

INTERVIEW I

DATE: January 8, 1975
INTERVIEWEE: ROBERT McNAMARA
INTERVIEWER: Walt W. Rostow
PLACE: Washington, D.C.

M: Walt, I would like to start this discussion by recording my skepticism of the value of oral history and my reluctance to participate in it. To be candid, I should tell you that I would not have agreed to this interview had it not been that Lady Bird personally asked me to do it. I have such high regard and affection for her that I hate to turn down a personal request. And even then I doubt that I would have agreed to it had she not offered to ask you to conduct the interview.

My skepticism with respect to my own participation in oral history is based simply on the fact that I'm ill-prepared for it. I'm ill-prepared for it in the sense that my memory is poor in respect to past events in which I participated. Moreover, I find it very difficult, with the best of intentions, to separate my personal feelings and judgments from a professional appraisal of the merit of the action. Then too, I have limited access to documents and source materials, very limited indeed. They're really on the materials that the archivists prepared under your direction for my examination. And now I have had even more limited time in which to pursue them. As you know, the world is facing extremely complex economic and financial problems today, particularly the part of the world that I am closely associated with, the one hundred developing nations. The result is that I haven't had the time, I haven't had the resources, and I don't have the memory to prepare for this properly. Moreover, even if we were to overcome those limitations, I'm skeptical of oral history itself because, in many cases, the interviewer is poorly prepared to deal with the subject. In this case, that obviously isn't a handicap. But the manner in which oral history is collected also raises questions. The manner of collection, because contradictory statements are often made by two individuals participating in the decision-making process without either knowing that the other had made a contradictory statement

McNamara -- I -- 2

and without either having an opportunity to consider or reconsider his own position, thus leaving historians many years hence--many years in the future--to resolve the issue. Beyond that, in terms of dissemination of the information, it happens at different times and in different forms. The likelihood of a scholar having access to all sides of the argument at the time he is doing his research is not high. For all these reasons I am skeptical of its value. And I want to record that now. In particular I want to record my skepticism of my own value as a source for scholarship, for the reasons I mentioned earlier.

I am, nevertheless, extremely interested in history and I am anxious to see scholars write the history of the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations and draw the lessons from that research that will benefit our people in the future. As a matter of fact, it was my interest in assuring that scholars would have an opportunity to draw those lessons that led me to establish what later became known as the Pentagon Papers. They didn't take quite the form I had in mind when we started the project, but they are evidence of my concern that documents and records of the time be preserved and made available for later study and evaluation by historians. So, to the extent that this interview may possibly add to that, I am happy to go ahead with it; but I wanted to record my serious concern about it and my reservations about its value.

R: I just want to make sure we are recording. Carry on, you have the question.

M: Now there is one other point I want to make and record in the introduction to this interview. I understand, of course, that for the interview to be credible I must be candid. But there is a policy I followed while I was in government--and I want to continue to follow the policy now--and that is that I have no desire to hurt individuals. I've respected their opinions. I'm not going to speak negatively about my associates of that time.

R: I followed the same policy in *The Diffusion of Power*. There is really no point in it.

M: All right now, let's go ahead.

R: Why don't you just take the questions now and remember that they were set up for you as suggestive, so you can use them as you will.

McNamara -- I -- 3

M: All right. The first question is: When did I first meet Johnson? My first contact with President Johnson was during a telephone conversation. It was an amusing situation. It occurred during the Christmas holidays in 1960. I was calling President-designate Kennedy and found him in Florida. I was calling to clear the nomination of John Connally as secretary of the navy. The President had given me full authority to recommend for appointment the individuals I considered best qualified for each of the major posts in the Defense Department. I searched the country for the best qualified individuals without having received any suggestions from the Vice President with whom, up to that point, I had had no contact. I had concluded that John Connally was the best qualified to be secretary of the navy. I called the President to obtain his final approval to submit that recommendation. I, of course, knew that John had been associated with Vice President Johnson's campaign for the Democratic nomination for the presidency: but I didn't really realize the degree of his involvement or the extent to which at one time there may have been considerable friction between him and President Kennedy. But President Kennedy, having given me his promise that I would be allowed to appoint the people I recommended, made no effort to back away from that, accepted my recommendation gracefully, and then in humorous vein, the full extent of which I didn't realize until later, said that before we decided finally on the appointment that he wanted me to discuss it with two of his associates, who were at hand--Messrs. Rayburn and Johnson--and he put them on the telephone. And of course I fell into the trap, explained the whole matter to Vice President Johnson, outlined the reasons why I thought Connally was the best qualified and asked his opinion. It was a marvelously humorous incident, which as I say, I didn't realize until later. But from then on, I got along very well with then Vice President, later President Johnson. I had immense respect for him as a man, and immense respect for him as a political leader.

You ask, given the inherent problems of the relation between the President and the Vice President, how would I evaluate that relationship? I would say it was tense, tense and strained as one might expect from the very ill-defined, ambiguous, insecure position of

McNamara -- I -- 4

the Vice President in the American system of government. When that position is filled by an extraordinarily able man and when the president is also a strong man, there are bound to be strains and stresses in their relationship. President Johnson was a man of huge ego and immense ambition who of course believed that he should have been president. It was natural that he should feel that way. In a sense he had an inferiority complex, I think, in the face of the Kennedys' easy social graces. But he underrated himself in that situation. The strain in part arose because of his failure to recognize his own strengths and to be secure in the knowledge that he was strong. He was a masterful politician in the best sense of that word: in his ability to sense the differences among our people, and in his ability to reconcile those differences so that we could move forward to a common goal and a better life for all of the people. That was his great quality; and he came upon the scene with that quality just at the time when it was most needed, at the time of the racial conflict which had resulted from a hundred years of failure to deal with the discrimination against the blacks. I don't believe there was any politician on the national scene--any political leader in the country--who had the capacity to deal with that explosive race issue in the way in which he did. And I think history will record this as one of the great achievements of this nation in this century--an achievement to which Kennedy contributed too by his sensitivity to the issue, by his insistence that it be dealt with, an insistence that was evident in the thousand days of his presidency. But the dealing with it was, to a considerable degree, left to his successor; and it was Johnson who steered through the nation and through the Congress the legislation which has laid the groundwork for at least beginning to overcome the discrimination against the blacks.

Having said that, I would have to add that, compared to Jefferson or Wilson, I believe that President Johnson lacked the education in history, philosophy, and political science which would have better prepared him to deal with extraordinarily complicated relationships among nations, and, as a matter of fact, with complicated relationships between the executive branch and the legislative branch, and between the government and

McNamara -- I -- 5

the people of the United States. So he had tremendous strengths and some weaknesses; but we were fortunate to have him on the scene at the time.

Now, turning to the second question, what do I consider to be my major achievements as secretary of defense, and were there any major failures? Well, of course, this is exactly the kind of question I feel ill-prepared to answer. It's impossible for me even today to have a balanced judgment of my administration in defense. There were some successes, but I believe I would rather have others judge those. There were certainly some major failures. Among the successes were, I would say, these:

First, we made a great effort to reduce the risk of nuclear war, and I believe we did reduce the risk of nuclear war by reorienting the national thinking away from the belief that nuclear power is similar to other forms of military power. It is not! And the belief that it is can lead to great dangers for a nation. Nuclear power is not similar to other forms of military power because its use will lead to the destruction of a nation. It was believed at the time the Kennedy Administration came to power--believed by the leaders of our nation, by the people of the nation, and by our allies--that use of nuclear power could sometimes be in our interest. Military doctrine was based upon that proposition. Contingency war plans were based upon it. Such a view failed to recognize that nuclear power had only a deterrent value and, in my opinion, a very limited deterrent value at that. The actual use of nuclear power almost surely would lead to destruction of both parties, the initiator of the use of the power, and the responder to that initial use.

Secondly, I believe we were successful in establishing civilian control over military operations, successful therefore in implementing the legislative intent and the actual legislative requirements for the administration of the department. We established tight civilian control. The best evidence of that, I think, is the performance of the department and the military during the Cuban missile crisis. And there were many other indications of the change in the relationship of civilian to military leadership in the department.

Thirdly, I believe we were successful in reorienting the formulation of the policies of the department toward the national interest--toward support of the national interest--as

McNamara -- I -- 6

opposed to support for the parochial interests of the department and the traditional constituents of the department. I can elaborate on that later, if you wish. But in my mind this is one of the great successes of our administration.

Fourthly, we were successful in assisting the government in removing the Soviet nuclear missiles from Cuba without the use of nuclear force, and without bloodshed. I think this was a major accomplishment.

We were successful, as well, in supporting the initiation of the limited test ban and ultimately in stimulating the initiation of the SALT talks; successful, too, in the avoidance of war with the Soviet Union in connection with Vietnam. I'll perhaps have more to say on that subject when we talk about Vietnam. And we were successful as well in preventing war between the U.S. and the Soviet Union in connection with the June 1967 crisis in the Middle East.

A fifth area of achievement, I think, which is both a cause and an effect, was the recruitment of what I believe to have been the most outstanding group of senior political appointees that any department has had, at least in the thirty years since the Roosevelt Administration. I've only to mention some of the names to illustrate the point I'm making: Cy Vance, Ros Gilpatric, Harold Brown, Paul Nitze, Bill Bundy, Charlie Hitch, Alain Enthoven, Harry Rowen, Joe Califano, John McNaughton--just to name a few. A truly outstanding group representing, both literally and figuratively, individuals drawn from two basic categories: Rhodes scholars and editors of the Harvard and Yale Law Reviews--men of that quality. And whatever we accomplished in the department stemmed from bringing that level of ability into the government and permitting it to contribute fully to the establishment of national policy. I think both President Kennedy and President Johnson recognized the quality of those men, and relied upon them, and drew on them to the maximum of their capacity.

Sixthly, we made an effort--and I believe succeeded in--dramatically expanding the public knowledge of controversial defense policies. This was associated with our efforts to formulate policy directed to the national interest as opposed to the narrow parochial

McNamara -- I -- 7

interests of the services or of the traditional constituents of the department. This effort to expand public knowledge was supported by the detailed "Posture Statement" which I presented each year in both classified and unclassified form to the Congress and, through the Congress, to the public. These were, in effect, white papers on all major controversial issues: the use of nuclear weapons, the B-70, SALT, et cetera, et cetera.

And seventh, as a result of these other steps that I have outlined, I think we achieved an increase of efficiency and a reduction of costs for a given level of security. We eliminated weapons systems which had great support within Congress but which did not contribute to our national security; for example, the B-70. We refused to approve the continued use of forces that did not contribute fully to our security. We eliminated 23 reserve guard divisions at one point, despite unanimous opposition from the committees of Congress and the Joint Chiefs and the governors of the country. And when I say unanimous, I mean there were fifty governors who were opposed to that.

R: How did that happen? What were the mechanics? Did you simply persuade them that their instinctive positions were wrong? After all, they had the vote.

M: The governors, of course, didn't have a vote. The members of Congress had a vote. But we finally persuaded them. First, the chiefs were very reluctant to see these divisions removed even though they recognized that they had very little value and, in our opinion, no value. They were formed, in effect, to provide political patronage to military-oriented individuals--adjutants general and others--in the states. And they drew their power from the support of the governors who, in turn, were supported by the adjutants general whom the governors had appointed. At one point President Johnson asked me to meet with the governors to see if I could persuade them to support the action. I did meet with them. I went to Hershey, Pennsylvania, where the governors were holding their annual meeting. I spoke to them, I thought very persuasively, and I received absolutely zero support. There were several governors who came up to me later and said: "Now I know you're right and I wish you well, but it is absolutely impossible for us to state publicly that we support the elimination of those units." But the knowledge that thoughtful men did recognize the

McNamara -- I -- 8

national interest, even though it was impossible for them on this matter to say so publicly, reinforced our determination to pursue it, which we did. We ultimately prevailed. In part because there wasn't any easy handle for the Congress to beat us with. I mention this simply to indicate that, as a result of having very able people in the department, the Vances, et cetera; as a result of insisting that our policies be oriented to what I call the national interest as opposed to the narrow parochial interests of the department or the services; as a result of a determined effort to bring the pros and cons of major controversies within the field of defense to light--in this case with speeches and writings and statements that were published in newspapers of record such as the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times*--we presented such a powerful case that we overcame the political opposition, not in the sense that they ever forgave us for doing it, but in the sense that, at the time, they couldn't stop it. I want to distinguish between those two points; I'll comment on them later.

And finally, I think we were successful in proving or in demonstrating that Defense Department operations can be shaped to support both military and social objectives without significant penalties to military readiness. I will give you three illustrations: the use of sanctions to force off-base desegregation of housing for military personnel; Project 100,000 to help train and, in my opinion, raise the lifetime productivity of disadvantaged and low mental-test score youth; Project Transition, which was designed to prepare military personnel for transition back to civilian life to maximum advantage to the individual and to society. So these are the successes which come to my mind.

Now for the failures. It is very difficult, I guess, for anyone to examine his own failures, particularly some of which are very painful to think about. The greatest failure of all was Vietnam. We may wish to talk of it later. And I say failure at least in the sense that at the start of our engagement in Vietnam, or at the start of the Kennedy-Johnson Administration's engagement in Vietnam, which in turn followed on the engagement of previous administrations in Vietnam, we surely did not foresee that it would turn out as it

McNamara -- I -- 9

did. We failed in that sense. I think we failed in other ways as well, but certainly that was the beginning of the failure.

Secondly, although I emphasized the achievement in asserting civilian control over military operations, and although I emphasized the achievement in reorienting the policies of the Defense Department to support the national interest as opposed to the parochial interests of the services and the parochial interests of the traditional constituents of the Defense Department, these successes were not complete. As a result, certain programs of the department initiated while I was in charge, although well conceived, were poorly implemented, poorly executed--I would say even sabotaged. The TFX, the F-111, was an illustration of that.

