speak with authority externally. That never was implemented. It hasn’t been yet, and we have yet to have successful administration.

O’CONNOR: Yes. I’d like to hear you talk a little bit more about that. I don’t know whether you will get into it later, but if you won’t, I would like to hear you talk about it.

BERLE: I will, yes. It’s in the task force report and the text of our feeling is there. “‘Two, bill appropriating five hundred million for inter-American development fund implementing Dillon’s [C. Douglas Dillon] Bogata pledge’.” This had been a Republican pledge—authorization of five hundred million for the inter-American development bank which was never appropriated. We’re recommending that they make good on that pledge for obvious reasons. “‘Three, Venezuela, Colombia key countries needing open support. Direct secretary of treasury work out prompt emergency financial support for Betancourt government’.” The background is that there was an active civil war, directed and armed from Havana, going on in Venezuela. I never could persuade the American public that there was any such a thing as Cold War going on. I don’t know that we ever really persuaded the Kennedy administration. But I’ve been over the fighting front myself, and to call it a Cold War was euphemism.

O’CONNOR: The reports of terrorism and so forth were very widespread. Is this something more than you are talking about? Or is this something that the government...

BERLE: They refused to believe that it was not a local domestic revolution, agitation against terrible social conditions, and so forth. The fact was that it was a bona fide import from Cuba and taking its strategic direction from the Havana wire.

O'CONNOR: What was the feeling in the State Department toward Betancourt? This is the way Betancourt felt?

[-11-]

BERLE: The State Department, you see, had tried to drive Betancourt out of the hemisphere for years. There was a time when the only house he could get a courteous dinner was mine in New York.

O'CONNOR: This, as you say, was a new season, though, in a sense.

BERLE: I know, but then after he had headed the revolution which overthrew the military dictatorship under Perez Jimenez [Marcos Perez Jimenez], thereafter he had been elected president. Now he was president. What the State Department thought of him is difficult to tell. I don't know. I wasn't in that department. What he had felt about the State Department, to his honor, he never told me, and he never muttered a syllable of bitterness against it. But on all personal grounds, he had every cause to be bitter. He's a bigger man than that. And one result was a chaotic situation left by the military dictatorship and of the disorganization by the so-called "terrorist campaign" which actually was a guerrilla campaign. It's a "war of liberation", as they call it. They meant to make life terribly difficult economically for Don Rómulo. So, we said Venezuela and Colombia were key countries. These were the two countries where democratic governments were fighting for their lives.

"Four, transfer Sparks [Edward J. Sparks], but with dignity. Counselor Stewart [C. Allan Stewart] to Ambassador, Caracas.'" I knew that Rómulo trusted Stewart and Stewart, Rómulo. This was because Stewart had been the counselor of embassy in Costa Rica when Rómulo Betancourt was a refugee there. Sparks had supported the anti-Rómulo forces, chiefly Larrazabál [Wolfgang Larrazabál], in the previous election. He had a right to do that, that's not to criticize for that, but it was the wrong horse. This is why it would have been wise to bring Sparks out, as presently we did, and do it honorably and courteously and then replace him by his own counselor which is not usually done in the State Department.

O'CONNOR: Indeed.

BERLE: It happened later, but.... "Five, send personal representative, unpublicized trip, consulting. Puerto Rican government; enroute to explore with Betancourt and Lleras Camargo [Alberto Lleras Camargo] possible combined policy and corrective action respecting Dominican Republic and Cuba, including possibility of combined center Caracas and Bogata for propaganda and other activities'." Let me say, parenthetically, that I'm off the boat. I think we need a

propaganda service, and we've never had one. I don't think that "information" quite meets the kind of brute adversary attack which was being financed then by the Soviet Union and today

[-12-]

also by the Chinese. I think the American government is entitled to defend itself as well as the next. We are, really, the only great country in the world that does not indulge in that, and I think to let the battle go by default is not a good idea.

O'CONNOR: Propaganda is a prejudiced term.

BERLE: It's a dirty word, actually. It has acquired bad semantic significance. Going on with the diary entry with the telegram:

“This might become the nucleus for hemispheric-wide democratic progressive front for social development, an ideological and political defense against Communist and Castro attacks.

“Six, directive Defense Department: In conjunction CIA (Central Intelligence Agency), prepare orders for operation preventing shipment of arms and guerrillas from Cuba to Santo Domingo and elsewhere into Latin American countries. Stop the spread of force, and help. Plans should envisage possible multilateralization with Venezuela, Colombia, and possibly others who might wish to join'.”

I ought to add, the task force was recommending arms control in that area so that we could diminish the spread of hostilities, some other things, too.

“Nine, directive secretary of state: Prompt high level consultation Brazil regarding Ecuador and Peru dispute. In Quito special precautions should be taken in respect to Interior Secretary Araujo Hidalgo [Manuel Araujo Hidalgo]’.” He was a bad actor.

“Ten, directive secretary of state: Convene an inter-department group to draft long-range economic plan, preferably based ECLA (Economic Commission for Latin America), liberalized to include U.S. with undertaking to set up relations between ECLA group and OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) and stepped up program for aid and consideration plans to stabilize prices, key agricultural and mineral exports. Have Puerto Rican representative in group but avoid commitment of administration of such planned Pan American Union secretariat’.” There was a great deal of prejudice against the Pan American Union secretariat at that time which was not set up for economic work.

[-13-]



“Eleven, sugar quota action already requested by outgoing administration appears adequate, but power should be given President to eliminate Dominican quota, arranging compensation for sole American company involved if legislatively possible’.” This was Trujillo’s [Rafael Trujillo] time, you see. “‘Restoration Cuban-Dominican quota should be made possible when situations change’.” References are to incoming cabinet officers.

“Paragraph five suggestion by Morales-Carrion not fully discussed, though disagreement unlikely. Other recommendations unanimously agreed by Alexander, Gordon, Whitaker, Carrion, Moscoso, and myself.”

This was really a very brief summary of the immediate questions we thought would be coming up immediately on his inauguration.

“Afternoon at the Twentieth Century Fund where the task force on Latin America worked up a preliminary report for Senator Kennedy. Were present: Goodwin from Kennedy’s office, Whitaker, Alexander, Morales-Carrion and myself got up a preview check list. Whitaker wants more Organization of American States action than I think we can get or that is safe. But he is reasonable and might settle for multilateral action with the three or four countries in the Caribbean who would work with us. A long, stiff session.” That’s December 16.

January 5,

“Dean Rusk wants to see me, troubles are coming, a date with Kennedy for Friday morning. We copy the report.” The task force had convened on December 29 in Puerto Rico at Muñoz-Marin’s suggestion. “We were thoughtfully invited to Muñoz-Marin’s inauguration by Arturo Morales-Carrion, who, beside being under secretary of state for Puerto Rico, was chairman of the committee for the inauguration.” A grim note that the Eisenhower [Dwight D. Eisenhower] administration outgoing took no notice of this rather great triumph of democracy in Puerto Rico. So we represented the whole United States without authority. So we went.

My note:

“Well, it takes the children. Kennedy sent a telegram of congratulations. The task force saw to that. Nelson Rockefeller, being a gentleman, did so too. Eisenhower forgot about it. No one failed to notice the omission.

[-14-]

Frankel [Max Frankel], the *Times* correspondent in Cuba, came over for a drink on Sunday. He tells me the mystique is out of Castro.” That’s no good as prediction. “He said that as firecrackers went off in San Juan in celebration, it meant celebration. In Cuba, when they went off, it meant killing. Bombs were exploding every night.”

Well, this was work on the task force. Then the telegram from Ted Sorensen, “‘Feel free to bring with you to your conference with the President-elect any members of your task force whose presence you think will be helpful and who are able to come’.”

O’CONNOR:           So who did you bring?

BERLE:                Cross reference, a letter from my son in Vietnam. He was in the Air Force then.

January 6, 1960

“I met President Kennedy at the Carlyle Hotel slightly after 10 A.M. Ted Sorensen sat in. I gave him the report and asked him to read a summary, the guts of it attached to this diary. Sorensen said the report was a liberal education in Latin American affairs; it was hard hitting; he liked it. Then we started to talk. The conversation lasted an hour and a half, more time than I’d expected. JFK was called to the telephone, and I offered to go. Time is valuable. Sorensen said no, the Senator was enjoying it. So we had a long chat. Kennedy was listening while we were talking. It may be that he knew a great deal more than he suggested, but he listened. A good aptitude for the President. I think the field is new to him, and he’s studying it.

“I pointed out that we’d said nothing about Cuba, feeling this ought to be a solo. I said the task force had asked me to say that it could not be asked to advise where it could not know the facts. Specifically, aid and assistance to forces hostile to Castro in Cuba should be based on one of three situations: (a) A state of affairs menacing the United States in which self-defense was the operating principle: (b) A threat to the safety of other American countries in which case the United States would act, presumably, on request: (c) Action authorized or approved preferable by the OAS but, in any case, by a multilateral group in accord with the rather subtle glow of the hemisphere. All of these involved estimates in fact which would have to be made by the President. We couldn’t have

[-15-]

the CIA reports or the State Department reports. “Personally, I said we were in a situation in any event. The twenty-sixth of July revolution was a legitimate, perhaps necessary, reaction to a messy state of affairs. This revolution had been aborted by Castro. It should succeed, and our line should be to aid its success.” (That was not Castro, but the original revolution.)

“The talk ranged widely over many things, mainly covering the report. The President-elect discussed one or two points himself. He seemed convinced that Latin America needed better representation in government than mere assistant secretary of state. Sorensen observed that that particular job had been downgraded and something ought to be done. He speculated whether our peculiar position in Latin America would not

justify giving recognition in the region not given to other regions. I said it could be done if someone identified with Latin America affairs had been appointed to a top post. This, however, was over the dam since the two top posts had been filled, secretary of state and under secretary, and with men identified with other regions. So it seemed to me some act of State, creation of a new position and so forth, was in order. He asked whether it would be well to keep Tommy Mann [Thomas Clifton Mann] on. Mann was assistant secretary. I said he wished to go to Mexico, but that to keep him where he is for a while would probably maintain continuity. He's probably the best career man they could find. He made some inquiry about embassies. I made suggestions about the other members of the task force.

“He inquired about sending a man of Mexican ancestry from Texas to Mexico. I said we had tried that in the Roosevelt administration, and there always was trouble.”

Parenthetically, when you send a man of that race, background, or an emigre (We've tried it in Finland, and we tried it one or two other places), in every case, the other country either assumes that he is their man and is angry when he isn't, or the envoy consciously is defending himself against identification with the country to which he has been sent. In any event, it sets up an emotional relation which, as you can see, is pretty difficult. So I recommended against that. He wanted to send Telles [Raymond L. Telles, Jr.] from Texas. Finally, we sent him to Costa Rica. On the other hand, you might send a Latin American from Texas to Uruguay or some Latin post abroad Portugal, for example.

