

Oral Reminiscence

of

JOHN M. CABOT

Counselor of Embassy Buenos Aires, Argentina, 1945-46, Belgrade, Yugoslavia, 1947; appointed career minister, 1948; Consul General, Shanghai, China, 1948-49; Minister to Finland, 1950-52, Ambassador to Pakistan, 1952-53.

Manchester, Massachusetts

July 18, 1973

Recorded by Richard D. McKinzie, Harry S. Truman Library

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MCKINZIE: Ambassador Cabot, how did you decide upon a career in Foreign Service? Were there any particular individuals or ideas that in your younger days moved you to become a Foreign Service officer?

CABOT: I hadn't decided anything when I was sent by my father to Oxford, as a reward for getting a magna cum laude at Harvard. While I was in Oxford I went to Hungary and Rumania in

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connection with the thesis I was writing. I came into contact with our embassies, or our legations rather, and with a certain number of our diplomats. It seemed a rather interesting life and one for which I had inadvertently prepared myself fairly well by majoring in history.

The idea gradually grew on me and I decided to take the exams, which I did. I came out number one in my class, and so made the Service.

MCKINZIE: Did you especially choose the Latin-American service in the beginning, or did that just fall to you as a result of being a junior officer?

CABOT: It completely fell to me. I offered French and German as my foreign languages when I went into the Service, though I was sent to a Spanish

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speaking country, and spent most of my life in Spanish speaking countries. I have never gone into either a French or German-speaking country.

MCKINZIE: Could you talk a little about the political orientation you took with you into that? Very many people who went into the Foreign Service had been affected by someone else's ideas; Woodrow Wilson's ideas or, in the economic field, Manley O. Hudson at Harvard.

CABOT: I wouldn't say I had. My father was a rock-ribbed Republican, and I always used to argue with him about the League of Nations, which he did not support. To that extent I was a Wilsonian. I think that I went in without any particular preconceived notions, other

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than ones derived from our history. I mean, I did believe in the Monroe Doctrine. I did believe in a strong Navy, things like that. But for the most part, I went into it realizing that I would have to subordinate my views to those which I was supposed to uphold in the foreign government service.

MCKINZIE: You became the Chief of the Division of Caribbean and Central American Affairs in 1944. Could you talk about your work, particularly about any contacts that you had with Central Americans or planners in the State Department about the postwar period?

CABOT: Well, I can divide that into two compartments, I think. The first was carrying out the policies which were necessary in the persecution of the war. My principal job as the

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officer primarily responsible for Central America (it was only later that the Caribbean got included, and that was Cuba, Haiti and Santo Domingo), was the question of procurement. We were getting sisal, hemp, rubber, mahogany, and various other things from Central America. Of course, later when Cuba got into it there was sugar from Cuba, Haiti, and Santo Domingo, and nickel from Cuba.

Mainly, we were constructing highways. We had all the arrangements made to construct a highway transversing lower California. There was a great to-do about it because the Mexicans are very sensitive on the subject, quite understandably. We'd just been able to complete arrangements when the War Department announced that the danger of a Japanese landing in Southern California no longer existed. Therefore,

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they didn't want to build the highway. We had to get out as gracefully as we could.

Then we did build, more or less, the Inter-American Highway. That was quite an undertaking. A lot of money was wasted on it, and it was stopped in mid-career. Then we had a quinine project, the development of a synthetic (atrabin), to treat malaria, and then suddenly they announced that they were going to stop that program. In the meantime, we were issuing floods of apologies, and not a very substantial return for all the trouble that the Central American countries had gone through to help us.

MCKINZIE: I spoke with Jose Figueres, President of Costa Rica, and asked him if he thought that the Central American effort during the war to provide these supplies entitled Central

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American countries to special consideration after the war. His response was that Costa Rica had supplied three coffee crops to the United States at OPA prices, and had not sold that coffee on the world market. The difference between the OPA price and the world price was the Costa Rican contribution. His view was that the United States had an obligation at the end of the war to make some kind of gesture in the way of development aid to Costa Rica.

CABOT: That, with due respect to Figueres, is a lot of malarky. In the first place, there were no foreign markets for coffee. Most of the markets for coffee in Europe and other parts of the world were cut off for the war, so the only place they had to sell was in the United States.

In the second place, the OPA price was put

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deliberately high in order to sustain the economy of the coffee producing countries. This is the fact, but you do hear a lot of that sort of talk; that just isn't true.

Of course, by the end of the war it was quite possible that coffee prices would, through natural causes, have risen to more than the OPA prices. I cannot answer that. When I was Assistant Secretary in '53-'54, the result of raising the control price on coffee was to let coffee rise very substantially, but I don't think that was particularly true in '41-'45.

MCKINZIE: Could you comment upon the state of the "economic art" in Central America as you knew it during the war? Some people in the State Department voiced the opinion that Central American economists really were not very

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sophisticated, or at least not very much in tune with U.S. thinking about the problem of development in their countries.

CABOT: Well, the question of development hadn't arisen at that time particularly. They were thinking in practical terms of attracting industry and one thing or another, but it was only toward the end of the war that the more advanced countries like Mexico and Brazil began to think that United States should help them develop. It was at that time that we did make large loans to a number of countries; for example the Volta Redonda Steel Mill in Brazil. Similar loans were made to Mexico, for similar purposes, and to other countries.

May I mention another thing. A lot of people in Latin America complain that we kept our prices down by our controls, which

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was in some cases emphatically true. Most of the basic materials were kept down in price, but they overlooked the fact that we were supplying them with goods, at our officially low price, in return. They were sending us more than we were sending to them, so it wasn't altogether an equal exchange, but we were sending steel and finished products, which were short enough in the United States, at prices which we controlled and were very much lower than world prices.

I remember, for instance, that we used to send automobile tires to them and it caused an awful row. They would get in the blackmarket and then there would be a lot of trouble. We'd say, "Oh, we won't send any more," but we'd end up sending some more; perhaps a few less than we would send otherwise.

I can remember, for example, being in

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Mexico during the war. We went down to see Elizabeth's mother a couple of times. You could get things like gasoline and Kodak film, which you couldn't get in the United States. They were uncontrolled.

MCKINZIE: Do you recall having to deal with Latin-American diplomats who wanted larger shipments of capital machinery? Some records indicate that very many of the Central and South American countries wanted this and believed somehow that they had been promised it, perhaps through Nelson Rockefeller's office, Office of Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs.

CABOT: That is undeniably true. The Latin-Americans did want a great many things. You see, they were piling up surpluses of dollars, precisely because we didn't have as much to sell them as

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they had to sell us. One of their complaints is that we took off controls after the war, and the result was that they sold to us at controlled prices while we sold to them at uncontrolled prices. Of course, part of the answer to that is that they didn't control what they were bringing in. They were bringing in Cadillacs, silks and things like that; not buying the machinery they needed.

MCKINZIE: Do you think it would have been a good idea for the United States to have kept controlled prices on exports after the war, so that the dollars that the Latin-Americans had accumulated would not have been so quickly dissipated?

CABOT: No, I don't. I don't think we can control the economy very effectively in peacetime,

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as we have been discovering the last two or three years. That, of course, is a matter of opinion; I'm not a noted economist and you can see that.

MCKINZIE: Would you talk about the relationship that you had with the Office of Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs?

CABOT: Nelson Rockefeller and his associates were a bunch of rather eager beavers, which had both advantages and disadvantages.

For example, they devised a blacklist which was, I think, as a whole, a good thing. Of course, there were mistakes made in carrying out this; embarrassing cases arose where people were put on the blacklist that never should have been on it. On the other hand, the whole conception was an effective means of waging economic

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warfare. Of course, they did encourage relations between Latin America and the United States, and they did a lot of good.