And thirdly, we failed to the extent that the new philosophies and the new systems of management to which I have referred were not so fully institutionalized as to be preserved in their entirety in subsequent administrations, and particularly in the Nixon Administration.

So much for success and failure. I want to end with what I began: I do not feel that I'm the proper person to be judging these matters.

R: I think this is an extremely valuable statement to have for the record. Now the third question: the relationship between State and Defense. I want to add something which I heard you once articulate on a plane flying back from the Ranch. It was a small plane. Dean Rusk, you, and I were talking. You explained in his presence your view of your relationship to the Secretary of State and of the relationship between force and diplomacy, and why, in effect, your views on these matters made the relationship manageable. It was one of the most impressive things I heard in eight years in government and I don't want to lose it. Do you recall the conversation to which I'm referring?

(In the framework of foreign affairs, how did you see the relationship between State and Defense? While it is generally thought that your relationship with Rusk was good, there are those in the State Department who thought you had usurped the power of the State Department to enunciate foreign policy. How would you answer these critics?)

McNamara -- I -- 10

M: I'm not sure I can repeat it. But let me just say this. My basic feeling about the relationship between Defense and State is that Defense is a servant of State. Now, true, there are many details of Defense policy that are so far from foreign policy that one could think of Defense making decisions, or the secretary of defense making decisions, with respect to those matters without reference to the secretary of state. And of course we did do that on what I will call details. But in the major formulation of defense policy, Defense acted as the servant of State. I believe in that philosophy; and I followed that philosophy in practice. I believed, for example, that there must be a definite integration of defense policies and programs with State Department policies. Military strategy must be a derivative of foreign policy. Force structure is a derivative of military strategy. Budgets are a derivative of force structures. So in a very real sense, a defense budget, in all of its detail, is a function of the foreign policy of the nation. It was for that reason that we sent to the Department of State, for review by the Secretary of State, the so-called Posture Statement which was my rationale as presented to the Congress in support of the defense budget.

R: Anything you want to say about your human relations with the Secretary of State?

M: Oh, yes. First I would emphasize that I believed the Department of Defense was subordinate to State, and that the Secretary of Defense was subordinate to the Secretary of State. And I always made very clear to Dean Rusk that I believed that. I both said it, and I think I acted in accordance with it. My relationships with him were very good, in part because I followed the principle I've outlined; but also because I admired him immensely. I admired him as a professional and I admired him as a great American. He had extraordinarily high integrity. He had great sensitivity to the traditions of this nation. I recognized that his education and his experience in the field of international relations were far superior to mine. I think he respected me, and this feeling of mutual respect, of course, was a very strong foundation on which to build personal relationships. Your question implies that there were some in State who thought that we usurped their powers. I think there were some in State who thought that. But those who did, I believe, failed to

McNamara -- I -- 11

recognize that the deficiency was theirs and not ours. They failed to recognize that the top political appointees in Defense were more able, more active, and ran a tighter organization than did those in State. The Defense Department's tight administration versus State Department's loose administration frequently resulted in Defense appearing before the public or appearing before the Congress to be leading rather than following State. For example, during those years, my Posture Statement to the Congress--which had been submitted to the Secretary of State, reviewed by him and changed in accordance with his desire and the desires of his associates--was the only written complete statement of U.S. foreign policy presented to the public. It wasn't until Henry Kissinger came into the White House and presented for the President a written statement of foreign policy that any statement of foreign policy, in a complete and coherent form, was available to the public except as a part of the Secretary of Defense's Statement to the Congress. As I said earlier, I began with foreign policy because I wanted to derive from it--and felt it necessary to derive from it--the statements of military strategy which, in turn, were the foundation for force requirements and hence budgetary requirements. So I felt if I were to go to the Congress and say that we wanted a budget of X to buy A, B, D, E forces and F, G, and H weapons in support of this stated military strategy, I had to relate that to a foreign policy. And that's why we began with foreign policy. And so in the process of subordinating ourselves in a very real sense to State, we appeared to be taking the leadership.

R: I'd agree with that as an old State Department hand. I think you've dealt with that question, unless you want to add anything to it.

M: Now we come to the relationship with the Congress.

You ask about my relationship with the Congress, how was it? Were there failures? Here I'll refer back to some of the statements I made earlier.

I held three basic beliefs. First, that the Congress was intended to represent all the people, not just the traditional constituents of the Defense Department. There was a

McNamara -- I -- 12

difference between all the people, on the one hand, and the traditional constituents of the Defense Department, on the other--which we can discuss later.

Second, I believed that the Congress was entitled to full disclosure of the facts relating to defense issues, and not just the facts that supported the views of some of the services in the department.

And third, I believed that knowledge was power; and that if we fully disclosed the facts--put the knowledge at the disposal of Congress--it would then have the power effectively to legislate and effectively to direct, to the extent that the Constitution provided it should direct, the activities of the Defense Department. I did not believe that it was my function to yield to the pressures of narrow constituencies, whether those were in the Congress or in the public or among the military services. And I would have to say that the military committees that I appeared before in Congress--the Armed Services Committees in the House and the Senate and the Appropriations Committees in the House and the Senate--were not representative of all the people. They were representative of certain elements of the people. For example, they were dominated by southerners. The chairmen generally were southerners, the members disproportionately southerners. Southerners, as we all know, have had a different view of the military requirements of the nation and the national security of the nation, and how it might best be achieved, than have the rest of the people. They were not, in any sense of the word, representative of all of the people.

I'll make one further point, because it relates to this. The committees were dominated by southerners, and they were dominated by reserve officers--men who were honest, sincere, patriotic individuals, but men who held commissions in the reserve and guard of the United States and were really spokesmen for--consciously or unconsciously--spokesmen for the military interest as opposed to the national interest. They saw things through the narrow parochial views of the military. Men such as Thurmond and Goldwater, for example.

R: Aside from the regional bias, because of weather or whatever, are there a disproportionate number of military installations in the South?

McNamara -- I -- 13

M: Yes, and I think the reason is twofold.

First, the members of Congress who were influential in decision-making regarding military installations--the location of military installations--they were from the South, and they, therefore, had a disproportionate number of such installations.

But secondly, I would have to emphasize a point that was implicit in your question. The weather conditions and other physical conditions--geography, land availability, et cetera, in the South were conducive to support of many military activities. But having said that, I think the first condition was a very important one.

I should emphasize another problem with respect to congressional committees before which we appeared. At that time--more so then than now, but at that time in particular--they were either unwilling and/or unable to use fully the material we presented to them. The classified Posture Statement that I presented was as complete a statement of the pros and cons of foreign policy, military strategy, force structures and budgets as we could prepare. It contained, in itself, strong arguments that could be used against us. It certainly was a foundation for thoughtful examination of the policies and perhaps for reformulation of them or for the substitution of executive branch by recommendations from Congress. But the congressional committees were poorly staffed to deal with it, poorly manned. The members were overworked. They had such a wide range of assignments. They had neither the time nor the inclination to deal fully with it. So, as a result, I was, for all these reasons, frequently in conflict with my committees. But I didn't consider that a failure. To the extent that the committees were not representative of the national interest and were pursuing parochial interests, my being in conflict with them, from my point of view, was a success. But it carried very heavy costs, because conflict leads to tension, criticism, opposition. But I think it is fair to say that we lost no major legislative battle.

R: I was going to ask that.

M: I can't recall a major legislative battle we lost. But we won leaving behind a residue of criticism. Congressman [F. Edward] Hebert, for example, the present chairman of the

McNamara -- I -- 14

House Armed Services Committee, is a strong critic of mine. A major reason is that I refused to yield to Hebert's pressure to advance the parochial interests of the military at the cost of the national interest. To give you just one illustration. It's a minor one; but it illustrates the point. Hebert was consistently trying to force us to increase the expenditures within the Defense Department for medical services to be provided to civilians. He wanted us to establish large obstetrical services in all military hospitals for all the dependents of all military personnel. This was inefficient. It duplicated services available in the civilian sector, and I saw no reason to do it. He wanted us to set up a medical school within the Defense Department for the training of military personnel. This was clearly duplicative of the civilian sector. The civilian schools could do the job far better than we, at lower costs, and with greater benefits throughout the society. We refused to do it. I understand, by the way, that since then he has forced his proposition through. But I mention these as illustrative of the kinds of differences that grew up.

There was a very strong constituency in the military committees of the Congress in favor of the reserve and guard units. They fought tooth and nail our decision to reduce the number of units, even though we proved conclusively that those units were not needed to support the military strategy that had been agreed upon, that they were costly in terms of financial expenditure, and costly in terms of diversion of people from other pursuits in our society. The military committees fought our refusal to provide nuclear power for the carrier, the *Kennedy*. We believed then--and I believe with hindsight now--that it was cheaper to use conventional power than nuclear power. They were very much opposed to that.

As a matter of fact, my main problem with the Congress was that we were constantly pressing for lower levels of expenditure than they were willing to approve. You saw it in the argument over conventional versus nuclear power. You saw it in the argument over the B-70 and its elimination. You saw it in the argument over the reduction of reserve and guard divisions. You saw it in the continuing argument over the

McNamara -- I -- 15

closing of military bases. You saw it in the argument over the reduction of the production of fissionable materials.

There was at that time a situation difficult for many people to imagine today: a desire in the Congress to spend far more than the Secretary of Defense and the President wished to spend on defense. It sounds unbelievable to say that today. The psychology is completely reversed today. But that was the condition we faced then; and it led to constant friction between the Congress and the Secretary of Defense. We had the Joint Chiefs, quite naturally, I think, pressing for high expenditures, and the Secretary of Defense overruling them, going to the Congress saying that he had overruled them, and recommending against the expenditures. We had the narrow constituency of the Congress, within the defense committees, pressing the Secretary to raise the expenditures, and the Secretary refusing, and therefore bringing on tension.

This leads me to the expression of a thought that President Kennedy and I talked often about; namely, the opportunities and responsibilities of a national leader. If a national leader has power, the question is: how should he use it? I think the answer is he should expend it. If he has a goal that he believes to be in the national interest, the achievement of which requires power, one can be almost certain that in the pursuit of that goal the power will be expended. But one should not hesitate to expend one's political power--or personal power, if you wish to call it that--in pursuit of a desirable national goal. As a matter of fact, one should expect a politician to enter office with substantial power and leave office with none. He should have consumed it in the pursuit of priority goals, and hopefully by their achievement. Now that was the basic policy I followed.

R: That is fascinating. It is exactly President Johnson's evaluation of what he aimed to do and what he did.

M: Yes.

R: He wasn't saving his power for the junior prom.

McNamara -- I -- 16

M: No, no. Well, that was exactly the philosophy that I followed in my relations with Congress. I must say that I have the highest respect for many of the leaders of Congress. I think many of them have high respect for me. I said to--

R: I want to ask you about Dick Russell.

M: Russell is a good illustration of the kind of individual I highly respected. I also had frequent disagreements with him. But I said to someone the other day that if I had my life to lead over again, I would want to be a politician, an elected official. I don't think I have enough years to learn how to pursue such a career effectively now. But I have the greatest respect for the elected leaders of this country. In a very real sense, it is the highest duty one can perform. There is no more important task in a democracy than resolving the differences among the people and finding a course of action that will be supported by a sufficient number so as to permit the nation to move ahead toward the achievement of a better life for all the people. That's the role of the politician. I recognized it as their role, and I had great respect for them.

The next question indicates there were two views of the Tuesday Lunches in the White House. First, that they were an excellent method for the President to meet and communicate with his closest advisors and for them to stay in touch with each other. And secondly, an opposite view that these meetings were so unstructured, there was so little time to prepare briefing papers for them, so difficult to keep notes of actions and decisions, that they represented a disorderly approach to very serious problems. And you ask my view on the structure and effectiveness of the meetings.

I would say immediately that I thought them extremely useful opportunities for the President to exchange views informally with his key national security advisors, the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs and the Director of Central Intelligence. And for the President not only to exchange views, but to probe intensively the views of each of the participants, and for each of them to express their views with a candor that is very difficult for a senior official if his views are being expressed in front of the usual thirty or forty listeners in major national policy discussions.

McNamara -- I -- 17

Such a large audience leads to posturing by some and frequently to disclosure through leakage of very sensitive matters. I think that those larger discussions inhibit the participants. Certainly I've seen them inhibit presidents from expressing their own views and from probing the views of their associates as fully as I think would be to their advantage. The Tuesday Lunches, therefore, were used for that purpose. It's true that in some cases they led to decisions. But more often I think they were used by the President as a preliminary step toward decisions. He was turning over alternatives in his mind. He was listening to Dean or to me or to others express skepticism of some of his strongly held views and positions--skepticism that we felt much freer to discuss when there were only five or six of us present than we might have felt when there were thirty or forty people in the room. And I concluded that had I been president, I would have wanted to have that kind of close informal discussion with my senior associates. I believe that President Johnson felt the same way and benefited immensely from it. I know I did.

R: What about the presence of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs?

M: It was, from my point of view, highly desirable. Not that I ever hesitated or failed to express the view of the Chiefs to the President when their representative was not present. I thought it extremely important that the President have that view; and I thought it of the utmost importance that he have that view when it may have differed from mine. So I always expressed it. I never felt hesitant to overrule the Chiefs whether they were present or not present, or to recommend positions contrary to their positions whether they were present or not present. But on many matters, particularly matters relating to military tactics, they were much better qualified to express their own views than I was. And I think for that reason alone it was wise that the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs was present at the Tuesday Lunches. Beyond that, I think that the President felt it helped him in his relations with the Chiefs; and I'm sure it did give them the feeling that their own representative was present in the highest councils and expressing their views. I think it definitely helped the Chairman to understand the views of the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, and the President. It assured not only that he understood them; but,

McNamara -- I -- 18

because of the easy communication between him and the other Chiefs, it assured that the other Chiefs understood them as well. So I think it was a very important participation, and one I strongly favored.

