INTERVIEW I

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INTERVIEWEE: ANTONIO CARRILLO FLORES

INTERVIEWER: JOE B. FRANTZ

PLACE: Mr. Carrillo Flores' office in Mexico City

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F: Mr. Secretary, let's start this very briefly just by telling how you first got to Washington.

CF: Well, I first met President Johnson immediately after my arrival there as ambassador of Mexico. This is in January, the end of January or the beginning of February of 1959.

F: That was when he was Senate majority leader?

CF: That is correct. I had never before met Senator Johnson. I had many friends in Washington because when I was appointed, I had been before, first as Director General of National Financiera, 1945-52, and later on as Secretary of the Treasury of Mexico, 1952-58. So I had many friends in Washington, but mainly in the financial community, in the State Department, but not very many in Congress.

F: You possibly knew Secretary Anderson?

CF: Yes. Well, I had known him when he was secretary of the treasury. I was secretary of the treasury, and we were fellow delegates to the 1957 conference in B.A. [Buenos Aires].

I knew that Senator Johnson was a very powerful man in Washington. He had come to Mexico at the end of 1958 when Mr. Lopez Mateos was president-elect, and they met in Acapulco. So when I went to see President Lopez Mateos to receive from him his last instructions for

my work in Washington, he told me, "You must try to know Senator Johnson. He is a good friend of ours and he will help you in your work in Washington. Give him my regards and greetings." So I made a point of meeting Senator Johnson as soon as I was there. But the funny thing is that he was the first one who asked me first to have luncheon with him in the Senate. It was the first Saturday I was in Washington.

F: Oh, very quickly.

CF: So, it was by chance that I was in my office, because usually on Saturdays I didn't work in my office. I went to play golf. I didn't know him personally. He said, "I'm Senator Johnson. Some friends from Mexico are here. I'm giving a luncheon for them in my office in the Senate, so I invite you and your wife to come and join us for luncheon." Technically, it was a very late invitation, but as it was in my interest to meet him, I didn't want to put protocol. . . So I said, "All right, Mr. Senator." I went there. That's when I met Lady Bird.

It was a very interesting meeting, because at the end it developed into some kind of polemic about the policies of the new administration in Mexico regarding foreign investments. It was a very interesting discussion. He told me that he understood why Mexicans and other Latin Americans were somewhat diffident about foreign investments, why their nationalistic feelings were against foreign investments. "But, on the other hand," he told me, "You must remember that without investments it is not possible to

develop your country." [It was] the philosophy that is normal to expect from a prominent American politician. I tried on my part to tell him that we understood that, but that it is an emotional more than a purely economic problem, so this conversation developed in that line. But you know Senator Johnson, and at the moment I, not knowing him very well, I said, well, if he's raising his voice, I also have to raise my voice a little. But all of this ended in such a friendly manner that I decided that, as my President had told me, I knew that in Senator Johnson I was going to have a great friend for Mexico.

F: Looking back a moment, as I recall he met President-elect López Mateos in Acapulco because he was still fairly fresh from a heart attack and did not know whether he could stand the altitude.

CF: That is correct. I remember, now that you touched that point, that a few weeks after that first meeting with him, I was invited by then-President Eisenhower to fly with him to meet President López Mateos in Acapulco. It was in February, 1959. And President Eisenhower invited also Senator Johnson to fly with him, not throughout Mexico, but from Washington to Austin, to an air force base near Austin.

F: Yes, Bergstrom.

CF: So in those days there were no jets, there were slower planes, so we had a four or five hour flight from Washington to this place. President Eisenhower invited me to join both Senator Johnson and him in a long talk. We had dinner together, we had a couple of drinks, then they both commented on the fact that they both belonged

to the club of people who have suffered from a heart attack. I understand that the attack that President Johnson suffered was rather severe, no? He told me several times that for a moment he thought that he was not coming through, out of it, but he recovered.

F: It has been a real medical case. You know the doctors have studied it because he has made such an enormous recovery.

CF: I remember, going back to my first experiences with Senator Johnson, I decided to make a good party for him, but really a different party from the usual diplomatic dinners that are given in Washington. So, having good friends in Mexico and having been secretary of the treasury in Mexico, I knew that they were going to support me, because an ambassador sometimes needs to spend more money than is allowed. So I called my friends in Mexico and they decided to send a group of artists, Pedro Vargas and some very good popular folk singers were there. And it was [a good party]. He told me [so]; he sent me a letter--I don't have it at this moment, it's at my home--saying, "This is the best party ever given to me in my life." He was really happy, and I knew that he was important, but I didn't realize how important he was until I knew the people who were willing to come to a party honoring him. Because you know the hierarchies and protocol in Washington. So, for example, the Speaker of the House of Representatives in those days was Sam Rayburn. I knew that he never accepted to go to any embassy, and he accepted to come to my embassy for dinner and for this entertainment afterwards. The Chief Justice of the United States--I mean, normally a Chief Justice

does not attend a party in honor of a senator. Milton Eisenhower, three or four members of the cabinet [all came]. I had a dinner for eighty, ninety people and after that a reception for easily four hundred, five hundred people, and music, so we stayed there until, I don't know, two or three o'clock in the morning, much beyond the traditional eleven o'clock hour in Washington. And so we became friends; the day of the party, that's when we really became friends.

