

Donald F. Barnes, Oral History Interview – 6/30/1964
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Biographical Note

Barnes, presidential Spanish language interpreter in the State Department from 1956 to 1966, discusses meetings between John F. Kennedy (JFK) and Latin American heads of state at which Barnes interpreted, JFK's relationship with Latin American leaders including Rómulo Betancourt of Venezuela and Arturo Frondizi of Argentina, and his memories of JFK's assassination, among other issues.

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Donald F. Barnes
Donald F. Barnes

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Donald F. Barnes

Table of Contents

<u>Page</u>	<u>Topic</u>
1	Translating for John F. Kennedy (JFK)
3	Meeting with President Arturo Frondizi of Argentina
13, 18	December 1961 visit to Venezuela and meetings with President Rómulo Betancourt
16	Evolution of JFK's feelings towards Latin America
28	JFK's lack of foreign language ability
30	Travel anecdotes
32	December 1961 visit to Colombia and meetings with President Alberto Lleras Camargo
36	December 1961 Palm Beach meeting with Frondizi
39	2 nd Alliance for Progress Conference in Punta del Este, Uruguay
41	April 1962 meeting with Dominican Republic Foreign Minister
44	June 1962 meeting with Colombian President Guillermo Leon Vallencia
47	JFK's relations with Latin American heads of state
51, 54, 57	June 1962 trip to Mexico
52	Barnes relationship with JFK
56	Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy's activities during state visits
68	JFK's meeting with Mexican students
69	Latin American's reactions to JFK
71	Meeting with Venezuelan Minister of Defense Antonio Briceño Linares
72	Lunch with Latin American Foreign Ministers
74	September 1962 meeting with Eduardo Montalva Frei
76	January 1963 meeting with Argentine foreign minister, Carlos Manuel Muniz
79, 84	Betancourt's visit to Washington D.C.
81	Exchange between Betancourt and Senator Wayne L. Morse about military aid to Venezuela
86	March 1963 Conference in Costa Rica with Central American Presidents
91	December 1962 speech to Cubans and the Cuban Invasion Brigade after the Bay of Pigs
96	Meeting with former president of Mexico Miguel Aleman Valdes
97	Meeting with Victor Paz Estenssoro of Bolivia
104	JFK's assassination

Oral History Interview

with

Donald F. Barnes

June 30, 1964
Department of State
Washington, D.C.

By John Plank

For the John F. Kennedy Library

PLANK: Mr. Barnes, would you be good enough to tell us something about how you came into the Department, how you got your role which brought you so close to President Kennedy [John F. Kennedy]?

BARNES: Certainly, I would be very glad to. I came to the Department, after an absence of several years, in the latter part of 1956, appointed as an interpreter in the Language Services Division. My first contact with President Kennedy was rather remote. It was on the day of his Inauguration when the Voice of America asked me to do a live simultaneous version of his inaugural speech for broadcast to Latin America. It was a tremendously effective speech, as everyone knows, which reached

[-1-]

all corners of the world and is still remembered. I later had occasion to do the same thing, within a matter of a few weeks, with his major address on the Alliance for Progress, and subsequently on several occasions with his live press conferences, so I was aware of his manner of delivery and the way in which he presented ideas.

PLANK: Did you find him particularly hard to translate for or particularly easy to translate for?

BARNES: Both. It was difficult in that he spoke fast, sometimes in extremely rapid bursts; he has been clocked at well over two hundred words a minute in short bursts. It was easy in that his thinking processes were clear and you could tell what he was trying to get at, without his being necessarily blunt or using basic English. The words that he used he marshaled in order to drive home the point that he wanted to make.

PLANK: You indicate that your first association with him came indirectly at the time of the Inauguration. When did you first really become acquainted with him as a person?

[-2-]

BARNES: I believe one of the first major occasions in which I was with him was in the meeting he had with the then President Frondizi [Arturo Frondizi] of Argentina. They met at the Hotel Carlyle in New York. Frondizi was on his way to Europe, I believe. It was supposed to be a brief working breakfast but both men, I think revealingly, had had breakfast before and came to the breakfast ready to talk while the other party ate and listened, but it became quite an exchange. It went on for well over an hour, the two Presidents and myself, a rather rapid exchange. It then broke up into a larger meeting in which President Kennedy was joined by his principal advisers. I remember Mr. Salinger [Pierre E.G. Salinger] was there, Mr. Edwin Martin [Edwin M. Martin], a number of others, and President Frondizi was joined by his Foreign Minister and other members of his staff. It covered a wide range of the problems particularly affecting Argentina.

PLANK: What was in the original, more restricted conversation between the President and President Frondizi?

[-3-]

What seemed to be on their minds? What prompted them to talk so much longer than they originally planned to talk?

BARNES: President Kennedy asked President Frondizi, as he had a habit of asking Latin American leaders, for their opinions on the wide range of problems affecting the hemisphere and their own countries and neighboring countries also. Unfortunately, Frondizi was so engrossed with Argentina's problems that he did not give this broad picture which President Kennedy had asked him to do and concentrated on Argentina--its economic problems. He was then, as he was during most of his administration, in a state of political crisis. There had been attempted coups. The austerity program he had imposed had led to wide unrest among his people. There was mistrust of him by the Armed Forces and others because of his supposed agreement with Peron [Juan Peron] and he was desperately

trying to stall for time, feeling that if he could last in power that by the end of his administration he would have succeeded in his program of putting

[-4-]

Argentina on its feet. The problem of Cuba was touched upon. President Frondizi skirted the issue quite a bit. President Kennedy tried to make him speak specifically, not in an attempt to pin him down, but just to know what was on his mind, but he was not too successful in that.

PLANK: Did you get the feeling that President Kennedy was a bit irritated at Frondizi's – what I take from you to be – monologue in effect, or...

BARNES: No. There was quite a bit of interrupting mutually, incidentally, in this. Both men were feeling each other out. This was President Kennedy's first confrontation with what was, after all, a leader of a major power and this was Latin America's first real confrontation with the leader of the United States, and so they were fencing, in a way, trying to find out the toughness of each other, their intellectual elasticity. I recall that later on President Kennedy said now he understood why Frondizi had survived all of the attempted coups because Frondizi would not be

[-5-]

budged from a number of positions that he took. On the Cuba thing, he brought up other matters such as the admission of Red China to the United Nations, not as a proposal but as a request that the United States consider what he called the facts of the situation.

PLANK: You, of course, were with the President when he talked to quite a number of Latin American leaders. Were you aware that he handled each one in a way different from...

BARNES: Entirely different. He was obviously aware in this case that Frondizi was a man of great intelligence, some might call it cunning, but an intelligent man, and he dealt with him on that basis, an intellectual basis. There was no emotional feeling like there was, I feel very strongly, in the case of President Betancourt [Rómulo Betancourt], where President Kennedy considered this man to be a hero, a man who had fought tenaciously against what were great odds through most of his administration, a man with whom he

[-6-]

felt an emotional bond, who shared really with him emotionally the principles of the Alliance for Progress, which was not really the case with Frondizi and some others who wanted American aid, but to apply it as they wished, which is to build industry and then saying, the social reforms will come later. So there was a warm relationship with Betancourt which was missing in Frondizi.

PLANK: Let me back up just a minute, Mr. Barnes, and ask whether your assignment as the President's interpreter after this first meeting in which you served really came directly from the White House, that is, President Kennedy asked that you be the person who do his work for him?

BARNES: No, as a matter of fact, it was not. He was engrossed in his meeting. We had received a request through channels from the White House. I was assigned, being the senior Spanish interpreter. He thought, incidentally, at the time that I worked for the Argentine Government. He wondered if my Foreign Minister would permit me

[-7-]

to write a memorandum of conversation for him. I was glad to do it as an employee of the State Department, needless to say. [Laughter] And I remember that later on when we went to Venezuela he asked me if I worked for the American Embassy in Caracas. But after that he got to know me by name and name requests came down through channels to our office for my services.

PLANK: I see. Well, I just wanted to get that into the record – what your relationship was. Did you find that the President on this first meeting with Frondizi was himself at all adequately briefed with respect to what the Argentine situation was?

BARNES: Very definitely. Very definitely. One of the specific matters that was discussed as a major project Frondizi had in mind: to build a series of dams and steel blast furnaces and coal extracting operations in Southern Patagonia in order to open up an entirely new area of the country. His stated cost of that project was completely at variance with the facts that President Kennedy

[-8-]

had, and the President did not hesitate to bring those out. In fact, the figures that the American Government had were double what Frondizi was mentioning and since in fact Frondizi did not reiterate the original figure when he was confronted with the American statement, I take it for granted that our figures were right.

PLANK: I don't know what more usefully can be said about that particular confrontation. I would like to get from you, however, some feeling for the mood of that meeting. You indicated earlier the two men were sparring, feeling one another out. Did you pick up anything of Frondizi's reaction to President Kennedy, or was this man guarded in all his responses?

BARNES: I think that he came away with a healthy respect for President Kennedy.

Fronzizi had been up here on a state visit sometime before; I had been with him during part of that time and I think my conjecture is that he looked upon President Kennedy as a wealthy young man dabbling in politics. This

[-9-]

is my honest opinion. People are not aware of the political career of President Kennedy, his election to the Congress before that. They seemed to consider him as a man who had arrived just at the presidency with no toughening up politically, and I think Fronzizi found out different. There was no warmth that I could detect. There was a respect on both sides for the capabilities of the other one.

PLANK: You say you talked about Cuba. Did you talk about the first Punta del Este meeting having to do with the Alliance for Progress at all and Argentina's role?

BARNES: That was mentioned specifically by President Kennedy. He stressed how much importance the United States and his Administration attributed to the Alliance for Progress. Fronzizi did not respond in kind. He spoke of aid but not specifically in terms of the reforms. He said, in general terms of course, we have to have social reforms and all of that, but his position of course

[-10-]

went back to a few years before, the Bogota Conference, where Argentina and Brazil had said that industry and other development projects should take precedence over social reform which would come in due course, and I had the feeling that Argentina was still trying to work on that basis.

PLANK: Did President Kennedy have anything specific to approach President Fronzizi with with respect to Argentina's performance and nonperformance in the Alliance for Progress?

BARNES: No, obviously he was hoping that Fronzizi would successfully put the country on an even keel politically and economically and become a stable power, an anchor on the southern end of the continent – an example – but other than that I don't feel that he tried to get any other message across in connection with the Alliance.

PLANK: So, in a sense once he realized that Fronzizi was going to be doing most of the talking he just decided to listen and learn rather than...

[-11-]

BARNES: Well, he would interrupt. He was well aware of the fact, for example, that Argentina's social structure is different from that of certain countries with

millions of Indians or landless peasants. For example, land reform in Argentina is not a factor and so he did not dogmatically stress that as is usually done with some of the other countries – the need for distributing land – and he sympathized with Frondizi's efforts in the development of oil. This was, of course, at the time a very pleasing thing to the United States because Argentina had finally let American companies come in and they were, I believe, six months ahead of schedule in their drilling and transporting operations and were getting ready to export oil. And this was considered a very good sign and I am sure President Kennedy was very pleased with it. A pragmatic approach to a touchy political problem in other words which, as he said, he hoped other countries, notably Brazil, might take as a cue.