[-16-]

“He wondered what could be done for young Franklin Roosevelt [Franklin D. Roosevelt, Jr.]; he speculated on the possibility of making him assistant secretary of state for public relations. He inquired about his future in New York. My first instinct was no, then said that if he had time to establish himself with a good reputation, he might retake the ground he had lost by his Trujillo retainer.”

O'CONNOR: Let me interrupt you for just a second here and flip this backwards.

[BEGIN SIDE II, TAPE I]

O'CONNOR: Okay, I just wanted to make sure the tape is going back the other way.

BERLE: “He then said he hoped I could work in his administration and asked if I had seen Dean Rusk. I said I had an appointment with him for Sunday. He very kindly said he hoped I would be with him. Then he introduced me to Governor Ribicoff [Abraham Alexander Ribicoff] who came in along with a committee. The committee was an amusing one: John Gardner [John W. Gardner] of the Carnegie Foundation and half a dozen other people. Either he and Sorensen do now know or wisely kept quiet about the operations of the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency).

O'CONNOR: What was the date on that meeting?

BERLE: January 6, 1960. I have in my papers here a memorandum entitled, "The Guts of It", meaning the brief summary of the task force report. It's probably in the papers somewhere.

January 8,

"To see Dean Rusk of the Rockefeller Foundation at eleven. I talked about twenty minutes, then Adlai Stevenson came in. About one, Dean Rusk and I had lunch at our house with Beatrice [Beatrice Berle] and me. The three of us were the only people there. Dean Rusk said they wanted me in the administration on Latin American affairs. He asked how I felt about being Latin American representative in OAS. I said I thought there was nothing in it, it was peripheral. I'd rather be working somewhere else. He then asked about the title, ambassador-at-large, and about the possible title of presidential assistant. I said there was no good blinking the real problem.

[-17-]

The real work of policy was done in the long, slogging, day-by-day medium of the State Department. Extraneous jobs, however bespangled with titles, didn't do the job. No one knows that better than Latin America. Nelson Rockefeller had had that job, and it didn't work. (He had been coordinator of Latin American affairs under Roosevelt.)

"Rusk said Kennedy planned to fill the White House, whereas in these other phases, this was not the situation. I said I knew that, and I thought the temporary title plus transmission from the White House would work out, but it was only a temporary solution and a personal one. This was the only time I had had the chance to state the case, and I'd better state it with all the force I could, however inconvenient. Latin America is a continent and a half with two hundred million people and crucial to us. Either you staff to handle it or you didn't. As they had complimented me by asking my views, I could state what it takes to do the job. I thought I convinced Dean Rusk, as I thought I had convinced Kennedy, but they were not sure whether they could do it. We left it that I would send over to Dean Rusk a copy of the task report, which I did by telephoning Goodwin on Monday, January 9. There we left it. They are studying the matter.

"Subsequently, they asked if I would go as assistant in the White House. I refused that on the ground that if I were to have any work, I would rather have it in conjunction with Dean Rusk so as not to introduce a third element between him and the president, that I would work in the state department."

From the point of view of personal career that was a mistake; to defend yourself in the White House, you can't do it very well with a half-baked job in State. I'm not apologizing for what was a bad power decision because I still think that the relations between the president and his secretary of state are of first importance. But if I had it to do over again, I would have taken the job as presidential assistant in the White House. I don't think Kennedy ever really understood my dislike to introduce this element, and I was trying to be helpful with Dean Rusk.

O'CONNOR: Well, in taking this job in the State Department, in effect, were you still hoping, though, that you had convinced the President and the Secretary of State to appoint an under secretary, hoping that this...

[-18-]

BERLE: And really start to do the job, yes.

O'CONNOR: Well, the situation would have been quite different if that had been appointed.

BERLE: If it had been appointed, yes. They never did do that, you see. I was fearful of assuming the enormous responsibility which an assistant secretary of state for Latin America assumes when he has no corresponding power or communication enabling him to do the job. As one of them said, "There never was a job with more responsibility and less administrative authority to discharge it than that job." And I wanted, if I could, to stop it. I never did.

O'CONNOR: Did your position in State create much resentment?

BERLE: Oh, yes. Let me add that that resentment is built-in. It is not merely for an outside position. The bureaucracy resents a new secretary of state with almost equal speed. Without line of authority, it was somewhat greater. I don't think this is personal, or maybe it is the automatic reaction, you know, a singularly cohesive bureaucracy whose tactics at worst anything but nice.

January 10,

"This is still before the inauguration. I had lunch with Freitas-Valle [Cyro de Freitas Valle] who is the Brazilian representative to the United Nations. He wanted to swap the time of day. He thought Castro would have to be stopped by force eventually. This is Brazilian public opinion. Too bad they hadn't done it earlier. I said Latin America wanted Castro stopped and wanted the luxury of criticizing us for doing it. Anyhow, it couldn't be done now. I asked the ambassador if he could check on whether Jânio Quadros [Jânio da Silva Quadros] received the letter from Kennedy, since I knew that Kennedy wished to establish close, intimate relations with Brazil. Freitas-Valle said he would write to Affonso Arinos [Affonso Arinos de Mello

Franco], who's close to Quadros, and have him call the matter to his attention. Affonso, an old friend of mine, is much talked of for minister of foreign affairs in the Quadros government, but current gossip is that, instead, he will come as ambassador here. He did get foreign affairs."

January 11,

"Flores [Agregino Flores], the Counsel General of Honduras, came in.

[-19-]

He reported on the *Castrista* revolt against Villeda Morales in Honduras. Again, parenthetically, I have to note that there are a whole series of these things being started all over the place. And they had Russian money and Russian guns. The first rather desperate preoccupation of mine was to try to prevent this kind of thing from getting loose and precipitating a sort of Spanish Civil War on the mainland. That was the nightmare, of course, that I had. Many people thought I was alarmist about it, and maybe they were right. I don't think so. Flores said a pro-Communist group got a hundred thousand dollars from Cuban sources."

January 17,

"Dean Rusk telephoned. I was teaching school, so we could not get together until this morning by telephone. They want me to do something or other down there in Latin America. I haven't got it quite worked out. We meet at breakfast on Thursday the nineteenth."

January 18,

"Pepe Figueres [José Figueres Ferrer] came in."

O'CONNOR: Who?

BERLE: Pepe Figueres, the president of Costa Rica, former president. During the day Dean Rusk telephoned to ask; "What do you think of appointing Franklin D. Roosevelt, Jr., as assistant secretary of state for Latin American affairs?" I told him it would be fatal.

O'CONNOR: Why did you think that?

BERLE: Because he had taken a retainer of fifty thousand dollars a year from Trujillo in the Dominican Republic. If you know anything about Trujillo and his general reputation in the rest of the hemisphere, you'll realize why. One of the things he had just failed in doing was assassinating Rómulo Betancourt: we'd said that. They nearly had succeeded, too.

O'CONNOR: Certainly you weren't the only one who was aware of this. I'm surprised that he would even be considered for this job if this was so.

BERLE: "I told him the people hearing the rumor had called me up to object for the past week. Muñoz-Marin and Pepe Figueres had both talked about it today. Kennedy wants something for

[-20-]

him. Apparently he has offered other jobs which (ambassador to Rome was one of them) Roosevelt declined, wanting this. Unhappily, being in need of money, he took some from Trujillo. No one in Latin America will forget that.

"I went to Washington and had breakfast with Dean Rusk. He said, in substance, there are difficulties in Latin America. This is an understatement. He proposed that I head a task force to try to handle the pressing questions of policy, drawing in representatives of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Pentagon, assistant secretary of state, and CIA. This would be on an emergency basis, say for six months. I would spend two or three days, it would actually be three or four. I thought of it as being full time. I said I would do this, try to frame it around some definite basis. I said I had no interest in third rate titles. A first-rate job ought to be created with some fanfare. Otherwise, the less said about it the better. Obviously, the latter was easier, so he agreed to it. I'm not sure whether this is great wisdom or greater foolishness on my part. It will wind up, I'm afraid, as usual, with a great deal more responsibility than power and a great deal more aggravation than recognition.

"FDR, Jr., has been trying to be assistant secretary of state for Latin American affairs. He wants it very badly. Everyone agrees this would be fatal. They have offered him several other posts which he wouldn't take. They're going to offer him the embassy for Israel. They've just about come to the point of feeling they've offered him all they need to.

January 24,

"This is after the inauguration. Job is slowly materializing. They're creating an interdepartmental task force, and I'll be consultant or something of the kind as head of that. It has jurisdiction over the assistant secretary of state for Latin American affairs and, I hope, some other things, too. Then, going into lunch, all the old State Department men now in top positions greeted me like a long lost friend. Some were professional emotions in which diplomats specialize; some flattering. I remember Dean Swift [Jonathan Swift]: "Praise is the product of present power." They gave me an office three doors down from Dean Rusk and keys to the secret elevators and two views. It's a waiting

period for something to happen, so I got hold of some of the men who really knew the score and got some information. We went over the list of ambassadors, approving some, vetoing some. FDR, Jr. is angry because he's stopped from running Latin American affairs. Cannot understand that his retainer from Trujillo should be an obstacle. Am trying to make him take the embassy at Rome.

“Behind this monkey business, the really serious situation is the civil war in Cuba and our attitude towards it. The present estimate is that eight governments may go the way of Cuba in the next six months unless something is done. The ARA (Area Redevelopment Administration) (currently Bureau of Inter-American Affairs) handles routine well, but apparently stops right there. We have better information on the national situations in these countries at 70 Pine Street than they do and, of course, a great deal more direct contact with the men.”

I think that still might be true. Then there's this whole business of an administration taking over and so forth. And the immediate problems coming on from there on our history. Hijacking of a Portuguese ship by...

O'CONNOR: Salazar [António de Oliveira Salazar].

BERLE: ...Salazar. The attempt to find some intelligent men to work with in Haiti.

O'CONNOR: Were you involved in our pursuing of that hijacked Portuguese ship?

BERLE: Yes, we had to. They took it to Brazil, and the Brazilians solved it for us in a way that nobody but Brazilians would. Quadros said that the head of that force was an old friend of his, and so he would give him “asylum” in Brazil, and they turned the ship back to the Portuguese.

O'CONNOR: The Portuguese were quite upset about that whole business.

BERLE: I should think they might. Let us suppose that a Cuban hijacked an American liner on the way to Argentina, for example. I imagine there would be quite a ruckus about it here.

“Affonso Arinos has become minister of Foreign Affairs. Brazil will be as nearly bankrupt as a government can be.



We're trying to get out some help. But anything done in the department is about like running a presidential primary, followed by a nomination, followed by a campaign, before anything happens. The bureaucracy is strangling in these matters."