I had an opportunity of knowing how important he was when I presented to the State Department the first case that was, more than any other thing, of great political significance: that was to open a new gate to allow us to use a bridge that we had built in the area of Ciudad Juarez. Now all of this is obsolete because all of this is before the Chamizal problem was settled. But it was a very important thing because Mexico owned a part of a very important piece of land called the Cordoba Island on the other side of the river. And we had built a few years before a bridge from Mexico to Mexico, but crossing the Rio Grande, as you call it. But the United States never had accepted to open the gate, because they knew that if they opened the gate it would be more difficult to negotiate a settlement of the Chamizal. We Mexicans never want to negotiate under pressure and we thought that the reluctance to open the gate was a pressure to make us accept the State Department's ideas about the old problem. So we said, if the United States doesn't want to open this, it is because they want not to give us back the land. I explained the case to Senator Johnson, and fortunately the interests of the Mexican town of Ciudad Juarez and the interests of El Paso were parallel,

were coincident because, because of this problem between our two countries, no new bridge had been built in the past sixty years. The two cities had grown, so it was impossible that facilities that were good for 1909 could continue serving the needs of these people fifty years after that. So Mexicans were interested in having this new bridge put into operation, and the people of El Paso were also interested.

F: I've seen the stack-up on both sides.

CF: So, I went to Senator Johnson. I told him, "Well, Mr. Senator, the State Department doesn't want to give us this help that we want from them to get from the Treasury Department and from other offices: the permission to open the gate." Because technically it was only a question of building facilities for immigration and for customs. Politically it was more than that, but technically that was the problem. So I went to see the Senator and he said, "Well, Ambassador, and what reason does the State Department give you for this denial?" And I said, "Mr. Senator, they say that they have no budget to build the facilities."

F: Can't man the gate.

CF: And the money to build the house, and the men to operate it. So what he did, he picked up the phone and called up Anderson, the secretary of treasury, who was a very good friend of his. I remember him asking him, "Bob, are we so poor that we don't have $60,000 that we need to build some facilities on the border with Mexico?" And I suppose that the answer was, "Yes, we have the money." "Well, then, I can tell the State Department that you say that we have the

money to build these facilities?" "Yes, you can." Then he asked me, "Who is the man directly in charge of this problem in the State Department?" And I told him the Assistant Secretary for Latin American Affairs and in a lower level the head of the Mexican Department in the State Department, who was a good friend of mine, [Melville] Osborne. "Well, I want to speak with Mr. Osborne," he told his secretary. [He got] Mr. Osborne just like that. "Well, Mr. Osborne, this is Senator Johnson speaking. I have just talked with the Secretary of the Treasury and he tells me that there is money to build the facilities to open this gate with Mexico. So if that is the reason, I have settled that for you."

I didn't know what the answer was. So the next day I went to the State Department and met a great, great friend of mine, a great man, really I admire him, the then-Secretary of State for Latin American Affairs, Mr. Richard Rubottom. And I said, "Well, Mr. Rubottom, I'm here to talk about the bridge on Cordoba Island. I have used no influence whatsoever, no pressure." "Yes, you have, one that is two meters high," referring to Senator Johnson. That case was settled for the benefit of the two cities and that increased my bonds in Mexico very much because my predecessor, Manuel Tello, who was my boss at that moment, when I went to say goodbye to him before I went to Washington, told me, "Tonio, don't get disappointed. For six years I have tried to get that gate opened, and I failed. So, I know that President López Mateos has asked you to see that that gate is opened, but you won't be able to succeed. But don't

be sorry, I failed also." So when I reported here, "Well, the gate will be opened," then a curious reaction happened in Mexico. They said, "Well, if something that had not been done for six years, suddenly they are ready to do it, why? There must be some hidden reason." And Mexico then, instead of trying to work as hard as they could to have this ready for immediate opening, the reason Mexico gave me was that we needed appropriations for the works that had to be done in our territory.

F: It happened faster than it should have.

CF: It was not only a question of the gate, because a road had to be built from the river to the place where the gate was going to be opened. But then Senator Johnson got a little mad and he called me up one day on my phone. "Well, Ambassador, you came the other day and you told me. Then I helped you, and I called the Treasury and the State Department. Now that everything is ready you Mexicans are taking a nap and you're doing nothing on this." Well, but you know, that was proper to his temperament. He said, "Well, this man has come and I have done everything; now that everything is ready on the American side, it is not ready on the Mexican side." Well, then, I called Mexico City and I was very happy; the bridge was inaugurated and the gate was inaugurated at the end of August, 1959, on the day of his birthday. I think that his birthday is one of those days, and they wanted to have a big celebration, and there was a big celebration. So that was the first important case that had much to do with the solution of the Chamizal case. Because once

we had that road and that gate, it was clear that the pressure that the lower level of the State Department had put on Mexico for many years couldn't be exercised anymore. So once the road was open we could start negotiating a fair settlement on the Chamizal question.

F: Well, now Chamizal had been going on, as I remember, since about 1852.

CF: Well, technically no. The Chamizal was pending . . . . The problem started in 1864, but from 1864 to 1909 it didn't become an acute problem. In 1909 it was submitted to an arbitration. The award was given a week before President [Porfirio] Diaz resigned the presidency, May, 1911. The United States' position was that the award was void because the judge had gone beyond what they should do. It's a very complicated case. So it became an issue from 1911, when the United States declared that they couldn't comply with the award, until 1963, when it was finally settled in the agreement between President Kennedy and President López Mateos.

F: As vice president and as a man from a neighboring state of Texas, did Vice President Johnson take any role at all in Chamizal?