Sometimes, there were various controversial things. I remember a meeting when Nelson Rockefeller wanted, in effect, to take over the whole educational system of El Salvador. We didn't think that was a very good idea. We were afraid that it would cause quite a row sooner or later when the El Salvadorans discovered that their little children were being educated by Americans or people picked by Americans. That was the sort of thing which had very fine possibilities, but which correspondingly had possibilities of a row.

They did a lot of their work in health. They had these servicios which established regions and all on how to wipe out malaria or to do

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something else or produce rubber for example. I think those did quite a lot of good. Of course, some of their ideas were utterly wild. I've forgotten what some of them were, but they were completely crazy. Others were very sound and worked out very well.

I think it's only fair to say that Rockefeller was the real leader of the Point IV program. He's done so much good around the world on the whole.

MCKINZIE: Was Rockefeller's organization effectively controlled by the Department, from your point of view?

CABOT: No, it wasn't. You never knew what was going to turn up next. Sometimes you'd find out about it in the papers and go through the roof, but the fat would be in the fire.

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That's a lightly mixed metaphor, isn't it?

MCKINZIE: It's effective.

Could you talk about how you came to attend the Dumbarton Oaks Conference? I assume this was in connection with Latin America.

CABOT: That was the other compartment of my work during the war. About 1943, Cordell Hull ordered that an organization be set up to study postwar problems. I was appointed to the committee by Larry [Laurence] Duggan to sit in and work on these things, particularly for Latin America. One of the major things was the question of an international organization to replace the League of Nations, and second, of strengthening the inter-American system.

MCKINZIE: There were many people who thought that the inter-American system was a regional arrangement

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which might mitigate against the effectiveness of international organization.

CABOT: The whole question of how they meshed in was very much before us, because the inter-American system was a more or less functioning system at that time. The later United Nations was something which existed at most as ideas in people's minds. The United States wanted an international organization but did not want either to destroy the inter-American system or so hobble it that it could not work effectively if the international organization was not effective.

From early 1943 until the end of the San Francisco Conference in 1945, I was very busy with those studies, in addition to my duties in Central America and the Caribbean. I was involved particularly with Latin-American questions. I wasn't so much involved in the Dumbarton Oaks

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proposals, although I sat in on a good many of the meetings and I was on the delegation.

MCKINZIE: Do you recall particular discussions you had with Latin Americans about the Dumbarton Oaks proposals?

CABOT: The Latin Americans, as usual, felt themselves slighted, and they expressed themselves rather vociferously. There was no particular reason why they should have felt slighted. I think that the great question was whether the Americans, Russians and British could agree on any proposals which would be acceptable to the great majority of nations of the world;

that was a pretty grave question. For example, the veto caused an awful row, particularly in Latin America.

MCKINZIE: The feeling was that this was undue power for the big five?

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CABOT: Exactly. Cordell Hull had been talking about sovereign equality of nations, and the Latin-American position was that this is a hell of a sovereign equality. "The United States can say, 'No,' and we can't make them say, 'Yes,' or agree to say 'Yes.'"

MCKINZIE: At the time of the Dumbarton Oaks Conference did you think Latin-American countries were going to demand a modification of the inter-American system? Henry Wallace had recently said that it's going to be the privilege of the developed nations to help the underdeveloped nations.

CABOT: Well, I don't think Henry Wallace had much influence in the situation, but the Latin-American nations wanted to proceed with the inter-American organization and they had some

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rather grandiose and nebulous ideas about international concessions. You must remember that the Latin Americans were not in the Dumbarton Oaks conversations, and they were mad about it. They felt that they should be in on everything because they were our allies.

MCKINZIE: What response did you make to them?

CABOT: Well, the answer was these things were all going to be resolved in a conference to be held. They would be present, and have their say in court at that time.

MCKINZIE: The Chapultepec Conference immediately preceded the San Francisco Conference.

CABOT: At the Chapultepec Conference, the agenda was divided into about five parts, of which the most important was the inter-American section. I was in charge of the World Organization Section

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and there the American republics got up a lovely resolution which pertained to all sorts of noble ideas and didn't have very much substance. I, for instance, remember the Latin-American nations insisting on the idea of universality. In other words, they wanted everybody including the neutrals of the world and eventually the enemy powers to be included in the international organization. This was, I think, a very good idea, but one that we couldn't meet or cram down the Russian's throats. A lot of noble phrases came out, which is the trouble with most inter-American meetings; lots of noble phrases.

MCKINZIE: Of course, hanging over all of that was the question of Argentina's participation.

CABOT: The United States wanted to deal on an

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equal basis with all the American republics. Of course, Argentina had different ideas; Bolivia also did at one time. Hull was anxious to keep Argentina out of the system since she hadn't cooperated during war. [Sumner] Welles wanted to have the idea of universality in the American hemisphere. Welles got booted out, I believe, for a number of reasons. I think this Storny note played a big part. Storny was the admiral in charge of foreign affairs in Argentina. He wrote a rather appealing note to the United States, and Hull insisted on sending a very cold reply. This ended Storny's career rather abruptly and caused the coldness between Argentina and the United States.

There were two years of trouble and then came the Chapultepec Conference. At that time was clear that the great majority of the other

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American republics were anxious to have solidarity in the hemisphere. "Solidarity" was the key word. Nelson Rockefeller, who was then in charge of Latin-American affairs, would listen to this almost unanimous appeal and started to patch relations with Argentina.

Hull was furious and caused quite a split; it caused quite a split in other respects, too. For example, Charles Bohlen in his book says that Roosevelt was so feeble that he signed a note in defiance of the Russians and agreed to support Argentine application to get into the United Nations.

What actually happened was that the other American republics supported the idea, Nelson agreed to go along, and he sent Avra Warren to Buenos Aires to see if they could work out a deal. At Yalta it had been decided that only

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those nations which had actually declared war on an Axis Power could go to the San Francisco Conference. That was contrary to our agreements with the other American republics, who had been told at the beginning of the war that if they broke relations with the Axis Powers that they would be entitled to participate in any postwar arrangements. A number of countries, Chile, Paraguay, Venezuela, and three or four others had broken relations but had not declared war. Yalta confronted them with this decision.

Eventually all did declare war and then Argentina was left alone as the one American republic that could not participate. The other republics, as I say, wanted them to participate. So, Avra Warren worked out a deal with Argentina, by which they agreed to

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declare war, and then got into the Conference. They were not among the original invitees, and they did come a little late. Hull was furious and I think a good many Russian experts thought that we'd crammed it down their throats.

MCKINZIE: What was your own position in all of that? Did you support Warren's efforts?

CABOT: I think I was in favor of it. I was immediately subordinate to Nelson Rockefeller, and, of course, I supported him.

MCKINZIE: At the Chapultepec Conference, which was an obvious effort to strengthen the inter-American system, do you recall any discussions about military alliance?

CABOT: Oh, yes. There was the Act of Chapultepec, which was the basis for the later treaty at

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Rio. The Act of Chapultepec carried the inter-American agreement to defend, multilaterally, any republic attacked by an external power, and a general agreement that any American republic attacked would be defended by all of the other American powers. That was the definite understanding, but I forget exactly how it was worded. Of course, in the later Treaty of Rio we agreed to carry the matter to the extent of anything short of military sanctions by 2/3 vote of the American republics; no veto.

MCKINZIE: Do you have any personal knowledge of why it took so long from the time of the Act of Chapultepec to the Rio Treaty; a two-year period? There is some implication that the reason was that the Latin Americans insisted on tying military and economic developments together and it was difficult to get those separated.