[-12-]

PLANK: Of course, almost immediately after this meeting with Frondizi in New York City, you went down with the President to Colombia and Venezuela, which I take it was a triumph. Perhaps you could tell us something about the preparations for that trip to the extent that you were involved in them.

BARNES: Right. Well, first of all there were many, many people in and out of Government who felt that he should not go. All of us remembered the incidents that the then Vice President Nixon [Richard Milhous Nixon] had gone through in Caracas. There was a general knowledge of the fact that the new Government had not been able to rebuild the police force that had been destroyed when the dictatorship was overthrown. And Caracas is a volatile city. It's a city where President Betancourt obtained a very small portion of his support. The streets are narrow. There are a number of circumstances, so there was a doubt. But obviously the gamble, such as it was, worked out very well.

The reception was organized. I mean, you

[-13-]

could tell the security measures were a little too conspicuous. I don't know if that could have been avoided but they dampened the reception a little bit. And organized labor, for example, was out at certain specific points, and President Kennedy was enough of a politician to know when people had been put out on the streets by request and when they were there spontaneously, but there was enough spontaneity to overcome the security aspect of it.

PLANK: Let me just ask a preliminary question. Why do you suppose the President decided to go on this trip? What was his purpose in undertaking it?

BARNES: Well, my conjecture would be the double approach to Latin America: (1) of counteracting the influence of Castro's [Fidel Alejandro Castro Ruz] Cuba and its effect on the masses in Latin America which at the time was fairly strong, and (2) to prove to the Latin Americans that we were really interested in them. For many,

many, years Latin Americans had said that since Roosevelt [Franklin Delano Roosevelt] died there had not been any

[-14-]

genuine interest in their area, and they wanted to feel that they were understood. That's a favorite phrase of theirs. "We want you to understand us, to know our realities." And by going down there, and this would be stressed by the fact that he was going there, taking a certain risk, he would prove that he was interested in them and in their people. And it was successful. He did prove to them. Hour by hour as the presidential party was in Venezuela, the emotion and sentiment increased. The fact that Mrs. Kennedy [Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy] was along, of course, enhanced the visit a great deal. She has always been very popular in Latin America. The speeches that she gave in Spanish in Venezuela made a tremendous impression. The fact that she had made this very successful effort to speak their language reached their hearts. The one incident which amused the President was the fact that Betancourt told him that the communist students at the Central University in Caracas had a sign saying "Kennedy - *No*; Jacqueline - *Yes*." He found that to be very amusing.

[-15-]

PLANK: As time went on, I take it from what you're saying, the President made a very deliberate political calculation now that the trip to Latin America was important. Before that trip he had not had any real intimate acquaintance with Latin America. As the years went by in your association with him, did you feel that he developed more than a pragmatic political interest in the area?

BARNES: Very definitely. He had been accused during the campaign of a phony interest in Latin America. But he developed, or had all along – I can't tell you, I obviously wasn't with him in the campaign – but when he was there was no doubt that he was vitally interested and vitally concerned in the people. He saw their vitality. This impressed him a great deal. He met their leaders, some of them of great stature. And it puzzled him a little bit to know why they had not progressed more than they had with these two good ingredients: a vital people, people full of energy; and good leadership; and he wanted to do

[-16-]

what he could on behalf of the United States to make these countries achieve their potential. He also was a consummate politician, and as any good politician is, I believe, he felt communication with people who cheered him or applauded him and you could see that when he talked with these people, it was not that he was counting votes or anything like that, but he began almost trembling and became excited, and would raise his voice. And this, from an interpreter's point of view, if I may, was a little different approach than what we had been used to before. We had always been told – not deadpan, but not try to act it up and he had to

ask me several times to please put a little more —“jazz it up” was the phrase he used. And I tried to do my best and the result seemed to please him. But he wanted to communicate with these people. That was important. And he did stir up their interest and stir up obviously their affection, and he wanted this to be transferred to this struggle against the backwardness of the area

[-17-]

and to let these people know that the President of the United States was interested in them, which they believed.

PLANK: I'd like to get in a little more detail about the meeting with Betancourt. I take it that there, were a number of, or at least some, lengthy conversations between the two men and it certainly is my understanding, which you could confirm, that Betancourt regarded Kennedy as highly as Kennedy regarded Betancourt.

BARNES: Very definitely. Betancourt felt, as I thought, that he had found a kindred spirit. He could talk frankly. There were economic circles in Venezuela that considered Betancourt to be a communist. As a matter of fact I recall the President asking Mr. Allan Stewart [C. Allan Stewart] about a Venezuelan friend of the President, saying, “What does he think of Betancourt?” And Mr. Stewart said, “Well, he thinks obviously that he is a communist,” and President Kennedy gave a wry smile, but he understood that Betancourt was fighting these

[-18-]

forces. He could speak a very frank language with him. He was not defending American economic interests in Venezuela. He was not destroying them either with the Alliance, as anybody could see by looking a little further ahead, and they communicated on a very direct level and they liked each other personally. They admired each other personally. They both admired courage and each one of them was a very brave man and this made them have a tremendous amount of communication.

PLANK: In this situation between President Kennedy and President Betancourt, were you working both ways, or was Betancourt requiring services of...

BARNES: No, no. Betancourt accepted... There were two of us who went to Venezuela. I handled the public statements and most of the conversations. I was not there during their one more formal bilateral talk, but as I understand it, it went on the same level as all of their other communications.

PLANK: I meant, you worked presumably from Spanish to English, didn't you?

[-19-]

BARNE'S: I worked both ways for them, yes.

PLANK: I had always thought that Betancourt thought he could understand English and didn't need that, although...

BARNES: Yes. Well, when you have people who understand a language somewhat, they may either want to interpret it to work anyway to avoid any possible misunderstanding. I mean, a word would slip by, but also it gives them a little time to think before they reply and they gain a little advantage in that. I don't know frankly how much English Mr. Betancourt spoke, or speaks to this day. Obviously, he understands quite a bit. He reads it, but still insisted on full interpretation of everything that was said.

PLANK: What were the topics to the best of your recollection?

BARNES: President Betancourt listed his achievements, which were impressive, in terms of schools built, of houses built, of the other intra-structure aspects of development. They discussed the threat

[-20-]

of Castroism, of course, which affected Venezuela very strongly. Mr. Betancourt reiterated, although Mr. Kennedy was well aware of this, that if Venezuela fell this would place Castro not only with tremendous economic potential that the oil reserves represented but also with a foothold on the South American continent which could not be intercepted by sea patrols and air patrols and all of that. Colombia would be a bordering country. Panama would be close by. I mean, one thing could lead to another and Venezuela was a keystone. But Mr. Kennedy understood it. He listened to the reiteration of this. He was impressed also by the efforts that Betancourt had made successfully to win over a majority of the military in Venezuela and their trusts. It was a long painstaking effort, of his efforts to use military service to teach hygiene, to teach the troops how to read and write, and to begin, little by little, to use them for the so-called civic action projects.

[-21-]

PLANK: When you were talking earlier, Don, about the meeting with Frondizi, you indicated the President tried at the outset to draw Frondizi out on Argentina's attitude toward other parts of the hemisphere. You indicated, of course, Betancourt's concern about Castro, but did the President try to feel Betancourt out on the role of Venezuela in the Alliance for Progress and Venezuela's attitude toward what was going forward?

BARNES: Yes, and Betancourt spoke frankly about the fact that with the income from oil Venezuela did not need the direct financial help that other countries needed that were so desperately poor. Betancourt had traveled all over and was aware of these conditions. His administration had needed a substantial amount of assistance when

he came into office because of the bare cupboard that the dictatorship and provisional governments had left. But after that he was well aware of the fact that there is a limit to what money can do and that basically Venezuela had enough to take care of

[-22-]

its own needs and would be even willing to start contributing to the welfare of the very poor countries of Central and South America.

I recall that President Kennedy again asked him opinions on various countries: on Chile, which was then beginning to worry people because of the possibility of a popular front victory in the elections which were then three years off--the campaigning had already begun; about Colombia, which was then even more involved in its operations to clean up these guerrilla outfits that occupied large portions of the country; and to other countries, towards what was going to happen in Brazil..

PLANK: I can guess how that conversation was.

BARNES: Well they didn't quite know what was going to happen in Brazil. As I recall, Quadros [Jânio da Silva Quadros] had just taken office, was beginning to disturb people by his erratic...

PLANK: Goulart [Joao Goulart].

BARNES: No. Was it...

PLANK: Quadros had left.

[-23-]

BARNES: Quadros had just left, yes, and President Kennedy wanted to know what made Goulart tick. Betancourt could not answer. He didn't know Goulart apparently. He spoke of his friendship for Paz Estenssoro [Victor Paz Estenssoro] of Bolivia, and for Frondizi. Frondizi and Betancourt had been friends for a long time and he hoped that Frondizi would, of course, be successful in his efforts to stabilize his country. About Chile, he was not quite sure either. The picture was, of course, obscured by the fact that the elections were three years off. He was concerned over the fact that either the Socialist candidate would win, and what worried him even more was that Mr. Allende [Salvador Allende] would win by a razor-edge margin which would give the military an excuse to move into Chile, although they had been out of politics in Chile for many years.

PLANK: This prompts the question: did he bring up the Betancourt Doctrine in this conversation?

BARNES: Yes. He felt that the United States had to act as it did because of so many commitments, but

[-24-]

he was obviously, although understanding our position, a little disappointed by cessation of our pressures against the Peruvian Government. If you remember, the elections had been nullified; Haya de la Torre [Victor Raul Haya de la Torre] was not permitted to take office, and Betancourt felt very strongly that the United States might have pushed a little harder in that respect although he said he understood that we had other reasons, other than his own. He said he would not vary from this doctrine, no matter what, that the only way to obtain over a long run the establishment of constitutional regimes in Latin America was to make it painful for any *de facto* government no matter how good its intentions were.

FLANK: Did he have anything to say about Mexico?

BARNES: Not much. Not much at all. He was then a little bit worried, though not too much, about travel through Mexico to Cuba and back, but he was not too concerned.

PLANK: I take it from what you said at the outset that President Kennedy responded rather differently

[-25-]

to Betancourt from the way he responded to Frondizi, and I also gather from everything you said that the two men were really different in their approaches to their roles in the hemisphere, and everything that you have said indicated that Betancourt was indeed concerned for the hemisphere as a whole. He seemed to have a perceptiveness about him that Frondizi, because he was harassed by other matters, didn't show. Actually these conversations were carried forward where? In Miraflores?

