

T. C. Mann, 87, a Maker of U.S. Latin Policy

By IRVIN MOLOTSKY

WASHINGTON, Jan. 29 — Thomas C. Mann, a career diplomat and an architect of a switch to an American policy in Latin America in the 1960's that emphasized free enterprise, died last Saturday at his home in Austin, Tex. He was 87.

Mr. Mann's appointment by President Johnson to a high State Department post shortly after the death of President Kennedy was seen as a signal to Kennedy loyalists that the new Administration was going to switch to policies in Latin America that focused on the interests of American and local businesses. Former policies had emphasized the promotion of democracy.

On Dec. 14, 1963, just three weeks after Kennedy's assassination, Johnson named Mr. Mann as Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, Johnson's first major appointment. Four days later Johnson named Mr. Mann to the additional post of special assistant to the President.

The historian Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., a Kennedy adherent, praised Mr. Mann for one aspect of his Latin American policy, his opposition to the Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961, recalling that "he thought it was nonsense."

But Mr. Schlesinger faulted him for the way he carried out Johnson's policies in Latin America.

Under Johnson and Mr. Mann, Mr. Schlesinger wrote in "Robert Kennedy and His Times," many of the political and social components of the Alliance for Progress, a program aimed at helping Latin American countries attain democracy and improve living conditions, were removed. Much of what remained, he wrote, was converted "into an instrumentality for North American corporations."

Robert M. Sayre, who served on the National Security Council and was Ambassador to Uruguay, Panama and Brazil, defended his friend



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Thomas C. Mann

A Johnson aide who helped push Latin America rightward.

and colleague against some of Mr. Schlesinger's statements.

"I don't think he was Tex-Mex," Mr. Sayre said, explaining that the term was once used in the Government to describe those who had a low opinion of Latin American capabilities. He pointed to Mr. Mann's bilingual upbringing along the United States-Mexican border at Laredo and his experience as Ambassador to Mexico and El Salvador as evidence of his affection for the area.

Prof. Walter LaFeber, a Cornell University historian, wrote that Mr. Mann's career "is a case study of

how the United States moved from Good Neighbor to the overt use of military power in the hemisphere."

"Mann was by no means primarily responsible for the devolution," Mr. LaFeber wrote, but said it illustrated the way a Washington policy shift originated and developed.

Mr. Mann played important foreign policy roles involving many countries. In 1964 he arranged help for Eduardo Frei Montalva, a moderate, in defeating Salvador Allende Gossens, a Socialist, to become President of Chile. Mr. Allende won the next election, in 1970, and died in a Washington-backed coup that overthrew his Government in 1973.

Also in 1964, Professor LaFeber wrote, Mr. Mann supported military officers after they overthrew the President of Brazil, João Goulart, whom he viewed as "an inept President, easily influenced by leftist advisers and cronies."

In 1965, Johnson, at Mr. Mann's urging, sent 22,800 troops to the Dominican Republic to put down what Washington regarded as a Communist threat. That action led to opposition in Congress and Mr. Mann's replacement in the inter-American post in 1966. By then, Mr. LaFeber wrote, "Thomas Mann's policies were the future of U.S. policies in Latin America."

Mr. Mann once said in an interview that he had learned Spanish before English. In high school he stood out as a scholar and quarterback, taking Laredo to an undefeated season in 1927.

Mr. Mann's son, the Rev. Clifton A. Mann, said his father graduated from Baylor University in 1934 with a bachelor's and a law degree and practiced law in Texas until the United States entered World War II.

"After Pearl Harbor he went to take his physical and flunked it because of his eyes, and was despondent," Father Mann said. At that point Mr. Mann saw an advertisement recruiting Spanish-speaking lawyers and wound up working for the Office of Economic Warfare, posted in Uruguay. Professor LaFeber said one of Mr. Mann's jobs had been to monitor Nazi shipping in the South Atlantic.

At the close of the war, Mr. Mann transferred to the Foreign Service, where he spent the rest of his government career, retiring in 1966. He was president of the Automobile Manufacturers Association from 1967 to 1971.

Mr. Mann's wife of 64 years, Nancy, died in 1997. He is survived by his son, Father Mann, an Episcopal priest in Lubbock, Tex.; six granddaughters, and three great-granddaughters.

"My dad was Lyndon Johnson's first appointment, and that caused him a lot of pain," Father Mann said. "He was perceived to be a political figure when he was, in fact, a diplomat."

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