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CABOT: That's wrong. What happened was that they had already more or less agreed to meet in the fall of 1945 for the final conference, and, all of a sudden, Spru [Spruille] Braden was appointed Assistant Secretary for Latin-American Affairs. He said, "I won't have anything to do with a treaty including the present Argentine Government," and that was that. The conference had to be called off. It was only when Spruille had been booted out that they were able to hold a conference. I know that very well, because I was in BA then too.

MCKINZIE: Perhaps you could talk a little bit about San Francisco, where you did deal directly with Latin Americans on the delegation in charge of various committees.

CABOT: I was liaison officer under Nelson Rockefeller.

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He was head of the people who tried to ride herd over Latin-American votes to find enough votes to overcome possible oppositions. Nelson was very effective out there. We had to go to these Latin Americans on innumerable matters; first, to find out what they were thinking so as not to let our thinking get too far out of line with theirs, and second, to try to line them up in favor of the agreed position when an agreed position had been reached. We knew the Latin-American delegates very well and we had good relations with them. I think if you record the votes at the San Francisco Conference you find that the Latin Americans for the most part lined up with us even on the veto question. There were only two Latin-American votes cast against it.

MCKINZIE: Did Latin Americans voice much interest

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on some of the other controversial decisions, mainly the amendment of provisions to the U.N. Charter, whereby the whole system could be changed?

CABOT: Well, they naturally jibbed a bit at the fact that the five big powers were going to have such overwhelming position of strength in the organization, but they came to accept it, eventually. I never thought they would, but in the outcome they did.

MCKINZIE: Could you narrate your experience in Argentina?

CABOT: Why, yes. I went down there almost immediately after the San Francisco Conference and, already on the way down, I heard rumblings of a row between Braden and [Colonel Juan] Peron. I sort of wondered whether I was going

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to land there and find Braden thrown out because of his dogmatic and belligerent positions. I got down there, and I remember just a few days after I arrived Braden had gone up country to some sort of a meeting at some university, and he came back to Buenos Aires one evening.

I went down, naturally, to see him, and there was a mob of "gente bien"; everybody that was anybody that you know socially was there, and it was a wild scene with great applause and one thing and another.

While this had been going on Peron had issued this inflammatory series of posters denouncing Braden Copper Company for some horrible mine accident which occurred years before that. Braden didn't even hold a share of stock in the Braden Copper Company at that time, so he didn't have anything to do with it. It

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was pure propaganda from Peron.

Well, there was this scene at the railway station, and I was appalled, because I saw exactly what was happening here; Braden was getting thoroughly mixed up in internal politics. I remember a junior secretary came up to me, said, "Isn't this wonderful?"

I said, "No, it's terrible," and just walked away.

In the meantime this row grew worse. Braden was making more and more speeches indirectly attacking Peron, otherwise antagonizing him and going around to all the gente bien, who were all opposed to Peron. It was sort of a touchy situation.

MCKINZIE: Did he make a speech at some point where he advised people to vote against the Peron candidates?

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CABOT: No, he never did that.

MCKINZIE: Peron, as I recall, mounted some kind of campaign slogan which was "Braden or Peron."

CABOT: Yes, that's true, but Braden never went so far as to advise to vote against Peron.

The situation got worse and worse, with the gente bien egging Braden on. Braden has tremendous charisma; was really a high personality down there. Most of the old-line papers were for Braden and supporting this thing with undisguised glee.

My first reaction was that Braden was attacking the wrong target. He'd been sent down to attack the German interests in Argentina and see that they had gotten cleaned out, whereas he was attacking Peron in respect to internal affairs. The more the thing went on and

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the stronger Braden's attack grew, the more I began to think, "Well, Jack is out of step with everybody else."

About that point came a telegram from the Department saying that the President wished to appoint Spruille Assistant Secretary for American Affairs, because he had so well represented United States' views in Argentina.

Well, I worked that one over and said, "Obviously I've been on the wrong track. I'll go even further than I have in supporting the Braden line, which obviously is to get Peron out rather than get the Germans out."

Then came the famous Plaza speech. By that time that Braden was leaving, and he got up and delivered this speech. He started out by saying, "And this all happened in a country

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far away from Argentina." Then he proceeded to tell the story of practically everything that had happened in Argentina by putting it in this far country. The essence of the story was that the dictator had sent a lot of students to raid the British Embassy, and they had broken a lot of windows, etc. The Ambassador called the Foreign Office and said, "Please do something about this."

The Foreign Office just said, "Oh certainly, we'll send more police."

The British Ambassador's reply to that was, "Don't send more police, send less students."

It was the most extraordinary thing that could be; you could never imagine the scene that this caused. All these sedate people were deliberately getting up and dancing on the

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tables to hear their own government denounced.

MCKINZIE: This was even more than the gente bien?

CABOT: This was the gente bien; there were about 800 of them congregated in the various ballrooms of the Plaza Hotel. I also may mention the Argentine Government could do very little; in ten days Braden would be gone. They couldn't very well call him "persona non grata" when he was going to be in charge of the Department from Washington, as you can imagine. That was the high point of Braden's career in Argentina.

Then he left and he continued his attacks from Washington. In the meantime, the Senate was getting upset at all of this ruckus, and when Braden came up before the Foreign Affairs Committee for confirmation they cross-questioned him and criticized his interference in the matter

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of internal affairs. They extracted from him a promise he wouldn't interfere in any internal affairs. Nevertheless, he continued to denounce Argentina and supported the Uruguayan move. I think they had an investigation on the conduct of Argentina; something like that. This was in September, and in October Peron was booted out by the Army. However, those who opposed Peron couldn't get together, and finally about ten days later they got the most insignificant cabinet that was ever chosen for office of any American republic, in my memory. And the next day before they had even been sworn in, Peron came back in a tremendous riot and Peron returned to power and the Army had to acquiesce in that.

Then, Braden continued his attacks on Peron. It wasn't long before I began to get

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reports from the anti-Peronist Argentines that these attacks from Washington were doing no good to the anti-Peronista cause. The Argentines were just getting mad at this business. This was about November of 1945. I wrote a long letter saying in the plainest language I could, "For Christ's sake, lay off." That went up like a lead balloon, and the attacks continued.

MCKINZIE: Did you get a response from anyone?

CABOT: I got response from Ellis Briggs, just thanking me for the letter, so forth and so on. I wrote the letter to Ellis Briggs because I was afraid that Braden was a "bull in the china shop," and he wouldn't pay any attention to it, or maybe get mad. The attacks continued and Peron put in some changes, some

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called them socio-oriented measures, by the time the elections were held. For some weeks before the election the Peronistas had been attacking anti-Peronistas and really intimidating them. There were a great many instances of that around the country.

About two weeks before the elections the Army announced that it was going to preside over fair elections, and there was going to be no more rough stuff. Everything calmed down, so for two

weeks before there was relative peace. The elections finally came, and I sent out officers to polling places all over the country, just to keep a gentle eye on them and see whether there was any intimidation at the polls. There was a unanimous report that they hadn't seen anything that looked like intimidation.

The count of the votes was very slow in

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those days; it was a month, I think, before they finished it. Immediately after the elections the opposition leaders sent a message to the Army thanking them for having presided over such fair elections. The very first return favored the anti-Peronistas, but from there on they were overwhelmingly pro-Peron, and the opposition leaders were stuck with their own words. At this point, I began to do some drastic rethinking of my own ideas. To make a long story short, I decided that I was damn well either going to see that the policy was changed or that I was thrown out. I expected the latter.

MCKINZIE: Did you talk to the Argentines in this rethinking? Did you have a confidant, particularly?

CABOT: No, I was sort of isolated in the Embassy. So,

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I sent a series of strongly worded cables saying, "Peron has been elected in fair elections. Whether we like it or not, we've got to deal with him and make the best peace we can with him. That was the general tenor of my comments.