BARNES: The main one was in Miraflores, but they talked all along when we were traveling. For example, in the car from the airport to downtown Caracas; in the helicopter out to the housing development that President Kennedy and President Betancourt inaugurated, where, incidentally, President Kennedy caused quite a stir because he broke away from his security and plunged right into the mass of these people, and the reception was just unbelievably warm. There was no problem of security there unless he might trip or somebody

[-26-]

might push him. This was, of course, Betancourt's territory – the country people. These had been his people for many many years, and they loved Betancourt and they loved Kennedy also after. And their conversations from there to the lunch that was held in Maracay; all along they took advantage of all the time to discuss a number of things.

PLANK: This housing project was where in relation to Caracas?

BARNES: It was about an half hour away by helicopter.

PLANK: In the direction of Maracay?

BARNES: In the direction of Maracay. The two Presidents handed out the first two deeds to these people, to two families. They inspected one or two of the houses there to see what they were like, and it is a pleasing thing because these people were obviously happy to get their own house and their own roof over their head, and President Kennedy saw it as a direct application of the Alliance spirit. I mean, here was a tangible benefit to human beings, not figures on a graph

[-27-]

or anything like that, or a banker's report, but actual human beings whose lives would be improved by our joint efforts.

PLANK: You mentioned earlier that on the Venezuelan trip the President told you to jazz it up a bit. Did this reflect a certain frustration on his part? Did he try to speak Spanish to these people at all?

BARNES: Not at all. Among his many many virtues the capability of even pronouncing a few words in a foreign language was completely beyond him.

PLANK: I see.

BARNES: The Alliance for Progress speech that he gave at the White House on March 13 had a few phrases in Spanish, and very frankly he butchered them up. He just could not.

PLANK: But were you conscious of the feeling on his part that the language barrier was a serious one, that somehow he wanted to get to these people, and that there was a...

BARNES: At first, yes, but after – he had no way of judging, of course, how accurate I was but when

[-28-]

the people responded they would have probably responded even had he spoken all in English because that's the nature of a group of people, but after that he was very relaxed about me and the work I did for him and seemed to have no concern.

There was one amusing incident. At the speech at the housing project I had read the original text, which he deviated from, of course, extensively, much to the chagrin of those

who helped him work on the speech. The speech mentioned that this was the hundredth anniversary of the death of Bolívar [Simón Bolívar] or something to that effect – or a hundred and fiftieth it must have been...

PLANK: Well, hundred and twenty-fifth.

BARNES: Hundred and twenty-fifth. And in his speech he slipped up and said “of the birth” and I corrected it instinctively. I don't meddle with people's speeches but here was a little matter.

[END OF TAPE I, SIDE I]

[-29-]

[TAPE I, SIDE II]

BARNES: I knew it was a slip of the tongue on his part and I figured nobody would notice it. Well, as I was saying, somebody obviously told him that I had made this small correction of a date and he came and asked me if I had and I said that I had corrected his date. He said, "Did I really make the mistake?" and I said, "Yes, you did, Mr. President," and he said, "Well, fine, thank you very much." It was an illuminating thing. He did not think he had made the slip, but he was willing to admit that he had when confronted with the facts and did not object to the fact that I had corrected this small lapses.

Another interesting thing happened that same day flying back from Maracay. We were on a fairly tight schedule. We had the helicopters, of course, and on the ground we had automobiles in case bad weather forced us down, but Mr. Kennedy did not want to use the cars because of the time involved. The pilot said, "I'd rather go around these

[-30-]

mountains and come in from the sea because there are clouds or turbulence over the mountains” and Mr. Kennedy said, "Well, take them over anyway. That's what these things are for." And so we went over. And there was no problem – a little bit of turbulence, but he was not at all concerned over any possible danger. The pilot of course was being cautious as befitted the pilot of a president but the President overruled him and we went into the city with no major problem.

PLANK: What craft were you using?

BARNES: I really don't know. It was a...

PLANK: Was this the Attache's plane?

BARNES: No, no, no. There were Marine helicopters that had been flown down for the purpose of the visit.

PLANK: Mrs. Kennedy was with you throughout the trip or...

BARNES: Yes, except that when we went in the helicopter she went in another one, always with Mrs. Betancourt.

PLANK: I see.

BARNES: And President Betancourt's daughter, who speaks English fluently. She studied in this country.

[-31-]

So it was the Minister of Agriculture, and one of our Secret Service men, Gerry Behn [Gerald A. Behn], with us throughout this trip, and the two Presidents, and myself.

PLANK: When the President did things like what you described a moment ago, his bolting from the platform in effect down into the crowd, did you try to go with him on such occasions?

BARNES: Yes, I tried to follow. There was not much that was said. He shook hands, people wished him well and all, but just in case, you never knew when he might want to stop and talk to a particular person, so I stayed right behind him as much as I could, as close as I could.

PLANK: How did you make the trip from Caracas over to Bogota?

BARNES: On Air Force One, on the jet plane, yes. It's just a short hop, of course.

PLANK: Was there a difference in reception or a difference in feeling in Bogota, as contrasted with Caracas?

BARNES: Yes, the feeling of the possibility of an incident was pretty well over. For most of us, I don't

[-32-]

know about the security people, but as far as those of us who were along on the ride we figured, "Well, we've gone through Caracas, and now everything's all right." There was no danger after all. And in Bogota there were less security precautions. They did not have the problem Venezuela had had, and the reception was more spontaneous. It was a beautiful day. We spent a full day there. The conversations between the two Presidents were held just by the two of them since President Lleras [Alberto Lleras Camargo] speaks very good English. But there again I had the feeling that there was a great deal of mutual respect

because Lleras also is a brave man and has gone through a great deal in his life for his country and was trying with a different approach than Betancourt's. He's not a man of the real masses, of the peasants, obviously. He's a little colder. But still he was trying to get his country into shape and to provide at least the beginnings of hope for the people who were deprived economically.

[-33-]

PLANK: Well, I was just going to ask if President Kennedy in Colombia stayed pretty close to Bogota.

BARNES: He went out to one housing development again to inaugurate it, and that was about all. Then, there was a big dinner that night which was televised all over Colombia at which President Lleras and President and Mrs. Kennedy all spoke.

PLANK: I see.

BARNES: But it was an entirely different atmosphere, a little more pomp and circumstance. Bogota is a more formal city. It's not tropical. The Presidential Palace is a beautiful old place. Things are more ornate. The Colombians are a little more formal but there was obviously warmth also.

PLANK: This prompts the question about whom, in addition to the chiefs of state, the President talked with on these trips. Did he talk with other ministers of government?

BARNES: Very briefly, if at all.

PLANK: With newspaper people?

[-34-]

BARNES: No, no press conferences, but basically the talks were with the respective chiefs of state. As I said, the meeting with Lleras was just the two of them. There was no one else present.

PLANK: Do you know if there was any fixed agenda of problems that were laid out ahead of time to be discussed?

BARNES: No, I don't think so. I wasn't there at the Lleras talks, but I don't think so. Lleras knows the United States very well. He's lived here for many years and he's a well read man. President Kennedy was obviously well briefed on Lleras Camargo and on Colombia and I think they could dispense with the itemized list of problems faced by our countries bilaterally though they probably did go into them somewhat, but to

speaking on a broader scale of the hemisphere as a whole, of the problems of communism and reaction and of poverty and of development.

PLANK: Of course later on when you went down to Central America with him there was a pretty tight agenda and these were substantive talks.

[-35-]

BARNES: These were substantive talks, yes.

PLANK: In contrast to these conversations. I notice in the rundown of your chronology here that almost as soon as you got back from this trip you met with President Frondizi again and went to Palm Beach.

BARNES: West Palm Beach, yes.

PLANK: What was that occasion?

BARNES: Frondizi was going to the Far East on a tour of India, Indonesia, and I forget what other country – Japan – a good will mission. Some of his critics said it was to get away from his problems. That may or may not have been true and there the subject was largely the problem of Cuba. But there was no communication as far as I could see, really. They did not come to grips with the problem. They both agreed there was a problem. Frondizi kept saying, "It is just representative of the illness of poverty and of previous repression." President Kennedy said, "Yes, but he is undermining other countries that are trying to get on their feet."

[-36-]

"We must stop him or curtail his activities." They did not to my mind speak on sufficient specifics.

PLANK: Of course this was well after... No, this was before the second meeting at Punta del Este, wasn't it?

BARNES: Right. It was a couple of months before. Argentina had asked that the meetings be held on the date they were held because of their impending congressional elections on which Frondizi was staking his political career and which cost him the presidency, indirectly, when the Peronists won such a large number of votes. But as I say they spoke in such generalities that the communiqué that was issued actually seemed to reflect a great deal of sharing of opinions, much more so than actually existed. Frondizi was tired. The strain of his period of government was starting to tell on him. He had aged and he did not make such an impact, I think, as he had made on the first meeting.

PLANK: I see. Was the President down at West Palm Beach

[-37-]

just for a short vacation at this time?

BARNES: Yes. This was right before Christmas and he had gone down there to be with his family. His father was there. As a matter of fact, his father had his stroke the day after we returned from Colombia and Venezuela, and he wanted to be with his father. He liked West Palm Beach. He had spent Christmas and New Year's there before. And Frondizi was on his way and this was a convenient point for him to have a meeting with President Kennedy before he went on his trip to the Far East.

PLANK: I see. You were in Washington, of course, and were called down?

BARNES: Yes, I was called to go down there.

PLANK: By this time I take it you and the President knew one another.

BARNES: Yes, he knew who I was by this time.

PLANK: Although it's not on this list, you did go down to Punta del Este for the second meeting, didn't you?

[-38-]

BARNES: That's right. I went with the US Delegation to those meetings. They were, as you know, very hectic. We had the very definite problem there of a number of Central American countries, particularly, that wanted strong action; a number of South American countries that wanted no action at all; and the United States really caught in the middle because congressional pressure at home was quite strong about doing something *vis-à-vis* Castro. And President Kennedy's influence was felt there, and I believe that it would be all right to mention this one incident. The Colombian Foreign Minister had presented a draft proposal which he stuck to rather stubbornly. It was in line with what was desired by the Central American countries. It was too much for some of the others and he would not budge. And the Secretary called President Kennedy in Washington and asked him to call President Lleras, who then called the Foreign Minister and the problem was over.

[-39-]

PLANK: I see. You were very conscious then that the lines were open...

BARNES: That the lines were open and that the resources were always there. The reserves were there to be called in case of dire need. They would not have

been used had this not been rather critical because we were approaching a decision-making time. I say “we” because we worked such long hours I felt very much involved in this though I obviously had no substantive participation, but the decision had to be taken. The votes were being counted very carefully. As you recall, the final proposal was approved by the bare minimum of fourteen. It was close.

PLANK: And as you say, indirectly it may have cost Frondizi his presidency.

BARNES: Yes. Well, he went back. The military from Argentina were shuttling back and forth to Punta del Este trying to force the Argentine Delegation to soften its stand. They forced him to break with Cuba a few weeks later, but the congressional

[-40-]

elections there and the governorships that the Peronists won led the military then to depose him about a month and a half after that.

PLANK: The next date that I see on your chronology is April, 1962, at which time President Kennedy was meeting with the Foreign Minister of the Dominican Republic. What's the history of this?