CF: Oh, fundamental, fundamental. I have here the notes that I took in the meetings between President López Mateos and President Kennedy when the bases for this agreement were reached. And President Kennedy said to my President--it was never made public, but I took the notes: "Mr. President, I think that you are right; I think that we have to settle this problem. But I have to talk with Vice President Johnson because these Texan politicians are very difficult, and unless I can

get the support of Vice President Johnson and key Texan politicians, it will be very difficult for me to take any commitment regarding this case." So I knew that without the support of the then-Vice President Johnson it would have been impossible to settle the Chamizal. We also had the support from other people from the state. We had the support, I want to say, of Senator [Ralph] Yarborough. We had the opposition of Senator Tower on matters of principle, but fortunately he only cast his vote against the ratification of the treaty. We had the support of most people of Texas. We had in this great fortune.

F: You had Governor Connally, I remember.

CF: Governor Connally was in favor. That great ambassador that you had in those days here in Mexico, Thomas Mann, was a Texan. Because it was necessary that Texans were in favor of the settlement, only, and I agree with him, an ambassador from Texas could support an agreement of this kind without the fear that he would be attacked by Texans.

F: If he'd been from Ohio they would have thought he was giving away Texas land.

CF: That is correct. On the other hand, the agreement is so fair, so fair, that I don't think that anyone can say that. And it was such a good thing for the United States also, because as President Kennedy says, it was really a black blot in the relations between the two countries. This statement was made on television after the return from his visit to my country in July, 1963. I mean, why should the United States not be prepared to comply with a little award in favor of Mexico?

F: Was there ever any question in your mind of a United States Senate ratification? And I'm sure there wasn't any in Mexican ratification.

CF: No, but there was a constitutional point raised by Senator Tower. The constitutional point was if it was necessary for the Texan Congress to approve the treaty because there was, in an opinion of the Supreme Court, it was a dictum, that when a treaty disposes of a certain part of the territory of a state, the legislature of that state must also give its consent. But, fortunately, the legal adviser of the State Department, who was Abraham Chase, a very distinguished lawyer, made a deep study of the case and reached the conclusion that this approval was not necessary. Well, when President Johnson took over, the situation was that the treaty was signed, but pending ratification of Congress, or of the Senate. He was very helpful and he invited me to the White House on December 12, 1963, when he signed the act approving the Chamizal. He offered me, as is customary in Washington, one of the pens with which he signed the law.

F: Shortly after that, Congress approved 44.9 million to pay relocation costs for people in the Chamizal area.

CF: Yes.

F: Did Mexico show a deep interest in that, or was this strictly an internal matter for the United States?

CF: Well, it was important for us in one sense. We knew that for the United States, one problem was that the people living in the area had to be accommodated somewhere else. So for us it was a domestic problem of the United States, but we were naturally happy that the

United States solved it and that we received the land free of any problem.

F: Where did the initiative come to develop that into a sort of international park, which I think is being carried out rather brilliantly.

CF: Well, I really can't say that that idea has been accepted. Personally I think that it is not a bad idea, but my predecessor, Mr. Manuel Tello, who was the foreign minister at the time, was very much against it. I think that the reason is rather subtle. If we consider this a land that belongs to Mexico and is owned by Mexico, then to call it an international park may convey the idea that we in fact didn't get full sovereignty over it. And because of the emotional history of this problem, my predecessor, rightly I think, insisted that no, that this should be land for Mexico to use as Mexico saw fit to use it. It was, I believe, Mr. Antonio Bermudez who was many years ago head of PEMEX and later on was in charge of a border problem, who launched the idea to build there a University of the Americas, a center for higher education where people from all over Latin America could come. In fact, I don't know the last developments. Perhaps you as a man from Texas could know a little more about what is happening there in the area.

F: Well, I visited it about two years ago and I couldn't tell just what was going on, except that there seemed to be something moving.

CF: Yes.

F: President Johnson, of course, succeeded President Kennedy, who was extremely popular, particularly after President and Mrs. Kennedy

had visited down here.

CF: Yes.

F: Did the change of administration under those somewhat tragic circumstances present any particular problems to you as the ambassador to the United States?

CF: No. Really not.

F: You actually were working with a man you knew better now.

CF: That is correct. In the papers those days it was reported--and it is correct, and I'm very proud of it--that I was one of the closest friends that the new president had in the diplomatic corps. And it is true. So if anything, my relations with the White House were easier. But apart from that, I think, and I'm very glad to repeat, that President Johnson has been a president that was more interested in Mexico than any other president I think in the history of the United States. And the reason is clear. I mean he is from a state, a border state. He started his work in a village very close to Mexico, Cotulla. He knows the problems of our people.

F: And he has had to learn a little of the language.

CF: The language, and I am absolutely sure that he was sincere when he told me once that he felt more at home, I mean in that area and with Mexicans, than in some of the most sophisticated areas of the eastern part of the United States.

F: I believe that's true.

CF: And if you go to his Ranch, to his house, you'll see that it's full of things reminding or showing the Mexican tradition there. So he has a deep interest in Mexico.

I remember one anecdote when he was a senator. An American of Mexican descent was killed in the Korean War. I don't know if you are familiar with that incident. There was some difficulty with his body being buried in the cemetery because of the discrimination against people of Mexican descent, and [the story relates] how he obtained the body of this man to be buried in Arlington Cemetery.

F: With full military honors. Right.

There was no discernible diminution of enthusiasm for the Alianza from one administration to the next?

CF: Well. . .

F: I'll grant you that the Congress had gotten more careful, you know, and more critical of foreign programs, but I mean as far as the administration was concerned.