I sort of waited for the axe to fall on my neck when, all of a sudden, something happened which I hadn't appreciated: The Senate was getting on its tin ear. Senators Connally and Vandenberg went to see Byrnes in Blair House and said, "You have damn well got to stop this business. There's to be no more interference in Argentine internal affairs."

Truman finally agreed and got Byrnes to assign [George S.] Messersmith to take over as Ambassador. I'd been in charge of the Embassy for about eight months.

Messersmith arrived on the eve of Peron's

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inauguration. I remember his clothes hadn't arrived and we had an awful time getting some clothes fitted on him in 24 hours.

I was there for about two months longer. In the meantime, there had been an awful row between the State Department (which of course was acting under Braden's order), and the Embassy (which I headed) about the question of the Germans. We had done an awful lot to clean out Nazi influence in Argentina. Of course, there was not a bottom to the well, but we'd gotten a lot of water out of it. The Department said, "Oh, you've actually done nothing. We'd reported these 3,000 German schools and you've only closed 340." Of course, the 3,000 must have been

perfectly ridiculous. There weren't any 3,000 German schools in Argentina. We also had fairly well turned out German business interests and other German activities.

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I've forgotten to mention one thing which made me change my mind. Just before the election, the Department issued this *Blue Book*, which you've doubtless heard about. There are not too many factual mistakes in it, but the whole thing was completely dishonest. I hate to say it, because I consider Spruille Braden a friend, but what the *Blue Book* said was terribly distorted. I can give you some illustrations.

The *Blue Book* strongly intimated that Argentina had sought German arms in order to attack Brazil. The fact is, as shown by the German telegrams which the Department had captured, that they were scared to death that Brazil, with our assistance, was going to attack them. That's just one illustration of the distortions which went on. Also the *Blue Book* accused Argentina of helping German spies.

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The telegrams and other letters which we had showed that German spies, as the war gradually shifted to the allied side, were scared to death of the Argentines; constantly being harrassed and driven underground.

When Messersmith arrived, I gave an account of my stewardship; how we had worked out the deportation of Germans, the closing of German businesses, the closing of German schools and so forth and so on. Messersmith was usually the sort of man that said nothing, but the next thing I knew he had gone the other extreme and was loudly defending Peron against everything. He was completely in Peron's corner. Well, that wasn't my idea of the way of handling the thing I thought that we should handle it coolly, and not take a strongly partisan view one way or the other. I didn't have much to do with the last

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two months. Messersmith was busying himself releasing Argentine assets and things like that.

MCKINZIE: Did you recall having any discussions with Messersmith in which you made your position rather clear, that he had perhaps gone too far?

CABOT: I don't think I did particularly, because it was a gradual process. There were things which I approved of, such as the release of the Argentine pro-Nazis to the United States. It hadn't gone far enough by the time we left for me to take any particular position. After I left, of course, Messersmith and Braden got embroiled in a horrible row. Messersmith was writing these 77-page letters he was famous for to everybody in Washington, and Braden was getting madder and madder. Everybody was waiting with baited breath to see what would

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happen. Finally, after about a year, Truman fired them both and that was that.

MCKINZIE: Somehow, Braden has managed to say that he resigned. He doesn't acknowledge his release by President Truman.

CABOT: It may be true that he resigned, but I think he did it on request.

MCKINZIE: Were you aware of what all of this was doing to U.S. relations with other Latin-American countries?

CABOT: Well, I was vaguely aware of it. You must remember that Peron was a pretty thorough demagogue, and the result is that most of my diplomatic colleagues in BA, for example, were not too impressed by him. On the other hand, I remember that the Brazilian Ambassador, strange

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to say, was rather pro-Peron.

MCKINZIE: Did you have any dealings with American investors who were anxious to get into the Argentine market?

CABOT: No. The only thing of this nature, as I remember, was IT&T getting out of Argentina. They sold their holdings for at least 80 million dollars to the Argentine Government. And, of course, the British all got out. They sold all their railways to Peron. There was quite a process of disinvestment at that time.

MCKINZIE: You've mentioned the circumstances under which you left Argentina. Was this a request you made, or was it the normal rotation by that time?

CABOT: I didn't make a request. I had a letter from

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Ellis Briggs in which he said that they discussed it in ARA, and they thought it was best that I be withdrawn soon after Messersmith got there. This was perfectly all right by me, because I was in an impossible position. Here I was, strongly recommending the end of this anti-Peron policy, while upholding it in Argentina. Granted, I upheld it until it was obvious that it was a failure. At the same time, it was a hell of a note to be saying things in public that I wasn't saying in private. I had no idea what Messersmith was being sent down there to do. I supposed that he was being sent down to continue the Braden policy.

MCKINZIE: Did you brief Ambassador Braden when you returned?

CABOT: Yes.

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MCKINZIE: Did you manage through all of that to maintain a friendly relationship with him?

CABOT: I did. I still consider him a friend, and I hope he does consider me a friend, although I violently disagreed on that and numerous other things since.

MCKINZIE: How did you get assigned to Yugoslavia?

CABOT: Well, that is a rather amusing story. I received an assignment to Yugoslavia like a bolt out of the blue. Almost simultaneously I got a letter from Selden Chapin, Director General of the Foreign Service, saying, "Don't worry about this, you aren't going there. It's just simply to get you out of BA."

So, I came home in all innocence and was sent to the War College for three months; quite an interesting experience. My predecessor in

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Yugoslavia came home and said, "You had better get my house there. The houses are very scarce in Belgrade and you had better pick the house while the picking's good."

I said, "Oh, don't worry, I'm not going there. They told me they wanted me to go there to get me out of BA."

He said, "All right."

About a month later I saw another officer, I've forgotten who it was now, who said, "Well, sure, you're going to go there."

I said, "My God, I've given up this house. What are you doing to me?"

He said, "You are going to go, period." I was pretty mad actually, but that's the story of why I went to Belgrade.

MCKINZIE: Did you think that they really intended to send you there from the very beginning?

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CABOT: I don't know. I don't think they had any real intentions, but there was an empty slot and I was a handy person to put in it.

MCKINZIE: Why do you say that the War College is an interesting experience? Many Foreign Service officers get attached to the War College in one way or the other.

CABOT: It was my first close dealings with the military; a chance to exchange viewpoints and realize that when they got your viewpoint they could genuinely appreciate what it was all about. I particularly thought this was not true in previous exchanges with the military.

MCKINZIE: Could you talk about what occurred in Belgrade once you arrived? You came out of one tense situation into what apparently was another.

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CABOT: Oh, it was. Our two airplanes had just been shot down and relations were about as cold as they could be, and then there was a perfectly ghastly physical situation. Ambassador [Richard] Patterson had made a god-awful mess of things in Belgrade. He had resigned and then went around the United States delivering speeches and denouncing Yugoslavia, which naturally didn't help matters in Belgrade. There was no place to live, but very fortunately the Embassy was empty. We moved in there while looking for other quarters, which I continued to do as long as I was in Belgrade, only seven months.

MCKINZIE: Did you find anything eventually?

CABOT: Well, we finally found a half-ruined house that we agreed to fix up. I forget what finally happened about that. I think somebody else fixed it up and took the obligation over from me. But everybody else was in such a jam. Nobody could find a place to live; everybody was living in cellars, attics, half-ruined houses, and that sort of thing. The clerks were particularly in a bad situation. They, of course, were accustomed to living by American standards, and the Yugoslavs wouldn't let them have decent housing.

MCKINZIE: Just what help did you get from the Yugoslav Government in these situations?

CABOT: You couldn't get any to speak of. Think of their position. These people were living in absolute misery. Why would the hated Americans be given better quarters? I think it's just one of those situations which was dreadful.

MCKINZIE: You mentioned that the two airplanes had

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just been shot down. They got all tied up with discussions about whether or not Yugoslavia should be entitled to receive any reconstruction funds.