BARNES: Well, the then Foreign Minister Bonilla Atilas [José A. Bonilla Atilas] had obviously wanted to meet President Kennedy personally, and he had always been impressed by something that Secretary Rusk [Dean Rusk] had told him at Punta del Este, which was how President Kennedy had been impressed by the spirit of some of the young military officers in Santo Domingo at a time when they rescued the civilian junta from an attempted or potential coup. And some of these young officers had told the civilian junta, “We don't want our names published. We're not out for personal glory. We're doing this for our country.” And, of course, it is a moving incident and it had been related to President Kennedy who

[-41-]

had commented how much he was impressed, and Bonilla Atilas wanted to go and talk with him.

And there again the Dominicans were also asking us to see what could be done to stop Castro's influence on the Dominican Republic. It's been unstable ever since Trujillo [Trujillo Molina, Rafael Leónidas] was killed. There was a great deal of radio propaganda coming from Cuba – very powerful transmitters. There were also other types of infiltration and it was actually a courtesy call which went beyond that into discussion of some of the problems confronting the Dominican Republic. Sugar was a big issue that came up very briefly during the meeting. The Dominicans wanted a larger share of the sugar market in the United States.

PLANK: Of the Cuban quota?

BARNES: The former Cuban quota, yes.

PLANK: Did they talk about Haiti at all at this time?

BARNES: They mentioned it in passing, agreeing that it was a problem and that it was difficult to find out what to do with it. They brought Mr. Kennedy a very finely carved rocking chair which he

[-42-]

accepted. They felt very happy to leave this at the White House.

PLANK: But this was a meeting that took on dimensions that President Kennedy evidently had not anticipated when he agreed to see the Foreign Minister.

BARNES: Well, the meeting was held under the title of a courtesy call, but the President was well briefed obviously. He had been well briefed. He was not at a loss at any time for replies as to American approaches or policies.

PLANK: Did you get any feel for his attitude toward the Dominican Republic and toward the principal political factors in the Dominican Republic at that time?

BARNES: Not as individuals. But here again I think he felt, as did a lot of people, that somehow the prestige of the United States and of democracy as a whole was at stake. We had to prove that a dictatorship could be replaced by a democracy or the beginnings of a democracy and that it would be successful because there are still those who believe in Latin America, and perhaps some here,

[-43-]

that Latin Americans need a strong hand; they cannot govern themselves under a Western or Anglo-Saxon concept of democracy, and so I think President Kennedy felt this very keenly. It was a challenge to help make this country work.

PLANK: You yourself did not get involved in any conversations subsequent to this one between President Kennedy and other Dominicans?

BARNES: No. When President-elect Juan Bosch [Juan Emilio Bosch Gavino] came up, he spoke quite a bit of English and I was not along on this particular assignment.

PLANK: Well, you're quite right, of course. The concern the President felt for the Dominican thing because of their emotional involvement, if nothing else, in

Dominican affairs was very marked. In 1962 in June, a couple of months later, the President talked with President-elect Valencia [Guillermo Leon Valencia]. Where did those conversations take place?

BARNES: Those were very brief. President Valencia had come up on more of a tourist trip than anything

[-44-]

else and the meetings at the White House were... there was very little substance to them. President Valencia had not come up here on a negotiating basis or, as is usually the case with presidents-elect, to try to reach certain agreements as to action in the future by the incoming administration there. And, very briefly, things that were mentioned were what assistance the United States might give in this fight against the guerrillas, which of course the President was very happy to offer in whatever measure we could within political and economic limitations, and that was about the only point of substance that was mentioned.

PLANK: How long a meeting was this?

BARNES: Very brief, very brief. The bulk of it was at a lunch.

PLANK: I see.

BARNES: And they chatted for a few minutes before and a few minutes afterward but the Colombians did not come up with any presentations and so there was no actual need for a more formal meeting.

[-45-]

PLANK: You were unable to pull any sense of the way the President responded to President Valencia or vice versa?

BARNES: No, there wasn't enough time. President Valencia was impressed by President Kennedy. He devoted, strangely enough, the major part of his rather eloquent toast to Mrs. Kennedy, who was not present at the lunch. It was a nice gesture but contributed nothing really to anything more than eloquence and compliments. And I think that President Valencia suffered from having followed Lleras Camargos' footsteps. It was a hard act to follow.

PLANK: Well, this was what I was thinking of, whether either in this particular context or in other ones you ever detected a sense of restlessness on President Kennedy's part as he dealt with Latin Americans?

BARNES: No. He was always intensely interested in them and their countries, knew what their place was. I mean, Colombia has been traditionally very friendly

towards the United States ever since the

[-46-]

Canal business was settled. They sent troops to Korea. They have backed us up in the UN and the OAS almost invariably. And there is this strong affection by Colombians for this country, and within this framework of course he was very happy to see President Valencia as a representative of this continuing spirit and Valencia showed him that this cooperation would continue without any hesitation, no matter what the United States did, which is heartening to know from an incoming president.

PLANK: That's right. I really was thinking not only about President Valencia but about some of the others like President Schick [Rene Schick Gutiérrez] whom he also saw, and I think he saw President Ydigoras [Miguel Ydigoras Fuentes]. With some of these gentlemen he didn't feel that they were not quite at his level or...

BARNES: No, he looked at each one of them as an individual. I think he was perhaps a little bit amused by President Ydigoras, who was a very colorful figure —

[-47-]

erratic. I mean, his pronouncement on ministers' wives buying negligees to keep their husbands home as a part of an official government announcement, this is color; not complete approval of the perhaps lack of honesty in Ydigoras' Administration, but a tough little bird, and interesting. Rivera [Julio Adalberto Rivera] of Salvador, whom he met also in this same group, in Costa Rica: a tall, very big, very silent, somewhat inarticulate man, but quite sincere; very friendly towards us; sincere in his efforts to do something in his country in spite of the fact that he came in elections which were sponsored by the junta of which he was a member, but honestly trying to run his country well. He's not eloquent, he's not colorful at all, but he and President Kennedy amazingly enough liked each other. I have spoken with President Rivera since and he has still not gotten over the death of President Kennedy.

PLANK: I guess this is really what he derived, from what you said, Don. Characteristically, the President was involved in these people and he was interested

[-48-]

in them as human beings.

BARNES: Right.

PLANK: And sincerely interested in them.

BARNES: He was. Very definitely. He was not thinking of what advantages can we get

in trade or in alignment in international organizations or what, but in each country he wanted to know what made it tick, what was wrong with it, what we could do, what they could do, what their problems were, he was interested in the men. They were all different. Orlich [Francisco J. Orlich Bolmarchich] was the sort of second generation of a revolution already established in a country that is amazingly democratic. Costa Rica is such a delightful place in that respect. There were no political problems there during the President's stay. And there was Villeda Morales [Ramon Villeda Morales], already in some trouble at home, suspected by some of dealing with leftist forces that he should not deal with, but already under fire. President Ydigoras in great trouble as he always had been and he was to be deposed soon

[-49-]

thereafter. President Somoza [Luis Somoza Debayle], who presented a problem because I think that he was probably one of the most capable men there, and politically very savvy. He felt very much at ease. I don't know much of this was a cover but he felt very much at ease with President Kennedy. He twitted Ambassador Moscoso [Teodoro Moscoso], who had refused to go to Nicaragua on an inspection trip ever on behalf of AID and he asked Mr. Moscoso, "Are you afraid to see how much progress we are making?" and President Kennedy turned to Mr. Moscoso and suggested that he visit Nicaragua one of those days. But Somoza was very much at ease. He was proud of his administration, of what he had done. The incoming President, President-elect Schick, very nervous, knew that he was coming into power with the two Somoza brothers still very much in evidence--one still commander of the National Armed Forces and the other nominally a senator but still a strong power. And yet he was, I believe, determined to do the

[-50-]

best he can, but he was very nervous and besides he was the president-elect and there were half a dozen other full presidents in their own rights so he was somewhat of a junior member there. And then President [Roberto F.] Chiari of Panama was also there.

PLANK: We'll talk about them in a moment. I notice that we are coming up to something quite spectacular – the President's trip to Mexico – which I gather was also a triumph for him in many ways. Again, would you be willing to tell us something about how this thing unfolded? I don't know at what stage you were brought in, presumably fairly early.

BARNES: No. I had read about the trip in the papers. I had made my own plans to be available and I was called to go. I got the usual briefings from the Political Desk as to what might be discussed at the meeting. A funny incident happened. It was not funny at the time but I've laughed at it since, if I may inject a personal note. I was supposed to fly down on Air Force One but the day before I was bumped by someone in the White House

[-51-]

and put on the press plane, which arrived beforehand, which was all right. I would be there as he got off the plane. But somewhere in the air Mr. Kennedy wanted to know where I was and nobody knew where I was, and I gather from comments of several people who got off the plane that the atmosphere got rather heated because he foresaw the possibility of his getting off in Mexico City and not having an interpreter there. He greeted me rather warmly as he got off the plane. Mexico was numerically, of course...

PLANK: Let me just interrupt for a moment. I don't want to break your chain of thought. I suppose between a man like President Kennedy and an interpreter with whom he's used to working, a certain kind of trust and a special relationship develops. I mean he felt comfortable when he knew you were doing it.

BARNES: I think so. I like to think so, yes. We instinctively fell into a rhythm of how long he would speak. At first I would have to glance up. I usually had his prepared text plus a notebook for the times that he deviated, so I could capture

[-52-]

the main thoughts, and I would have to keep looking at him out of the corner of my eye to see when he was stopping because I didn't want to have to have him prompt me but after a while this became instinctive. We developed a rhythm. I could tell when he was building up to end a paragraph or the portion he wanted done, and he could tell when I was finishing. There have been times when he would interrupt me, he thought I'd finished and I would go on. But we developed a pattern of delivery that clicked pretty well, I think.

PLANK: This was really his feeling... because from what you've just told us about his concern that you might not be there... Obviously there were plenty of people at the Embassy and others who could have provided interpreter services. It's not the same thing.

BARNES: No. He wanted a professional.

PLANK: He wanted you.

[-53-]

BARNES: Well... yes.

PLANK: I'm sorry I brought that in but it seemed to be the proper place. You were about to say something about...

BARNES: Yes, numerically, I think, the reception in Mexico City was the best he received in Latin America. It was nothing like his trip to West Berlin, which is

in a category all by itself, I feel. But Mexico City is a larger city, and there again you could tell where the Mexican Government and the Government Party had mobilized its considerable resources. You could see where groups of unions were and they were under their own banners, and they were standing there, but still the popular enthusiasm was obviously there also. It was a spectacular entry. They dumped something like sixteen tons of multi-colored confetti. It was just a cloud. It was well done. The Mexicans have pride...

PLANK: This was a formal...

BARNES: Right, all the way up into town. It was a spectacular thing. But also enough warmth behind

[-54-]

it so that you knew it wasn't all because they have an efficient government and an efficient government party.

PLANK: Was the security apparatus as much in evidence there as in...