R: Let me add another question. There's a whole body of literature now current in political science which tries to interpret presidential decisions as the balancing out of bureaucratic politics. My reflection on the Tuesday Lunches is that it was a way of getting the chiefs of the bureaucracies in a position where they could speak freely without, as it were, being overseen by their subordinates who have built-in, understandable institutional interests. They could speak in the presence of the President who had to make a net decision. It was a way of mediating between the President's multiple interests and the narrow interests of the bureaucracy by getting the leaders of the government to share the President's point of view. What do you think of the notion that major decisions were settled by bureaucratic politics? What was the role of the Tuesday Lunches in screening them out and letting the President's view of the national interests prevail?

M: Well, I don't believe that one can overlook or be insensitive to bureaucratic politics, but I certainly don't believe that one should be dominated by it. And the first requirement for the president or for a secretary is to determine where the national interest lies, the interest of all the people. And it was to examine those questions that the Tuesday Lunches were organized; and it was in the examination of them that they performed their service. Now assuming for the moment that the President obtained a clear view of the national interest from such discussions, then the question of bureaucratic politics became very important. The translation of a considered judgment as to where the national interest lay into a set of actions that would obtain the support of the bureaucracies, the Congress, the press, and the public, was very important. The bureaucratic politics had to be understood and taken account of in order to implement the decisions that were formulated in the national interest. I don't need to go into great detail about how it was done; but I would point out that there is an important distinction between decisions that are a function of bureaucratic politics or decisions that are dominated by bureaucratic politics on the one hand and, on

McNamara -- I -- 19

the other, the implementation of decisions taken in the national interest--implementation which must take account of bureaucratic politics, and in a very real sense neutralize bureaucratic politics, if you wish to call it that.

R: That's a statement that I wish we could get into our classrooms these days, because these textbooks--

M: Yes, I know the political scientists don't seem to be accepting that, or some of them don't.

R: They don't accept it because the one thing they can observe is how bureaucratic politics works. They can't observe a president's mind. And they can't observe the collegiality which can develop between a president and his senior people in that kind of setting.

Next we come to the role of you and the Department of Defense in certain domestic matters--wage-price guideposts, aluminum, steel, et cetera. President Johnson often enlisted your aid to "suggest" compliance with wage-price guidelines, especially in the aluminum, steel and automobile industries. Was this primarily in your capacity as secretary of defense, given the vast purchasing power of the Pentagon, or because of your earlier business associations? How were you able to persuade industry? How do you view your effectiveness in these encounters?

M: The question asks why did President Johnson enlist my aid in these economic matters. I don't really know why. But my belief is that he enlisted my aid in such matters primarily because he felt that if I agreed with his economic policies, which I usually did, that I was experienced enough in economics and in business to conceive of tactics to implement these policies; that I was loyal to the point that he had complete assurance that I would carry through those tactics; and [that I was] skillful and tough enough that there was a high degree of probability that I would carry them out successfully. Now this may appear to be self-serving; but it's my view of why he asked me to function in fields that were really quite far removed from the responsibilities of the secretary of defense. I don't mean to say that my power as secretary of defense didn't in some ways help me in carrying through the tactics that were necessary to support the President's economic objectives; but

McNamara -- I -- 20

I don't believe that it was because of my position as secretary of defense that he asked me to carry out these assignments.

There was reference to the aluminum case. In that instance I persuaded the industrial leaders--the leaders of the aluminum industry--to reduce aluminum prices by proposing to them that the government use the discretionary power which it had, in perfectly legal ways, but in ways which would have been disadvantageous to the aluminum industry. As an alternative they preferred to reduce the price, accept penalties to the industry by that means, but provide benefits to the nation. In return the government was willing to modify its plans for use of the stockpile. The net effect, I think ultimately, was a substantial benefit to the country with no long-run penalty to the industry.

R: Now did you work in those affairs with the Council of Economic Advisors and other conventional branches of the government?

M: Well, the Council of Economic Advisors was not then, and perhaps it never should be, an operating as opposed to an advisory agency. So the answer is no. I didn't work particularly closely with the Council although I did work very, very closely with the President and with his assistant, Joe Califano, in carrying out policies the President had arrived at after examining the advice and recommendations of the Council.

R: Out of this experience and being in government in the role you were for seven years or more, do you have any reflections on how the domestic side of government might be better organized?

M: Well, I'm not an expert on the organization of government. I did, at President Johnson's request, as you perhaps know, serve with Kermit Gordon and Mac Bundy and some others in considering restructuring of the government toward the latter part of the Johnson Administration; but I don't pretend to be an expert in government organization. I do believe that foreign and economic policy should be organized very much as is defense policy. That is to say, that the State Department should have the same relationship to the Treasury in connection with foreign economic policy that State does in connection with Defense and defense policy. Certainly the Treasury should formulate and negotiate the

McNamara -- I -- 21

details of foreign economic policy; but this formulation of policy and negotiation of policy should be subject to State Department guidance, in the same way that the formulation and negotiation of defense policy with other nations is subject to State Department guidance. And when a difference of opinion would arise between Treasury and State in the formulation and negotiation of foreign economic policy, I would expect that it would be resolved by the president in exactly the same way that differences, which were very rare, were resolved between State and Defense in connection with the formulation and negotiation of the defense policy. I mention this subject because I don't believe that has been the way foreign economic policy has been formulated and negotiated many times in the past; and it may not be the way in which it is being formulated and negotiated today.

R: I think we had it working pretty well when I was in the White House in Joe Fowler's time.

M: Yes, I think that's true. I didn't want to pinpoint specific examples of when it may not have been or may not now be working, but it hasn't always worked that way. That's certain.

Now secondly, with respect to domestic economic policy, for optimum performance in the formulation and implementation of domestic economic policy, I do believe reorganization of the government is required. The most obvious illustrations are the necessity for reorganizing the set of departments including Labor, Commerce, Agriculture, and Interior; and for establishing different relationships between those departments and the Treasury, the Federal Reserve, and the council. We've had, I think, a very loose set of relationships among those parties in the past. I believe we have a very loose set of relationships today. There is far too much pulling and hauling and lack of central direction of our national economic policies.

R: Now we go back to the origins of the Great Society in question seven.

How did the cut in the 1964 defense budget finance the first part of the Great Society? How did increased expenditures in Vietnam later affect domestic programs? Should the President have opted for a tax increase at the end of 1965 or waited until 1967 as he did? Philosophically, can we have guns and butter?

McNamara -- I -- 22

I wanted that question because I happened to be there in part of the discussion in which, I believe it was the case, that your defense budget cut in 1964 helped get the Great Society programs off the ground.

M: You ask how did a cut in the defense budget for fiscal 1965 finance a great part of the Great Society? I don't have the details of that budget in front of me, but I want to say that it was my belief at the time that, short of an emergency such as the one that developed subsequently in connection with Vietnam, we could look forward to a time when the Defense Department would be taking a smaller percentage of a continually increasing gross national product. I have forgotten the exact figures; but I recall that I drew a chart to show the President how I anticipated the per cent of GNP devoted to defense should drop between 1964 and 1965 and subsequent years. I pointed out this should permit, by the saving in per cent of GNP going to defense, a financing of both additional public and private goods. And among the public goods to be financed could be programs to meet the pressing problems of our society--programs which would be developed under the term Great Society. So in a very real sense the plan to reduce defense as a per cent of GNP did permit financing of the Great Society. We made strenuous efforts to reduce the fiscal 1965 budget for defense below what it would otherwise have been, consistent with both our own views and those strong directives of the President to all the departments of the government to do everything possible to hold down expenditures. At the time he was ridiculed for some of the actions he took to dramatize his point. You may recall he turned out the lights in the White House. Well, I like to see the lights in the White House as much as anybody; but I thought then and I believe now that it was a dramatic indication of his insistence that every part of the government, in every possible way, increase efficiency, reduce expenditures in order that the funds saved could be spent to meet the pressing needs of our society.

R: Now, how did the increased expenditures in Vietnam affect the domestic program?

M: Well, clearly, over a period of years following the major increase in Vietnam-related expenditures that followed the decisions of June and July of 1965--over time those

McNamara -- I -- 23

expenditures acted to reduce civilian programs, programs directed to support the civilian sector.

You might ask: Was this necessary? I think the answer is no. While it is true that at any one time the nation's resources are limited, it is not correct to imply that the distribution of such limited resources, between public and private goods or between various forms of public goods, is optimum. I mean optimum in the sense that the distribution maximizes the benefit to the majority of the people. I believed in 1965 that we could finance both an expansion of Department of Defense expenditures and the Great Society programs by appropriate tax increases, and by other actions, which would lead to modest reductions in expenditures on low-priority private goods and would shift those expenditures from low-priority private goods to public goods, including both defense and the Great Society. I believed it then and, with hindsight today, I still believe it.

R: Let me underline the reason for the question. It bears on what you just said. When I was working back historically over this period, I was much surprised in looking at the numbers to see what happened. In President Johnson's time the proportion of GNP going to federal, state, and local expenditures in the whole society went up by 3 or 4 per cent. The total increase in Vietnam expenditures was on the order of \$25 billion at the peak. That lifted military expenditures by about 1 per cent of GNP: from about 10 to 11 per cent or 9 to 10 per cent. But this was a period of such rapid advance in GNP that the burden--the strictly economic burden--of Vietnam was proportionately much less than it was in Korea. The proportion of increases in GNP for broadly welfare purposes--Medicare, education and so on--kept on increasing during the Vietnam period. Now where the guns and butter issue came unstuck, leaving aside politics and psychology, was in the control of inflation--the failure to get the tax measure soon enough.

M: I think that's correct.

R: You might comment on the issue I'm raising here.

M: I want to refer back, for just a second, to one point about the possibility of financing both an increase in defense spending and an increase in Great Society programs by a shift from

McNamara -- I -- 24

private goods to public goods--obviously through a tax increase and through other actions. The simplest illustration of that is the possibility we had then to reduce the volume and/or the character of automotive production. We were producing 5000-pound automobiles to perform the function of 3000-pound automobiles; and we were producing far more of each than we needed in relation to our true national interest and in relation to alternative uses for this scarce labor for the scarce materials that were going into those automobiles. I was not prepared then and I'm not prepared today to say that we should sacrifice the public good for what I'll call a low-priority private good. I don't believe this lesson was learned then. I don't believe it is understood today; and I think it is one of our serious national problems.

R: Right.

M: Now to go back to the specific point you made about taxes in the Great Society and the possible conflict between defense-related Vietnam expenditures and the Great Society program. It is a fact, and I suspect you know it, that in the initial draft of the July 1965 Vietnam paper presented to the President, I recommended both that we call up reserve forces and that we increase taxes in support of the expanded program--the military program in Vietnam. He decided not to call up the reserve forces and he decided against increasing taxes. This was after full exposure by me and others of the pros and cons of these decisions; and I can't say, even with hindsight, that his decisions were wrong. My reason for recommending the increase in reserve forces--and I may wish to expand on this later in connection with some of your other questions--was that I learned from the Bay of Pigs one lesson I've never forgotten. By the way, if I failed to include the Bay of Pigs among the failures of the Defense Department, I want to add that now and reinsert it in the proper sequence. Although the Bay of Pigs operation was planned by the CIA and implemented and directed by the CIA, we in Defense had an opportunity to present our recommendations with respect to it to the President. I did so. And, along with all the others that he asked in his administration, I recommended in favor of it. I was wrong. I want the record to show that. Although President Kennedy took complete responsibility

McNamara -- I -- 25

for the fiasco, I told him then that I knew where I was when the decision was being made. I was right there recommending in favor of it, and I was fully prepared afterwards to say so. But he was a masterful leader. He said that he had made the decision and that he would assume full responsibility for it. But the fact is that his advisors were unanimous, with the single exception of Senator Fulbright.

In any event, let's go back to one of the lessons we learned from it. That lesson was never, never introduce military force unless you introduce it on a massive scale--massive in relation to the potential requirement--and unless you apply it with the greatest restraint. That lesson, or that formula, was not followed in the Bay of Pigs. It is one of the major reasons why it failed. It was followed thereafter in many situations where we succeeded. The first instance was the Berlin crisis in 1962 when we did call up the reserve and guard, not that we actually needed them to apply force, but it was a signal to the Soviets of our capacity and of our intent and our purpose. I think they read it correctly. We applied it as well in the Cuban missile crisis. We called up our reserve and guard then. We gave every indication of our massive force capacity at the same time that we applied that force with the greatest restraint. Similarly, in connection with the civil unrest --I think some of your later questions deal with this and I'll comment on them later--the lesson that Cy and I learned from the Bay of Pigs we applied in connection with the march on the Pentagon and in connection with the introduction of federal troops in Detroit--

R: And the Dominican Republic.

M: And the Dominican Republic. In all those situations we did not move militarily except with massive force in relation to the requirement; and then that massive force was controlled with the utmost care and restraint.

Now going back to the point I was making earlier, I said that in my initial draft I had recommended both a call-up of the reserve and an increase in taxes; and the President accepted neither of the recommendations. He didn't accept the recommendation to call up the reserve because I think he didn't want to stimulate a war psychosis. There is a later question on that and I'll deal with that issue then. In the general objective of minimizing

McNamara -- I -- 26

the emotional feelings of this country with respect to Vietnam, I strongly shared the President's feeling; and I'm not prepared to say he was wrong in his decision to defer call-up of the reserve and guard.