Now, do you want to ask some questions? What you're getting here is merely a task force report of immediate Latin American problems I have here. I suspect that is already in the Kennedy papers which are on file. It was rendered on January 4, 1961, signed by Robert Alexander; by myself, as chairman; Arturo Morales-Carrion; Richard Goodwin, liaison officer; Lincoln Gordon; Teodoro Moscoso; and Arthur Whitaker. The final report of the interdepartmental committee dated June 29 when I left Washington completes the story. Now that sets the stage, and I would think from here out, you'd better ask some questions.

O'CONNOR: All right, that's fine with me.

BERLE: As I say, where I can refer to a contemporary document, I would rather do that.

O'CONNOR: Okay. One of the problems that I wanted to begin this with was your trip to Brazil at the end of February and March. I thought maybe that was one of the first major problems that you were involved in. And I wonder if you'd discuss that a little bit. I'm thinking particularly of the purposes that you had in going down there.

BERLE: You have to set the context. The Cuban situation was becoming increasingly unhappy, and it was trebly so because there were three quite distinct images of the situation. The first was mine which was not widely held. I thought the Russians were in this up to the neck. We were not dealing with a local revolution, but with the familiar form of imperialism with the revolution as part of its apparatus. This view was highly unpopular in intellectual circles. They've always assumed that these were spontaneous movements. As will presently appear, by the time I got back from South America, I was convinced there were three thousand Russian soldiers there at the time of the Bay of Pigs. The first question was whether we could get any multilateral action to deal with the situation, either via the OAS, which at that time was paralyzed, or a group of countries possibly acting under the Rio Treaty and taking joint measures to contain the Cuban situation.

As I saw it, it was not a struggle against "communism," the

[-23-]

dear old familiar Communist conspiracy. If Cuba wants to be a country that doesn't believe in private property, it has a perfect right to do that. It was a straight question as to whether a foreign expansionist empire got a bridgehead in the Caribbean capable of threatening all of the weak countries around the Caribbean and eventually, possibly, ourselves. It's quite one thing to have a Communist Cuba, and it's quite another to have a client government of the Soviet Union. At that time, the Soviet-Chinese split had not occurred.

A great many liberals do not like this idea. Some of them probably like the idea of some communist governments around, those on the extreme left. A great many in the middle assumed that this is just a revolution against local conditions, spontaneous, and that the only solution for Latin American social problems is a bloody revolution of sorts. This is a very widespread stereotype usually held by people who've never seen one, that don't know what the cost of it is. It may be necessary, but when you realize that the Mexican revolution in 1910 cost a million lives, you have about the enthusiasm for these things that you have for war, which also from time to time can't be avoided. If you can find any better way, you try to find it. Of course, the third was a general view that none of this was too important anyway, so what are you worried about?

February 16,

I continue, "The agonizing appraisal of the Cuban situation goes on. We feel that it is clear that the Cubans are building up arms at a tremendous rate. The Russians and Czech technicians, otherwise officers in disguise, though some were really technicians, are arriving by planeloads. I should guess there are about three thousand on the island."

I had a reason for that estimate.

O'CONNOR:           What was that?

BERLE:                I had been told that the KLM (Royal Dutch Airlines) planes which were the only direct communication with Cuba at the time had been arriving three times a week filled with Russians or central European power people, with Czechs and so on, for something over a year. Pepe Figueres had told me that. On my trip south to see Betancourt, Camargo, and Quadros, I stopped by the island of Aruba in passage, and a Nicaraguan consul and countryman came in. It was a habit in America not to

[-24-]

think much of Nicaraguans or any little fellows, but a great many very intelligent, very able men—some of them sons of old friends of mine—are there. And he'd made the notation.

A little later, the governor of the island, Dutch governor, came in to see me. And he said, "I suppose you know that they've been piling Russians in there for a good while." He said, "If my guess is any good, an awful lot of them are soldiers in mufti. I was in the Dutch underground during the war, and I think I know the signs." So then we checked up what the number of people had come in on those planes are and discounted it by about half, and arrived at, let's see, ninety people per plane would be coming in. They'd be coming in full. By counting and then discounting by about half, we arrived at about a figure of about three thousand. Later, we know that a very considerable number were there. We never could verify the number afterwards, but probably more than that. If anything, this was an underestimate.

“Lunch yesterday with Herbert Matthews [Herbert Lionel Matthews]. For the first time it seems to me that he had really slid over the Marxist watershed though he does not admit it to himself. Briefly, his thesis is this:” (He’s with the *New York Times*.)

O’CONNOR: Oh, yes.

BERLE: “One, there will be a revolution in Latin America.” In this respect—in South America—he may be right. “Two, there can be no revolution except when directed by Communist forces.” In this respect, I could hope to prove him wrong. “Three, the United States cannot resist this nor accept it.” I asked him whether the United States was expected to commit suicide with the alternative of creating a military empire. He said that realistically we do create a military empire. The result leaves us, as he sees it, without much of anything except to be surrounded by a Communist world, after which an ensuing world war might be disastrous. This is Matthews.

My own comment:

“This is the fallacy of the limited premise. It’s our job to import a few other ones. I think we can do it. Anyhow, we propose to try. He is still pretty romantic about Castro. He would like to think that Castroism is different from communism, whereas I’m clear it is merely a thin veneer for propaganda purposes. His point is we should think of Latin America as an uncommitted area.

[-25-]

Well, perhaps, but international politics is a long tangled road, and I do not think we are bound by historical inevitabilities. Home to Nelson Rockefeller’s house. He has kindly let us use his until we get our own. Complete the arrangements for a trip to South America next week. Back to the dinner table circuit with Betancourt, Lleras Camargo, and then to Brazil. Then I will be returning home. This is not any time to be away.” Memorandum to Mann which I never sent. My state of mind.

O’CONNOR: How did that trip come up then?

BERLE: That’s a good question. A tangled one. This was dictated March 22.

“We expected to leave on Monday the twenty-sixth for Venezuela, Colombia, and Rio. (This is the trip you were asking about.) But all planes were tied up by the strike. The flight was cancelled. We got a flight to Caracas by KLM on Tuesday A.M. This left a very muggy day to clean up a little in the office. February 27, on KLM to Caracas, we were met at Aruba by the consul and some of the staff and also a nice representation from the Dutch government at Aruba. In the course of conversation, it was mentioned by the Dutch representative that a KLM plane came in there from Europe with about sixty Russians, Czechs, Chinese

technicians with women, who stayed overnight and took the next plane out to Cuba. This has been going on for quite awhile.” You see, this confirmed the Nicaraguan.

“We arrived that evening in Caracas. Went directly to the President’s house and stayed there.”

A foreign envoy shouldn’t be a guest, but Rómulo Betancourt and I were intimate friends. I knew him far better than I knew Kennedy, and he had many times had my hospitality in New York and in the country and was returning it to Beatrice and me in Venezuela.

“Ambassador Sparks met us at the airport along with a couple of officers in Betancourt’s household. The next morning, a long conversation with Betancourt. We wasted no time with preliminaries. We’ve been discussing it for many years. I asked him about economics. He stated the outline of his policy as the Carrillo-Batalla [Tomas Enrique Carrillo-Batalla] plan. A businessman, Carrillo-Batalla was now encountering the frustrations of democratic

[-26-]

government, but the general outline of his plan was the policy of Rómulo Betancourt’s government.

“We went on to the Caribbean problem. I said we had to be braced for a general Caribbean crisis. This would include the Dominican Republic where reports were more and more harrowing. (The Trujillo dictatorship was moving towards its bloody end.) If that government blew up, we had to assume there would be trouble in Haiti, a weak government, dissolving into almost anarchy. Finally, to Cuba. I stated the facts and left with him a copy of a confidential, though by no means secret, compilation made of the various activities of the Cuban government. Betancourt said that in case things blew up, he was prepared to act. He believed that he would act together with Colombia, but, in any case, he was prepared to move in himself. He was thinking of the navy and Venezuelan arms. There was no well set up organized opposition, though opposition was as widespread as it could possibly be. He believed Pepe Figueres would know more about it than he did.

“Betancourt considered he had the Venezuelan situation pretty well in hand. The occasional riots, usually supposed to be pro-Communist, (two occurred while we were there) were small matters and of no great significance. The last serious plot was an uninspired affair. Economically, he had temporary difficulties, but thought the long-range problem not bad. The country had paid off a 1.2 billion in debts of one sort and another, had reduced its currency and credit supply by about 26 percent. Carrillo-Batilla’s plan contemplated expanding the currency again to the tune of about one-half the currency credit contraction. On the other hand, the closing out of a substantial part of public works had thrown about three hundred thousand men out of work. This was his problem. He wanted money to re-employ those men. I said in

handling his requests to us, I hope these would be capitalized—that is, that his development money would be used for the public works and not for a mere budget deficit. Our people had always disliked to give financial assistance merely to meet public deficits. He seemed to think this was a feasible way of handling it.

“As to the continent in general, he thought it would be a good idea to see what hemispheric support could be had

[-27-]

for meeting the Cuban-Dominican situation jointly. He authorized me to give his views to President Lleras Camargo of Colombia though he would send his own ambassador with instructions to talk to Camargo. Thereafter, the discussion ranged widely.”

O’CONNOR: You, of course, were well aware by this time of the American plans for Cuba?

BERLE: Yes.

O’CONNOR: Did you discuss these plans specifically with Betancourt? Did he know what was going on? Did he have any ideas?

BERLE: I think you’ll find he knew more about it than we did. And I didn’t write everything out that we spoke of. I didn’t desire to have a set of information supposed to be top secret splattered over the record.

March 1, to Bogata,

“Pleasant flight. Since there’s no ambassador there, we were in an empty embassy and king of the castle. And a very lovely castle it is. We went to dinner with the President and his foreign minister Turbay [Julio Cesar Turbay Ayala]. Ate a good dinner, mainly devoted to discussing philosophy. It was a pleasant respite. Camargo observed it was a continuation of the dinners we had had at 19th Street, and indeed, we picked up where we left off, discussing the philosophy of power. The palace, the one from which Bolívar [Simón Bolívar] once escaped by jumping out of a window.

“The next morning at the palace where Turbay and I started our conversation, I had the benefit of an excellent briefing from Wells [Milton K. Wells], who was Chargé there, and his staff on some of the problems that came up. Then comes first the necessity of Colombia: they had their guerrilla problem, too, more of it with small arms; they had promised them helicopters which they hadn’t got. (This is the first emergence of the helicopters as an anti-guerrilla weapon.) They were having trouble with the loans made to Colombia. The Ex-Im (Export-Import) Bank had opened a grant for housing. Though the Colombian Institute seemed to be an excellent and

successful institution, the Ex-Im Bank wanted a different set of institutions modeled on our savings and

[-28-]

loan associations here. “This”, said Lleras, “means legislation which takes a very long time and a price to be paid for it when it deals in jobs and so forth when the new institution is staffed. Why couldn’t we work with a successful institution on the ground?” And a variety of other similar matters which later came.