BARNES: No, very definitely not. The Mexican armed forces are not large. They have things under control in Mexico and things were not as conspicuous.

PLANK: How long a trip was this one?

BARNES: This was about forty-eight hours there, I believe, something like that. Rather intense hours, but that's about all.

PLANK: He stayed in Mexico City?

BARNES: In Mexico City, yes.

PLANK: He went over to the Basilica, didn't he?

BARNES: He went to mass there, yes. It created a problem for the Mexican authorities since no high-ranking government officer would be seen going into church. The President cannot. But he said, "There's no problem. I'll go on my own." He was accompanied by the military aide the Mexicans

[-55-]

had appointed for him and there was no problem at all. I think this endeared him. There is a dichotomy in Mexico opposed to religion and this endeared him to a number of people.

PLANK: What about Mrs. Kennedy in this context?

BARNES: Well, there again she was a smashing success with her speech in Spanish which was given at a lunch that was televised and millions of people saw it, and her usual charm and attractiveness and bearing contributed materially to the success of the trip.

PLANK: When you say speech in Spanish, did she really give speeches or were these just little statements?

BARNES: They were not speeches. They were more statements. She had memorized them, but she delivered them very well, in very good and clear Spanish. And there again it wasn't so much what she said but the idea of here is an American who has bothered to learn our language and is trying to say something.

PLANK: The two of them stayed together on all of these trips, didn't they?

[-56-]

BARNES: They split off. She would go to the museum or to a children's hospital while he was having his bilateral conversations or something like that.

PLANK: Did you sit in on the bilateral conversations there?

BARNES: No, for a number of rather complicated reasons. At the last moment they decided to use the services of Ambassador Carrillo Flores [Antonio Carrillo Flores] and Ambassador Mann [Thomas Clifton Mann] at the formal sit-down session. I was with him at all other times.

PLANK: I take it maybe then some matters of substance were discussed?

BARNES: Oh, obviously, some of those came out. The Chamizal was one of them, and as you know, this is now soon to approach its climax with the formal ceremonies in El Paso. The problem not so much of Cuba as such, I gather, but of practical pragmatic solutions to problems of Central American students being able to move freely from Mexico to Cuba and back with no record on their passports; and a great deal of progress, I think, was made. From what I hear from my Central American friends,

[-57-]

this traffic, this flow of people, was curtailed very drastically in the ensuing months, but without any fanfare on the part of the Mexican Government, for its own political reasons.

PLANK: How would you contrast, if you do at all, President Kennedy's reaction to President López Mateos [Adolfo López Mateos] with his reaction, for example, to Frondizi?

BARNES: He liked him. The relationship started out on much more of an even basis because here was not a man fighting for survival, worrying if he was going to be overthrown, asking for a great deal of help, really, was what it amounted to – a little bit on the defensive. Here was a man who stood with all the pride that the Mexicans feel of their Aztec and Mayan background, the tremendous culture that they have. They feel this strongly. It's their country. It's not something they inherited from Spain. This is theirs. Plus the fact that they have had this viable political and economic system for such a long time and, different as it may be from our own, it works, and the masses of the people feel that they participate in the

[-58-]

government. The fact that there are not two parties fighting it out on a more or less even basis at the polls does not perturb the majority of Mexicans that I met. This is their government, their party. They have a part in it. It has a certain mystique of its own.

PLANK: Here again the person in the Mexican context who reaches the top is still as political as any political animal in the world.

BARNES: Very definitely.

PLANK: And I would imagine that this kind of thing would elicit a sympathetic response of President Kennedy who just admired political skill when he saw it.

BARNES: He did and he saw it, and he also admired this feeling of independence. It was not anti-Americanism. It was Mexicanism and there was no antagonism there. He spoke glowingly of their revolution, which they always liked to hear. He gave President López Mateos....

[END TAPE I, SIDE II]

[-59-]

[TAPE II, SIDE I]

PLANK: Don, you were talking at the close of the last tape about President Kennedy's references during the Mexican trip to the Mexican experience, the Mexican revolution. Do you want to follow that thought out?

BARNES: Yes. He, in almost all of his public statements, expressed his admiration for the revolution as an institution and for the institutionalized revolution of Mexico where the bloody parts were over and the building... [a few words inaudible]... had been under way for quite a few years. For example, when we were out to

the Institute of Social Security he delivered a speech there. It is an impressive place. Public housing built by this Institute is very attractive and the President commented very frankly that he wished that our urban renewal would follow the example and not build these monolithic blocks of brick that sometimes are used for public housing, and this was attractive, well landscaped. He was impressed by

[-60-]

their pragmatic approach. The people bought the houses on long-term loans, very, very low interest, obviously within the means of almost every family. It was not a gift. It was something that they were building.

He noticed a number of very young men or boys in late teens, in khaki uniforms, but with no other insignia, and he was told that these were Mexican draftees who served out their military service working in communities such as this; gardening, cleaning the streets, performing other tasks. They would serve their military term this way and yet were not involved with things military. They performed a very useful function and they felt they were building also. It gave them quite a bit of pride. And this was a practical use of manpower and a solution to the problem of what to do when you draft so many thousands of young men in a country which has no major military problems.

And, as I said, the place was so attractive, and he spoke – this was not invented, this was

[-61-]

not false flattery – he admired this Institution, these houses, and expressed his envy of them. We also saw part of the Mexican spirit. There was a small concert of Mexican folk music and a little bit of dancing, and he was told that these were professional men – lawyers and doctors, and dentists and others – who on their own spent a great deal of time preparing their authentic costumes and rehearsing and all because they felt that this was part of Mexico. And the spirit impressed him.

PLANK: On a trip like this, as on the others that you've talked about, was the President almost all the time in the company of country nationals, or was he a great deal of the time with Embassy people?

BARNES: No, he spent some time, and after going to the Social Security Institute we went to a little bit premature Fourth of July picnic for the American community. And he spoke to them, joking as he often did. He called them “the best-dressed Peace Corps men he had ever seen.” These were mostly business men and he was speaking of their

[-62-]

duty to represent their country. He addressed the Embassy staffs, both Americans and locals, in each of these countries. In Mexico, I know, he moved the Mexican locals because he told

them that their loyalty towards the American Embassy was in no way in conflict or in contradiction with their obvious loyalty to their own country; that they could serve our Embassy well and still be patriotic Mexicans and that these things rather complemented each other and helped to build a better bridge between the two countries, and they were just glowing.

PLANK: What kind of schedule did he keep? What time did his day begin and what time did it end?

BARNES: Well the day began normally in public about eight o'clock, and ended about midnight, and there was always something going. He would rest briefly and there would be times when of course he would disappear for a quarter of an hour or an half an hour to get his briefings on world problems, but he was in the public image very much. At the lunch that he gave for President López Mateos, Mrs. Kennedy

[-63-]

told him how impressed she was by the Mexican Museum of History which is an impressive place and he turned to López and said, "I understand it's closed. What a pity! I would like to see it," knowing full well that the signal would then go immediately, which was done. And we were going to go to the Museum and then to the American Embassy but because it looked like it might rain he changed his plans and went to the American Embassy first. And what I'm trying to get at is that nobody supposedly knew that he was going to visit the Museum but there was a fantastic crowd outside the door and he went in and admired the historic treasures that are there, so well and so affectionately preserved by the Mexicans with such pride, and then again went out into the streets. And there the Secret Service men had to pull him back. The crowds got a little bit too enthusiastic.

PLANK: You've told me and put on tape a good deal of what President Kennedy said and the sort of things that interested him. What was on López Mateos'

[-64-]

mind to the extent that you could draw this in their conversations? What sort of things...

BARNES: Well, the two problems that existed--physical problems – were the Chamizal territory, which was at least well underway towards solution, and the other one, which the United States and Mexico are still working on, but there is intent on both sides to solve the problem, is the salinity of the waters of the Colorado River, which is a sore spot still. But that's about all. Cuba was hovering in the background always, and knowing full well that there was not complete agreement for whatever reason, President Kennedy was always aware that in dealing with other countries, just as he had to keep half an ear tuned back home to political currents here, that these other people had political problems also, that it was not just easy for them to say, "All right, we're going to do this about Cuba,"

that they had their own problems. So he never pressed really hard on that because it would not have done any good. It would have been perhaps counter-productive.

[-65-]

PLANK: This is fine. I really was thinking about small talk.

BARNES: One thing I would like to mention which I think might be of interest and there I felt that López did not understand the question properly. Kennedy wanted to know, as an individual, "What do the Mexicans think of Pancho Villa?" I mean, he was curious. He knows what we consider him here. He knows what some people in Mexico consider him to be, and he wanted to know. And President López drew back a little bit and said, "Well, there is a great deal of disagreement." And Kennedy, I think, wanted to know what López Mateos thought as an individual, not as President of Mexico. I mean, here's a strange political phenomenon: "What was he really?" And the answer was not forthcoming. There was a little bit of evasiveness.

PLANK: But at the luncheon I take it from what I saw of the visit from the press reports and elsewhere that they carried on a very animated conversation.

[-66-]

BARNES: Yes. It was mostly light talk about, oh, the President's trip to Acapulco on his honeymoon, the sailfish he had caught, and the fact that he hoped to come back some time in the future after he left the White House to spend some more time and see things at a more leisurely pace, admiration for the architectural achievements in Mexico City, questions about the University – if the students were a problem – if they had student organizations and what were their political feelings.

PLANK: Did you detect any significant difference in the level of small talk, the kinds of things they talked about really when they weren't talking about matters of substance between the two countries, as between the conversations with President López Mateos on the one hand, let us say, and those President Kennedy had with President Betancourt on the other?

BARNES: Yes. With Frondizi there was almost no small talk; with Betancourt, it was all business: the business at hand, the reforms, the struggle; with

[-67-]

López there was actually not that much to be discussed formally and so they could sit back and relax and talk as equals, and discuss the things that I have mentioned.

PLANK: Now the following month, or the same month, I take it the Mexican students came up here and...

BARNES: Yes. They had hoped to see him for a brief meeting in Mexico City. They actually saw him in a hotel corridor briefly and he said, "Well, come up and see me." And they did and he met with them. They were representatives of the student body. They had had, as I recall it, their first student elections in several years until the political climate at the University settled down enough to permit the Government to want the elections to be held, and this was the elected leadership of the University – all fervent Catholics, and they wanted to present Mr. Kennedy with a scroll or a flag of the school. And he spoke to them briefly and again affectionately about his trip to Mexico when they came up to see him here.

[-68-]

PLANK: I see. They had nothing on their minds?

BARNES: Oh no, no, no. They were just overawed by the fact that they were going to see the President and wanted to express their admiration for him, and friendship.

PLANK: This is often pointed out here in our country, as it is in Latin America too, the fact that President was a Catholic apparently was an important fact in Latin America. How did this reflect itself or manifest itself? Was it brought out overtly in Mexico City?

BARNES: No, not in Mexico City. He did go to the church. The government withdrew temporarily from the activities and he went as a private citizen. But the mass of the people, I think most of them, were very, very much impressed by this. They felt another link with the man because of this.