CF: I think this: that undoubtedly the Alianza was something very much linked with the glamour of President Kennedy, with the people around him. It was in part a technical program, but it was also an emotional program. And much as I like President Johnson, I have to confess that he didn't have the glamour of President Kennedy. But he was very effective. I can't speak for the rest of Latin America; I say that Mexico didn't notice any diminution of interest. I mean the transit from President Kennedy to President Johnson didn't mean for us anything that we can attribute to a lack of interest in the administration. There was one thing that hurt us, but this was not the fault of President Johnson: the termination of the <u>bracero</u>

program in December of 1964. I attended, invited by then-President-elect Diaz Ordaz, the meeting between Mr. Diaz Ordaz and Mr. Johnson on Mr. Johnson's Ranch in November of 1964. And Mr. Johnson, according to my notes, told this to President Diaz Ordaz. "Mr. President, my advisors in Washington believe that if this program is stopped, many people who are unemployed in the areas of Texas, California, and New Mexico will take the jobs of the braceros. I know that they are wrong because this work is so hard that even unemployed people won't take it. But I have to let some time pass so that my advisors," including the Secretary of Labor in those days, Mr. Wirtz, "convince themselves that they are wrong. And when they are convinced that they are wrong, then I think that we can work a new, realistic program on this problem." That was what President Johnson thought in November, 1964. Unfortunately, the Vietnam War and all these things frustrated many of the good ideas that he had.

F: Did you ever work directly with Secretary Wirtz on this problem?

CF: No, because it was too late. I worked with Secretary Goldberg. I found him most understanding. I remember, in a problem that is somewhat different but is related with the same general question of our workers, the so-called green cards. You know about that. There was a moment in December of 1961 when, because of a decision of a district judge in Washington, they were about to stop in fifteen days the situation of the green cards.* I went to see Goldberg and I told him, "Well, Mr. Secretary, independently of the merits of the decision of the judge, this situation has existed for

* Persons who lived in Mexican territory with their families, but were authorized to cross the border daily by presenting their green cards and work in the American border cities, principally El Paso and Laredo, as if they were residents of the U.S.

twenty-five years. Do you think that this is reasonable, that you are going to stop it and change it in fifteen days?" And he immediately said, "That is impossible." And so he suspended this decision. That gave us time to present the case before the courts and we won. So now the Court of Appeals has decided that the situation is a legal one and unless the Congress changes it, and I hope it won't change it, that problem does not exist.

F: In February of 1964 when President Johnson was still fairly new as president, he and President Lopez Mateos met in Los Angeles.

CF: That is correct.

F. Did you help set up that meeting?

CF: Yes.

F: What lay behind it?

CF: Well, there was a concrete problem, I think, that was important for the United States in those days. That was the sugar problem. But I think that more than that President Johnson, who had been only five months in office, wanted to continue and renew with President Lopez Mateos the tradition of personal interviews between our heads of state. And it was a very fruitful, a very fruitful interview.

F: Were the men naturally simpatico?

CF: Who?

F: The two Presidents.

CF: Yes, they got along.

F: They did communicate.

CF: They communicated very well. There was never any question of incompatibility. They were different personalities, naturally.

F: Yes.

CF: But they went along very well.

F: Well, now, they met later in El Paso, in the fall of 1964.

CF: Yes, that is correct. They met in September of 1964 for the definition of the new border, and that was a farewell meeting.

F: This was already fairly well established in advance, so there wasn't any point of contention at this meeting really?

CF: No, no, no. No, that was a protocol meeting because President López Mateos was about to leave office.

F: Right.

CF: An important meeting was the one in November of 1964.

F: That's the one at the Ranch?

CF: At the Ranch, yes, that is correct.

F: Had President Johnson known President-elect Diaz Ordaz previously?

CF: Let me tell you, I'm not sure, but I think that they had never before met personally, that that was the first time they met each other.

F: Did their relations become equally congenial?

CF: Absolutely. Absolutely. President-elect Diaz Ordaz spent a couple of days with President Johnson at the Ranch. Mrs. Diaz Ordaz went there and they got along beautifully. It was very informal.

F: You were there?

CF: Yes, I was there.

F: What's the day like on something like that? Is it sort of official, or is it rather relaxed but busy?

CF: Well, it was busy. It was relaxed and it was busy. And I think that it was important because of the problems that they talked about and certain things that were clearly defined. For example, I think that President Johnson knew that President Diaz Ordaz was going to be a very realistic president. He knew the difficulties that there are to settle many things that we would like to be settled, but that on certain matters of principle he was going to be very firm. So, for example, President Diaz Ordaz was very firm that he was not going to change the policy regarding Cuba. That was clearly defined at the meeting.

F: Tell me if I am right. Now I know the problems that President Kennedy had with Mexico over Cuba; I have a feeling, though, that during the Johnson period that there was more press talk and individual talk about irritation between the United States and Cuba than there ever was any governmental feeling over this, that the United States accepted the Mexican attitude.

CF: Well, I think that the last time that the question was formally presented was in this meeting of November, 1964. My impression is that President Johnson understood our position, and I can assure you that never again has the United States tried to put any kind of pressure on Mexico so that Mexico would change its policy regarding Cuba.

F: Well, now you had another problem in here with Mexico's historic

opposition to intervention, and that is Santo Domingo.

CF: Santo Domingo. That was a difficult period, yes.

F: By now you are foreign minister?