With respect to taxes, he said to me he didn't disagree with my conclusions that a tax increase was needed, was desirable: but there was absolutely no possibility of obtaining congressional support for it. When I expressed skepticism about that point, he in effect said, "Well, if you know so damned much, you go up there and make your own check." I did make some checks, and he was absolutely right. [Wilbur] Mills was opposed to it. All the congressional leaders were opposed to it. And then I went further and said that I thought, in effect, that it was the President's role to lead and educate and that an attempt to obtain a tax increase might fail now but it would facilitate one later. He then put forward what I thought was a very shrewd appraisal of his problems with the Congress and the problems that faced the nation. He pointed out that the attempt would certainly fail, which I was forced by then to agree with. But in the process of failure it would impose serious penalties on the Great Society programs, because there was strong opposition to those programs--some of it expressed, much of it latent. Many were seeking an excuse to vote against the Great Society programs. The opposition was reluctant to come out in the open and vote against the Great Society programs on their merits; but, were the President to give them the excuse of higher taxes, they would grasp that and use that as the basis for their opposition. I think he was correct in his appraisal; and it was to deny them that weapon that he withheld, not the tax increase, but the attempt to get a tax increase, an attempt which he believed then--and I was forced to acknowledge that his appraisal was correct--would have failed.

R: I'm delighted to have that on the record.

All right, this carries on nearly straight into question eight. (It is widely believed that one of the major concerns of the administration was not to generate a war psychosis and not to disturb Great Society programs. The first commitment of troops in July of 1965 was in less numbers than you or your military commanders had recommended. Was

McNamara -- I -- 27

this due to the above factors? Was it due to the desire to minimize the likelihood of direct confrontation with Moscow and Peking? Other considerations? What reflections do you have on the consequences, positive and/or negative, of the policy of "gradualism"?)

M: You state it is widely believed that one of the major concerns of the administration was not to generate a war psychosis. I strongly agree that was one of the major concerns. I stated earlier that I believed Vietnam was a failure. At some point I should discuss in what respects it was a failure and in what respects the nation's interest and the world's interest were advanced by it. Let me simply say here that in one very important respect our policy in respect to Vietnam succeeded. We avoided a military confrontation with either the Soviet Union or the People's Republic of China. This was a major objective of the President from the beginning. It was certainly a major objective of mine. Many of my recommendations, many of my policy decisions and my actions were dictated by recognition of the great danger not just to this nation, but to the world from a military confrontation with either or both of those nations. And surely one way to avoid or to minimize the risk of such a confrontation was to hold down the emotional level within this country with which the matters relating to Vietnam were considered. So the President consciously and I consciously avoided doing anything that would have contributed to what is called here a war psychosis.

R: In reviewing the arguments of that time I was much interested to try to establish to what extent this posture was determined by advice of Dean Rusk, you, Tommy Thompson, and others, that we act in ways which minimize the risk confrontation--as opposed to the other view which is quite common in the literature, that it was the desire to save the Great Society programs.

M: Oh, on the contrary, it was solely a result of a desire to minimize the risk of confrontation. I never heard any suggestion made, nor did I ever feel any pressure, to hold back the application of military force or military expenditures in order to save the Great Society programs. I am not arguing that they were not high priority. I believed they were of the utmost priority; but I just said earlier that I, myself, felt our society had a capacity to

McNamara -- I -- 28

support both the Great Society programs and whatever was necessary in the form of defense expenditures. I felt no pressure to restrict military expenditures because we lacked such capacity or because of conflict with Great Society expenditures. But I did feel then the very severe risk to our nation of a military confrontation with the Soviet Union; and I sought in every possible way to avoid it; and we were successful in avoiding it. I think that is a tremendous achievement of that period. I'm not suggesting that the achievement was mine alone, but rather of the President and his senior advisors.

R: Do you have any general reflections on the consequences, positive and/or negative, of the policy of gradualism?

M: I think the policy of gradualism will be debated for decades to come with hindsight. At the time I was a major proponent--perhaps the major proponent of it.

R: I think Dean Rusk joined you.

M: I think Dean Rusk did, I agree. But I proposed it for several reasons. One because I wished to avoid--to minimize the risk of a military confrontation--confrontation with the Soviet Union and the People's Republic. Two, because I wished to minimize the damage--the loss of lives and the other damage--to both the U.S. and its allies and to the people of Indochina. And three, because I never did believe that a military victory in the narrow sense of the word was possible, with gradual application or non-gradual application of military power. So for all these reasons I favored gradualism. I favored it then and I've seen nothing since to change my views; but I confess this is the view of a participant. It may not be the view of history, and I'll leave that question to history.

R: Now we come to a narrower question, nine.
(Why did the President decide not to retaliate for the attack in the Gulf of Tonkin on August 2? What issues were raised in meetings with the President? What involvement did you have in planning for the congressional resolution which had been discussed as early as June? What did you say in your briefing to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on August 3? The Library has not been able to locate a copy of your briefing for that day--only the briefing of August 5.)

McNamara -- I -- 29

M: The question is: why did the President decide not to retaliate for the attack in the Gulf of Tonkin on August 2? I believe the answer is that no military response was made by the U.S. to the August 2 DRV [Democratic Republic of Vietnam, i.e., North Vietnamese] attack because of the President's desire to avoid escalation of the war and because of insufficient evidence to indicate that the attacks were intentional. Even with hindsight I don't know whether they were intentional or not, but in any event, at the time, it was my strong feeling--and I think it was Dean Rusk's strong feeling and it was the President's decision--that we would, in every possible way, avoid escalation of the war. The attacks caused no significant military damage to the U.S. They weren't significant militarily. They were important only as possible indications of intent; and they weren't clear indications of intent. Therefore, they deserved no response. I think that was the feeling at the time. Now with respect to the briefings that I gave to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on August 3, you ask are copies available, and frankly I don't know. I think it's possible--I believe it's possible that Bill Bundy may have copies of those or may have recollections of them, and I refer therefore this question to him. I certainly have none.

R: Were you involved in the planning of the congressional resolution?

M: I recall a discussion of a possible congressional resolution on August 2. I know such planning was underway in the State Department. I have no reason to believe that we in Defense were not consulted with respect to it; but I have no clear recollection of the degree of consultation.

R: All right. Question ten: When did you first realize that most of the troops would not be out of Vietnam by the end of 1965, and what effect did this have on budget planning? That's a question, I should explain, that arises somewhere from the literature on the period.

M: The question probably goes back to the statement that was made, I would judge, in October of 1963 before President Kennedy's death that I believed that we should reduce the number of U.S. troops in Vietnam by the end of 1963 and that there should be further reductions--I can't recall exactly the extent or the dates I used--in future years. Those

McNamara -- I -- 30

statements and recommendation were associated with the strategy we were then following in Vietnam. That strategy was subsequently changed; and when it changed, the statements and recommendations made with respect to that strategy were no longer valid. Since I don't have all my papers in front of me I can't say exactly when the change occurred. Certainly by mid-1965 it had become clear that we had to choose between two alternatives: either expand our military support of Vietnam or withdraw. I think, at that particular time, those were, basically, the only two alternatives. I believe that Mac Bundy and I came to the conclusion that we were failing to face those alternatives.

R: As early as January.

M: I was going to say in January of 1965. And I think it was a serious failure on the part of the government that it had not chosen between those alternatives. I'm not with hindsight suggesting that we made the right choice. I wasn't entirely clear then what the right choice was, as I think we--Mac and I--both said in January of 1965 and also later in July of 1965; but I think it was a serious failure of government to avoid facing the choice. And finally I think it may have been a serious failure to avoid examining the choice fully. It is said by some that the alternative of withdrawal was fully explored and supported by some--and strongly recommended by some. I don't believe the record supports that. But to continue with the question of when I believed--when it became clear--that troops would not be out of Vietnam by the end of 1965, surely in July of 1965 the record is clear: we recommended an increase in troops not, I emphasize, to win the war by military means, but to prepare a foundation for a political settlement. We recommended a specific number of troops be approved for addition at that time, but stated specifically that it was likely that additional troops would be required. The specific numbers are referred to in the memorandum of 20 July, 1965 to the President. We emphasized then that several hundred thousand troops above and beyond the numbers recommended for immediate deployment might be required. So it was very clear by mid-1965 that we believed that if we pursued the course of action that was being considered at that time, a very large number of troops would be in Vietnam at the end of 1965 and in later years as well.

McNamara -- I -- 31

R: The next question, eleven, is on the process of bombing-target selection and on bombing pauses. It gives you a chance to reflect on peace initiatives and the diplomatic contacts of the Johnson Administration.

(Explain the process of selecting bombing targets and any differences you may have had with the JCS on the bombing. Were the bombing pauses of sufficient frequency and duration to produce a NVN response if they had been interested? What general reflections do you have on bombing pauses? The peace initiatives and contacts of the Johnson Administration?)

M: My memory is very hazy on these matters; and the documents weren't at all complete or conclusive on them. So I'll give you a statement on how the targets were chosen and some slight recollection of the peace initiatives.

As to target selection, the Joint Chiefs of Staff laid out a target system in North Vietnam to maximize the damage to North Vietnam: economic damage, psychological damage, military damage. Periodically, the Chiefs chose from that target system particular targets to be attacked during particular periods of time. My civilian staff and I would receive the recommendations from the Chiefs, examine them, and then submit separate recommendations to the President. Invariably my recommendations were for lesser bombing than recommended by the Chiefs. I recommended lesser bombing after having had restudied the effects of bombing during World War II and during the Korean War. In particular I placed lesser weight than the Chiefs did on the potential for economic damage to North Vietnam and the effect that such economic damage might have on North Vietnam's war-making capability. I think the Chiefs greatly exaggerated the dependence of North Vietnam's military effort on its so-called industrial plant. The industrial plant contributed very, very little to North Vietnam's military effort.

Secondly, I believed then and I believe now that the Chiefs greatly exaggerated the extent to which our military attacks could damage the industrial capacity of North Vietnam.

McNamara -- I -- 32

And finally, my recommendations for lesser levels of bombing were influenced by the desire to save both U.S. lives and the lives of civilians in North Vietnam.

I should add one further point. The lesser attacks recommended by me had, as a final justification, the desire to avoid to the greatest degree possible the provocation of North Vietnam and particularly to avoid incentives to the Soviets and to the People's Republic of China to retaliate with some form of military action.

R: As I recall, when you presented the bombing target recommendations for the northern part of Vietnam to the President in the Tuesday Lunches, for example, there were certain criteria that were systematic: one was, what would U.S. losses be; second, what would be the North Vietnamese civilian losses; and third, an evaluation of the economic or strategic or other consequences of the attacks. Am I right in thinking that those were the three variables?

M: Yes. Exactly. My judgment on each of those was substantially different from the Chiefs. I invariably believed that the damage to North Vietnam would be less and the cost to the U.S. would be greater. And I think all of the evidence proves that I was correct on both points.

Now with respect to the peace initiatives, I didn't believe then and I don't believe now that we put sufficient emphasis on the political track. I didn't believe we did all we might have done in creative use of bombing pauses to advance on such a track. We did, as you'll recall, initiate a pause in the bombing during December 1965. It was controversial then, and we argued among ourselves whether it should be started, and if it should be started, how long it should be continued. The record, I'm sure, will show that controversy. With hindsight, many in the government--I think this included the President--believed that the pause accomplished nothing and cost something in terms of permitting the North Vietnamese to take advantage of it to build up munition stocks and to move personnel that strengthened their position vis-a-vis the U.S. I didn't believe then and I don't believe now that there was any significant military cost to the U.S. resulting from such a pause. I do believe that continuation of such efforts--and other political actions we

McNamara -- I -- 33

might have undertaken--would have resulted in a reduction in the military action on both sides. I think that my critics are correct in saying I have no proof of that. They point out that there is little evidence in the short run that the North Vietnamese would have reacted favorably to such U.S. political probes. But, as I say, I believe the military cost of such probes was small. I think that the tempo of the war would have been slowed and I believed that the ultimate peace settlement--the political settlement--would have been advanced. This is a highly controversial view. It is not shared by many men whom I respect. I can't prove it; but I very much regret that we didn't carry it out.

R: All right, the M-16 and all that.

Why was there a shortage of M-16s and why was their introduction opposed by army traditionalists?

M: Well, this is from my point of view a pinprick, a minor matter. Moreover my memory of it is very dim, and the documents among the papers submitted to me were not conclusive.

R: No, it was very much an in-house Pentagon matter. It wasn't reflected in the White House papers.

M: My recollection is, with respect to the M-16, there was substantial disagreement among the services as to whether that rifle would function more effectively than the M-14 and whether it should be adopted as the standard infantry weapon. I believe the Marine Corps was opposed to substituting the M-16 for the M-14; the army was divided with respect to such a substitution; and the air force strongly believed that the M-16 was superior to the M-14 and did substitute it, 100 per cent, for the M-14. It wasn't until years after the decision was initially placed on the Chiefs' agenda that they finally decided to standardize on the M-16. Of course, by then years had been lost in tooling up for the necessary production. But I don't believe that it was a major matter. I don't think it had a major effect on our combat effectiveness. I favored the M-16 initially. I wished we had adopted it earlier; but, frankly, I don't think the war would have ended any differently if we had.

R: Anything you want to say about helicopters?

(The war brought about a new role for helicopters in combat. Why were there shortages?)

McNamara -- I -- 34

M: My memory is unclear on that. There were no shortages in any meaningful sense. We had huge quantities of helicopters in Vietnam. Less perhaps than the commanders would have wished at any one time, but far greater than anyone would have reason to believe would have been available at that time.

R: Right. Infiltration barrier?
(To what extent did the "infiltration barrier" fulfill or fail to fulfill your rather modest hopes?)