PLANK: This interests me a bit. That is one link. What would be some of the others that you might single out, Don, as having tied, shall we say, the President to Latin Americans as other Presidents did not?

[-69-]

BARNES: His frequent talk of revolution. Not inciting it, not destructive revolution, but a constructive revolution of building, of changing the old order. We are represented in the minds of many millions of people in Latin America, as you know, as being connected with the *status quo*, with investments, with business. He did not go around knocking investments. On the contrary. But he spoke as if he had, and convinced them that he had, and I believe that he had, a vital interest in improving the standards of living of the people; that the United States was interested; that they wanted this. This was not lip service to a slogan, but actually that he was a part of their struggle; that obviously we did not want it to come about violently or to get out of hand. That, I think, was clear, but that we wanted to see the changes made. And they believed it and they were impressed.

PLANK: In these countries that he visited, did you have the feeling that the people had a pretty good notion of the person whom they were going to see

[-70-]

before he got there, or did his actual appearance on the scene affect the attitude?

BARNES: Oh, yes. They had heard of his statements. They liked him and a lot of these people would have cheered wildly no matter what his political viewpoints because he was an attractive figure. He was a leader. There was this charismatic quality about him. But seeing them there to see his – I hate to use this word but I can think of no other – his vigor, and his interest in things and always looking around, always stopping to talk to people, to shake hands, there was this direct human link.

PLANK: I see here that there are a couple of meetings here with military types. In September he met with the Venezuelan Minister of Defense. I would assume that that was strictly a matter of business?

BARNES: No, it was largely a courtesy call. He had met General Briceño [Antonio Briceño Linares] in Caracas. He knew that here was a man who had from his uniform and from his position as Minister of Defense given President Betancourt complete loyalty,

[-71-]

and President Kennedy went out of his way to compliment and thank General Briceño for this very patriotic attitude and to reassure him as to the patriotism of actions such as that.

PLANK: What brought General Briceño up to this country?

BARNES: He was here on other business. I don't know whether it was in connection with the purchase of equipment or what, but he did want to stop by to see the President and bring him greetings from President Betancourt.

PLANK: I see. So this was in effect just a cordial exchange of greetings?

BARNES: It was a very cordial exchange, yes.

PLANK: Then, of course, he had lunch with the Latin American Foreign Ministers here. Was this a business lunch?

BARNES: This was a business lunch. They had been meeting in the State Department Building for a day or so, a meeting to exchange impressions on Cuba, to

perhaps try to find out what to do about Cuba. It was a protocol lunch in a certain respect.

[-72-]

During the lunch he sent me to ask Secretary Rusk what the Secretary would like the President to say that would help the Department in their conversations. He wanted his after-dinner remarks to be more than platitudes but to serve a useful purpose and the Secretary was... I went back again to make sure and I passed back the information. He brought out a couple of points that Mr. Rusk felt might reinforce the American Delegation's position.

PLANK: The President was speaking extemporaneously, wasn't he?

BARNES: Completely. There was no preparation at all.

PLANK: Was this characteristic of his performance in most of the times that you were working with him? He had a prepared text, I know, but....

BARNES: For his major addresses he had a prepared text and some of it he stuck to — quotations from Roosevelt or Jefferson [Thomas Jefferson] or from the hero of the country he was going to — he would stick by those, but then as the crowd reacted, he would depart.

[-73-]

PLANK: Of course this gets a little ahead of our story, but I think the Orange Bowl speech was a prime example...

BARNES: It was very definitely a prime example.

PLANK: Of throwing away what he had prepared and responding to the crowd. This was in September of 1962 and also in September of 1962 he had his first meeting with Senator Frei [Eduardo Frei Montalva]. Was this the first time he had met with Frei?

BARNES: To my knowledge this was the first time. Senator Frei had actually gone to see Ralph Dungan [Ralph A. Dungan] at the White House, and he was brought in to say hello to the President. It was basically an exchange of greetings. Frei had a strong interest in meeting the President because he considered him to be the American equivalent of a Christian Democrat, his own party, and a Catholic. Frei is a devout Catholic and feels this very strongly. But the conversation did not last very long. He was asked about the campaign, how it was going. He said it was going well but it would be a tough fight.

[-74-]

PLANK: The President obviously knew who Frei was.

BARNES: Oh, yes. He had to be careful because, after all, in the thick of the race at that time was another candidate who was very friendly to the United States, the Radical candidate, Senator Duran [Julio Duran]. Frei is a politician and had he been able to go back home with the endorsement of President Kennedy, it might have helped him but it would have embarrassed the United States. So the conversation was a little guarded in that respect.

PLANK: How long did this last?

BARNES: Oh, ten or fifteen minutes.

PLANK: Did you get the feeling that the two men responded well to one another?

BARNES: Yes, within the limitations of this situation.

PLANK: Well, one would almost assume that Frei understood as well as the President what the problem was.

BARNES: Yes, I think he understood very well what the ground rules were, but he was happy to be able

[-75-]

to go back and say that he had spoken with the President, I am sure letting people draw their own inferences as to what was said.

PLANK: In January of the next year he met with Foreign Minister Muniz [Carlos Manuel Muniz] of Argentina. This is one I know nothing about whatsoever. What happened there?

BARNES: Well, this was a visit by a very young fellow – under forty – the Foreign Minister of Argentina under the transitional government of Frondizi's Successor [José Maria Guido], and he came up actually to discuss a whole range of problems, bilateral problems. He had had meetings, substantial and substantive meetings, here in the Department with AID and with many others, and he had a session with the President also.

PLANK: Which in effect covered the ground that held been covering in his other...

BARNES: Exactly, yes, in general terms. The United States had said its piece pretty well and so had he. They went over some of the basic points there, but in very general terms, about Argentina's

[-76-]

economic development, the elections that were way off on the horizon at that time, the stability of the Guido government.

PLANK: What role did President Kennedy play in a confrontation, of this sort, in which the basic work had already been done in the State Department and elsewhere?

BARNES: Well, to reinforce in general terms our presentation, I feel that the purpose of the meeting was perhaps to inspire more confidence in the Guido regime. I don't think anybody wanted a military coup. People hoped that the man would last and be able to supervise elections. One thing that happened that disconcerted a number of people, certainly Muniz and I think the President also a little bit: Muniz brought a present, which was an extremely finely woven poncho, made of vicuna of all things. Now this has, as you know, political ramifications here which the Argentines were completely unaware of, and the President was not elated to be photographed with a piece of

[-77-]

vicuna cloth in his hand, but he got it over with as quickly as he could.

PLANK: He didn't say anything about...

BARNES: No, he didn't. He couldn't explain at the time and he wanted to get the ceremony over with rather quickly and the Argentine, I think, was a little puzzled because it was a beautiful poncho, very finely woven, so finely woven it was waterproof. But it was just one of those situations that was a little bit uncomfortable.

PLANK: Did you ever, Don, after one of these sessions, see the other principal? For example, would you ever see Muniz? You left the room together presumably?

BARNES: Yes, we left the room together, but he went out to his confrontation with the press, and the language problem there was handled by the Argentine Ambassador, who spoke English fluently. We would have preferred to be kept out of those press situations.

PLANK: Surely. But of course you know Muniz was never properly filled in...

[-78-]

BARNES: No, I don't think so. He resigned very shortly thereafter for other reasons, internal reasons, so this whole series of meetings was in away wasted. It was a pity.

PLANK: Well, shortly thereafter President Betancourt came up here and spent

sometime in Washington. I'd be interested in how that went. I take it from what is noted here that you were involved, intimately involved?

BARNES: In almost all the conversations, yes.

PLANK: I was just going to say, by this time of course a real personal rapport had been established between these two men?

BARNES: Very much so. President Kennedy joked a great deal with Betancourt's daughter, who came up on the trip. When some problem with the sales of residual oil had come up, he had called Caracas. He was in the habit of sometimes calling, but let me interject here, he was communicating by writing with almost all of these people on a very frequent basis.

[-79-]

PLANK: People like President Betancourt?

BARNES: Yes, all of these heads of government. Even Frondizi after he was deposed, there was an exchange of correspondence which led to continuation of these ties and of a show of interest. But he joked with Mrs. Perez, Betancourt's daughter, about how excited she had become while interpreting her father's statement about American oil sales, and she laughed and of course enjoyed that exchange very much. And President Betancourt and Mrs. Kennedy had become very friendly. It was a very happy meeting. There were problems to be sure. There always are but it was an incredibly friendly atmosphere. Betancourt felt better. He was another few months more towards being the first elected President to serve out his term and he felt more confident. He had taken a harder stand against the terrorists and was sure he would overcome the problems they created and it was a very friendly meeting indeed – a great deal of good will.

[-80-]

PLANK: Aside from the residual oil problem, what else was there? Cuba again presumably, and the problem of subversion?

BARNES: Again Cuba, and, yes, the problem of subversion, of cutting the flow of arms and of funds and of personnel. One after-dinner exchange: Betancourt wanted some equipment for his navy and the President called over Senator Morse [Wayne L. Morse], and said, "All right, here you are. You talk to Senator Morse. He's the one that doesn't want to give us the money to help you to have your equipment. You convince him. So go ahead." And he sat back puffing on a cigar, as if to say, "I'm going to enjoy this." It was a little strange for Betancourt to be defending the military as much as he did. He felt that he had to help them get this equipment. They wanted it and he felt they needed it, and Senator Morse of course is an interesting person and was not at all shy about giving his opinions and he spoke very strongly about not wanting to give any more.

[-81-]

He said he was still trying to recover from the shock of the fact that American-built tanks had broken down the doors of the Presidential Palace in Lima.

[END OF TAPE II, SIDE I]

[BEGIN TAPE II, SIDE II]

PLANK: Don, you were talking at the close of the tape about an exchange that the President watched between President Betancourt and Senator Morse.

BARNES: Well, President Betancourt presented his case. The equipment that the Venezuelan Navy wanted to replace was unsafe because it was so obsolete and that the Navy needed it, that the Armed Forces had been loyal to him throughout all the troubles with both the Left and the Right in Venezuela. And Senator Morse sat back against the chair with his arms crossed and would not budge. He said that he did not feel that we were helping any Latin American country by keeping up their armed forces, that in the short run it might look that way but that he was completely against it. President Kennedy enjoyed this exchange quite

[-82-]

a bit. I had the feeling that he had argued the point with Senator Morse perhaps.

It was also an interesting lesson in a way for Betancourt to see that here was a man who is a powerful figure in the American Senate and that he had his own opinions and that if our Embassy in Caracas could not always get what was wanted, there sometimes is a reason for it. So I think that is also part of what President Kennedy had in mind. It's not all easy. Just because the President says so, it's not necessarily so when it comes to appropriations, but the President seemed thoroughly to enjoy the scene.

PLANK: This exchange took place in the White House?

BARNES: In the White House after dinner, over coffee.

PLANK: Did, on this occasion, President Betancourt again push hard for the Betancourt Doctrine and for the meetings on representative democracy, and so on?