CF: Yes, I was foreign minister.This was April, 1965. I have my notes. We knew by radio that this had taken place and there was no doubt whatsoever from the very beginning that we had to do something. As you remember, the first statement issued by the U.S. government was that the only purpose of the operation was to protect the lives of Americans that were in danger. So my President said, "Well, that's what they say, so our first statement must be a very careful statement, because we cannot say that we condemn something if we don't know what the facts are. If they really go there--as you remember, there was also a French ship in the bay--and they take the Americans out and they leave, wonderful, that's great. If, on the contrary, we see that the situation develops in a different manner, then we will have to raise the tone of our protest." So my first statement was so mild that I was very bitterly criticized here in Mexico by some sectors of public opinion. Especially because other statements from other countries of Latin America were from the very beginning very harsh. But the curious fact was that as the problem developed we became more and more firm in our opposition, without ever uttering harsh words against the U.S., but opposing in the Organization of the American States practically every measure that was proposed. Because for us there was no other possible measure than the withdrawal of the Marines. We could not accept anything that would

legalize the presence of the Marines in Santo Domingo, while other countries thought that it was in accordance with their convictions and principles to accept some kind of compromise. And my President issued a very strong statement on May 6, 1965, in the meeting of what the English called E.C.L.A. and Spanish CEPAL, the Economic Commission for Latin America. That is a United Nations commission that was meeting in Mexico in May. And then President Diaz Ordaz issued a statement more or less like this: "We have been obliged to condemn certain things that have happened in Santo Domingo because they are against the principles of all our history. We think that the Dominicans and only the Dominicans are the ones that must decide the destiny of their country." He had to say that. But I think that the American government understood. Then when the United States proposed immediately after the Santo Domingo operation the inter-American force, we had to oppose it. And we opposed it firmly, and it was a very interesting debate, because it was a debate and a discussion that was very fairly fought. We fought it, said that we were going to oppose it. When the conference of Rio took place in November, 1965, I talked with Secretary Rusk and said, "Dean, if you are going to present this proposal, we have to oppose it." He said, "No, we are not going to present it." "Well, if you don't present it, then it's not for me to raise this thing. We won't say a word." And it was not presented. But later on in 1967* the Argentinians did not put the same proposal, but something similar. We had to oppose it, and we defeated the proposal.

* In 1967 the Third Inter-American Special Conference to revise and modify the Bogota Charter of 1948 was held.

F: This never really brought any personal bitterness, though?

CF: No, I think that then-Under Secretary Mann told me that I had very prematurely opposed the proposal before it had been formal. Well, I knew that it was easier and I had better chances to defeat the idea before it became formal proposal of the United States.

F: A little in the tradition of the cowboy movie, head them off at the pass.

CF: That's correct.

F: Don't let them get that far. Did you find that former Ambassador Mann made a good assistant secretary of Latin American affairs?

CF: I think he did. I think he did. I think that he knew the problems and especially that he knew Mexico. I know that what you may call the liberal people in Washington and in the press didn't like him very much, that's a fact.

F: He was hardheaded.

CF: But for Mexico I think that he was an excellent ambassador. An excellent ambassador.

F: What about Sol Linowitz with the OAS?

CF: Well, he did his best.

F: He is a different type.

CF: He is a different kind of man. He did his best, but I think that the main problem always is a very limited authority that the executive branch . . .

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CF: [He did his best, but I think] that the main difficulty is always the limited authority of the executive branch of the United States to take commitments regarding Latin America on matters like trade, especially trade--that's so important for us--because Congress is the one who has the authority and also in other matters regarding conditions in which certain financing can be done. I remember, for example, the meeting of the presidents in Punta del Este in April, 1967. A few days before the meetings took place, key leaders of Congress issued a statement that President Johnson couldn't make promises because anything that he promised had to be approved by Congress. I mean, that's something that--

F: They trapped him.

CF: --put him in a difficult position. And how many of us insisted that something concrete should come out of that meeting. And there was something very, very modest that at the end looked as the only feasible thing: to untie the loans of the United States to Latin America, something that President Nixon did about a year ago. President Johnson wanted to do that, but apparently he couldn't get the authority from, or the approval of, the key members of Congress to do that. So that speaking out of my experience of more than twenty years of these meetings, the problem is always that the American delegates go to some of these meetings with so little authority that--

F: Very similar to the Russians in a way. (Laughter) Have to keep going back home.

During that period, Dr. Milton Eisenhower, who, you know, had become interested in Latin America, talked about the Mexican economy and the fact that he did not believe that your farm industry could advance in sufficient numbers to take care of all the necessities of Mexico, and he was interested in some kind of proposal that would industrialize agricultural areas. Right?

CF: I really don't recall us accepting that suggestion of Dr. Eisenhower. I know, I know that is something that is clear, that our rural areas have not developed as fast as the metropolitan areas. That is perhaps the number one problem that we have.

F: Is the increasing foreign investment in Mexico a real problem? Was it while you were foreign minister at the time Mr. Johnson was president, or was it pretty well understood? I realize there's an emotional content here--

CF: That is correct.

F: --so that you have to take certain stances, but as a practical problem, was it a problem?

CF: Well, as a practical problem, I don't remember that there was any problem, except perhaps in an area that was well negotiated and settled. That was the case of the sulfur industry. Some restrictions were put by the Mexican administration on the export of sulfur to encourage . . . well, in the industrialization of sulfur here in Mexico, we have never wanted to be a country of only exports, raw materials. While the business was originally planned as the export of pure sulfur, not the export of industrialized things, that created a

problem at the beginning of the Diaz Ordaz Administration. But my impression is that at least with the most important company, the so-called Pan American Sulfur Company, a fair understanding and a fair settlement was reached. It was Mexicanized, as they say. The second most important, I think, that became a little more difficult: the oil contracts of 1949 that according to an amendment of our Constitution of 1960 had to be terminated. But it was not a problem really because Mexico was always ready to negotiate a settlement.* But you are right. I mean, I think that it's a difficult problem to define the borders of the American foreign investment that is desirable and welcome and the American foreign investment that is not desirable or not very welcome. I think that it's a rule of what is reasonable. I mean, we know that we need foreign technology. We know that our resources are limited, we know that we will need foreign capital to develop certain areas. The question is, I think, some self-restraint on the part of American investors not to be over-powerful in certain areas, to be careful not to dominate certain areas, especially those more closely linked with the emotion of all people, like minerals, like national resources, all those things.