M: Well, this is again a subject on which my memory is hazy and on which there is very little documentation available to me. The infiltration barrier was a barrier suggested by a group of scientists whom I had brought together to examine the effectiveness of the bombing program in Laos and North Vietnam, a program designed to reduce the infiltration of North Vietnamese forces into South Vietnam. The scientists concluded that the bombing program had been ineffective in reducing infiltration and was likely to continue to be ineffective. They suggested that it might be possible to be more effective by developing what is called here the "infiltration barrier," the use of electronic devices to detect movements and to trigger bombing attacks against such movements. My impression is that the infiltration barrier did substantially increase the effectiveness of anti-infiltration bombing; but I left the department before it was possible to evaluate that effectiveness, and I'm not an expert on it.

R: Fifteen, the Dominican Republic.
(What were some of the factors that went into the President's decision to send troops into the Dominican Republic? Communist threat, danger to American lives, atrocities, others? How did you counsel the President during this period? What are the logistics involved in moving troops in on sudden notice? In general, what reflections do you have on the Dominican Republic episode? Was it a success or failure?)

M: On the Dominican Republic, again the documentation available to me is sparse, and my memory of it is even more hazy than of many of these other activities. I think that it would be far better to use Cy [Vance] and Mac [Bundy] as sources than me.

McNamara -- I -- 35

R: Now the Middle East question.

M: You ask were we right in trying to avoid the Middle East war at all costs, or should we have coldly calculated the odds on what the Israelis in 1967 felt they had to do. You go on to ask what lessons we've learned with respect to it. I think the lesson to be learned from the June 1967 war and from the events since, is the risk to the U.S. from ambiguous defense commitments to nations which are unable fully to defend themselves. That risk is very great indeed. It's a risk to the U.S. and it's a risk to the nation involved, in this instance, Israel. I think we and they incurred it in 1967. And I think we and they are incurring it today. The risk is made particularly great when an opposing great power, in this instance the Soviet Union, believes, perhaps incorrectly, that it can manipulate such a situation to its advantage with little cost to itself. Here I want to refer to two or three of the pages that were included in the materials the archivists put together for me. One of the statements indicates that between May 17 and May 23 of 1967 [Levi] Eshkol, the Prime Minister of Israel, pressed for an urgent reaffirmation of the U.S. commitment to Israel's security. Clearly he was uncertain what that commitment was. Is there any reason to believe that the Soviets were more certain than he was? And if both Eshkol and the Soviets were uncertain, is this to the U.S. advantage? I don't believe it is.

Further, that same statement says that on May 23 Secretary Rusk had a long session with the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. I'm inclined to think that I was with him. I know when he and I met with the Congress during those days, the leading members were sharply opposed to any unilateral U.S. action in the Middle East. They were saying that they opposed use of military force in support of the continued existence of an independent Israel. Certainly Israel was concerned about that. Is it likely the Soviets lacked understanding of this opposition? Is it in our interest that this ambiguity should have existed then and, I believe, continues to exist today? Certainly the President implied to Israel in 1967 that if Israel did not initiate an attack and if Israel were attacked that the U.S. would respond against Israel's attackers with military force. But our own record indicates that our own people were unclear as to whether we would or should respond to

McNamara -- I -- 36

support Israel with military force. The Israelis were unclear as to our intentions and probably the Russians as well. I believe this is an extremely dangerous situation for all parties: Israel, the U.S., and the Soviets. It existed then and, in my opinion, it exists today.

R: You know, Bill Fulbright advocates an explicit defense treaty with Israel as part of a Middle East settlement. In fact, he's advocated it for some time to get around this dangerous ambiguity. Would you agree with Bill?

M: I think essentially I do. Now I do with many qualifications and conditions and requirements that Israel move in certain ways, and with a belief that what we need really is a joint and several guarantee of the continued existence of Israel, by both the Soviets and the U.S. But speaking generally now, I wish to say I believe there is very substantial risk to the U.S. from ambiguous defense commitments to nations unable to defend themselves, and particularly a serious risk to the U.S. in such circumstances when the opposition may include great powers.

R: One small item. As I recall, when the "hot line" came on, it was discovered for the first time that it ended in the Pentagon, not the White House. I thought you might wish to put that story on tape.

M: This is a humorous incident; and I don't want even to take time to put it in a serious discussion of this kind. But let me tell you about it, if you are interested. It was my custom to arrive at the Pentagon at seven o'clock every morning. And one morning, in this tense period of June 1967, shortly after I arrived, the duty officer called me. He was a flag officer, as was our custom: we kept a general of the army or an admiral of the navy on duty twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, in charge of the War Room. The duty officer reported that Prime Minister Kosygin wished to talk to President Johnson on the "hot line." He asked what response he, the duty officer, should make. I said: why are you calling me? Well, he said, the hot line ends in the Pentagon. Now this sounds absurd. I had been secretary for six and a half years, but I--we had never used the hot line for any operational purpose. No doubt it had been tested periodically, but it had never been used

McNamara -- I -- 37

to transmit communications between the President and the Prime Minister of the Soviet Union. I had no idea it ended in the Pentagon. Of course it wasn't what most people thought it to be: a telephone line. It was a teletype line. The teletype machines on the U.S. terminal were located in the Pentagon. So I said to the duty officer, in shock and surprise, that we spend 80 billion dollars a year on the Defense budget and we'd better find some way, having spent 80 billion dollars, to get that damned line patched over to the White House. I then called the President to tell him of this and to get him down to the Situation Room in the White House so that he might respond. It was sometime between seven and eight in the morning. I knew that he would probably be asleep. The sergeant, the air force sergeant who was close to his room, answered the telephone and said that the President was asleep. And I said, "I know he's asleep." The sergeant said that he doesn't like to be awakened. I said, "I know that, but you go tell him that Secretary McNamara is on the line and asked that he be awakened." The sergeant did and the President came to the phone and in a sleepy, gruffy voice said, "Goddamn it, Bob, what is the problem?" Well, I said, "Mr. President, Prime Minister Kosygin wishes to talk to you and what should I say?" Well, he was shocked and surprised: "What do you think I should say?" I said, "I think you ought to say that you'll be available for consultation with him in twenty minutes." He said, "Okay. You tell him that and, in the meantime, you get yourself and Dean Rusk over here and we'll meet in the Situation Room," which we did.

R: That's when it began--that morning. I just wanted to get that in for fun.

Now, seventeen is one which I hope you can get into: especially the evolution of the NATO Nuclear Planning Group.

(Why was there a reluctance on the part of the U.S. allies in NATO to build up conventional tactical defense forces? The NATO Nuclear Planning Group was obviously a major, salutary innovation. How did it evolve? Who learned what? How fast? Major problems? Results?)

M: The first question is: why was there reluctance on the part of the U.S. allies in NATO to build up conventional tactical defense forces?

McNamara -- I -- 38

The answer is yes. I believe this reluctance arose from a misunderstanding by our NATO allies of the limitations of nuclear power and an unwillingness to pay the price of additions to NATO's conventional power. The misunderstanding of the limitations of use of nuclear power were similar to those prevalent in the minds of the U.S. public before we began the extensive education program I mentioned earlier as one of the successes of the Defense Department--an educational program to show the U.S. public that there was a major difference between nuclear power and traditional forms of military power. Traditional forms of military power were what I would call usable power, usable in support of political ends with potential net advantage to the user. There were no circumstances that I could conceive of then--and I use the word no almost without qualification--no circumstances I could conceive of then, and none I can conceive of now, in which the user of nuclear power can use it to his advantage. This isn't to say that nuclear power isn't necessary; but it is to say that it is quite a different form of power than traditional forms of military power. Even its value as a deterrent is limited because it is so clear that its use will carry such heavy penalties. It is now recognized, I think, that nuclear power will not deter small actions. Just when an action changes from small to large, and therefore from an action that could be deterred by nuclear power to an action that can't be deterred by nuclear power is perhaps a matter of debate; but in the case of NATO, it was very clear to us in the Defense Department, and I believe that State shared this view, that there were many forms of potential Soviet pressure upon the West which would be disadvantageous to the West to yield to, but which could not be deterred by nuclear power. And it was essential that if these forms of pressure were to be deterred, that there be appropriate levels of conventional power opposing them. This point was not well understood by our NATO allies; and because of that lack of understanding, they found it easy to yield to those in their governments who were pressuring for reductions in defense expenditures and for avoiding the acceptance of the costs of strengthening the conventional power of the NATO tactical forces.

McNamara -- I -- 39

Now a related question which you've raised is the Nuclear Planning Group: How did it evolve; in effect, why and what were the results? Well, the Nuclear Planning Group evolved to meet the problem I've just outlined. Our NATO allies believed that we were withholding from them information regarding nuclear forces, which we were. They believed that they had no voice in the evolution of nuclear strategy, which they did not. They believed that they had no finger on the trigger of nuclear weapons, which they did not. They believed that the U.S. would act in its own interest and withhold the use of nuclear force when they--our allies--would consider it desirable to initiate the use of such nuclear force in their own interest. They were wrong on both counts. We would not have withheld it; and they would not have wished it to be used. In any event, for all these reasons it was wise in our opinion to take them more fully into our confidence; to educate them on the capabilities and limitations of such weapons; to reassure them as to our strategy; and to discuss openly with them the political control of the use of such weapons, and the actual triggering mechanism for such weapons. John McNaughton and I conceived the idea of the Nuclear Planning Group. Dean Rusk approved of it. The President approved of it. We recommended that it be set up. It was our objective, as I've indicated, to bring our allies--particularly the senior officials, the ministers--into the most intimate possible consultation with us on the very delicate issues of the capabilities of nuclear forces, the strategy for their use, and the control of their use. In order to insure that, we insisted that the membership of the group be kept small; that the participants--that is to say, the ministers--do their own work, present their own thoughts, rather than merely read a paper, and speak from knowledge and personal conviction. We even went so far as to fashion a table that was limited in size to the number of ministers and, in effect, made it impossible to present set pieces. It forced discussion and full exchange of views on these very, very important problems. I think it was at a meeting in Turkey that we finally obtained an agreement from our NATO allies for the formation of the group. I recall inquiring about the agenda for the first meeting, and asking the NATO allies for suggestions. Once we had gotten this far, in a sense we were calling their bluff. They

McNamara -- I -- 40

were not nearly as enthusiastic about the kinds of discussion that they saw lay ahead of them when we had offered to hold the discussions, as they were when they thought we would refuse to hold the discussions. So when I asked for suggestions for the first agenda, there were no suggestions. I said: "Well, surely, one of the subjects we should discuss should be whose finger should be on the trigger." Well, they could hardly avoid agreeing that was a subject to discuss because in the newspapers for years they had demanded to have a voice in whose finger should be on the trigger. So that was put on the agenda. Then I said: "Now who will be responsible for presenting a paper to us to read before the meeting and for leading the discussion during the meeting?" Again, no volunteers. "Since this question has been raised so often by the Federal Republic, we'll ask the Federal Republic to do it." There was dead silence. The last thing in the world--

R: Who was their defense minister then?

M: I've forgotten. I think it was [Kai-Uwe] von Hassel, but I'm not sure. But there was dead silence. The last thing in the world the Federal Republic wanted was an open discussion of whose finger should be on the trigger because what they then would be saying was that someone's finger, in addition to that of the U.S., should be on the trigger. But it wasn't likely to be theirs and they didn't want anybody else because they feared that others would withhold action by the U.S., which the Germans might find in their interest. So clearly, from their point of view, despite years of pressing for discussion of the subject, it was better to leave it alone. I mention all this simply to indicate the ignorance which we had fostered and stimulated and which it was our responsibility to overcome. But there was also a great unwillingness of others really to face these difficult issues of control, and a fear that once they were faced, Pandora's box was opened and the answers that would come out of it would be less agreeable to them than the answer which the U.S. had unilaterally determined theretofore. This general attitude became even clearer in subsequent meetings, when, in setting the agenda, we insisted that there be consideration of the possible use of nuclear weapons: strategy in relation to their use; the considerations of circumstances under which they be used; and the effects of such use. Again, because of

McNamara -- I -- 41

the Federal Republic's great interest in this case--since it was likely to occur on their soil or as a result of an attack on their soil--we asked that they take the initiative in examining the question and present the paper and lead the discussion. They worked for six months, six to twelve months; and they were never able, at least while I was in the department, to present a plan that even they would support for the use of nuclear weapons--not even the demonstrative use of nuclear weapons; because once they began to study the matter intensively, the tremendous dangers that were associated with the use of nuclear weapons became very clear. These dangers included harmful effects on their own people from fallout, but more importantly, the dangers of response by the Soviet Union which then had substantial numbers of nuclear weapons, and the difficulty in controlling the escalation that would follow the initial use. Perhaps today, the NATO allies have a plan for their use. I doubt it very much.

R: Was there any evolution that you could observe as you went from one meeting to another? About how many meetings did you have with that committee?

M: Well, I should know and I don't. I would guess--four. Each of them was very well prepared, and there was a very clear evolution in the sophistication of examination of problems, just as there has been in the evolution of the level of debate in the SALT talks. I thought at the time we were considering the initiation of the SALT talks that one of the greatest benefits that would accrue to the U.S. would be the education of the Soviets on the pros and cons of the use of nuclear weapons, and the danger to each party that would accrue from the use of nuclear weapons. I think that education has come about.

R: I heard you say that when we were designing the SALT talks in the 1960s.

M: Exactly. And I think that was one of the major objectives and major accomplishments of the Nuclear Planning Group. I saw it even in the limited time that I was exposed to it, after we set the group up.

R: I regard that as a major innovation, an education device, a stabilizing device.

M: Well, I do too, and I hope it's continuing to be effective. I believe it is. I see references to it periodically.

McNamara -- I -- 42

R: Now the Erhard-McCloy exercise, and de Gaulle.

(Given Erhard's subsequent downfall, do you think the U.S. was unnecessarily harsh in enforcing offset agreements in the fall of 1966? Reflect on the whole offset agreements crisis?)