BARNES: Yes, he again stressed this that there was only one long-term solution to establishing institutionalized governments, democracies in

[-83-]

Latin America, that could proceed with the business of governing and of reforming whenever necessary, and that was to free them from the fear of military coups. The only way to do this was to have a strong line and isolate those countries that had governments overthrown. They feel strongly about this, as you know. It must have been a painful decision for them recently in Brazil because here was a government which obviously is going to change perhaps its policy *vis-à-vis* Cuba, and yet the Venezuelans have stuck to their guns on this matter.

PLANK: You indicated earlier when this topic came up that Betancourt was fully aware of the reasons why the United States could not necessarily go on. What did the President say in response to this plea?

BARNES: Well he wanted to know really how much in the light of our experience in the past, over the last fifty years or so – I mean, we've tried this before. It was tried under Wilson [Woodrow Wilson], and it's been tried since. It was tried in Nicaragua

[-84-]

right after the war. How much really can this pressure achieve? To which Betancourt replied, "Well, unless you try it, you'll never know. If you keep on recognizing *de facto* governments they'll keep on cropping up." Nobody convinced anybody on that score. Obviously President Kennedy would have liked to have seen the elimination of military coups, cessation of the overthrow of democratic elected governments, but I think he honestly felt there was a limit to what this pressure could achieve and also there are inherent dangers in applying pressures in a country. The pressures might go off in another direction.

PLANK: While conversations of this kind would be going on, among the men obviously, was Mrs. Betancourt visible on these occasions at all?

BARNES: She was in another room with the ladies. They have the separation of the sexes after dinner and the ladies were in another room having their coffee presumably, and the men were all in one room.

[-85-]

PLANK: Well, now we come up to the meeting in Central America which brought together all the Isthmian countries. You might just tell us a bit about what the purpose of this meeting was. This was more the protocolary?

BARNES: Yes. The Central American countries, all of them, no matter what type of government they had, were honestly fearful of subversion, or active physical subversion from Cuba. And that includes Costa Rica, which has no other major internal political problems. I mean, they have their democracy well under way. But they were all afraid and they were, it seems to me, perhaps, getting a little restless at the fact

that time was elapsing and that Cuba was still a sore spot, and needed reassurance that the United States was really interested. I mean, rumors do go about the fact that the United States may soften on one thing or another. The comments by American politicians are transmitted in the press down there and Kennedy was accused of thinking of softening up on Cuba, and I think

[-86-]

they may have been a little concerned, so he wanted to go to reassure them. He also wanted to go to give again this feeling to the people of Central America that the United States was emotionally committed to the Alliance for Progress, wanted to stir up their emotions so that they would become emotionally committed to this program, and also to give another push to the Central American Common Market, which within its limitations, has already started to give such good results for these rather poor countries.

PLANK: Were there bilateral talks?

BARNES: There were bilateral talks with each of the Presidents – all six of them – in which they were free to bring up whatever bilateral questions they had and we on the other hand did the same. There was a general meeting with all of them at which the President gave them a *tour d'horizon* of the world picture as the United States saw it, of Berlin, Laos, Vietnam, the whole of Africa, Congo, all of that. That, I think, stems from

[-87-]

something the Secretary learned in the Punta del Este meeting when a member of one of the country delegations came to him and said privately, “My Foreign Minister would probably be more amenable if he felt that you were letting him in on the United States’ positions on some of these places, if he were sharing,” and the Secretary used this and I guess he passed it on to the President because he did spend well over an hour – just going over the world giving them a full picture. Nothing of any startling nature but still it gave them a feeling that they were part of it, that they were part of this confrontation between East and West, and also that Cuba was just one part of it all. That’s another thing. I think that this may have – when you go into West Berlin and the presence of Soviet troops in East Berlin and our limited forces in Europe – maybe they think that it’s not so easy to take care of Cuba militarily because of the chain reaction that might be set off. This all places them in a larger perspective.

[-88-]

PLANK: Did you sit in on all of these bilateral talks? Were you the President's man?

BARNES: No. Since the bilateral talks were all held on the same day, we had taken a team of interpreters down – four of us – and we would take turns with

interpreting and taking notes for the memoranda of conversation so that when the President took off for his final speech, there was already a full record of everything that had been said. So we took turns. I was in on some of the meetings, but not on all of them.

PLANK: Which ones were you in on?

BARNES: I was in on the one with Rivera of Salvador; with Somoza and Schick of Nicaragua; with Orlich of Costa Rica; and with Ydigoras of Guatemala.

PLANK: And I gather that you had known Villeda and Chiari from another time.

BARNES: Correct.

PLANK: In these bilateral talks did anything emerge that was not consonant with Central American unity, that is, did you get any pulling and hauling as among the Presidents?

[-89-]

BARNES: No. There was some good-natured pulling between Somoza and Orlich. There have been troubles in the past between – not these present administrations, but preceding ones – their forefathers, so to speak, or fathers – and there was a little bit of kidding on that part. But they were all, I think, fairly well committed to the principle that none of them wants to see a neighbor's government overthrown no matter what, that there are bigger things. And so there was nothing. Each country brought up its own particular problem. I remember the Salvadoran mentioned that Salvador has such a large incidence of acts of blood, as he called it, the machete-type barroom brawls. It's a serious problem and he wanted to discuss health stations, and things like that. Rather minor details, but important to him, he felt. He also wanted some more equipment for his – well, it must be a very small Navy – and the President said he would look into it.

PLANK: The President was well briefed for these too?

[-90-]

BARNES: Oh yes, thoroughly briefed. He'd meet with our respective Ambassadors in these countries for about fifteen to thirty minutes before each meeting for a final summation on top of all the reading which he had done so he was fully prepared. There were no surprises for him.

PLANK: Who sat in on these meetings?

BARNES: Well, there would be the two Presidents, the Secretary and the Foreign Minister, our Ambassador. That was usually the make-up.

PLANK: Forgive me for having skipped over this as I certainly didn't mean to, but I wanted to talk with you or get your impressions of the return of the Brigade and the Orange Bowl speech. This was quite a traumatic and emotion-filled event.

BARNES: Yes, it definitely was. Frankly, I was not aware – this was around Christmas and I was not fully aware of the fact that there was going to be a meeting in Miami. I was called by Mr. Salinger's office and told to get on a plane and go to Palm Beach, with no further instructions. When I arrived I was given the speech he was going to

[-91-]

prepare by Mrs. Lincoln [Evelyn N. Lincoln]. She had just finished typing it around midnight and I went over it, making notes in advance for myself to simplify the task. The next morning I went to the stadium before the ceremony and talked with some members of the Brigade. Mr. Salinger had asked me to do this to see if I could pick up any human interest story that might be used in the speech. I gathered a few. They were not very satisfactory; they were not used.

Then he met with the leaders of the Brigade. This is one of the few times where I don't think he was completely at ease. I mean, he did not know how they were going to react. They had been locked up for eighteen months or so and he was a little bit nervous, I feel. They had the two San Ramon brothers, Artime and Oliva, and the one man representing the Cuban family relief organization, whatever it was, and he had Mrs. Kennedy and Princess Radziwill [Caroline Lee Bouvier Radziwill] there also as spectators. But the men were subdued. They were obviously grateful to get out, and they were immediately

[-92-]

concerned with problems of housing and subsistence for the thirteen hundred and some men, and very little was said about the operation itself.

PLANK: What happened to the prepared text on this occasion?

BARNES: I have read and heard from alleged inside sources about six different versions about whose ideas were originally in it and whose were taken out, and what appeals were made. I didn't see the preliminary drafts. Most of these stories seem to be exaggerated. There were some things that he had in the text that were left out.

Some people had been concerned about it because there had been an informal movement among some Cubans in Miami to boycott the meeting. I don't know who started it, how much support it had, but that was in the air. There had been a bomb threat. They found sticks of dynamite near the stadium and this, I am told, triggered a tremendous reaction on the part of the community there and they went to the stadium en force. As

[-93-]

he got into his speech with the presentation of their Brigade flag to him and his response that, "This flag would fly over a free Cuba in the future," then the crowd warmed up a great deal and then he departed from the text. I don't think it was a deliberate decision. I am not going to say this for fear of offending whoever, but it's just that he started speaking off the cuff and actually building up in the intensity of this statement, and he got the crowd worked up. They were yelling, "War war," and one thing or another.

A rather amusing incident happened when we were walking toward the platform. He said, "Is there any quick phrase I can learn in Spanish to say to these people?" And I wasn't much help. I said "Well, maybe 'Viva Cuba Libre.'" He gave me a rather quizzical look and said, "No, no, no." I think he felt it might have sounded like he was ordering a drink or something, and I agreed with him. It would not have been the best, but I could not think of any

[-94-]

offhand that was short that he could use and he shook his head and said, "No." But he did communicate with them again and he felt it. You could feel that he was expanding and going on in his statements as a result of the response by the crowd.

PLANK: You didn't have occasion yourself to talk after the speech with any of the Brigade or their families?

BARNES: No, I did not.

PLANK: Getting back to the chronology again, after the Costa Rican visit Mrs. López Mateos came up here, I take it?

BARNES: She came up here. She was the Mexican Delegate to the World Food Congress.

PLANK: I see.

BARNES: She went to see the President. There was nothing of substance. He recalled the trip, and the pleasure and reception and showed her in one of the corridors he had a couple of pictures of the entry into Mexico and he was very happy they had been so well received and had such fond memories

[-95-]

of the reception. There was nothing really much more than that.

PLANK: I am struck by the next entry on your listing here. That is the September visit of former President Miguel Aleman [Miguel Aleman Valdes]. What prompted that? Did he come up with some sort of official status?

BARNES: No. Of course he is involved in tourism for Mexico. He is the head of their tourist agency. He does a great deal of public relations for them. There was no real substantive reason for the talks. The President wanted to know how the elections were coming in Mexico, and Aleman laughed and said, "Well, you know, in Mexico we have a reverse process from what you have. We know who the president is going to be a long time in advance but we don't know who the candidate is going to be until the last minute." And he said he had no way of knowing who the Party was going to pick. President Kennedy asked him, "Well, what does it feel like to be a young former President?" which is something that the occasionally referred to, and Aleman said that he kept himself

[-96-]

busy with one thing or another. There had been no problem for him. He had just started in politics at an early age because of his father's [Joseph P. Kennedy] position.

PLANK: Had they met one another before?

BARNES: Not to my knowledge, no. They discussed horses. Mr. Aleman had this General Umberto Mariles, who for many years was the world's horse-riding champion under Aleman, and Mariles lamented the fact that succeeding administrations had not wanted to put the money into his equestrian program, and that Mexico's fame had been watered down, but there's not much to that.

PLANK: No. However, the next step here is important. The Paz Estenssoro visit which I take it, was the last state visit the President had?