F: Things that go right to the land.

CF: We are a little more liberal in manufactures. We are now a little more strict on certain basic industries. It's a question of what is reasonable; not to try to settle general principles, but rather to negotiate concrete cases. That's my opinion.

F: Now, in May of 1967, while you were foreign minister, the Mexican

* An amicable settlement was reached between President Diaz Ordaz's government and those American interests.

government floats a twenty-five million dollar loan in Europe.

CF: Yes.

F: Which is a departure in your borrowing procedure to some extent. I rather gather the United States was pleased--

CF: Yes, yes, yes!

F: --that you went outside the United States.

CF: Absolutely, absolutely, because it was good for us. We didn't want to depend only on the American capital market. And I think for the United States it was a good case to show to other Latin American countries that they could do the same thing, that if they had a good financial policy, a prudent economic policy, they would be able to borrow money from Europe like Mexico had done and not rely completely or only on the assistance of the United States.

F: Is there a feeling that the Inter-American Bank of Development--Desarollo--is too much U.S. dominated?

CF: I don't think so. My impression is that the United States has influence in it as the principal shareholders, but that on purpose--and naturally protecting certain points of policy that the U.S. has to protect--that the United States government has let Latin Americans run the bank. The president of the bank, as you know, Felipe Herrera, is a Latin American; most of the staff are Latin American people. And my impression is that it is much more a Latin American bank than an American bank. Naturally, there is something that no one can avoid: the United States Congress once in a while trying to know a little bit more about the bank, and the bank resisting, saying, "I am an

international organization so the United States Congress has not the right to investigate the bank as it has the right to investigate the Export-Import Bank." But I think that on the whole the relations have been good ones and the institution is an excellent one. I think it is an excellent institution.

F: In April of 1966 President Johnson and his family came to Mexico City.

CF: Yes.

F: Do you want to talk to me a little bit about what was behind it? I know it was wrapped to a certain extent around a eulogy of Abraham Lincoln.

CF: That's correct. I suggested several years before, in fact, that the United States should give us a statue of Abraham Lincoln, because he is perhaps the figure in American history we love most for many reasons. We would reciprocate with a statue of Benito Juarez, that is already in the Watergate area. So after all the procedures were finished and completed, the moment came to dedicate this statue. And it was a curious story, because first they told us that perhaps Secretary [Dean] Rusk was coming to dedicate this statue, then that perhaps Mrs. Johnson was coming, and seventy-two hours before, they tell us President Johnson was coming himself.

F: That wasn't much notice, was it?

CF: I think that in part this was due to the recommendations from the Warren Commission that the movements of the President be kept secret to avoid any possible problem, and, in fact, the character of President Johnson. I mean, he is that way. He wants to surprise

people and to do the unforeseen thing. And it created minor problems, but fortunately all of them were settled. And my impression is this: he wanted to come to Mexico because it was his first trip outside the United States. He knew that he was going to have here a warm reception, as he had. He had a wonderful reception. And he wanted also to take the opportunity of presenting a program for Latin America and to support the idea of a meeting of the presidents of the different states of the continent here. What was behind this? I think only his wish to come to Mexico and to have a warm reception in Latin American country, to show to other parts of the world that he was liked in Mexico, that he was liked in Latin America when his policies in Vietnam were beginning to create some difficulties for him and were beginning to damage his image in the rest of the world. That's my impression of it. I may be wrong.

F: Do you get the feeling that President Johnson felt that Mexico was sort of a showpiece for Latin America, and that if Mexican-U.S. relations worked, then you would have a certain amount of goodwill that would fall over into the nations to the south?

CF: Yes. I think that he had that impression. Yes, yes. And he knew the problems of Mexico rather well. So I think that many times, many times, he didn't say that very clearly, but one day he hinted that to me at the White House, why Mexico didn't want to assert more leadership in Latin America. I tried to explain to him that it's difficult. I mean, it's impossible for any Latin American country to really be a leader in Latin America. I mean, each Latin American

country had different problems, and no one would accept other Latin American countries to become a leader of the others.

F: I have spent considerable time in South America and I've always found myself acting as an interpreter of Mexico to them, because they are intrigued by it. But you know, sometimes the understanding is much less than you get from a norteamericano.

CF: Yes. I remember very well my first impression, my meeting as foreign minister with my colleagues in South America. Sometimes they don't understand how we can deal with the United States. Sometimes they resent that the United States accepts from Mexico attitudes that it does not accept from other countries. For example, our policy regarding Cuba. I remember some of the foreign ministers in the South said, "Well, if any one of us had said we don't comply with the resolution, we would have terrible problems with the United States. Mexico said 'I don't comply with the resolution,' and nothing wrong happens to you." But on the other hand, I told them, "Look, I think that we are more realistic. I mean we have had in the past so many problems with the United States, that we know perhaps a little better than they do how to negotiate with the United States, what to expect from the United States, what not to expect from them. We rely more on our own efforts I think and a little less on international cooperation.

F: I could go down a checklist of both incidents and problems that have occurred during the period that you were foreign minister as well as your ambassadorship, but I think it might be a little too detailed

simply for this reason, and you tell me if I'm right. It seems to me that most of the problems in the past half dozen years between the United States and Mexico have been more like irritations than fundamental problems.