CABOT: Yes. That was one of the problems that arose while I was there. The Yugoslavs came around and asked for food; said they just plain didn't have enough food and their country was starving.

They had agreed previously that they would not export any food if we would given them aid and food. Just about the time that I was turning that over in agony, somebody (I think it's better if we not mention who), pointed out to me the Swiss commercial statistics. They showed that the Yugoslavs were sending considerable quantities of hogs to Switzerland.

In the meantime, I had been told that the two

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or three American newspaper correspondents in Belgrade were all pinko troublemakers and to be careful of them.

I decided to pause here, gently laying most of my cards face up on the table and letting them see my hand. They realized that I wasn't trying to have a row with them, so when I found this I got

these statistics and mentioned them to the correspondents. They promptly reported them to their respective agencies. It all came out in the American newspapers.

I think that got my point across. Tito denounced me publicly but that merely called attention to something that I wanted brought to the attention of the Yugoslavs while thinking he was giving me trouble.

MCKINZIE: Was it possible to deal with the Yugoslavs? How were they as negotiators?

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CABOT: As soon as I got there I decided that it was pretty hopeless, but that I was going to see what could be done to improve relationships.

I went to the Foreign Office and said, "Just why the hell do you have so much against us?" Let's just have this out, and if I can find just reasons for complaint I'll see what I can do about it."

They raised particularly the question of war criminals, and I never got anywhere there. There were rights and wrongs on both sides, and the Yugoslavs had lots of quite legitimate complaints against us. For instance, there was one awful case where (if I remember the story correctly) an American soldier had killed a Russian soldier. He had been smuggled out of the country before the Yugoslavs had had time to investigate. Then the Yugoslavs took off after a couple of other

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American soldiers. They promptly took refuge in the Embassy, and to get them out we agreed that the soldier who had been guilty, whom we knew had been guilty, would be tried in Italy by an American court.

The two soldiers were released from the Embassy. The next thing that happened was that the soldier who was guilty, was acquitted. All the Yugoslav trial evidence was thrown out by the American military court on a technicality. Naturally the Yugoslavs were furious. No one could blame them as far as I could see. I suggested that the Judge Advocate who had presided over the court should be indicted. You could see that that wouldn't get very far.

MCKINZIE: Were you aware when you were there that there was a lot of people in the Senate, pitting in a sense, Spain against Yugoslavia?

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They reasoned that if you give something to Yugoslavia you've also got to give it to Spain, and if you ask something of Yugoslavia you should also ask it of Spain.

CABOT: I think that both the Yugoslavs and I were aware of that situation. Of course, my point was to see a way to avoiding World War III; it was just about that bad at that time. I, in my little corner, could not do anything effective to prevent it. Actually, I think relations did improve during my incumbency there, and they continued to improve after Ambassador [Cavendish] Cannon came and succeeded me.

MCKINZIE: Yugoslavs in a sense only had limited options because the Soviet army was in the area, though not actually in Yugoslavia.

CABOT: They would never admit that. Of course, we

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knew that those limited options existed. I think they grew a little less limited as was proved a year later. The month before I left Yugoslavia I wrote a long dispatch which I am publishing in my book. It's already been printed in the annual thing that comes out, *Foreign Relations of the United States*. The dispatch, after discussing all the various problems and the probable results, finally said that if we played our cards correctly, there was some hope of a break between Tito and Stalin. This was in July of 1947, and when the dispatch got to one of the top officials there, he wrote something like "stuff and nonsense" on it.

Just eleven months later a break did occur and I felt a little pleased with myself, having been so wrongly condemned by the top echelon.

MCKINZIE: In July of '47 there were negotiations going on about the Marshall plan in Paris. Do you

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recall any response in Belgrade to all of that?

CABOT: Oh, yes. Of course, we didn't at that time know what it was all about. We merely knew that Yugoslavia had been invited to participate and had refused. As I recall the story, as it was pieced together, Djilas came back from Paris and reported to Tito, and he had reacted favorably to it. Tito, in the meantime, had received a message from Stalin saying "under no circumstances do this."

MCKINZIE: How did a Yugoslav diplomat treat an issue like that when he had to speak to an American official?

CABOT: Officially, he didn't. You must remember, there were pretty chilly relations at that time. You didn't go around to cocktail parties and

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gamble with your Yugoslav colleagues, you didn't see them in the first place. This was just after the war, Yugoslavia was a miserably poor country, and the diplomatic cocktail circuit was by no means as well worn as it is in the average capital. If I recall correctly their answer was that it's all a con; you don't really mean it. This was despite the fact that they had been receiving a lot of UNRRA aid from us.

MCKINZIE: Was there much talk about establishing any really meaningful east-west trade?

CABOT: Well, you must remember that Yugoslavia had practically nothing to export. Trade was not a really important question. I can recall our offering potatoes to them (I forget what they were going to pay for them), but trade

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was not a very important issue in Yugoslavia.

MCKINZIE: Why was your career there so short?

CABOT: I came home on leave at the end of August, and when I arrived I was told that there might be a mission in store for me. I started to go back, but Norman Armour called me in and said, "Don't you go. I want you to stay here," so that was the end of that.

What had happened was that I was going to be appointed Ambassador to Nicaragua; that came out a little later. I couldn't go immediately because we didn't recognize the incumbent Nicaraguan Government. Somoza had kicked out a stooge he had put in because the stooge didn't act like a stooge, and I had to wait.

In the meantime I was put in charge of the preparations for the Bogota Conference. It was a horrible snarl.

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MCKINZIE: You didn't attend the Bogota Conference did you?

CABOT: No.

It was late September when I was told I was going to Nicaragua. I should mention the fact that I had the usual agonies one has, when one's offered a mission, of trying to keep it secret. The gossip mill works overtime in Washington.

In mid-November Norman Armour called me in and said, "Jack, the boys tell me that you're the best candidate for Shanghai." I hadn't expected that at that point. I had never been in the Far East, knew nothing about it, and couldn't imagine why I'd been picked. I think the difficulty was in getting anybody to go. I said, "Well, if you want to send me to Shanghai, that's all right."

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He said, "We'll make you a career minister, and we'll consider your next post, as chief of mission, a second post. In other words, that would be better than Nicaragua, for example. So I went to Shanghai.

MCKINZIE: Did you find it, when you arrived, the "city of fables" of the Far East? The city has a reputation of being a rather comfortable place.

CABOT: Of course, we were comfortable. That was one of the difficulties. I mean we were too damn comfortable, at first. We had an enormous place right in the middle of the city, a rather hideous late Victorian house, and about 20 servants.

MCKINZIE: Why were you chosen? What work faced you when you got there?

CABOT: Oh, there was plenty of work. The nation was collapsing, there was a colony of 3,500 Americans in the city, and there were all sorts of business interests involved.

MCKINZIE: This was general. You weren't sent there to work on a specific question?

CABOT: No. I was just sent there to be a fall guy, more or less, for the American interests in China. As a matter of fact, the Ambassador also stayed.

MCKINZIE: In '48 when you arrived, Chiang Kai-shek was already in retreat.

CABOT: Things were looking pretty grim. He certainly wasn't progressing any in his efforts to suppress the Communists.

MCKINZIE: On the basis of what you saw, did you

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share the view that President Truman and Secretary of State Marshall took, that U.S. aid to China and Chiang Kai-shek had to be contingent upon his willingness to make reforms in his system?