Then we tackled the Caribbean crisis. I presented it, as I had to Rómulo, saying we expected the crisis might well come in the Dominican Republic where Trujillo’s reaction to having been denied a sugar quota windfall from Cuba meant that he threatened to become hostile. Torture and cruelty in his regime is growing. Trujillo’s method now is to arrest women and torture them to keep their husbands in line.”

This is not an overstatement. This is done in the lower reaches—chain the husband to the wall and torture the woman. After a while he says he’ll do what you want.

“I said the next problem was Haiti which might explode in a spasm. Obviously, opportunity for Cuba. I gave him a summary of the foreign arms, foreign experts, and attacks Castro had made. I said I assumed as soon as there were explosions anywhere, we should have Castro moving in at once. I didn’t give specifications, but as you can see, Villeda Morales had already filled me in on one—the very weak country of Honduras; as well as Guatemala.

“Lleras agreed. He said he was perfectly aware of the fact that if Castro ever got loose, Colombia, as well as Venezuela, would be one of the next targets. He had assumed target number one would be Colombia. He had resolved not to do anything meaningless, like merely breaking relations, which would accomplish absolutely nothing. But he said he was in no position to head a movement to deal with the situation. If the OAS would go along, or a consultation of foreign ministers evidenced substantial support, something could be done. This he considered would depend on Brazil, where Quadros was a mystery.

“As I left, I pointed out that we were not particularly endangered much by Castro. Castro would tackle all the weak Central American states, and they would look for protection to the hemispheric system. But if that did not work, they would defend themselves anyway and would expect our help, and we were not disposed to shirk the

[-29-]

responsibility. In response to a question, I said the government of Mexico sympathizes with us, but did not wish to raise political issues in its own country. If we had to confront the situation and did so, I hoped we could count on his sympathy. I

got the impression that we certainly could count on that and certainly on more active aid if the situation developed. I left to go over to the University of the Andes. (I was on the board then.)

“After dinner, I sat with Turbay and one or two other people including the probable candidate for president next year. Prior to that we went over for a proud formal meeting with the President. At this interview, Wells was present as well as Turbay. In the course of it, Turbay produced an idea. He said that what we really needed was a green light to deal with Cuba. He said if an American country puts itself outside the discipline of the hemispheric machinery, this might give that freedom of action. He wondered whether we could have the ad hoc committee of the OAS send a note to the Cubans to know whether they were or were not accepting the obligations of the hemispheric system—meaning they would cut their military relations with the Communist bloc, accept a democratic procedure, and so forth. I left out the machinery and followed his idea. In that case, I suggested, they could not claim the benefits of nonintervention and other agreements. Turbay struggled with this a moment, and I put the question to Lleras. He said, quite obviously, a country that did not acknowledge the obligations of one side of a bargain could not claim the benefits of the other. I noted this for future reference.”

I’ve even underscored the point a couple of times. Then, all night to Rio, probably the twenty-eighth.

“Formal dinner at foreign office. There was the new Secretary General, former Brazilian ambassador to Cuba, Leitão da Cunha [Vasco Leitão da Cunha]. He had been in Cuba. He started in on finances. The Brazilian finances were in difficulties. Then we tackled the Caribbean crisis. I made the same presentation I had in Colombia and Venezuela and asked their views on the subject. After a detailed examination of the facts, Cunha, himself just back from Cuba, said their intelligence exactly agreed with mine. Whatever Castro had been in the beginning,

[-30-]

now he was a prisoner of a Communist government. His own fear was that when it became inconvenient, the Communists would murder him and take over completely. As to what to do about it, he did not know and he did not suggest. It was obvious they had no instructions from Jânio Quadros. It really added up to that they did not feel they wanted to do anything, though were in entire agreement that something had to be done. I made the point that I thought their reserving the right to damn us out if we did the job wasn’t a very happy solution from my point of view.

“Then various parties, including a luncheon at the (Palacio de) Itamaratyoi which was like the company of old friends. We’d expected to go over to see the President Wednesday afternoon. However, this engagement was cancelled because of the death of the governor of Rio de Janeiro entailing a state funeral in Rio. The President thus

came to Rio, and we endeavored to see whether he would receive us in Rio. He could not. We made a date for Thursday morning in Brasilia, eight hundred miles away, but there are fast planes. In point of fact, though he did not tell us so, he put in the afternoon at the Itamaratyoi Palace getting boned up by his people on some of the problems. Ambassador Cabot [John Moors Cabot] thought we were being given a run-around. I thought not. So we had a party at Carlos Chagas' house instead, where half the Brazilian foreign office was present as old friends.

“Up the next morning, took the plane to Brasilia. We arrived about ten and went at once to the President's office—this is a very simple room in the Planalto Palace—and started in with the now famous interview. Quadros could not have been more frank. After a few minutes in which he sparred a bit during which I presented Kennedy's greetings and so forth, he squared away. He said he'd inherited Brazil in a shocking condition, government insolvent, demoralized, corruption everywhere you looked; he was having the country make enormous sacrifices, said he would be the most unpopular man in Brazil pretty soon, and he meant it. He was prepared to sacrifice everything to get this situation pulled around. So he was going to send Moreira Salles [Walter Moreira Salles] to break the ground, followed by Mariani [Clemente Mariani] to get the business done. I said we would discuss this at the foreign office, and we'd give it consideration. He thanked me for the hundred million, said we were generous and kind, but

[-31-]

he said he was refusing it because he wanted a whole package. A hundred million was nothing in comparison to his necessity. He would rather do the whole job at once. I let it go at that.

“Then I made the presentation about the upcoming Caribbean crisis. Though I did not know it at the time, he had been briefed about it the night before by Leitão da Cunha. He agreed with the analysis, but he pointed out that this meant immediate conflict with the left wing in Brazil. He felt they could put on an opposition which would paralyze his government. He, therefore, could not do very much. I said this, of course, left us to meet the situation, and I did not see how we could walk away from our responsibilities. He wondered whether we could not delay this business for a year and a half during which time he could meet his own state problems and get things in his hands. But I said foreign affairs does not always give you the luxury of time, or we should look to have it ourselves. Since we're getting nowhere, I said that I hoped we could count on his sympathy if the moment came. He said his first principle is cooperation with the United States; he considered the integrity of the hemisphere essential to everyone; defense of a Christian civilization had to be the ultimate interest of all of us. And he was speaking about himself and his state with the utmost frankness. I personally believed it.



“We left after a couple of hours of this on the most friendly terms after a very frank and cordial discussion, though it did not solve any problems of ours. Since we did not wish to talk to the press, I left by private elevator and went to lunch with Cabot, who was present at the interview. A couple of newspapermen came by, and I said it was the custom of our country when a visitor talked with the President to leave it to the President to say anything about it.”

That is our custom, not always followed. When you go to the White House, and the newspapers say, “What did you talk about?” you say, unless you have previously discussed it with the President, “The President will make any comment.” So I said that was our custom.

“I left it there, and in due time we went back to Rio, slept at the embassy, and the next morning took the plane to New York where I had to meet the Haitian opposition party. Planes were off schedule, and we arrived at ten Friday night.

[-32-]

“At once, a telephone call from Freitas-Valle, the Brazilian ambassador here. He came in to see me, apologizing because the foreign ministry did not see me off at the airport. I explained this was my fault; no one told them I was leaving. I had not been in Rio more than a few hours, and I asked him to apologize because I had not paid the historic *pour congé* call. This was not what Freitas-Valle meant. He wanted to know what had happened, how far to the left the President had gone. I gave him the facts. The facts, among other things, were that the President’s office had got out a rather snooty interview about it, apparently designed to please the extreme left, pro-Communist left, that’s what we talked about. This made something of a scandal in Brazil, and I was doing my best to play it down. No incident happened, but it was clear that some of the staff, Quadros’ staff, waded to give the impression that Quadros had been very snooty and unpleasant to an American envoy. I said I recognized Quadros’ difficulties. Freitas-Valle opened up slightly and said he was not too sure that there had not been attempts in the palace to make gestures placating the extreme left. This was a dangerous game. He himself was wondering how far it led. I tried to buck him up a bit.

“Next morning, the Brazilian consul general called up. She, (it was a woman) had wanted to have Bernardes [Carlos Alfredo Bernardes] meet me at the airport when I reached Washington. She wanted to cover the ground. I said I’d be working late Sunday night. It would be difficult. He’d better come in Monday morning. She wanted to see me herself, came in at lunch, and we talked about various things. They were afraid that Quadros’ staff, authorized or not, were making trouble. Bernardes did come in. He wants a statement to quiet down the press on the Brazilian flap. I understand, and I said I’d think it over. Then talked with the secretary. We decided to suggest they make a statement, letting us see it. And it was clear the cumulating of pro-leftist actions timed with my visit was intentional. I’m not sure. I think he

probably was right. We shall have to counter the effect. He suggested, in turn, that the Brazilians make a statement, letting us see it, and we make a statement in reply.

“Meanwhile, a Cuban note is being sent around proposing that the friendly nations in the hemisphere, meaning friendly to Cuba I suppose, mediate the dispute between the United States and Cuba. It pays the dubious com-

[-33-]

-pliment to me of saying that I was training several thousand men in Guatemala for the Cuban invasion force. I had been on the job for about three weeks so I must be a pretty good trainer.”

Of course, there was such a force there, I knew that.

O’CONNOR: But you weren’t training them.

BERLE: What is it?

O’CONNOR: You weren’t training them.

BERLE: Oh, I’d never been near the place. Never really had good information about it until after the Bay of Pigs. I was on the way out.

“The trouble with this infernal business is that it prevents work on real problems. The fact is we are fighting a Cold War without a coordinated command. This is the Cold War in the hemisphere, not a fight with words either. If I get out of this with a whole skin, I shall be lucky. My estimate is that there will be a major climax over Latin America, like the climax when the Communists sought to take over Europe in 1947. This will come fairly soon; the Caribbean will explode, and we shall have to act; attempts will be made to promote revolutions in every part of the continent; a particularly weak spot is Ecuador. Report to President Kennedy at 10:00 A.M. He was kindly, reserved, unflustered. His technique is so opposite to that of Roosevelt that I have to hold on to myself. He asked that a courteous letter from him to President Quadros be drafted. This has been done.

A lot of miscellaneous routine work.

O’CONNOR: Was he upset at all by the publicity that had come out of your mission?

BERLE: No, if he did, he didn’t show it. was. We have no propaganda service. By consequence, any propaganda service could try to make trouble. We had a perfectly friendly interview with Quadros in which he was perfectly courteous. The press boys around the palace manufactured something for their own purposes. This is the *malicio Latino Americano*.