CF: That is correct. You are right.

F: I'm thinking of the shrimp fishermen off Yucatan.

CF: Yes, yes.

F: I'm thinking of the border problem.

CF: Yes, correct. Yes, yes. You are right. There are more irritations than problems and all feelings hurt, one side or the other. For example, in this problem of interception*, our feelings were hurt. In our attitudes in the United Nations regarding Cuba, the feelings of President Kennedy were hurt. But yet never a fundamental problem. Never.

F: Well, I remember in 1968 FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover charged that the Mexican Communist Party was stowing arms and ammunition and was establishing staging areas for a revolution. I wondered for instance if the Mexicans resented a United States FBI director making that sort of statement?

CF: Yes, yes, yes. Many Mexicans resented it. We knew that he was wrong and that's so. But sometimes that's correct. Sometimes statements made by members of Congress, members of the Senate, members of the House, even things that appear in the paper, hurt our feelings. Sometimes the American government has nothing to do with them. For example, this publicity of one of the watch producers of the United

* The operation "Interception" was approved by President Nixon in 1969.

States, the Elgin Company, regarding Zapata: it hurt the feelings of Mexican people and the U.S. government had nothing to do with it. But I do say, there are more irritations than real problems.

F: You have made several trips to the Ranch and, of course, you have been a guest in Washington. You've been to rather large receptions and dinners and so on. Have you just been part of the crowd in this sort of thing, or did you see a good bit of President and Mrs. Johnson at such times?

CF: I think that my friendship with them was real. I mean, I was not only a member of the crowd, as you say. I think that our friendship is a real one. For example, in May of 1966 I had to go to Washington on a purely private matter to see my doctors. I reported to the White House that I was in Washington, that I had no official business to do, that I just wanted my greetings to President Johnson be passed to him. And then the answer came, "Well, he's not in Washington, he's at the Ranch, but we are going to transmit the greetings to him." The day after that the White House called me: "President Johnson invites you to go to his Ranch. He will send the plane of the White House to take you from Washington to the Ranch. That's more than just a courtesy or just to answer, "Oh, all right. He already received your greetings and he corresponds them, and he wishes that you have a nice day in Washington." And I spent two wonderful days with them at the Ranch. We talked about everything. I have my notes about my conversations with him. So that it's not only the fact that he called me Tony, because in the states that's

very usual, or that Lady Bird sends me very nice notes. So I couldn't say either that I am an intimate friend of the Johnsons, but I am a very good friend of them. I mean that I am sure that many of the things that he said about me were courtesies, as is usual, but that fundamentally he was sincere. When I paid the last call on him as President in the White House in January of 1969, when I went for the dedication of the statue of Benito Juárez in Washington. he invited me to the White House and we had a couple of sherries. He said, "Tony, you must be proud, because I don't think there's a man in Mexico that with patriotism and defending the intent of his country, has done more for the understanding between our two peoples." And I feel that he was sincere in that. I put that in my notes, and I corresponded, telling to many people, "I don't know of any other President of the United States who has been more understanding, more friendly toward Mexico than Lyndon Johnson was."

F: Incidentally, will your notes be made available some day?

CF: Well, I hope so.

F: I hope so.

CF: I hope so, I hope so. I think that I'm going to write, and when I retire here I want to write a book that may be a testimony of a Mexican, because I have been negotiating with the United States for the past twenty years. So I think that perhaps I am the Mexican who has negotiated longer than any other in this century. Because in the past century Don Matias Romero, with a few interruptions, represented Mexico in Washington for more than thirty years.

F: Republicans, Democrats, conservatives and liberals and--

CF: And I have friends in both parties.

F: Right. To get back to economics for a moment, in 1966 the United States cut back on the free liquor permissions into the United States. Was this a real problem or was this a point of irritation?

CF: No, no, no. It was a matter of irritation, because there is an industry in the border that produces liquor and the reduction in what could be imported free to the United States hurt somewhat the business of the border towns. But it was a minor problem. It was not a big one. The only important problem that we have had in the past fifteen years is this salinity problem of the Colorado River. Outside of that, we have no other important problems.

F: And that salinity problem was pretty well concluded under President Kennedy.

CF: No, no. The present agreement was reached between the Johnson Administration and the Diaz Ordaz Administration in March of 1965. We signed an agreement that comes to an end in November of this year. Precisely, we are now negotiating the renewal of this agreement, and that is one of the things that is pending now.

F: How does it work?

CF: Fundamentally well.

F: It's better than it was when they just provided you with--

CF: Let me tell you this. In the beginning there was a very bad thing that these wells of Wellton-Mohawk were drained, or the water of these wells was put in a canal and sent to the Colorado River.

bad water. So suddenly, without any notice, without any warning, without even the State Department knowing anything about this, the salinity jumped from 800 parts per million to over 3000 per million. That was a shock. Because it came without consultation, without any consideration for our interests. It was a very bad thing. This happened in the end of 1961. At the end, in 1965, we reached a reasonable good agreement, not a perfect one, but a reasonable one. A canal was built by the United States so that the water of these wells didn't mix with the water of the river. It came apart. If all this water could have been sent directly to the sea without being computed in the quota we have according to the Treaty of 1944, the solution would have been perfect. It was not perfect, because not all the water of this canal was sent to the river, only approximately half of it the United States accepted that was sent to the river without being accounted to our quota. But the other part of it, if we wanted to send it to the river, and we sent, then it was accounted as good water to us. The consequence at the end was that we lost three per cent of the water that we had the right to receive according to the treaty, and that the quality of the water is not now as good as it was before. I mean, before the problem, it was, as I told you, 800 or 900 parts per million. Now it is 1300. It's not very bad. I mean, it should be absolutely false to say that this water has created an important harm to our people, but we have lost, and this is unfair, three per cent of the water. So I always say it's like the man who owes another man that is a poor one one dollar and says, "I will pay you ninety-seven cents and not

one dollar." It's an abuse on the part of the rich one to dispute three cents to the poor one. That's one in this moment.