CABOT: Very definitely, yes. This is a slightly delicate subject, but since it's for history rather than for personal reasons, I'll comment. Ambassador [Leighton] Stuart was a dear person. He knew China inside out, had many, very many good friends in China on both sides of the fence, but he had no discretion; he simply couldn't keep a secret. He had a Chinese secretary who knew everything he knew, and who was reporting right to Chiang Kai-shek. The result was that the Department didn't really trust the reports it was getting from the Embassy, and I was supposed to report by private letter to Walt Butterworth

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on what was going on. In those letters (they won't be published because they were private), I constantly reported that there would be no hope if Chiang Kai-shek's regime didn't reform and that the Communists had decided that they were going to take the country over, which they did.

MCKINZIE: Did you, at any point in all that, have a real hope that Chiang Kai-shek would make sufficient reforms and use his resources well enough to hang on, or was it a fatalistic view?

CABOT: I was more or less fatalistic. For example, take the great monetary reform. I thought it was bound to fail and it did. It struck me as being completely crazy; the government had been running for years by running the printing presses, and it wasn't going to balance its budget just like that.

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MCKINZIE: Were you aware that in 1949 China had asked for a huge loan of silver bullion to pay its troops, in order to restore faith in the Chinese monetary system?

CABOT: No. That never came to my attention. I remember that, during the Battle of Hsuehchow, there was a report that every Chinese soldier in the Nationalist Army had been given a couple of silver dollars, and it considerably strengthened their morale. That was from Chiang's own resources.

MCKINZIE: Could you talk a little bit about the American community in Shanghai in 1948 and '49? What was their morale and the tenor of their business operations as deterioration set in, and what did they expect of you?

CABOT: Well, that was one of the extraordinary stories.

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I think the missionaries, who were nearly half of the community, pretty well understood what was going on, because they had people telling them news from all parts of the country. The businessmen were blind as bats; they hated the Nationalists so. The Nationalists had taken away a lot of their old privileges when the concessions in Shanghai were turned in. Of course, there was an awful lot of graft, and then the Nationalists were insisting on equal treaties and so forth. I remember for instance the *Shanghai Evening Post and Mercury* had one solid back page of editorial denouncing the effort, and a very feeble effort I may add, to sign an equal commercial treaty with China. The businessmen wanted to retain the old unequal treaties.

MCKINZIE: Had these businessmen been, established in

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China before the Second World War?

CABOT: Exactly.

MCKINZIE: Were there any distinguishable new businessmen in China?

CABOT: I wouldn't say so. They just couldn't get used to the idea that Chinese were sovereign there and equal with the Americans as individuals. As I say, they just hated the Nationalists.

I remember one perfectly extraordinary scene. It was the day after the fall of Shanghai when the American Chamber of Commerce held its weekly meeting. I was there as an honorary member of the Chamber. Businessman after businessman got up and said how glad they were to see the Communists there, and how wonderful it all was that those horrible Nationalists were

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driven out, and so forth. I started saying, "Now listen here, you don't know what has hit you yet." They didn't pay much attention to me, and then they started arguing about how strong a telegram they would send to Truman to say that it was all wonderful and not to give any more aid to Chiang. I protested as strongly as I could, but the only thing that really saved the day was that they fought among themselves about how strong the telegram should be. They finally postponed

the thing and before they really got to it again the seizures had begun and they realized I was right after all.

You know, the government did receive a telegram like that from Tientsin the American Chamber of Commerce there. This came out in the Korea hearings, and when I saw it. I said, "My God, is that the telegram from Shanghai, which I thought had not been sent?" I eventually learned

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it was from Tientsin.

MCKINZIE: There was, at the time that you were in Shanghai, a rather large colony of refugees from Europe.

CABOT: That's right. There were quite a lot of White Russians. We tried to get them out of Shanghai to the Philippines, but I forget how far we got. Some of them didn't want to leave. I remember, for instance, I had a doctor there who said, "I'm going to stay." This was in April of '49.

MCKINZIE: Did you go out there in the area where these people were kept?

CABOT: Oh no. They were pretty well integrated. They were all working. I remember we had one White Russian who was governess for us for a few months when we had our little girl out there. We eventually

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did get quite a few out as I remember.

MCKINZIE: Could you describe the fall of Shanghai? Obviously you were there when that occurred.

CABOT: The Nationalists had built this rather absurd series of fortifications around Shanghai.. The Communists waited about a month after the fall of Nanking to attack. They started attacking toward the Whangpoo River, between the Whangpoo and the Yangtze north of Shanghai, in order to reach the river and cut us off from the sea. That attack was repulsed. Then they gradually spread around the perimeter which the Nationalists had built until they came to the end of the perimeter. They came right in; the next thing we knew they were on the river bank right opposite the center of Shanghai.

As this attack developed, I moved from my

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residence to the Glen Line Building, which the Navy had abandoned in great haste, I must say. There we had established the consulate, and when they reached the river bank we could hear all sorts of firing going on under our windows. It wasn't pleasant.

About two days before the fall of the city, a whole bunch of junks came sailing down the river, great white sails going down.

MCKINZIE: Those were people getting out?

CABOT: I suppose they were getting things out. In the meantime, you heard planes leaving all the time. The people and all of the boats had left by that time.

MCKINZIE: Were you getting instructions during this from anybody about staying or leaving?

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CABOT: We had evacuated about two-thirds of the American colony, and the instructions had been that only those essential to American interests should stay.

MCKINZIE: Did you take your family out?

CABOT: The only person that had been there was my wife, and I took her out some months before, around the end of February.

I remember one day we went down to the British Club. We were passing one of the banks and saw them chucking enormous bundles of bank notes in a truck. They were practically worthless by that time, but still it was a rather casual way of handling money.

Early the next day we received a telephone call from the outskirts of the city saying the Communists had already reached that point, but communications were working perfectly well. It was a very extraordinary feeling. We had our

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own radio system in the building where we could communicate with any part of the world immediately.

It was about noon before the Communists reached the Glen Line Building. Then we discovered that the Nationalists had set up a road block in front of Soochow Creek, in the urinals on a little park there, and were holding the position to defend the bridge.

When the Communists came down in the morning we were watching from the windows and could see about half the action. The Nationalists fired at the Communists and killed a couple of them right under our windows and the Communists beat it up the side streets. The next thing we knew the Communists had come down the side streets to our building from the north, with a mortar. It ended after a little over 24 hours. There was firing between this mortar at

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the corner of our building and a hand grenade thrower in the opposite position, and there was quite a racket going on in the building, but we were safe. Even though there were many windows in the building, it was a pretty solid structure. The only time we were really in danger was once when we heard this machine gun coming from somewhere. We didn't know where, and we

started craning our necks out on what we thought was the protected side of the building. All of a sudden we discovered that what we had heard were machine gun bullets striking our building on that side and ducked.

MCKINZIE: Did you have the doors barricaded on the ground level?

CABOT: Yes, we did.

MCKINZIE: Absolutely no one went out during this

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period?

CABOT: No. As a matter of fact, that evening a German, who had been badly shot through the leg came to the building and was let in and put in the ex-Naval hospital there. He was put to bed, and a very courageous German doctor came and attended him. He had gotten in too, somehow.

MCKINZIE: What was your first contact then with the Communists in the city?

CABOT: Well, it seems to me that the first time I saw anybody was when I saw Chiang Han-fu. He was appointed by the Communists as the head of the Communist organization in the city. We received a message from the Communists saying that a clerk, who had allegedly thrown a Chinese out of the Consulate General, should

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appear and be tried. I was rather angry; after all we were officials of our Government. They just said, "Sit down for a while. You were, but you're no longer. You're just private citizens now."

Then there was another thing, though it was not direct contact. A notice was published saying that all transmitters should be turned in. Well, of course, I knew we had transmitters and I said, "Well, we'll list them and say that they are government property; that we suppose it's perfectly all right to use them." I didn't think that I should ignore this thing altogether.