[BEGIN SIDE I TAPE II]

You see, the Task Force announcement and my position as head of it was announced on February 1. Shortly after, there was a feeling that we ought to clear our policies with Betancourt and Camargo and, if possible, with Brazil.

My comment:

“Double-spaced and underscored is the terribly obvious thought of the Cuban Revolution, which in turn connects with everything else in the hemisphere.” “Cuba was entitled to her social revolution; so are a great many other countries in Latin America. Fidel Castro, however, was not satisfied with that. He wanted also a quarrel with the United States; he calls it ‘liberation’. Herbert Matthews makes the point that this is inevitable and natural.”

February 6,

“Some work with Goodwin at the White House.”

February 7,

“The problem of the Cuban exiles is beginning to be difficult. We arranged to have them all see Philip Bonsal [Philip Wilson Bonsal].” He’d been ambassador to Cuba and now is gone. “Some economic work with Lincoln Gordon, general go around with Ted Achilles [Theodore Carter Achilles] and Assistant Secretary Mann who is slowly getting the information lined up. The question is what to do about it.”

February 8,

“A White House meeting was held with pretty much everyone interested in the Cuban question. The discussion ranged over all points. The situation is anything but nice. We agreed that our whole favor ought to go to the younger, more idealistic groups, that our hopes should be that the revolution of the twenty-sixth of July, aborted by its Communist trend, be brought back to its original ideals.

I ought to add that the White House discussions were not too satisfactory. A great many people were there. This meant that no one really had a chance to develop ideas. To develop a policy in

a conference of twenty or thirty men was not a good way of doing it. They can vote aye or nay, but developing what really the possibilities are is not really easy. In fact, it's impossible.

February 16,

“Continuous agonizing appraisal of the Cuban situation goes on. It is clear Cubans are building up arms at a tremendous rate. Castro a week ago said he intended to support his revolution. In fact, he's been building up before this—sending arms and technicians to other points for future reference. The Communists have said the year 1963 is their target year to take over South America. This was the Russian date. Everyone here thinks we're in the odd situation of being prevented from doing anything because action by us would be illegal. The other side, of course, can do what it pleases. We had lunch with Herbert Matthews. Memorandum to Mann was that the Inter-American Defense Board is really not able to quench them—Castro still has a representative on it—but that we would have to work out special arrangements with other governments other than through that machinery.

My own note of March 11,

“My own feeling is crystallizing. Sooner or later we're going to have to meet the Cuban situation. It ceases to be a matter of diplomacy. It's rapidly getting to be one of force. This will precipitate and crystallize all Communist forces in the hemisphere against the United States. The President's speech on Monday ought to give his conception. If possible, I should like to lock the Communists into the position of revolting against the President's type of a Marshall Plan, as they did in Europe in 1947 when they lost. I think we'd best precipitate the climax. I can't see that it will be less if we wait, and we might as well have the battle on grounds we stage instead of on theirs. It will be frightening when it comes.”

O'CONNOR: Were you speaking at this time of the actual invasion?

BERLE: No.

O'CONNOR: Were you aware at this time that it was being planned?

[-36-]

BERLE: Yes, I was aware that it was being planned, but the problem was whether it should be.... There was still a locus of poenitentiae. But if you conceive it, as I did, as one engagement in a rather general hemispheric conflict of less degree of severity elsewhere, the problem was whether you should wait or let the situation develop itself all over the hemisphere.

“The House Committee on Foreign Affairs the morning of March 9. A very full session. Well attended. Secretary Ball [George W. Ball], Lincoln Gordon, and I made

the presentations. Everyone was interested. I tried to cool down the newspaper allegations that Brazil had treated us coolly. But when asked directly whether I thought the Inter-American machinery was important to the United States in defending against the Cuban intrusion, as cutting edge of a Communist invasion of the hemisphere, I could only answer honestly, "No."

I note in my diary that:

"Meanwhile the Laos situation has built up into its crisis. In practice the Communist Vietminh supplies and some troops held the Plaine de Jarres and the Laotian Royal Army has no interest in fighting anyone. Lest the Communist advance develop into a head-on drive for Siam and all of Southeast Asia, the President, first, stiffened American forces and, two, proposed neutralization of Laos. My impression is that what may come out of it is a ceasefire, leaving the Communists in the Plaine de Jarres, to stop the advance there. The Russians are obviously a little worried as Vietminh and the Chinese increasingly take over. So we may get another indecisive peace, losing some territory in the main defense area north of Siam. Query, How long will this last? Also trouble in the Congo. There's trouble everywhere."

Thursday, March 28,

"Publicity on the Brazilian visit is dying down, but it's interesting to estimate it. Tad Szulc's dispatch to the *Times* was untrue. Some embassy official said, "We did not throw bricks at each other." Next was a UPI (United Press International) report that Quadros and I'd quarreled. This was promptly denied. Following that, *Time* reported that Quadros refused to shake hands with me when he left. Obviously an elaboration of the original falsehood. Finally an AP (Associated Press) report that the Brazilian

[-37-]

embassy had been instructed to boycott the President's speech on Latin America. This was carried on the radio, though denied by the Brazilian embassy, which, in fact, turned out in force to hear the President. All this suggests intrigue in Rio. Someone was dumping this stuff out. Carlos Chagas thinks it was the American embassy, or it may have been someone in the Itamaratyoi. Rightly or wrongly, I suspect some low echelon person at the American Embassy has been helping to circulate a completely false report. We are sending Mann as ambassador to Mexico."

O'CONNOR: Why in the world would somebody in the American Embassy be putting out anything like that?

BERLE: We have some odd characters who get jobs at embassies sometimes. I'm trying to find out the date of the President's speech. I had urged that the President make the speech announcing the Alliance for Progress before the Cuban invasion, and he did that. In fact it was something like ten days

before the Bay of Pigs that he made his speech. That was very well received. I have a summing up of my own, May 3, on the Bay of Pigs.

O'CONNOR: A summing up of your own views?

BERLE: Yes.

O'CONNOR: I'd like to hear that.

BERLE: "The situation is building up pretty rapidly. The doctrine of nonintervention was used as an excuse for not facing the savage fact that high intentions, good words, and even good deeds will not stop cold war activities carried on with agitation, money, bought demonstration, and organizational guerrillas with arms from outside. To me this situation without clarification really meant that the process would go on, that circumstances would probably be created which might require much larger military action. Reports that Russian MIG-15's and Russian destroyers were on the way to Cuba added to the severity of the situation."

Those reports came back here by the way of.... There was a failure of intelligence there. The extent to which not only Russian soldiers but Russian heavy arms had already reached Cuba at least never reached me. I don't know whether it reached other people or not. But we came to discover that there were a great many more Russian arms and officers and men in Cuba than we know about.

[-38-]

"Various meetings were held with the president at the White House. The dates are appended. These meetings were attended by Dulles [Allen W. Dulles] and Bissell [Richard Mervin Bissell Jr.] and others from CIA, Secretary McNamara [Robert S. McNamara] and General Lemnitzer [Lyman L. Lemnitzer] of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, McGeorge Bundy, and not infrequently Arthur Schlesinger, by Dean Rusk and Thomas Mann and myself from State. The proposals from CIA were expounded. They were already very far forward. My own opinion was generally not asked, although on three occasions I stated a view.

"At the first meeting I suggested that the United States, instead of acting covertly, should act as a great power. Since Castro's government was no longer in the OAS, Lleras Camargo's observation that Castro could not claim the benefits of immunity as an American agreements government against intervention at the time that he denounced the system and violated all its principles and obligations. The rights of these treaties automatically lapse under those circumstances. In any event, it was an attack. Neither the Cuban people nor the United States nor any other country has given up its capacity to act when a member of the regional collective security group becomes an aggressive enemy of that group."

O'CONNOR: What was the response?

BERLE: Still less, but he claimed that the agreements creating our group protect him against the action of any one of them. Well, this was going all around the table, with the general agreement something ought to be done.

“The second one, of more importance, was the fact that the bill you attract in these circumstances would have implied acceptance of the dictatorship Castro had fastened on them by the Cuban people and by the United States, and possibly by the American system as a whole. Obviously there was no such acceptance. ‘In these circumstances unless some men are prepared to risk their lives for the cause of freedom in their country, freedom dies without a whimper.’ This sentence was Byron’s [Lord Byron] famous sponsorship of the Greek expedition to Thessalony. My own thinking on this has been better expressed by Salvador de Madariaga than I can express it myself. I attach to this memorandum his statement. ‘Referring to a great power in action, make clear the fact that this is now a front in the Cold War, a fact that seems to have escaped the notice of most of the American commentators.’ The suggestion

[-39-]

about no follow-up was not therefore discussed. The CIA and Joint Chiefs of Staff presented various methods. Their final one assumed a virtual unopposed landing capable of establishing a beachhead and an opposition government in Cuba.

“Subsequently, some sort of meeting was held in Miami, at the close of which a revolutionary front was agreed on, namely Miro Cardona [Jose Miro Cardona], Manuel Ray, Artime and Varona [Manuel Antonio de Varona]. Sanchez Arango [Aureliano Sanchez Arango] had been asked to join but did not. All known Batistianos had been filtered out. The CIA asked my opinion on this group. I said I thought it was as representative of the revolution of the twenty-sixth of July as could be expected, though I regretted Sanchez Arango’s absence from it.

“At a subsequent White House meeting the plan was discussed. By this time President Kennedy had made it clear that he would not back it with American forces. I had difficulty with this, but the president made known his decision and we had no further discussion on the point. The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the CIA thought the plan of getting ashore was a sound one. Thereafter, the success of the expedition depended entirely on its support within Cuba. As it presented itself then, the operation was substantially a commando operation, getting into Cuba with a relatively small group of trained men—in other words, doing exactly what Fidel Castro had done. The Joint Chiefs and the CIA were sure they could get ashore without opposition, and that adhesions would come automatically. I did not dissent, though two elements were absent: willingness of the United States to assume responsibility, and willingness to

assume a cold war front levied against the United States would imply that America would lose force if need be.

“My final connection with it—there were subsequent meetings at which a final decision was made, which I did not attend (specifically speaking was not invited) was with Miro Cardona in Washington when he was received by Ambassador Bonsal and myself. He merely stated his plans for our information. Later I was asked to see him and did see him alone at my house. This was on April blank. My principal task was to tell him the decision had been taken not to use American force in support of the operation.

[-40-]

“Subsequently, I met him on Saturday, April blank, at the Century Club in New York with Arthur Schlesinger. Again we stressed the fact that as this went forward, American forces would not be used, although American help would be given. It would be, very frankly, a Cuban group who wished to strike a blow for the freedom of Cuba, which had been taken from them. I’m clear Dr. Cardona understood this, though I think he believed that in case of necessity American force would come in as a matter of political sequence. Both Arthur Schlesinger and I tried to disabuse him of this idea. At that time I think the final decision to go ahead had been taken, though I do not know when or by whom.”