M: You ask: given Erhard's subsequent downfall, do I believe the U.S. was unnecessarily harsh in enforcing offset agreements in the fall of 1966? My answer is: no, I don't believe we were unnecessarily harsh. I believe we were unnecessarily clumsy in the way in which we approached the Germans with respect to the negotiation and thereby contributed to Erhard's fall. Our clumsiness was exceeded only by the clumsiness of the Germans in responding to our proposals. The initial offset agreements were negotiated by the Defense Department, by Ros Gilpatric in, I believe, 1961. Our negotiations were highly successful. Ros and I laid the groundwork for them by personal discussion with Strauss. Ros and I acted for the U.S. Government. We were the sole parties involved. Strauss was the sole party involved for the German government. He was decisive. We were decisive. We came to agreement. Each side adhered fully to the terms of that agreement. I would say it was highly successful.

The 1966 agreement, in contrast, was a result of interaction among State, Treasury, and Defense. It soon became clear that the U.S. Government was not speaking with a single voice. The Germans received mixed signals from us. And, as a consequence, they became convinced they could settle for less than they had settled for in 1961, and less than the U.S. ultimately insisted on. As a result Erhard took positions he couldn't sustain. He was weak for other reasons with his people. This looked to be a disavowal of certain of Erhard's policies by the U.S. It ultimately contributed to--although I don't think it was the primary cause of--his fall. I think it's shocking that the U.S. should have performed in this way. But I must say, even with the U.S. weakness, a strong German administration could have responded much more effectively and with much less cost to themselves than they did.

R: Anything on the NATO move?

McNamara -- I -- 43

M: Now on the next question, you referred to de Gaulle's caper with NATO and the move to Brussels. I think a review of the record would show the move was made with extraordinary dispatch and minimum disorder by NATO. The financial cost was minimized. It was nonetheless substantial; but I don't think that is of any great significance. In dollars it was substantial; as a per cent of total NATO expenditures or as a per cent of U.S. defense expenditures, it was not large. The cost in other terms-- political terms, possibly security terms--I think was much larger. It was a unilateral action by one of the parties of an alliance which could have no result other than to weaken the alliance. I think it has led to other disintegrating actions within NATO. I have no doubt that it was welcomed by the Soviets; and, under those circumstances, I can have nothing but concern about its effect and about the possible stimulus to others to follow a similar course.

R: Now we come to nineteen and Detroit.
(During the Detroit riots you were among the advisors with the President during the really tense moments. Could you discuss the background on the decision to send in troops? Were there political considerations as has been implied by Romney? What was the atmosphere of the meetings like? How would you assess President Johnson's performance in this crisis situation? What general reflections do you have on the use of the armed forces to maintain "domestic tranquility," including lessons from the march on the Pentagon?)

M: With respect to the Detroit riots, I think that a much better source than I would be Cy Vance, who participated much more fully than I and who deserves much of the credit for the success of the operation. I don't wish to rely on my memory for factual details which could be referred to him. I only want to say that, as I mentioned earlier, I think this was an example of lessons we learned following the Bay of Pigs and some of the other crises: one should never apply force unless one has available massive force, massive in relationship to the needs; and one should never apply such force other than with the utmost restraint. Now that principle was followed exactly in connection with the situation

McNamara -- I -- 44

in Detroit. The President withheld the application of federal force until it was clear not only that the Governor of the State of Michigan requested such force, but clear that unless such force was introduced there would be very serious disorders, with very heavy loss of life in Detroit. But then, having once decided that federal force was to be applied, the President took action to insure that the force was massive in relation to the potential need and that it was to be controlled and applied with the utmost restraint. For that purpose, he chose Cy Vance to be the senior official on the scene. I think Cy--he and General [John L.] Throckmorton, who was with him--showed great judgment, great courage and great restraint. The result was a tremendous success in the sense that the disorder was quelled very quickly after they arrived on the scene.

R: There's that question in brackets: would you have any reflections on the use of armed forces to maintain "domestic tranquility," aside from the one you just described?

M: I'm opposed to the use of armed forces to maintain "domestic tranquility" except in those limited instances where there is no other alternative. I think Detroit was one illustration of that. We had a similar situation in Washington in April of 1968 when the city was burning. We had other instances during my period in the Pentagon. These are very sad situations, and one should use every possible alternative other than armed force to deal with them. But occasionally, when one does need to use armed force, then it must be used and controlled as it was in Detroit and as it was during the march on the Pentagon. I was very proud of the way we applied that force in response to the march on the Pentagon. I'm very proud of the way we applied it in the case of Detroit. In the case of the march on the Pentagon, we didn't fire a single shot. There were forty-odd thousand people who marched on the Pentagon seeking to--

R: How did word get to the troops about the need for restraint--almost as a measure of professionalism? I can see you picked good commanders; but, somehow, the troops themselves seemed to have caught that spirit.

M: Well, I think it came through the physical presence of the commanders. I mean literally physical presence. In the case of the march on the Pentagon, Cy and I actually stood on

McNamara -- I -- 45

the roof of the Pentagon and directed the operation from there. Commands were issued which refused to allow a rifle to be loaded and which refused to allow a tear gas canister to be launched--three or four tear gas canisters were launched contrary to such orders. There was a very, very close supervision over the troops at the time. In the case of Detroit, Cy and General Throckmorton were actually on the scene. They walked between the forces: the guerrilla force on one side and the troops on the other. They actually walked down the center of the avenue that had been the scene of rifle fire. And they were so close to the troops that there was no question about what the orders were; no question about the restraint.

I give tremendous credit to General [Creighton] Abrams. In a sense he began this policy with his very, very careful restraint in the application of force, and in his recommendations for the application of force, in connection with the race riots in the South in the early years of the Kennedy Administration. That same professional care to avoid the use of military force in connection with civil disorders was widely accepted in the top echelons of the military. It was a principle and policy that both President Kennedy and President Johnson wished applied; and it was one that Cy and I took personal pains to insure was applied.

R: How would you assess Project 100,000? How did the project begin?

M: The project began, in part, because the President and I were immensely interested in opening opportunities for the disadvantaged in our society, particularly the disadvantaged youth. In the Defense Department, at that time, there was essentially no recruitment or acceptance of individuals below the 30th percentile in intelligence ratings. The question was: could we accept such individuals in the Defense Department with advantage to them and little cost to the department in terms of reductions in military readiness. I believed we could. We set up a program to do so, proposing minimum incremental expenditures to provide such individuals with functional literacy.

R: Did you do some pilot studies first?

McNamara -- I -- 46

M: The army had pioneered in studies increasing the effectiveness of uneducated members of our society. Through their psychologists, they developed special learning programs to deal with such people. We were simply drawing upon two or three decades of work by army psychologists in this field. We were drawing on them in the preparation of special short courses such as a ninety-day course to provide functional literacy to such individuals in association with their basic training in the military. When the Congress learned that we were considering modest incremental expenditures on such individuals, it actually passed a law prohibiting such expenditures. This was because the program would deal with large numbers of blacks. For a variety of reasons such action was opposed by the committees that I dealt with in Congress--reasons that I think you can understand in light of my previous answers. In any event, we were prohibited from making incremental expenditures to increase the competence of such individuals. We did, however, conclude that we could take in limited numbers of them at essentially no incremental costs to the department--and thereby adhere to the congressional ruling--and with little or no reduction in combat readiness of the individual and hence the department. We carried out certain experiments which supported our belief. Then in the fall, I believe, of 1967, we initiated the full program of 100,000 recruits per year with intelligence scores below the 30th percentile under what was known as Project 100,000. It was my belief that not only would we be able to utilize these men in the military services--and thereby reduce the inequity of the draft--but that through the training they would receive in the military, we could upgrade their productivity and raise the potential of their lifetime earnings very substantially. In order to determine whether we were achieving that objective with acceptable cost to the military, we set up three control groups: one, the group above the 30th percentile in intelligence scores who were taken into the army or into the military forces; second, the group taken into the military forces that were below the 30th percentile scores; and third, the group with below 30th percentile scores who were not taken into the military--that is to say, those who remained in civilian life. It was my intention that the first two groups would be compared with respect to their performance in military service.

McNamara -- I -- 47

We began such comparisons before I left. They showed that the second group--that is, the disadvantaged--performed essentially as well as did the first group whether you measured in terms of disciplinary cases or advancement in the service or by other measures of combat readiness. Hence I concluded that the cost to the military in terms of readiness of accepting these 100,000 disadvantaged individuals would be negligible. The comparison of the performance of the second and third groups--the disadvantaged in the military with the disadvantaged who had no exposure to the military--was intended to be carried out over a period of a decade or two, to examine the impact on the lifetime earnings potential of each group. Of course, I left before that was well underway. I'm not certain that's been carried out; but the preliminary studies we made strongly supported the conclusion that exposure to the discipline of [military] life and the opportunities for learning of military service dramatically increased the productivity and potential of these men for service in the civilian sector.

R: Now twenty-one.

(In 1964 President Johnson became concerned about the lack of Negroes in the service academies--his attention was especially drawn to the Naval Academy. What efforts were made to accelerate the integration of minority groups into the services? What brought about the desegregation of off-base housing prior to the 1968 Civil Rights Act?)

M: My memory is poor as to the dates and the actions that were taken by the Defense Department during the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations with respect to desegregation; but let me try to sketch it out as I recall it. First, President Kennedy early in his administration initiated actions both in the civilian sector and the military sector to begin to eliminate on a massive scale the discriminatory restrictions which had held back and acted against the Negro for a century. The Department of Defense, of course, had a history of leadership in this field of activity beginning with the Truman Administration. So we welcomed the President's request that we reexamine our policies to consider what further action should be taken. We did this early in the Kennedy Administration, issuing instructions to advance still further in the elimination of discriminatory treatment. And

McNamara -- I -- 48

then, in effect, we forgot the matter, assuming that the instructions would be carried out. It wasn't until several years later--I don't recall whether it was two or three, and it may well have been at the beginning of the Johnson Administration--that Adam Yarmolinsky came to me and stated that in his opinion we had serious problems of discrimination in the department which we were not acting to correct. I was shocked and surprised to hear it; but I accepted his statement. He urged that we set up an outside group to examine the department's practices. I agreed to do so. He suggested that Mr. [Gerhard] Gesell, the present Judge Gesell, head that group. He did. It became known as the Gesell Committee. They examined the practice of the department on-base and off-base. They wrote an extensive report. They concluded that there were many deficiencies in our policies and practices that we should correct. We set about doing so. This time instead of simply issuing directions and relying upon the services to carry them out, Cy Vance and I met with the service secretaries; personally charged them with the responsibility to carry them out; issued instructions on how they were to be carried out; and set up a means of monitoring their action. One of the major conditions we proposed to correct was discrimination in off-base housing, where the housing surrounding a base, by decision of the private owners, was, in effect, reserved for white personnel. Negro personnel would be foreclosed from living in favorable locations in relation to their base assignments. To deal with that, after some considerable effort, we got an opinion from the General Counsel of the Defense Department that we would be justified in applying sanctions against the private property owners if they continued to pursue such discriminatory policies. Cy and I announced that we would do so. We actually began to do so; and this led to desegregation of off-base housing for military personnel before the legislative requirement that it be done in the 1968 Civil Rights Act.

R: Did you have any crises over this issue?

M: We had continual controversy both inside the department and with members of Congress. We were insisting that the base commander assume the responsibility to initiate such desegregation programs. He had to carry them out in consultation with the community

McNamara -- I -- 49

leaders in surrounding areas. We had substantial pressure from members of Congress representing white property owners who strongly objected to the policies we were following. But we had the very solid backing of the President; a very strong legal opinion supporting our position; and the absolute insistence of Cy Vance and myself that we persevere in that direction.

R: How did the Joint Chiefs, especially the Chairman, take this turn in the policy?

M: They were--particularly the Chairman--quite willing to pursue it. I don't think they themselves took the initiative; but they didn't oppose it.

R: Now twenty-two. Yarborough's bill?

(President Johnson quietly opposed Yarborough's Cold War GI Bill believing that educational benefits should be delivered to a wider portion of the population rather than exclusively limited to veterans. How did you stand on veterans' benefits--at the time of the bill and as an issue today? Are benefits an incentive to an all-volunteer army? Incidentally, how do you feel about an all-volunteer army?)

M: Frankly, I have no recollection of the President's position with respect to Yarborough's Cold War GI Bill or of our action with respect to it. This was largely a veterans' matter, and we were not closely involved. We were very closely involved in assisting the veterans in preparing for the return to civilian life; and it was to better prepare them for that transition that we set up what was known as Project Transition. It was a project to utilize the last weeks and months of a veteran's service with the department--say ninety to one hundred twenty days--to prepare him for his re-entry into civilian life. We utilized this time by exposing him to job opportunities; by training him for those job opportunities; and by actually counseling him and guiding him to particular job opportunities. We went so far as to arrange with the Post Office Department, for example, for veterans to be given special preference in exposure, not special performance in grading, but special preference in exposure to civil service examinations for postal employment; and we provided special courses in anticipation of those examinations to prepare the potential veteran for participation in them. We found that, as a result, the number of veterans taking the

McNamara -- I -- 50

examinations and succeeding in passing them and therefore being eligible for postal employment, rose dramatically. We had the same kind of a program with certain police departments. I noticed, for example, one morning in the *Washington Post* that the Washington, D.C. Police Department was short of officers. It seemed perfectly absurd to me that that should be the case. I believe they said they were particularly short of black officers; and it seemed to me absurd that should be the case when we had tens of thousands of well-trained enlisted men, including well-trained black enlisted men, leaving the service. It seemed absurd to me that the District should not be able to recruit the police officers it needed. So we set up a relationship with the Police Department in the District and with police departments in other cities, providing a special course that would be of help to them in training personnel, and a special liaison between the departing veteran and the police departments. We thereby assisted both the police departments and the veterans.