F: Well, now, do Arizona's and California's congressional delegations give you any problem in this?

CF: Not California. In fact the only man who gave us a great problem--I'm very sorry to say that, but it's still a fact--was Senator [Carl] Hayden. Senator Hayden was very powerful and he was convinced that the United States had the right to do whatever they wanted to do with the waters of the river because the treaty didn't, according to his judgment, oblige the United States to deliver to us water of any certain quality. He said that according to the treaty and the legislative history, the United States had the right to deliver any kind of liquid. We never accepted that. And fortunately this position has been, in fact, changed by the United States. Even if in theory or in principle they say that they have not changed their position according to the treaty, in fact they have. I mean, no one can so state in 1970 that a country can do whatever it wants to do with its natural resources even if it harms the neighbor country.

F: Is there considerable interest in Mexico in the sort of social developments that are going on with the so-called Mexican-American? I'm thinking about the Raza.

CF: Yes, well, I am going to tell you this. Many people in Mexico are not aware or do not know the facts. I am very much worried. I think that on the long range this may become the most serious problem between our two countries. Because if the Mexican-Americans, even

if they are Americans--I mean, legally they are not Mexican, so legally we have nothing to do--but if they become involved in violent riots like the Negroes and this creates important problems, even if we want it or not, even if they are technically Americans, the Mexican people will be terribly involved.

F: It gets emotional and nationalistic after a while.

CF: On the other hand, the curious fact is that the Mexican-Americans feel very much linked to Mexico in our symbols. I mean, they love Hidalgo and the Virgin of Guadalupe, but on their interests, many times they are our most bitter opponents, because they oppose, for example, they are the ones who think that this bracero treaty [should] be stopped. That's what Secretary of Labor Goldberg used to tell me. Secretary of Labor Goldberg said, "Well, Italian-Americans are in favor of Italians. German-Americans are very German. Why are the Mexican-Americans sometimes against their own people?" The reason is very clear. I mean, they are so poor that they fear that more Mexicans going into the United States will create problems even more difficult for them.

F: Like many other countries, you still have a bit of a birth rate problem. You have a bit of a gross national product problem; you're really having pretty fair success there. Have you worked with the Johnson Administration on this at all, to see what you could do, realizing, of course, that the United States has its problems too along that line?

CF: I think that the position of my government has been that we don't

want to deal with this problem as an international problem. I mean, we know that it is a national problem. Some private institutions--there is a foundation; I don't remember the name of the foundation. The only thing that I remember is that General Draper--you know him well--is the head of the foundation, and that he has been working with private groups here in Mexico that have the authorization of the Mexican government to work on this. But my impression, that's a very personal one that does not reflect the opinion of my government, is that it is a very serious problem, that we should be more concerned about it than we are, and that we should do more about this question of control of population expansion.

F: Has the increasing United States involvement in Vietnam created a problem for you?

CF: No, no, it's a good question. Privately, I have talked to many people in the United States [and told them] that we cannot support the position of the United States in Vietnam for many reasons, historical reasons. I mean, that's a country that had been divided after the second world war. We cannot support the idea of the United States getting involved in a civil war in Vietnam. On the other hand, we have not issued any statement, as some other countries have done, condemning the United States. And that has been a hard decision, but a decision that President Diaz Ordaz took deliberately. Because we think that it is easy in Mexico, because of the things of the past, to arouse an anti-American feeling, but we thought that nothing good would come out of it. We are not going to help the Vietnamese

people just because we condemn the United States. But what were we going to get: demonstrations in the streets, demonstrations against the United States, anti-American feelings. We didn't think that those things were constructive either, so we thought that the only wise thing to do was to be silent on this problem and to express whenever we could that we hoped that the settlement would be achieved without condemning openly the United States even if, in our hearts, in our minds, we have always believed that this involvement in Vietnam was a great mistake and is a great mistake.

F: One final question, Mr. Secretary. There are a lot of people in the United States who think that all Latin America, including Mexico, sort of provides nests for communists. Now, is that a problem in your relations with the United States or are those just private individuals? You have no communist problem as I see it.

CF: No, no, no. I think this.

F: You know, it's a little bit like Caesar's wife: it's not the evil, it's the appearance.

CF: That's correct. I don't think honestly that we have a communist problem in Mexico. Even if there are Marxists, I think that those that are more influential are the orthodox Marxists that follow the Moscow line, and the Moscow line is now a line that with which you can live. I mean, they are people that don't believe in terrorism, don't believe in anarchism. They believe that in due time this country [inaudible].

F: It's flexible.

CF: So those who are a problem are those that follow the violent line of terrorism, of guerrillas and all those things, and in 1968 I think that was the difficult, the crucial moment for us.

F: Yes. Particularly when Nixon became President.

CF: But the government of Mexico took a firm decision and I think that everybody is convinced now that communism in Mexico is not a problem. On the other hand, we recognize that there are many things that must be improved, that the pace of development must be increased, and that the students all over the world are restless. So we have to be patient with them and if some of them are Marxists, all right. But I don't think that the United States--that's my conviction--is preoccupied about communism in Mexico. No, I don't think so.

F: Well, thank you Mr. Secretary.

[End of Tape 1 of 1, Side 2, Interview I]

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