O’CONNOR:           What was the date of this memorandum that you’re reading?

BERLE:               Well, this is after it was all over. It was May 3.

“A good deal of information subsequently appeared in the newspapers as to the handling of the force plans and so forth, by the CIA. I’d had no connection with any of this and no knowledge other than what was presented at the early meetings at which I was. I feel bound to say, however, that I should not have been hostile to any plan which gave a group of Cubans, especially those who fought for the revolution of the twenty-sixth of July and had been betrayed into the Soviet camp, a chance to speak their piece on Cuban soil. The problem is whether this plan gave them such a chance. Both the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the CIA were clear that it did. There was nothing more shocking in this than there was in support given by most of American public opinion to Fidel Castro when he was doing the same thing in the struggle against Batista [Fulgencio Batista]. There cannot be a double standard in these matters. The handling of the expedition itself, its leaving and so forth, the route and its destination were, of course, top secret. I knew nothing about them and did not wish to.”

I’m no expert at commando raids. I was once a second lieutenant of Infantry in World War I, but that was a long time ago.



I do not know that I have a memorandum of one meeting which Arthur Schlesinger has referred to in his book.

O'CONNOR: That was the April 4 meeting, I believe.

[-41-]

BERLE: While the invasion was still going on. It was right during it when things were going badly. The government-in-exile had been taken to Florida. The theory was that if the invasion had succeeded in establishing itself on Cuban soil, they would then go in and set up their own government there. Actually, as you are aware, at the Bay of Pigs they were very anxious to go, irrespective of the CIA telegram down to Washington, to the White House.

The White House called me down about twelve o'clock at night. There was a dance at the White House that night. The President came out from the dance, on the edge of the dance floor, and asked if I'd go at once to Florida and act in the situation. I said I would, and I think looked a little glum. He said, "Maybe you'd like someone to go with you, perhaps Arthur Schlesinger." I wanted it very much indeed, partly for company, partly for witness. To go with discretion and no witness puts you in a vulnerable situation.

We went to a secret camp in the President's plane, a secret camp in Florida. Virtually the Cuban government-in-exile, Manuel Varona and so on, were really imprisoned there.

O'CONNOR: Had you been aware of the intention to hold the exile government, or revolutionary government, incommunicado?

BERLE: Where they were held?

O'CONNOR: Had you been aware of the decision to...

BERLE: This did not worry me particularly because in action to take them close by with the immediate reports would likewise involve precaution that the detail of the reports and so forth don't filter out, that is, that nobody did any talking. So that for a forty-eight hour period this perceived nothing out of the way. But I was clear that the battle of the Bay of Pigs had been lost. And by the time we got there, as the radio reports were coming in, it clearly was. The problem was what to do with these unhappy Cubans. There are various things.... They wanted to go irrespective. That probably would have meant they would have gotten killed. They were as unhappy as men might be. Their sons went in on that expedition. One of the two expeditions had faltered and never got there. And of course, we weren't supplying air cover. I walked around outside a few moments and came to a decision and then got hold of Arthur and said, "I think we'd better take these men back to the White House."

[-42-]

O'CONNOR: That was your decision to bring them back?

BERLE: Yes. I telephoned to have the CIA to telegraph the President and say that, unless otherwise instructed, that's what we planned to do. It seemed to me only the President could deal with that kind of a situation. Who else could? So we did. We came back on the President's plane from Florida and then took them into the White House. I need hardly say that these were men in great agony. Their sons had been captured, and they might be killed. Nobody quite knew. Khrushchev was talking about using rockets. It seemed to me the handling of the situation had to be by the President himself. No one else could do it. Arthur Schlesinger had agreed.

So we took them back, and Kennedy met them. I think probably there is a memorandum in the White House papers, his papers, which would give what he said. He was as encouraging as he could be. Then the next morning he made a speech which suggested we would go much farther in dealing with the situation than actually we did, for better or worse. Meanwhile, of course, there was a tremendous row in the press. Everybody saying, "Poor little Cuba," and all this kind of thing, which to my mind was about as wide of the actual mark as you can fly.

I got a very brief note from Arthur later, which I have here. This is April 21. He was going. He said, "I can not take off." This is from Arthur Schlesinger to me. "I cannot take off without saying to you that in my judgment the republic owes a great debt to you for your services in the past three days. Only you and the President could have saved the situation. I was shocked by the unfairness of Wallace Carroll's reference to you in the *Times* today. I will speak to him about it before I leave town." I don't recall what that was, but I don't think it really matters.

O'CONNOR: Was the President really able to absorb some of the shock of these people, some of the hurt of these people, when he met them?

BERLE: Yes.

O'CONNOR: Did you talk to any of them about it afterward?

BERLE: Oh, yes.

O'CONNOR: What was their response to his.... Didn't they feel that he had betrayed them? Didn't they feel very bitter against him?

[-43-]

BERLE: Everything considered, I think they behaved surprisingly well. Varona, I'm clear, had thought that we would be involved in the situation to a point where we could not fail to follow up with military force. As I pointed out, under instructions I once stated that we were not planning to do that to him, and then still later with Arthur Schlesinger in New York I made it as clear as we could possibly make it. I think Schlesinger's papers probably would confirm that. Whether the decision itself not to use force was a sound one, I think is open to question. In retrospect it would have

been well to finish it then and there. A great many men who subsequently are dead or in exile or whatnot would be alive today. And we would have developed the Alliance for Progress in peace instead of in a half war situation for the ensuing year or so.

So far as the actual preparation for it is concerned, I was in on two of the meetings at the White House. These were big meetings and not, to my mind, satisfactory. To present the whole picture was not an opportunity I had. You can't claim very much of the President's time and then only if he chooses. Presumably Dean Rusk was doing that. If I had had opportunity, I am by no means clear that I could have made my own feeling, that this was an engagement in a main imperialist push by the Soviet Union, would have prevailed. I was very clear about it, as you see. Actually, this did become clear before the Cuban missile crisis. And at the time of the Cuban missile crisis it was so recognized. The handling of it was, therefore, much more decisive, and the support of the President was infinitely greater.

The attempt to try to do the Russian operation in reverse, that is, a war of liberation without direct participation, which was really the attempt made at the time of the Bay of Pigs, this failed, and failed partly because the CIA apparently was unable to develop accurate reports on the support it might have had, and in any event that support could not be forthcoming unless there had been an operation proceeding on Cuban soil. Otherwise it would be nothing but suicide. I was not pivotal in this. I mean by that, the actual authority for the decision taken turned on the agreement of the President with the Secretary of State and the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the CIA. That was where the decision had to be made, and I don't claim any pivotal force in it. I was in favor of action, and if the plans they had were sound, then I thought they ought to have gone forward. As it turned out, they were not sound.

I still think that we were better off for having made the attempt and failed than of quietly accepted the situation with probably more difficult results later. Let me state them at their

[-44-]

worst. I think if we had not done something at the Bay of Pigs, we would have been fighting it on the mainland within a year.

O'CONNOR: Do you think even the attempt of the Bay of Pigs...

BERLE: I do.

O'CONNOR: ...helped to prevent that?

BERLE: Certainly.

O'CONNOR: In what way?

BERLE: Because it convinced the Russians that we would react. I think the real effect of it probably you'll find in Moscow. I think it did contribute to the credibility of the President when, at the time of the missile crisis, he moved everything out, and the Russians withdrew them rather than call the bluff.

O'CONNOR: Were you aware of any centers of opposition to the Bay of Pigs within the meetings that you attended?

BERLE: Yes. The only opposition, if any, was a rather nebulous one in a meeting held in the State Department where Fulbright disliked the idea.

O'CONNOR: How about Dean Rusk's attitude? Was that ever very clear?

BERLE: Dean Rusk did not oppose. He went dubiously along, fearfully. In that, probably having better information, he was right in being fearful. But he went along.

O'CONNOR: There's much been made of Chester Bowles' [Chester B. Bowles] and Arthur Schlesinger's attitude toward the Bay of Pigs. Do you recall...

BERLE: Schlesinger said nothing at any of the meetings. I think you are right that Bowles was against it, though on other grounds. Bowles isn't a very factual man in the way he develops his positions. In any event, I don't think he was saying very much. You're talking of intellectual attitudes now rather than positions overtly taken.

Taking everything, and in spite of the fact that this was as dismal a failure as I've ever had anything to do with, as the history has developed itself in the ensuing six years, I am inclined to

[-45-]

believe that the United States, and Latin America generally, is better off for the attempt having been made than if it had simply been passed up. I think it would have been taken as meaning that the United States would not act in any such situation, and, by consequence, that the policy of arming and landing Russian troops in the hemisphere could have gone as far as the Russians cared to push it. They would have been entitled to take that as their conclusion. And had they done so, I'm perfectly clear that we would have been under a tremendous pressure to intervene the next time it happened, which might be Guatemala; it might be Honduras; it might be Venezuela; and, in point of fact, was the Dominican Republic. If the attempt had not been made, the next time would have been much more severe, as in fact it was in the missile crisis. But that our own feeling about it, even failing, gave credibility to Kennedy's decisiveness at the time of the missile crisis, as it gave credibility to Lyndon Johnson's decisiveness in the Dominican Republic. Otherwise, I think you would probably have had, in fact though not in form, a Russian conquest of a considerable part of the Caribbean littoral by small groups of men dealing with weak governments which would have had to be handled by force in a general military move. This is historical judgment.

The rest of this has to do mainly with the various problems inherent in the Alliance for Progress and the final task force report, which is in the papers, presumably, somewhere.

O'CONNOR: One question I'd like to ask you about this Cuban business before we mention anything about the Alliance for Progress, though: just prior to the Bay of Pigs invasion, there were a number of rumors that Castro was willing to negotiate differences between the United States and Cuba. And some of these rumors dealt with you particularly. Do you have any comments to make on that?

BERLE: Yes, I do. At no time was there the slightest indication that there was any possibility of negotiation of any kind. Before leaving Cuba, Philip Bonsal had explored every possible avenue, as indeed, in fairness, the State Department had explored them when Castro was in the United States a year earlier. A good many of the men who were then in Castro's government had urged him to start negotiations then, and he had refused. The testimony right through the whole episode does not suggest the slightest possibility of any such negotiation.

O'CONNOR: All right, we can go on then.

[-46-]

BERLE: Those rumors seem to be endemic in these situations. They're like the rumors that Hanoi really wanted to negotiate, but if, and so forth. I can't testify about the Hanoi rumors. So far as the rumors that Castro would have negotiated, I have nothing to suggest that he would have done anything of the kind.

O'CONNOR: Okay. We can go on then to your work during the first six or eight months of the Kennedy administration in connection with the Alliance for Progress. One of the things I was curious about is, what sort of opposition did you run into toward the whole Alliance for Progress idea? I have heard it said that opposition came from, among others, General Lemnitzer and Admiral Burke [Arleigh Albert Burke] toward the concept of the Alliance for Progress. Do you agree with that or not?