BARNES: Yes. I was not involved in any but the direct bilateral talks between them. As a matter of interest, President Kennedy had become impatient over the years with the system of interpreting that was prevalent, which was what we called "consecutive interpreting," waiting until the

[-97-]

speaker finishes and going on. This obviously doubled the time required and so he had had simultaneous interpreting equipment set up in the Cabinet Room. It's still there, built into the tables, and we used this. And therefore I went in to help my colleague who handled most of the meetings. This was again a man that Mr. Kennedy respected for his accomplishments, an embattled man who had survived, who had done many things that were unpopular in Bolivia and here at various times, but who was coming out on top.

PLANK: When did they first meet? Do you know, Don?

BARNES: I think this was their first meeting, first personal meeting.

PLANK: You indicated earlier that the President was in the habit of exchanging letters

with these people, and I know for a fact that President Kennedy had been corresponding with Paz before this visit. What was the substance of their talks that you participated in?

[-98-]

BARNES: Again here was complete frankness--no great beating around the bush – no protocol – two men, both busy men, just saying, “We have a couple of hours. Let’s talk our problems out.” A common complaint was that the Alliance is too slow. The machinery is too slow.

PLANK: And President Kennedy recognized this as well as President Paz?

BARNES: No. What I meant to say was this was a common complaint of Latin American presidents. But Paz stressed it even more. The fact he said that the time between request and then the feasibility studies and then the decision and then the appropriation, you lost political impact sometimes that you could gain if you had quicker approval of projects. I mean, I want to build a bridge here because I need to build a bridge and because it will help me with the people of the area. Well, if it takes eighteen months, the political impact is sometimes lost. And President Kennedy agreed partially that he would see to it that insofar as possible the paper work

[-99-]

was accelerated, and he was also keenly aware of the need of having political impact to Alliance projects, not to build hollow buildings for the sake of building them, but to use them as a political tool.

PLANK: Now when he was talking to a person like Paz, and listening to Paz’ concerns, not to speak of complaints, what was his mood?

BARNES: Great, vital interest. He paid very close attention.

PLANK: There was no cheap optimism on this part?

BARNES: No, no, he had no visions of overnight miracles. No, he liked a practical, pragmatic approach and when somebody was doing something successfully, he appreciated it. He also appreciated whatever political problems they had. Paz mentioned that he had been for years waiting till he felt strong enough politically, especially *vis-à-vis* the mine workers in Bolivia, and Lechin [Juan Oquendo Lechin], his Vice President, and their leader, to embark on a new approach to modernizing the mines, which are notoriously

[-100-]

inefficient, and more so since the government took them over. So he wanted to experiment by hiring a consultant firm to advise the government on how to modernize the mines and streamline their operations, and if that were successful, he would go ahead and use it throughout the tin mine system in Bolivia. And he was sure it would be successful. But he had to prove it with this one mine before he could make the people swallow the rest of the remedy.

He said he was fed up with international bureaucrats who could come and give plentiful advice to his government, and if things went wrong, they would either transfer to another country or to another international bureaucracy with no responsibility. He wanted a man to come down and if this man's program didn't work that man would be fired by his private employer, and he liked that. He wanted the responsibility there, and he felt that with that he could get results.

[-101-]

He felt fairly confident about Bolivia's future within the limitations of their resources and felt that they could get the mines to become more productive than they had been and be less of a burden.

PLANK: Did they get into Bolivia's international situation *vis-à-vis* Chile, for example?

BARNES: No, they did not go in my presence into the Lavcha River, for example. Paz mentioned also the problem of propaganda coming from a number of countries to Bolivian universities, including some American universities – mail from universities, not necessarily by the universities themselves, but with a university address.

PLANK: You did talk about Cuba and his problem?

BARNES: Yes. He made no attempt to disguise his feeling that Cuba was a major problem for Bolivia.

PLANK: Did this get him into the...

BARNES: No, he did not get into it. He came in only in connection with the mines.

PLANK: And he didn't mention Selas either?

[-102-]

BARNES: No, not at all, not in my presence.

PLANK: Is there any concluding thing that you feel ought to be on here, Don, that we haven't got to?

BARNES: No, I think that this about wraps it up. I had one more contact with him, a very painful one, as you will realize. Two days before he was killed, he called me at home, and this was of course a thrill, to hear a voice saying, "This is the President calling."

[END OF TAPE II, SIDE II]

[-103-]

[TAPE III, SIDE I]

BARNES: On the evening of the twentieth of November, fairly late at night, I got this call from the White House and the President asked me whether I would help Mrs. Kennedy with a speech she was going to deliver to a Mexican-American political action group in Texas. I had on that day translated one speech for that purpose, written by I don't know whom, and I thought he meant that I should rework it or there was another version and he said, "Well, call Mrs. Lincoln tomorrow morning to make arrangements to get on the plane." So I, of course, proceeded to do that and the speech was delivered in Houston. We had gone to San Antonio and into Houston and Fort Worth. My part in the speech was to sit in the cabin of Air Force One with Mrs. Kennedy and help draft what she was going to say finally, help her a little bit with the pronunciation of it. He was present at the time too and wanted to know what we were having to say, of course.

[-104-]

Texas was politically troublesome, perhaps, and there was a restlessness among the Mexican-Americans about certain things, and so we finished that work and for the rest of the trip I was going along for the ride, hoping to get a plane back to Washington Friday night. I was scheduled to take off for El Salvador the morning of the twenty-third to attend and interpret a meeting on internal security, of all things, of Central America with the Deputy Attorney General. And so Mrs. Kennedy gave her speech to this group, and on the plane after the speech, he came into the main portion and said that she was worried that she had not done it well, and I assured them that she had done it very well, as usual, and that the people were very impressed, and he seemed to be happy, and that was the last time I saw him.

I went along, the Dallas portion of it, because I had nothing else to do, and it was interesting for me to see one of these visits as a spectator. I was not involved. He was way

[-105-]

ahead. I was in a bus way back in the caravan with Mrs. Evelyn Lincoln, Pamela Turnure, Jack Valenti [Jack J. Valenti], and Mrs. Carpenter [Elizabeth S. Carpenter], and that's it. The rest, I think, everyone knows. We got to the Trade Mart where he was supposed to speak. We had seen a flurry of policemen. We thought somebody had perhaps tried to throw something from a bridge or an overpass. We saw policemen running up a hill with guns drawn but, we honestly thought nothing of it. He was several hundred yards ahead. We could not see. We

were in a closed bus and could not hear. We got to the Trade Mart and tried to get in, and the Dallas police there were strangely quiet and said, "You can't get in." We thought this was very funny, with the President's secretary. She pulled out her pass and a young fellow came up and said, "The President's been shot," and I am afraid I jumped on him about spreading crazy rumors, but all of us sort of felt a little strange. And then somebody with a transistor

[-106-]

radio came up and of course Mrs. Lincoln rushed to the hospital, which was only a couple of blocks away, and I kept on somehow thinking, "Well, he's going to come out with a bandage on his wrist or his arm in a sling, smiling and alive as usual," and I heaved a great sigh of relief when I heard over the patrol policeman's radio that the Mayor of Dallas was at the Trade Mart and wanted to know when the President was going to come in. I figured obviously it was nothing and he is going to go on and make his speech, and then the reports on the radio were a little confusing. People had radios on. I was right by the automobile there itself.

I saw a priest go in, which is an indication of something. I saw Kenneth O'Donnell [Kenneth P. O'Donnell] tear into the building, which was worse, and this feeling of foreboding got worse and worse. People were sobbing and then I saw President Johnson [Lyndon Baines Johnson] leave the hospital with President Kennedy's Secret Service men around him, and of course that was it

[-107-]

and so that was all. It was a state of shock as it was for so many millions of people around the world. I got back to the airport and as I was arriving Air Force One was taking off, and I got on Air Force Two for this rather sad journey home.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

[-108-]

Donald F. Barnes Oral History Transcript
Name List

A

Aleman Valdes, Miguel, 96
Allende, Salvador, 24

B

Behn, Gerald A., 32
Betancourt, Carmen, 31, 85
Betancourt, Rómulo, 6, 7, 13, 15, 18, 19, 20, 21,
22, 24, 25, 26, 27, 33, 67, 71, 72, 79, 80,
81, 82, 83, 84, 85
Bolívar, Simón, 29
Bonilla Atilas, José A., 41, 42
Bosch Gavino, Juan Emilio, 44
Briceño Linares, Antonio, 71, 72

C

Carrillo Flores, Antonio, 57
Castro Ruz, Fidel Alejandro, 14, 21, 22, 39, 42
Chiari, Roberto F., 51, 89

D

Dungan, Ralph A., 74
Duran, Julio, 75

F

Frei Montalva, Eduardo, 74, 75
Fronzizi, Arturo, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13,
22, 24, 26, 36, 37, 38, 40, 58, 67, 76, 80

G

Goulart, Joao, 23, 24
Guido, José Maria, 76, 77

H

Haya de la Torre, Victor Raul, 25

J

Jefferson, Thomas, 73
Johnson, Lyndon Baines, 107

K

Kennedy, Jacqueline Bouvier, 15, 31, 34, 46, 56,
63, 80, 92, 104, 105
Kennedy, John F., 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12,
13, 14, 15, 16, 18, 19, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25,
26, 27, 29, 30, 31, 32, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38,
39, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 48, 49, 50, 51,
55, 58, 59, 60, 62, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69,
72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 79, 82, 83, 85, 86,
87, 88, 89, 90, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 102,
104, 106, 107
Kennedy, Joseph P., 38, 97

L

Lechin Oquendo, Juan, 100
Lincoln, Evelyn N., 92, 104, 106, 107
Lleras Camargo, Alberto, 33, 34, 35, 39, 46
López Mateos, Adolfo, 58, 59, 63, 64, 66, 67, 68
López Mateos, Mrs., 95

M

Mann, Thomas Clifton, 57
Martin, Edwin M., 3
Morse, Wayne L., 81, 82, 83
Moscoso, Teodoro, 50
Muniz, Carlos Manuel, 76, 77, 78

N

Nixon, Richard Milhous, 13

O

O'Donnell, Kenneth P., 107
Orlich Bolmarchich, Francico J., 49, 89, 90

P

Paz Estenssoro, Victor, 24, 97, 98, 99, 100, 102
Perez, Virginia, 31, 79
Peron, Juan, 4, 37, 41

Q

Quadros, Jânio da Silva, 23, 24

R

Radziwill, Caroline Lee Bouvier, 92
Rivera, Julio Adalberto, 48, 89
Roosevelt, Franklin Delano, 14, 73
Rusk, Dean, 41, 73, 88

S

Salinger, Pierre E.G., 3, 91, 92
San Ramon, Artime, 92
San Ramon, Olivia, 92
Schick Gutiérrez, Rene, 47, 50, 89
Selas, 102
Somoza Debayle, Luis, 50, 89, 90
Stewart, C. Allan, 18

T

Trujillo Molina, Rafael Leónidas, 42
Turnure, Pamela, 106

V

Valencia, Guillermo Leon, 44, 45, 46, 47
Valenti, Jack J., 106
Villa, Pancho, 66
Villeda Morales, Ramon, 49, 89

W

Wilson, Woodrow, 84

Y

Ydigoras Fuentes, Miguel, 47, 48, 49, 89