We did exactly the same thing with many private companies. My recollection is that IBM, for example, helped us establish courses training our departing veterans to prepare them for service in IBM; and they actually did employ significant numbers of them. So I have no question in my mind that the department could then and, I believe, in the future initiate action that will smooth the re-entry of its veterans into the civilian sector.

R: What about the all-volunteer army; do you have any comment you would like to make?

M: Well I do, but I'm not an expert on it. I'd rather not at this time.

R: Twenty-three, the F-111 and all that.

(On the F-111, how did you overcome resistance to a common plane for the air force and the navy? What about the assertions that the decision to award the contract to General Dynamics was a political decision? Was commonality a reason for the failure of the F-111 or were there other reasons?)

M: You ask how did I overcome resistance to a common plane--that is to say the F-111--in the air force and navy. The answer is I didn't. And it was the failure to overcome such

McNamara -- I -- 51

resistance that led to a less than fully successful project. I say less than fully successful because I believe that with hindsight, the concept of a common airplane, a common tactical aircraft for the air force and navy, was proven to be achievable. If the F-111 wasn't fully successful, it was not because of an erroneous concept but rather because of poor implementation of the concept. As I mentioned in answer to an earlier question, I think that what I'll call the civilian control of the military--civilian direction of the military--was less than perfect, although we made tremendous progress in advancing toward that end. In this case we saw a particular illustration of poor implementation of a civilian concept, the civilian concept being the desirability of increasing common usage of equipment among the services. There were such absurd examples as different belt buckles among the services, different butcher smocks. There was an immensely strong resistance to accepting a common piece of equipment. I don't know whether to this day the Marine Corps and the army have ever agreed on a common belt buckle. It was a relatively minor matter and I didn't spend too much of my time working on a common belt buckle except to note in the back of my mind that it illustrated a frame of mind which we certainly didn't overcome fully while we were there.

It was a matter of great importance that we move to common items of major equipment, whenever that was possible. It became clear to us early in the Kennedy Administration that it should be possible to adopt in the air force and the navy a common fighter aircraft. At that time the navy was using the F-4 and the air force was using the F-105. As a result of our studies which led to the F-111, we determined that in advance of adopting the F-111 as a common aircraft in the two services, it should be possible to standardize on the F-4 for both services, even though it had been designed solely as a navy aircraft. The air force fought this, particularly the Chief of Staff of the Air Force, General [Curtis] LeMay. But we prevailed and insisted on it. The F-105 [production] lines were stopped. The F-4 production was expanded. The air force did adopt it then, and has been using it for years. I think if you asked them today, they would tell you it was the finest air force fighter they've ever used which, I think, clearly shows the practicality of a common

McNamara -- I -- 52

airplane for the two services. In any event, the adoption of the common aircraft, the F-4, by the two services was a derivative of the studies which led to the F-111.

But in the course of pursuing the F-111, immense resistance developed in both the air force and the navy to that aircraft. Each one wanted to optimize the plane toward its own narrow objectives instead of the common objective. The navy, in particular, fought the aircraft believing that if they could prove by various means that it was less than optimum for their own service that they would be authorized their own airplane. The air force continued to try to optimize the F-111 for its actions. These changes frequently led to increases in weight and made it, by definition, less desirable for the navy. This played into the navy's hands. The result was that the program was a constant subject of controversy. It required the most intense monitoring by the civilian secretaries of the air force and navy, and ultimately by my director of research and by myself. We clearly did not achieve the maximum benefits of commonality. I do believe that each service received or had available to it an excellent aircraft; and I think the history of what has happened to the navy's successor to the F-111 shows that they would have been well advised to adopt the F-111 and fully to optimize it for common service in each force, the air force and the navy.

The lessons we learned were that commonality is practical; that it should be an objective of Defense Department equipment design, not just for airplanes, but for other items of equipment: rifles, artillery, tanks, et cetera; that there should be a much stronger monitoring of the performances of the services in moving toward commonality, with appropriate reports to the secretary of defense and to the Bureau of the Budget and to the Congress.

If I may go back and add one further word on the F-111, I should say that throughout this period of controversy there was practically no support in the Congress for a common aircraft for the two services, and this stimulated opposition in the services to the program of the Secretary of Defense. The atmosphere in the Congress was, as I said earlier, one which stimulated increases in defense expenditures, which supported every

McNamara -- I -- 53

new advance in armament technology regardless of the degree to which that advance really contributed to national security. If it was new, it was better. I never believed that, and I don't believe it today. I think this attitude helps explain the problems in cost overruns in the Defense Department. For decades the department has had them and still has them--I hope less so in my period than previously, but we had them in my period and we have them today. Our problems in reliability of performance were attributable in large part to advancing the state of the art more rapidly than was necessary to achieve optimum levels of national security--optimum in the sense of balancing security advances with cost increases.

R: Now twenty-four. The Program Budget and its fate in 1969 and after. What happened to the military? Did they finally join when they couldn't lick you? Have they become program budgeteers?

(One of your accomplishments, at least in terms of cost reduction, was switching from a service budget to a program budget. How much resistance and interservice rivalry did you encounter? Did the military come to accept the revolution and fight their battles within the new framework? How well did the Pentagon budget revolution survive the years since 1969?)

M: You ask how much resistance was there to introduction of program budgets. There was strong initial resistance. There was strong initial resistance both among the military and on the part of Congress. You can see the reason, for example, in connection with the strategic nuclear forces where, instead of budgeting for the navy's strategic forces and budgeting separately for the air force strategic forces, we budgeted for U.S. strategic nuclear forces. This forced a harmonization of the service programs. It reduced the independence of the services. It increased the role of the secretary of defense and his associates that led to the controversies within the department and outside of the department in the earlier years of the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations. But I think that rather quickly, to thoughtful observers--thoughtful observers in uniform, and thoughtful observers in the Congress and the society--it became clear that this policy

McNamara -- I -- 54

resulted in stronger security forces and lower-cost security forces. I believe it's so deeply entrenched, therefore, in the department today that there's no chance it will ever be thrown out. Not only is program budgeting entrenched in the Defense Department today, but it was spread by the Bureau of the Budget, observing what had happened in the Defense Department, to other departments of the U.S. Government. And, by publications of some members of my staff and others, it has been spread throughout the world. I'm frequently asked about program budgeting as I travel around the world today on World Bank business.

R: Now, on twenty-five--on the Cold War and the nuclear balance--you've had some things to say already; but this is an extremely important part of the record. You might wish to go back to the post-Cuban Missile crisis period and the opening up of the Test-Ban Treaty discussion and recall how that evolution looked to you and your role in it. (What role did you play in scaling down the Cold War and bringing about disarmament discussions beginning with the cutback in the production of fissionable material in 1964?)

M: The record pulled together by the archivists is particularly deficient, I think, in dealing with this whole subject of what I'm going to call, loosely, disarmament. And my memory is even more deficient. So I don't wish to discuss it in detail. I do want to make an important point, however, in connection with it. I see the role of the secretary of defense as requiring that he explore the advantage to the nation and to the nation's security of every potential disarmament move and to support every move that appears to be consistent with and supportive of, the national security. Now this was a concept, a philosophical concept, that was at variance with the traditional role of the Defense Department. Generally speaking, the Defense Department had taken positions in opposition to disarmament moves. In our case we not only supported the moves, but we contributed to the initiation of several of them. And I would include in this category moves that we supported or initiated in such actions as the following: the limited test ban of the latter part of the Kennedy Administration; the potential later expansion of that test ban--an expansion, by the way, that unfortunately never took place; the Non-Proliferation

McNamara -- I -- 55

Treaty; the reduction of the production of fissionable materials; the proposals for reductions in the military budgets of the U.S. and Soviet Union, initially by parallel action, independent of each other, but in full view of each other, and hopefully later by agreement. The latter, of course, has not been realized. I hope it will be. The initial stage of parallel action was only partially successful. The failure was due, in part, to misunderstandings on the part of the Soviet Union as to actions we took in connection with Vietnam.

Most important of all were our initiatives leading to the initial concepts and moves to establish what later became the SALT discussions. You were present at the time I discussed the subject with the President in Texas.

In all these moves, and in others as well, I believed that the secretary of defense should act in the national interest to find ways to reduce the danger of military conflict and to reduce the burden of military arms. So we took a positive position and positive stand in connection with disarmament.

R: The dialogue on the Test-Ban Treaty began promptly after the Cuban Missile Crisis.

M: That was one of the reasons I felt the Cuban Missile Crisis was such a success. I think it changed relationships in many, many respects, including that one, between the Soviets and the U.S.

But I want to emphasize again the importance I placed then on disarmament and the importance I place on it today. I'm inclined to think that almost at any time in the past twenty-five years we could have negotiated strategic nuclear arms limitations or reductions with the Soviet Union which, with hindsight, would have been to our advantage. We failed to do so because we consistently examined essentially only the risks of proceeding with such an agreement and failed to examine properly the risks of not proceeding with the agreement. You could always conjure up a series of contingencies under which the Soviets might violate the agreement, in which case for a temporary period we might be at a disadvantage; but for twenty-five years the Defense Department and the nation failed to appraise properly the risk to the nation of no agreement with the Soviet

McNamara -- I -- 56

Union, and the stimulus to the Soviets, therefore, to narrow the gap in strategic nuclear weapons that lay between us, a gap which in effect they have finally eliminated.

R: You know what it's like? As you just described it, it sounds like the problem of business and labor negotiating a wage-price agreement.

M: It's very similar.

R: They prefer to go on in the style to which they are accustomed, at great cost, by not contemplating the consequences of not making the agreement. Do you wish to talk about question twenty-six? To what extent have changes you effected in the Pentagon been permanent?

M: I think the answer is I'm not the best person to ask that question. I'm not fully familiar with the administration of the Pentagon today. It's my impression that what I'll call the rationalization of departmental activities--the orientation of departmental activities to support a national as opposed to parochial interest, the introduction of program budgeting, of systems analysis--innovations such as these have taken hold and continue.

R: I'd add one other you didn't mention, which is a serious professional military involvement in arms control.

M: I was going to mention that. Two points then: a serious military involvement in arms control; and the acceptance by the military of what I'll call the rationalization of defense programs in relation to the national interest. I think both of these sets of mind have continued. Now you can argue, as some do, on whether they've been weakened or strengthened. I'm not close enough to say exactly. But I believe I'm close enough and have seen enough evidence on the outside to lead me to conclude that these sets of mind, these innovations, have become permanent fixtures of the Defense Department operations.

R: Now we come to twenty-seven on Vietnam. [Attached are your major recommendations on Vietnam. What additional comments would you make?] Whatever you want to say or not say about that is wholly in your hands.

M: I may have said earlier, I can't recall whether I did or not, but I'll say now that I still feel too close to Vietnam--too direct a participant in the decisions that affected the U.S.

McNamara -- I -- 57

intervention in Vietnam--to speak impartially with respect to the success or failure of such actions. In 1965 and 1966 I believed that the decisions that were being taken were so momentous with respect to the history of our nation that it was essential we preserve the records of the day that related to them--the premises on which such decisions were taken or that influenced such decisions--so that future historians would have access to them, could reappraise the decisions and draw lessons from them. It was to permit such historical research that I asked John McNaughton and, through him, his successor, Paul Warnke, to arrange for the collection of data which subsequently became known as the Pentagon Papers. Because I was a party in interest I did not wish in any way to supervise the collection of such papers; and I probably didn't supervise them enough, because I did not intend that they would turn into evaluations to the extent they did. Not that I necessarily disagree with the judgments in the Pentagon Papers. Quite frankly, I haven't even read them; but I didn't believe that any of us at the time were well equipped to evaluate the actions; and, in a sense, it was a waste of human effort to try to do so, being so close to the events. Instead I had intended that the raw material be accumulated, systematically arranged and preserved in an orderly, readily available fashion for historians. I think to a considerable extent that objective was met by the papers. The judgments that were formed at the time will, I'm sure, be subject to reappraisal and examination and perhaps modification in the future. Beyond this, even today, I have relatively little to say on Vietnam. I have some thoughts on the subject. Perhaps at a later date I will wish to express them.

The last question you ask relates to my resignation from the administration. (The record in the Library on your resignation is fairly complete but will be closed for some time. Could you comment for the record on the reasons for your resignation and some of the controversy generated by it, especially assertions that you were being fired or forced out.)

First let me emphasize again that my recollection of those years is dim. I have no documentary evidence of the sequence of events. The President's records, even when they

McNamara -- I -- 58

are ultimately released, will probably chronicle the period fully, so what I have to say now is subject to whatever modification the records later indicate is appropriate.

As I recall the sequence of events, it began in this fashion. In the summer of 1967, George Woods, then the president of the World Bank, told me that he would be retiring in the fall, although he stated the date of his retirement could be significantly deferred; and he wished to recommend me as his successor. I told George that the presidency of the Bank was a job that particularly interested me. I emphasized, however, that I had given no consideration to what I was going to do when I left the department, and that I would not wish, under any circumstances, to leave the government except at a time acceptable to the President even though I had stayed far beyond the time I had initially planned to stay.

I then reported the conversation with George Woods to the President. He asked me my views, and I repeated to him the points I had made to George. The President said he didn't want me to leave, but, as I had served nearly seven years, he could recognize the necessity of my thinking of leaving. In any event, he wanted to be sure that when I did leave, to use his words, "I had anything I wanted." I believe he meant exactly that.