BERLE: There was a variety of diehard opposition to foreign aid of any kind and, included in that, foreign aid to Latin America. This is the kind of sentiment today we'd associate with the John Birch Society. There was some of that. I think Arleigh Burke, Admiral A. A. Burke, may have had some such idea. I can't honorably say that it was very well articulated. We did find in the State Department some odd and amusing situations.

It had been an article of faith with the Eisenhower administration that you gave no aid to any government which had expropriated or which nationally owned oil interests. Thus, you must not give aid to a country like Brazil because it refuses to allow any ownership of oil or oil facilities except by the Brazilian government. We reversed that. This kind of opposition obviously was special interest residue. The second was that the policy should not be to develop aid from government to government. It should be only to assist private enterprise in developing the country. This also was a residue from the laissez-faire commercial interest

policy which had been an article of faith in the Eisenhower administration because it made good Republican doctrine. A little of that appeared in the Congress, I think. But I cannot honestly say that this was as serious as some people thought. There is a residue of conservative opinion in the United States which does not like foreign aid at all, believes it could be better done by helping American companies to go in and invest in the region. Even the Alliance for Progress contemplated that a great deal of the burden would be done privately, since few governments are well enough equipped to do an economic job.

O'CONNOR: Well, do you feel the Kennedy administration then contributed substantially to breaking down this conservative attitude?

[-47-]

BERLE: I think probably it changed the whole atmosphere. There'd been enough really to prevent anything except stress on private initiative. And private initiative obviously was not likely to start any serious ferment in Latin America. I also believe now, several years later, that that actually did—the changed policy in the Kennedy administration, the task force policy—did get a great deal more done than one supposes.

In the first place, I think that the redevelopment of the Inter-American Development Bank so that it had vastly more flexibility in making loans and some in making gifts, or concealed gifts, in the soft money window opened the way to do a great many things. It blunted the edge of the growing unemployment and sheer misery situation, to begin with, and second, it made excellent use of the Food for Peace movement and the capacity to use our surpluses of food, made directly available to some of these governments to take direct care of their people at a time when they were not as well taken care as they are now. It made it possible for governments, Venezuela, for example, to cut the pay of the Venezuelan Army by 30 percent, which for a Latin American government is a considerable achievement. Finally, it did succeed in insisting that a condition of Alliance for Progress participation must be adequate taxation of their own people.

I'm not dead sure that that may not prove to have been one of the major achievements of it: the insistence that the fiscal affairs of each country should be so handled that the poor didn't pay all the bills—specifically, the adoption of income tax, and adequate collection and so forth may not have proved as useful as almost anything else. The ghastly fact was that, before the Alliance for Progress, the poor paid the taxes. Rich men were richer in Latin America than they can be in the United States. They paid no income tax. This would mean that a man with an income of a million dollars a year would pay only trifling taxes. The same man in the United States would pay far more than half of it to the government. Until these had been arranged, any aid that you could give really meant that the rich men were growing richer, or at least were undisturbed, and that the United States was somehow supposed to take care of the tasks which government was expected to do. Now that has changed.

O'CONNOR: Well, how had that changed? Was that part of your task force...

BERLE: Oh, yes, that's part of the task force report.

O'CONNOR: Well, who was really involved in seeing that that change was brought about, can you tell me? Was this something President Kennedy himself appreciated very deeply?

BERLE: Oh, I think he did. Very much so. Actually, the Inter-American meetings on the Alliance for Progress, the Punta del Este meeting, was handled primarily by Secretary Dillon of the Treasury and implemented by a staff from the embassies. The economic counselors thereupon went to work in the respective countries to try to get understandings on...

[BEGIN SIDE II TAPE II]

O'CONNOR: Well, do you associate it with anybody in particular—the pushing of that idea, the making sure that that idea was carried through, was followed up?

BERLE: That was pretty much a team job. No, I can't say there's any one man particularly responsible for it. I think they all helped in that.

O'CONNOR: The reason I asked, though, is because there many good ideas that are put forth in a task report which never are carried out.

BERLE: I note in my file memorandum on this job,

June 22,

“The Task Force this morning: unhappily all variety of bureaucratic sabotage in ARA is showing up. No surprise. We know it. But it makes life unpleasant and difficult. The task force has had admirable cooperation from all the other departments.”

The Treasury I think was the most useful. The Ex-Im Bank was extremely useful. The Inter-American Development Banks were useful, though for reasons sometimes that perhaps psychologically were different from ours. They believed in balanced budgets, and this helped.

July 7,

“At the White House with Dean Rusk as agreed: I handed

in the final report of the Task Force and asked its discharge. The President was very frank and very kindly. He observed, "These fellows" (he was meaning State) "really object to my being President," which, of course, is true. He said that he was entirely disillusioned about the old pros in the State Department, their capacity to deal with situations. He asked if I would stay on as consultant, to which I agreed, and hoped that I would work out a good propaganda educational program and stand by to be a help when needed. I told him how I would defend the Cuban adventure, even as it came out. He grinned wryly, and said I'd have trouble in court proving it. I said that the historical evidence was not in, and that if the action had not taken place in April, we would have been right there fighting it out with troops at summer's end. After half an hour, the Cabinet met. I went off to clear up with Dick Goodwin various jobs. I had lunch with Bill Martin [William McChesney Martin, Jr.] at the Federal Reserve. Fascinating to see him after a lapse of twenty-five years, when he was secretary of the stock list committee of the New York Stock Exchange, and I was a public member of its board of directors."

Robert Woodward [Robert Forbes Woodward] now had gotten back and had been made Assistant Secretary of State for Latin American Affairs.

My note is that,

"I think he will be good. At all events, he knows the score. Unlike ARA, he understands the democratic forces as well as the governmental forces, since he started ambassadorial life in Costa Rica at the time of Pepe Figueres. I cleaned up and went home."

O'CONNOR: Do you have any particular criticisms, or disappointments, in connection with the Kennedy administration's carrying out the Alliance for Progress ideas? You must have some, and I would like to hear you comment on them.

BERLE: They are general rather than specific. The Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, the American Republics Division of the State Department, had twenty men in it, a man on each desk, for the other twenty countries. Only one or two of them had ever served in those countries. Many of them didn't speak Spanish or know the language or had only a tourist's, or less than a tourist's acquaintance with the country. These men didn't like anything. The acting head of it, Wymberley Coerr, was a good pro who was more interested, I think, in eliminating men he didn't

[-50-]

like than in getting anything done. The State Department—the Washington group—some of whom were quite effective in the field, were of no use whatever in this kind of a program. They didn't like it. "You should be a diplomat. This isn't diplomat's work. This is a damn



fool arrangement anyway. So why bother with it?" So you got no support from that group. The economic men in the State Department did rather better. The best help we got was, as I say, from the Treasury—Dillon's men.

The throatcutting inside the Kennedy administration was on a par with the throatcutting which goes on in most administrations. And the internecine warfare, especially on a lower level, which didn't primarily concern me, was terrific. My impression is that in dealing with his department, Dean Rusk showed up as a weak man, a good man, an honest man, a friendly man, and weak. Anybody who said, "Well, we better not have him, or someone else..." Rusk was more anxious in appeasing his staff at that time, I think, than in anything else. Not because he didn't want to forward the policies, but because he didn't consider he could act until he established a rapport with his staff, and this enabled the professional staff to cut a lot of throats. They were not particularly interested in an outside secretary of state, whom they consider is a foundation man.

O'CONNOR: Was this internecine war, is this responsible for the failure to appoint or to create a position of under secretary of state for Latin American affairs?

BERLE: I would not be surprised. I never knew the exact facts on that.

O'CONNOR: You said at one time that you thought...

BERLE: One of the arguments used was, well, just think how if you have that for Latin America, why, what do you think Europe, Asia, and Africa will think? And I said, "We don't have the same responsibilities toward Europe and Asia and Africa that we do towards Latin America. This is an area in which and for which we've assumed responsibilities by agreement. We don't have an Alliance for Progress with Asia or Africa, and we've already developed the working machinery for responsibility in connection with the Marshall Plan in Europe. So I don't think that the cases are on all fours."

No, I would say if there were any difficulties, the difficulties primarily lay in the career State Department men. Individually, they're not bad; in the department, their are. Then, within the department itself are the security men. The security men were

[-51-]

largely men who were supposed to appease the Senate committee—the equivalent of the Senate Committee on Un-American Affairs—Senator Dodd's [Thomas J. Dodd] committee, and so on. Those men tapped wires. In fact, I'm pretty clear they tapped mine all the time I was there. And they used to try to create a theory that nobody should have an interview with anyone except with one of the junior bureaucrats along. This was really a system of espionage. It was a very unpleasant place to work in that department. I've been told it still is.

As I say, Rusk was unable to get on top of that, not, I think, for lack of sympathy but for lack of strength. He had been accustomed to dealing with the Rockefeller Foundation, where they don't have that problem.

O'CONNOR: You thought at one time you had convinced both Rusk and President Kennedy.

BERLE: I hadn't, as you can see.

O'CONNOR: Well, you hadn't, and you've explained to a certain extent why you hadn't convinced Rusk, or at least why it wasn't carried out. But didn't Dean Rusk gain much backing in this line from the White House?

What was your relationship with the men in the White House who might have helped to carry this out?

BERLE: I never discussed that with President Kennedy.

O'CONNOR: Well, how about Arthur Schlesinger or McGeorge Bundy—were you dealing with them at all? You must have been.

BERLE: Well, we were friends, you see. I don't think Arthur Schlesinger, who was probably my closest friend in the outfit, considered, really, that he had very much to say about it, and I think if he had been asked, he would have supported the idea. I don't know whether he ever was asked. McGeorge Bundy I know talked about it. It was possible that he felt that as long as he was there you didn't need any additional machinery in the State Department.

I think the President may have had the idea that he could build up a White House staff which would get the result, then he wouldn't have to talk to Congress or the State Department bureaucracy or anything else—an idea that, in retrospect, I think probably was the easiest way of getting a result. I turned it down, as you see, in the initial go-around on this because I don't like the idea of ad hoc intervening machinery there. But that may have been a mistake

[-52-]

on my part. I don't know.

At all events, precisely what happened was that there were various individuals in the White House, occasionally McGeorge Bundy himself or occasionally Dick Goodwin—these men who were themselves handling matters for the time being. This meant, of course, that as long as that was done, the State Department drew a pass and could deny responsibility for a failure or assume credit for a success. And I think it may have contributed to a certain breach between the President and Rusk, before the President's death. I have no authority for that, other than the fact that both Sorensen and Schlesinger, especially Schlesinger, somewhat incautiously quoted the President as saying that he didn't plan to keep Rusk.