When I started investigating I found that we had 36 transmitters. The radio man was an electrical fan and every time an Army, a Navy, ECA, or anybody else's mission had pulled out of China he'd grab those transmitters and put

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them in use in the warehouse. He was communicating with everybody all over the world with these darn things. We don't mean it was any hindrance. We never heard any further about it from the Communists. Then came the Olive incident, which was quite serious. Olive was a young, very innocent, and not too bright Vice Consul, and he happened to be going down the street one day in his jeep when he was arrested and taken to the police station. Olive protested his consular character and accidentally knocked an ink well off the sergeant's desk, whereupon they grabbed him and beat the hell out of him; threw him in prison and just treated him terribly. He never

recovered from it. We had the cheerful job of trying to get him out and telling the world what really happened. It wasn't helped by the fact that the Indian Ambassador told completely

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false stories about the incident. We got the story originally from an Indian who saw the whole incident. The Indian Ambassador told a complete series of lies about him to the public.

I then put out the truth. I wondered what was going to happen after that, but nothing did, I'm glad to say.

MCKINZIE: Was the demeanor of the public with whom you dealt antagonistic?

CABOT: Oh, yes. Of course, we didn't have many dealings after this first time I went to Chiang Han-fu, or whatever his name was. I refused to go around, I sent a subordinate around. There's a question of face in China.

MCKINZIE: You must have had some very explicit instructions about how to conduct yourself and

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what positions to take concerning American property, and the rights of American businessmen and missionaries.

CABOT: What the hell could I do? I mean they wouldn't receive me as a Consul General. I was a private American citizen, I had no business interfering on behalf of others. That was attitude they took. How could I answer to it?

Actually, the worst thing that happened was that there were a series of outrages against American businessmen. The employees would lock them up or stage a sit down in their offices and hold them hour after hour till they had to go to the bathroom or something like that. They would have to give in to whatever demands were made.

MCKINZIE: Did you then try protesting?

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CABOT: Oh, we did. Of course, we never got anywhere. Also the Navy, in it's charming way, had abandoned the naval yard on 48-hours notice. This left us with the whole mess in our hands, and we were busy enough moving into the Glen Line Building. They had an enormous amount of stuff there, I don't know how much but it must have been over a million dollars worth of equipment. They just abandoned it. We were told to take what we wanted. We took a lot of food, medicine and so forth. Then the Sikhs complained that they had not been properly paid. They were the guards at this naval facility. It was true, they hadn't been paid what their contract called for and they proceeded to besiege the Consulate General.

Fortunately there was a heavy rain that night and that discouraged them. Then after I left they

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came in again; got into the building and held two or three of the officers, a very unpleasant situation. Finally the Navy paid them six times what they could have settled for, if they had settled early.

MCKINZIE: How did you leave Shanghai?

CABOT: I eventually got up to Nanking and came out with the Ambassador on his plane.

MCKINZIE: With the 36 radio transformers there, I gather that you were in frequent communication with everyone else. Was Washington giving you any helpful instructions?

CABOT: No. There was one thing which I think is rather important historically. It since came out partly in a story which appeared in a paper I've seen. At the end of June, Huang Hua, who is now Ambassador to the United Nations, had been

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appointed a representative to the diplomatic corps in Nanking. He had a series of conversations with Ambassador Stuart. Ambassador Stuart finally received what amounted to an invitation from Mao [Tse-tung] and Chou [En-lai] to come to Peking on the excuse that he was going to visit his old university of Yenching and that they would receive him if he came.

I saw this message about the 30th of June and immediately sent a very strong recommendation to Washington that Stuart be instructed to go, on the grounds that it was essential to the protection of the American citizens and interests in Shanghai. The aftermath proved that I was right.

Then came a message from Washington, "Under no circumstances should Stuart go to Peking."

I don't know why that attitude was taken. My own personal interpretation, purely a surmise,

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is that it was taken because the Truman administration was afraid of American public opinion at that time, which was very strongly anti-Communist. Another explanation which I got from Walt Butterworth immediately after I got back to Washington, was that the Department didn't believe that Mao and Chou really intended to receive Ambassador Stuart, that their point was to get him up there to humiliate him.

Another explanation I heard from Louis Clark just recently. They didn't trust Ambassador Stuart to say the right things at the right moment, and they didn't dare to put him into a very tricky situation like that. My surmise is that the American public opinion was the major reason.

MCKINZIE: Could you talk a little bit about the reports that were coming in from people in China?

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Some of the people who made reports got in awful hot water after that, Service and Davies to mention two. Were you aware of the sort of disparity of opinion among the people who were there regarding what was happening and as the best interests of the United States, any at all?

CABOT: Of course, most of the old China hands had left China. Louis Clark had been an old China hand, but he hadn't been back for, I think, 20 years or more. I had never been there before. Most of the reporting was being done, at that time, by people who were not terribly familiar with the Chinese. The funny thing is that, with only one or two exceptions, I don't think anybody who was in China at the time I was, got into hot water. There was one case of a Treasury man (I forget his name) up in Nanking, who was accused of being

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Communist. I think that was probably on good grounds.

MCKINZIE: Your point is that the old China hands by this point had pretty much been eliminated?

CABOT: Yes. It is true Clubb was the Consul General in Peking. He was an old China hand. He did get into hot water.

MCKINZIE: Did you ever have any difficulties as a result of all of those investigations that later occurred? Did you ever have to testify?

CABOT: I never did in connection with China. I once had to give a written opinion about a bunch of other officers.

I must tell you a terribly funny story which shows the atmosphere of that time. I was never conscious of this until later. My brother, who has done various confidential jobs for the

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Government, suddenly had his security clearance lifted. He couldn't imagine what the thing was all about.

Through a very good friend of his he found that it was due to a letter my father had written to the Boston *Herald*, which pointed out that the early Christians were obvious Communists, as you can see from Acts I. The funny thing is that I was the one who was the spiritual author of the view. I happened to be reading the Bible in Belgrade and I mentioned this (passage in Acts) to my father. He decided he would write in about it. Tom [Thomas D. Cabot] got his security clearance lifted for something I was responsible for. I never had any trouble about it. I don't know why.

MCKINZIE: What was your leaving of Shanghai like? You mentioned that you got out by getting to

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Nanking and coming out with the Ambassador.

CABOT: Yes. I took the train to Nanking as quietly as I could go.

MCKINZIE: Did you "close all the doors behind you," so to speak?

CABOT: No. The Consul General's office was still open then. Walt McConoughy, who is now Ambassador to Taiwan, was left there in charge. I was terribly sick, you see. I had this stomach trouble which was getting worse and worse with all this nervous strain. I left in July, the 15th, and I left Nanking the 2nd of August. It was quite a row getting us out of Nanking.

MCKINZIE: It was very close to the time that Chiang Kai-shek had left the mainland then wasn't it?

CABOT: Yes. Of course, he was long since out of Shanghai

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and Nanking. The Government had gone to Canton. I think Chiang had gone directly to Taiwan. He took all the gold, art, and everything else with him.

MCKINZIE: There was in the American press at this time, the proclamation that "a half a billion souls had been lost to Communism," as if some great cleaver had been dropped between the United States and China. Did you have that feeling when you left that China was going to be a totally closed society?

CABOT: Quite a lot of us did. By the time I left it was obvious that it was the end of Western interests in China.

MCKINZIE: Did you make any recommendations, when you got back, about American property, American business interests, and rights of American people still in

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China?

CABOT: I made two very important recommendations. The first was to get every American out of China who was willing to come, and pursuant to that recommendation they sent in the *General Gordon* that took aboard several hundred Americans from Shanghai. That was practically the last of the Americans there; not many were left. The second was that they close all consulates before the Communists reached them. That was done too. There were no more consulates open when the communists reached them. You see, by the time I left, the Consul General in Mukden was already under house arrest.

MCKINZIE: Did you anticipate that that might happen to you?