I think the President was unhappy at the whole handling of the State Department, not because he mistrusted Rusk but because he was unable to get any grip on the situation. This did not surprise me because Roosevelt had had exactly the same experience when he'd asked me to go to State in 1938. He simply didn't trust the kind of thing that came out. He thought

they were his political enemies. I think Kennedy thought so, too. I think both men were right. These men had no use for a Democratic administration. They had no use for a liberal administration. They didn't like these strange intellectuals cruising in and out. And their hatred for the White House group was manifested by the leaks they used to make to their pet columnists.

O'CONNOR:           What was the position of Richard Goodwin in all of this? How did you work with him?

BERLE:               Well, he was in the White House.

O'CONNOR:           Yes, I knew that.

BERLE:               And I used to see a good deal of him, still try to when I can. He's very young. He was thirty. Essentially, I think he's a poet. A good deal of the language that you find is obviously his language. He took the bit in his teeth, and this meant it didn't go through State Department channels. This infuriated the American Republics Division over there. And they made life as unhappy for him as they could. Their capacity to do that is considerable. The State Department bureaucracy is no better than the strength of the leadership at the top. Rusk had not established that leadership while I was in the department, and I doubt if he'd established it later. He may have established it now. And the bureaucracy were strangling the number of inter-departmental committees, any one of whose members has a veto, can strangle action more rapidly

[-53-]

than any system devised since the days of Babylon, I think. But if you're looking for personal devils, I don't know that I can find them. There are men I don't like.

O'CONNOR:           Well, that just about runs me out of questions.

BERLE:               We got quite a lot done, nevertheless, you see. As I say, when we got through there was a financial mechanism, adequately staffed and adequately financed. There were a great many specific projects which got going. These, as they proliferated, have come to the point where they ought to begin to tie up. Then you get a cumulative effect. The difference in the view of what a government was expected to do in Latin America, I think, is marked. We've already discussed that.

I think, too, the emphasis given to the democratic achievements of men like Betancourt and his government, men like Figueres and his governments, and eventually, after some puffs, blows, and flaps, the more or less adequately elected government in Peru, not to mention the direct aid given to Brazil, I think changed the whole climate of government in Latin America. That sounds like an intangible, but it isn't. It's quite one thing to have the old Carillo idea that I take, I get, and I and my family clean up, which had not been rampant there, and quite another to have governments believe that their mandate is to try to use the resources of their country for their people, and who do consider that there is something

inherently immoral in having an ultra-plutocratic group sit there, enjoying a free ride while the poor go without education and pay the taxes.

Finally, I think we did succeed in reversing the policy of the United States government not to stabilize commodity prices. So there was the coffee agreement. There is not yet a cocoa agreement; I hope there will be. There was a de facto stabilization of the price of copper, which is the other big export. This materially helped the price situation, though it is far from being solved. We still aren't over that hump yet. But I think we realize now it is a national issue. We cannot go on having steadily rising prices for manufactured products, which we export, and static or falling prices for the kind of products which these countries have to sell. This is really the heart of the whole Communist argument that we exploit colonially these countries.

Finally, we have seriously increased the extent to which these countries manufacture for themselves. Today Venezuela manufactures nearly 75 per cent of all her manufactured products within the country. Only a few years ago, any manufactured products were

[-54-]

imported from the United States or maybe from Europe. Brazil is moving towards that steadily. Colombia somewhat, but much more can be done. Central America remains something of a problem because they don't have the resources. But the Central American Common Market has begun to remedy that situation. Now all those are products or by-products of the Alliance for Progress.

O'CONNOR:           Okay. Unless you have any other comments to make on John Kennedy or his presidency, I think that will end this interview.

BERLE:                My own stay there was too brief and my own knowledge of him too little to try a kind of estimate to make of the man historically. He was as likeable as one could imagine, and certainly apparently as generous as a man can be under those circumstances. I say apparently because I am not sure that there may not have been, underneath this, a certain ruthlessness in dealing with men that one suspects without being able to describe. Nor would I quarrel with him on that account because a certain ruthlessness in a president is an essential part of it.

He did have, and I was unhappy about, the presence of certain friends, the Palm Beach set, who were intimately and intricately aligned with Trujillo. This was social, and it had nothing to do with his election to the presidency, but some of those men were engaged in business in the Dominican Republic and had close personal relations with Trujillo. And this made it difficult for him to believe, I think, in the Dominican situation exactly what form of life he was dealing with. The underside of the Dominican Republic is the last word in sheer horror. But the Trujillos, when you meet them, and I have, are pleasant, good-mannered men to meet. The fact that they murder their enemies or torture them doesn't usually come up over coffee cups. I think he had a hard time believing that. Actually, when we finally got inside of the Dominican Republic, there's no doubt about it. But it was a pretty ghastly situation. I think there you had something to overcome. A man who made estimates based on Palm Beach connections, and so forth. I thought he got over that.

No, it's a case of a man who I think was just developing enormous possibilities. What he would have done with them then, of course, these are unknown, might have been. I think, as you say, he had grown to meet crises. He wouldn't have been as indecisive as he was at the Bay of Pigs. He wasn't on the missile crisis. He might have found a better way of dealing with the Dominican crisis, though I'm not prepared to be dogmatic about that because no one has yet suggested what might have been done

[-55-]

instead of the Dominican action that the President took. And by this time I think in my own view, that there is defense as well as intervention involved in these situations, is beginning to make some headway, not so much in intellectual circles as in congressional and other circles.

O'CONNOR: All right, sir. I think that will end it then.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

[-56-]

Adolf A. Berle, Jr. Oral History Transcript  
Name Index

**A**

Achilles, Theodore Carter, 35  
Alexander, Robert, 8, 14, 23  
Araujo Hidalgo, Manuel, 13  
Artime, 40  
Ascoli, Marion, 3  
Ascoli, Max, 3

**B**

Ball, George W., 37  
Batista, Fulgencio, 41  
Benton, William B., 3  
Berle, Beatrice, 17, 26  
Bernardes, Carlos Alfredo, 33  
Betancourt, Rómulo, 9, 11, 12, 20, 24, 26, 27, 28,  
29, 35, 54  
Bissell, Richard Mervin, Jr., 39  
Bolívar, Símon, 28  
Bonsal, Philip Wilson, 35, 40, 46  
Bowles, Chester B., 45  
Bundy, McGeorge, 39, 52, 53  
Burke, Arleigh Albert, 47  
Byron, Lord, 39

**C**

Cabot, John Moors, 31, 32  
Cardona, Jose Miro, 40, 41  
Carrillo-Batalla, Tomas Enrique, 26, 27, 54  
Carroll, Wallace, 43  
Castro, Fidel, 2, 4, 13, 15, 16, 19, 25, 29, 30, 35,  
36, 39, 40, 41, 46, 47  
Chagas, Carlos, 31, 38  
Churchill, Winston, 4  
Coerr, Wymberley, 50  
Cox, Archibald, 3, 4

**D**

de Mello-Franco, Affonso Arionos, 19, 22  
Dillon, C. Douglas, 11, 49, 51  
Dodd, Thomas J., 52  
Dubinsky, David, 2  
Dulles, Allen W., 39  
Duvalier, François, 2

**E**

Eisenhower, Dwight D., 14, 47

**F**

Figueres Ferrer, José, 20, 24, 27, 50, 54  
Flores, Agrepino, 19  
Frankel, Max, 15  
Freitas Valle, Cyro de, 19, 33  
Fulbright, J. William, 3, 45

**G**

Galbraith, John Kenneth, 2  
Gardner, John W., 17  
Gates, Samuel E., 10  
Goodwin, Richard N., 8, 9, 14, 18, 23, 35, 50, 53  
Gordon, Lincoln, 7, 14, 23, 35, 37

**H**

Harriman, William Averell, 2, 3  
Hitler, Adolf, 1  
Humphrey, Hubert H., 2

**J**

Johnson, Lyndon Baines, 5, 9, 46

**K**

Kennedy, John F., 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11,  
14, 15, 16, 18, 19, 20, 23, 26, 28, 30, 31,  
34, 36, 37, 38, 40, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47,  
48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 55, 56  
Kennedy, Joseph P., 1  
Khrushchev, Nikita Sergeevich, 4, 43

**L**

Larrazabál, Wolfgang, 12  
Leitão da Cunha, Vasco, 30, 32  
Lemnitzer, Lyman L., 39, 47  
Lilienthal, David E., 3  
Lleras Camargo, Alberto, 12, 24, 26, 28, 29, 35, 39

## M

Madariaga, Salvador de, 39  
Mann, Thomas Clifton, 16, 26, 35, 36, 38, 39  
Mariani, Clemente, 31  
Martin, William McChesney, Jr., 50  
Matthews, Herbert Lionel, 25, 35, 36  
McCarthy, Joseph R., 2  
McNamara, Robert S., 39  
Morales Carrion, Arturo, 8, 14, 23  
Moreira Salles, Walter, 31  
Moscoso, Teodoro, 7, 14, 23  
Muñoz Marin, Luis, 7, 8, 9, 14, 20

## N

Niebuhr, Reinhold, 5  
Nixon, Richard Milhous, 3, 4

## O

Oakes, John B., 10

## P

Perez Jimenez, Marcos, 12  
Prebisch, Raúl, 9

## Q

Quadros, Jânio da Silva, 19, 22, 24, 29, 31, 32, 34,  
37

## R

Ray, Manuel, 40  
Ribicoff, Abraham Alexander, 17  
Rockefeller, David, Sr., 6  
Rockefeller, Nelson A., 6, 14, 18, 26  
Roosevelt, Franklin D., Jr., 17, 20, 21, 22  
Roosevelt, Franklin Delano, 1, 4, 6, 8, 10, 16, 18,  
34, 53  
Rose, Alex, 2  
Rusk, Dean, 5, 14, 17, 18, 20, 21, 39, 44, 45, 49,  
51, 52, 53

## S

Salazar, António de Oliveira, 22  
Sanchez Arango, Aureliano, 40  
Schlesinger, Arthur M., Jr., 2, 8, 39, 41, 42, 43, 44,  
45, 52, 53  
Sorensen, Theodore C., 7, 8, 11, 15, 16, 17, 53

Sparks, Edward J., 12, 26  
Stevenson, Adlai E., 5, 17  
Stewart, C. Allan, 12  
Swift, Jonathan, 21  
Szulc, Tad, 37

## T

Telles, Raymond L., Jr., 16  
Trujillo, Rafael, 14, 17, 20, 21, 22, 27, 29, 55  
Turbay Ayala, Julio Cesar, 28, 30

## V

Varona, Manuel Antonio de, 40, 42, 44  
Villeda Morales, Ramon, 7, 20, 29

## W

Wells, Milton K., 28, 30  
Whitaker, Arthur Preston, 8, 14, 23  
Woodward, Robert Forbes, 50