CABOT: I did. It wasn't a very cheerful prospect.

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MCKINZIE: Was being appointed Minister to Finland a reward, a compensation, for having suffered in Shanghai?

CABOT: Well, you must remember that I had been promised, if I went to Shanghai, that I would be given a better post. Frankly, when I came home they started mentioning a couple of very piddling posts and I was pretty angry. I said, "Now listen here, this was a solemn promise that I was given when I went to Shanghai. I have gone there, and I have gone through hell. I think I deserve something better." Eventually they offered me Finland and I accepted gladly.

MCKINZIE: Except for the fact that it, like all of your other postwar assignments, was a sensitive country, it should have been very pleasant. Was it?

CABOT: It was very pleasant.

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Argentina, Yugoslavia and China were impossible posts diplomatically. I had those experiences and I certainly don't want to go through them again. Finland was very much to the contrary. The Finns were marvelous and really wonderful people; courageous, pleasant and very hospitable.

Dealing with them, I got to know the Foreign Minister quite well, and he would tell me perfectly frankly what the score was. He never made any bones about the fact that they had to be constantly thinking about what the Russians would do next. Their freedom depended on walking a tight rope between appeasement and provocation,

MCKINZIE: Did you have any trouble in coming out of a highly charged ideological situation in Shanghai, and walking a sort of neutralist tight rope in Finland?

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CABOT: No. After all, I had my instructions, which were in effect to encourage the Finns to maintain independence, but not to be provocative with advice the Finns didn't need.

MCKINZIE: You were there at the time the Korean war broke out and in a very good observation point, at least in regards to Scandinavian countries. How did they think it was going to effect them?

CABOT: They were, of course, scared, but they never particularly showed it. I remember one conversation with a cabinet minister (I forget his name) in which he said, "Well now, supposing that the Russians do attack us, what are you going to do about it?"

I said, "I can't tell you that. My own guess is that it will be a question of what Sweden and Norway do about it. If they agree to come to your assistance we probably will, but if they don't

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obviously there is nothing we can do about it."

I got a very brief message back from the Department, "Your answer is approved."

MCKINZIE: Did the Finns discuss with you at all the U.S. aid programs to Europe and the buildup of NATO forces?

CABOT: The Finns had a treaty which they had been forced to sign to the Russians in 1948, in which they agreed that if Germany or the nations allied with Germany should attack Russia across Finland, that Finland would join with Russia in repulsing this attack. I forget exactly how it was worded, but that was the effect. Germany was specifically the villain in the case.

The Finns were always conscious of the fact that the Russians held this over them.

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MCKINZIE: They were not particularly upset by the buildup of NATO forces after the Korean war began?

CABOT: No. I think that was before Germany entered the NATO alliance.

MCKINZIE: Yes, but there was, of course, much talk about integrating Germany forces with NATO forces.

CABOT: Yes. Of course, the Russians on the whole acted pretty well with the Finns. They kind of wanted that as a showcase of what really decent people they are.

MCKINZIE: When relations between the United States and the Soviet Union, in most parts of the world, were terrible, could you have conversations with the Soviet people in Finland?

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CABOT: Yes, but there were not many. I remember going around to their parties. They had good caviar I'm glad to say.

MCKINZIE: That was what I was wondering, if in a unique country like Finland you could, both Americans and Soviets, participate in the same social activity.

CABOT: Yes, we did. Of course, you didn't see much of the other side socially. For instance, I don't think I ever had the Russian Ambassador to dinner or anything like that. There was a certain stand-offishness of that kind.

That reminds me of when I was in Shanghai. All of a sudden we got an invitation from the Russian Consul General to dinner, which brought us around to the funniest meal I ever saw. There was about a half a dozen of us from our Consulate

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General and a dozen of them from theirs. Of course, nobody spoke any known language. It was the most ridiculous thing you have ever seen.

Apparently they had received instructions, for some reason, to be friendly to us for a while. I think we did invite them back and they refused, and that ended that.

MCKINZIE: After that pleasant interlude you were appointed as Ambassador to Pakistan.

CABOT: Yes. I never got there. I studied up for the thing, got briefed on it, but didn't make it.

MCKINZIE: Could you describe the circumstances of that?

CABOT: They wanted to send an upper one on the circuit, and they figured that I was a good person to move into that spot. I hadn't asked for a transfer. As a matter of fact, I was

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sort of relaxing after the Olympics, which were a wonderful sight. Then all of a sudden, just when Elizabeth and the children were leaving for home, in comes this message saying, "You're assigned to Karachi." I hadn't had any warning of it at all. I wasn't particularly upset; I was being made an Ambassador and so forth. Elizabeth was terribly upset because at that time communications between the United States and Pakistan were pretty difficult. It took about 48 hours to get from Boston to Karachi. Elizabeth had visions of being separated from the children just at the time that they needed her.

Actually we never got there. When I got back to Washington about the first of December, after two months of leave, I was briefed on the particular interests there; all about Kashmir, Indian-Pakistanian rows, what the Pakistanis were saying about us, and so

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forth and so on. I remember there was a row about the rivers of Pakistan, which mostly had their headwaters in India. The Indians were planning dams to divert the waters from Pakistan.

When Dulles was appointed Secretary by Eisenhower (this was in December), I went around to see him and said, "Mr. Dulles, I'm in rather a quandary. I've been appointed Ambassador to Pakistan, and if I go when I'm supposed to go I'll get there about three weeks before President Eisenhower is to take office. I really don't want to go for three weeks and then turn around and come back to be assigned somewhere else."

Dulles said, "Before you go to this mission, I think you had better wait." I waited and then the next thing I knew I was appointed Assistant Secretary by President Eisenhower.

MCKINZIE: What kinds of awareness did you find, overseas,

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of American domestic politics? Did you find that it was generally well understood by the people with whom you had to deal?

CABOT: You just don't discuss domestic politics, either in the country from which you are accredited or to the country to which you are accredited. You discuss it, privately, at most. I don't

remember any discussions in any country of American politics. Occasionally something comes up on domestic politics which impinges on foreign politics. For instance, the American Embassies are no doubt very busy today, explaining Watergate.

MCKINZIE: Then there was no one to come and say, "Now look, what will happen if Dwight Eisenhower wins this election in 1952; how will that affect Finnish and American relations," or "How will the possible victory of Thomas Dewey in 1948 effect

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U.S. policy toward the Far East?"

CABOT: I don't think so. For example, you mention the Dewey-Truman fight in '48. The Chinese Nationalists were certainly hoping for a Republican victory because they felt that the Republicans would be more receptive toward giving them aid than the Democrats would be. But I don't recall discussing it particularly with them. I don't recall discussing how the election would come out. I probably was wrong; everybody else was wrong in that election.

MCKINZIE: During this time there were four Secretaries of State. From the kind of posts that you held at that time did it make any difference?

CABOT: Well, we were always short of money. That was universally true. I don't recall any sense of a great change between the policies of people

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either in regard to their international policy or in regards to their administrative policies.

MCKINZIE: Which is to say like with France. It goes on, despite the fall of cabinets and that kind of thing.

CABOT: That may be an exaggeration. Of course, we were rather encouraged by Stettinius as Secretary, and I recall that we were upset because sometimes they would take more career men and sometimes they would take less. The career, naturally, is favorably impressed when a career man is chosen. That's only human nature.

MCKINZIE: Those were certainly exciting years in your career.

CABOT: Yes they were most exciting years in my career. After I went on, with Sweden, Colombia, Brazil, and Poland; it was really interesting and they

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were pleasant. Still, they were really nothing quite so tense and exciting as those three posts I had at the beginning of my career under Truman.

MCKINZIE: Thank you very much, Mr. Ambassador.

CABOT: You are entirely welcome.

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