The President and I had worked closely together throughout his entire term. He knew of my deep respect and affection for him. He knew of my loyalty to him; and I felt his respect for me, and his desire to advance my interests. It is true that my views on Vietnam policy, views relating to the level of bombing, the level of troop support, the necessity for moving more rapidly toward a political settlement were increasingly diverging from those of others in the administration. And I think perhaps that fact advanced the time of my departure by a few months. It may have influenced the President; but I never had any feeling then that I was fired, as was alleged in the press; and I've seen no evidence since that was the case.

R: This should have been inserted earlier, but the question is: how do you remember the origins of the SALT talks in the U.S. Government?

M: Here again, I want to qualify my answer by saying I have no documents in front of me. I should say also there were others present at the time we made the first major step forward

McNamara -- I -- 59

in conceiving of SALT and moving toward what ultimately became the SALT agreements, and their memory should be tapped as well as mine. Among those present was yourself. You played a major part in it, as did Cy Vance.

SALT grew out of two situations: First, the very strong feeling on my part and that of others, including the President, that we should seek every possible opportunity to work out an agreement with the Soviets to limit strategic nuclear arms; and secondly, an event in the Federal Building in Austin, Texas, in the fall of 1966, I believe early December.

The event I'm referring to was an occasion on which Cy Vance and I and the Chiefs flew down to Austin to meet with you and the President to discuss with the President my recommendations for the Defense budget of fiscal 1968, a budget that would have to be submitted by the President very shortly to the Congress. The Chiefs were all present because it was our custom to insure that their views were properly represented. In this instance it was my intention to strongly disagree with what was, I think it is fair to say, the Chiefs' unanimous recommendation that the nation should proceed with an anti-ballistic defense. I say I think it's fair to say that this was the unanimous recommendation of the Chiefs, leaving some marginal uncertainty in my statement, because the Chief of Staff of the Air Force recognized the incongruity of his position when he was recommending that the strategic offensive missile force of the air force be expanded at the same time that he was recommending that we introduce a very expensive anti-ballistic missile defense against Russian missiles which were no more or no less capable of penetrating such a defense than his own missiles. But with that single qualification, the Chiefs were unanimous in recommending that we proceed with a very, very costly missile defense which Cy Vance and I believed would ultimately cause the expenditure of tens of billions of dollars and would lead to no, and I emphasize no, significant increase in the military security of this nation.

The Chiefs, all five of them, presented their views to the President. The President called on me to respond. I responded by saying that I totally disagreed. I strongly opposed proceeding with an anti-ballistic missile defense and advised him in the strongest

McNamara -- I -- 60

possible terms to refuse to support the Chiefs' position. It was one of the few times when I left the President in a position where he had to choose in the starkest terms between one of the recommendations of the Chiefs and my own. Normally I would have made it much easier for him to choose between us by, over time, leading the Chiefs to modify their positions, for example, or by other actions. But in this particular situation there was no middle ground. He was forced to say we should proceed with an anti-ballistic missile system or to say we shouldn't. It was a very uncomfortable position for him and, in effect, it was for me, because I didn't like to face him with such a difficult choice, a difficult choice in political terms as well as in military terms. And I had given much thought, as had Cy, to that problem before we entered the room. We thought it might come to exactly the situation it did; and we had considered what formula we could devise that would reduce the political pressures that would develop on the President were he to accept the recommendation we made in the face of the unanimous position of the Chiefs--we knew that the Congress strongly supported the position of the Chiefs. As a matter of fact the Congress, prior to this date, had actually appropriated funds for the procurement of an anti-ballistic missile system, funds which we had refused to spend for that purpose. This is another illustration of a point I made earlier--that my problem was fending off congressional support for military expenditures that we didn't need, in contrast to today when the attitude of Congress is quite different.

In any event, when the President was struggling with the question of how to move, I suggested to him that we might introduce into the budget sufficient funds so that, at a later date, should it then appear desirable--which I didn't think it would--we could take action on a so-called thin anti-ballistic missile defense in contrast to what the Chiefs proposed, a thick anti-missile defense. We would make perfectly clear to the Congress that we did not plan to spend those funds any time soon, and that the funds were being requested so that they would be available in the event that later action proved it absolutely essential that we move in that direction. I proposed further that we accompany such an introduction of funds into the budget with the initiation of discussions with the Soviet

McNamara -- I -- 61

Union toward an agreement which would preclude the development of anti-ballistic missile defenses by either nation, which, hopefully, would ultimately limit the strategic nuclear offensive forces of both nations; and which would surely bring the benefit to each of a full discussion with the other of deterrence and the views each held with respect to it. The President seized upon this formula, agreed to it, and authorized Cy and me upon our return to Washington that afternoon immediately to contact Dean Rusk and the State Department so that they could proceed with the matter and initiate discussions with the Soviets which, hopefully, would lead to what later became the SALT talks.

We did leave Austin that afternoon. We returned to my office. We got back, as I recall, in mid-afternoon. I immediately called Dean Rusk. As I remember he was not in his office. I got in touch with Nick Katzenbach, his deputy. I urged Nick to meet with us immediately. He said he would. He brought Tommy Thompson. We met in the conference room next to my office. Cy, Nick, Tommy and perhaps others sat down at the table. We reviewed the conversation in Austin. State was delighted to have the authorization to move in the way I indicated they should. However, since it was to be such a dramatic new initiative, they insisted that I call the President and, in their presence, review the matter again with him over the telephone to insure that there was no misunderstanding between us. I did so. They heard clearly his full support of what we were suggesting, and they began the necessary steps for contacting the Soviet Union.

R: While you are on this, do you have any memories of that marvelous time at Glassboro, in the short run fruitless, but in the long run perhaps significant? I mean that apparent debate at cross-purposes you had with Kosygin at lunch.

M: The President had a marvelous sense of humor. You probably recall those days better than I do. My recollection is that Kosygin was coming to the U.N. We knew that in advance, of course, weeks in advance. We were very anxious that he meet with the President. Having failed up to that point to really make much progress toward what later became the SALT talks, despite the action we had taken some seven months before to

McNamara -- I -- 62

initiate them, despite numerous contacts of Tommy Thompson with Dobrynin and Dobrynin with the Politburo, and despite other contacts between us and the Soviets--

R: Did you talk with Dobrynin yourself about this?

M: I did. To digress a second. After the President authorized the contacts with the Soviet Union in December 1966, I and others talked to many individuals about the desirability of moving ahead and the difficulty we were having in gaining Soviet acceptance of such discussions. One of the individuals I talked to, a U.S. citizen, called me one day and said he had understood that Dobrynin wanted to talk to me about this subject. I said fine; tell Dobrynin that I would be happy to meet with him. This would have been quite an unusual meeting, because in contrast to today, when Dobrynin has very close contacts with all parts of the U.S. Government, up to that time the contacts between the Secretary of Defense and the Soviet Ambassador were limited, to say the least. In a very real sense we were at war with an ally of the Soviet Union. It was obvious that it was inappropriate, normally, for Dobrynin to be contacting me, or vice versa. But, in this particular instance, I said to my friend: Tell Dobrynin that I would be happy to see him. The friend said he thought it would be much better if I told him, Dobrynin. So I picked up the telephone to call Dobrynin and made a mistake. I knew it was a mistake as soon as I made it. I said to Dobrynin that I understood that he wanted to talk to me and that I would be glad to talk to him. "Oh," he said, "I don't know where you got that idea. I certainly had taken no such initiative." I immediately recognized my error and retracted. "Well" I said, "undoubtedly I was in error, but since he was on the telephone, let me say that I would be just delighted to meet with him at any time at his convenience." He said he would be quite happy to see me. I said, "Where would you like to meet: at my home or my office?" He said, "I think it would be much more appropriate if we met at your home." This was in April of 1967, if I recall the time correctly. It was just a week or two before he was to go back to the Soviet Union to report to the Prime Minister and his associates in Moscow. He did come to my home. He came alone, which at that time was quite unusual--for a senior Soviet official to meet with the Secretary of Defense alone, particularly in his home.

McNamara -- I -- 63

We had a very frank discussion of the interests of each of the nations: the requirement for deterrent forces; the actions that each might take to preserve deterrence at a lower level of strategic nuclear forces than might otherwise be the case; and the advantage to both nations of engaging in discussions of these subjects. While he made no commitment to me, I got the strong impression that he personally, strongly favored the initiation of discussions.

Now to resume my story about Glassboro. It wasn't long after Dobrynin returned to Moscow that we learned that Kosygin was coming to the U.S., to the U.N. Many of us hoped that he and the President would meet together. The President--I think perhaps properly, but certainly to my disappointment--said: "Well, by God, if Kosygin wanted to meet with him, the President was available in Washington and Kosygin could come down from the U.N. to Washington and meet with him." And Kosygin was essentially taking the same attitude: "By God, he was coming to the United Nations as the United Nations and he wasn't coming to the U.S; and the fact that the U.N. was in the U.S. was coincidental; and if the President wanted to talk to him, he could come up to the United Nations and talk to him." There seemed to be no way in which we could get these two men together.

One night, late in the day, six or seven o'clock in the evening, the President called me and said, "Bob, what are you doing about Glassboro?" And I said "Glassboro where, Mr. President?" I had never heard of it. "What do you mean?" And he said, "You're in charge of this, what have you done?" And I said, "In charge of what?" He said, "You're in charge of it. You've been pushing me for a long time to meet with Kosygin. By God, I'm going to meet with him and you haven't made any preparations for it." Well, I said, "What do you mean? I don't know a thing about it." Well, he said, "I'm going to meet him in Glassboro and you better darn well get the place fixed up." And I said, "Mr. President, where is Glassboro?" And he said, "It's in New Jersey." I should have guessed that because if you take a compass and put one prong in New York and draw an arc and then turn around and put the prong on Washington and draw an arc, the two arcs would intersect at Glassboro.

McNamara -- I -- 64

R: Governor Hughes found it for him.

M: Well, it could only be determined by the terms I suggest, because that's exactly how you find Glassboro. So we arrived at Glassboro. It looked like something out of a Grant Wood painting. It was the house of the President of the University of Glassboro or whatever it's called--

R: A teachers college.

M: --Teachers College in Glassboro, New Jersey. You could just see what happened. A group of locusts had come in, in the form of the Secret Service, and swept those rooms. I opened one door on the second floor. It was a bedroom and the room was piled from floor to ceiling with the furniture of this marvelous couple, the president and his wife. They had just swept the rooms, pushed it all in this room. So we met there all day long and the President and Kosygin met alone for a good part of the day. They had lunch at a small table, perhaps ten or twelve were at the table, including the President, Kosygin, myself, Tommy Thompson and Averell Harriman. Kosygin was sitting next to the President and I was on the other side of Kosygin. At one point during the luncheon the President said, "Now Bob, you tell the Prime Minister why this movement toward limitation of strategic arms, and particularly the avoidance of deployment of anti-ballistic missiles, is in the interests of both nations." So I engaged in a discussion of the pros and cons of the anti-ballistic missile defense and why it appeared to me it was in the interest of both nations to agree not to deploy such a defense. I said that, were the Soviet Union to move forward with an anti-ballistic missile defense, we would have no option but to counter it by expanding our offensive force. There was a process of action and reaction which each party needed to understand and take account of in considering its own moves and the ways in which the other would respond. Quite clearly the Prime Minister disagreed with this, hadn't thought about it, and--

R: Or pretended not to have.

M: Or pretended not to; but I really believe he had not thought about it, and he did disagree with it. Because you may remember--

McNamara -- I -- 65

R: Oh, he said he disagreed?

M: What he said was, your position is immoral--

R: Inhumane and immoral, that's right.

M: Inhumane and immoral. He said, "We--the Soviets--are acting morally. We are only protecting the fatherland. We are proposing to defend ourselves. You are proposing to expand your offensive missile force." He didn't seem to grasp the point that they were pursuing deterrence in their way, and their way of pursuing deterrence weakened our deterrent; and we, therefore, were forced to respond with an action which offset their action but advanced neither one of us. At the end of the day you probably recall that the President and Kosygin had reached a point, not of agreement, but of wishing to pursue the subject further. Therefore, contrary to the schedule that had been agreed upon earlier, they decided to meet a second time. We met again on Sunday. I think the Glassboro meeting advanced the understanding by both sides of the other side's position; but it was just one in a series of meetings that were to take place over the following months before the SALT talks actually got under way.

R: There is one other aspect of Glassboro I wonder if you remember. On Sunday we all sat in the room outside the little room where the President and Prime Minister met. It was really quite a galaxy of talent. [Andrei] Gromyko was there and his able, intelligent press man; Dobrynin, et cetera.

M: Averell, Tommy Thompson, yourself, Mac [Bundy] and myself. I recall it.

R: Do you remember the discussion about China that took place?

M: I don't--

R: You raised with them your reaction to that Chinese film that we saw coming back--

M: Oh, yes; oh, yes, I do.

R: I want you to recall that if you can.

M: Well, I remember raising the film because it disturbed me immensely.

R: Yes.

M: But I don't recall their reaction; perhaps you do and can relate it.

McNamara -- I -- 66

- R: Well, I do. The reaction was: if you're worried about the Chinese reaction, how do you think we feel?
- M: Oh, yes, yes. The Chinese film, for the record, was a film of Chinese nuclear developments, leaving the implication that the Chinese believed nuclear weapons could be used in their interest; and although they might receive, in turn, tremendous casualties, they were prepared to accept those and were certain they would prevail in the long run.
- R: Yes, the specific point I believe you made was that film, aside from the general euphoria at their exploding a bomb, showed them treating it like artillery.
- M: Yes, exactly, exactly so, as a usable weapon.
- R: As a usable weapon with troops moving in right behind it.
- M: Exactly, and it just scared me to death.
- R: It was scary. I was amazed that the Russians were willing to talk so candidly about their reaction to the Chinese nuclear capability in that kind of a group.
- M: It's through the little things like that, I think, that you can see evidence of the way in which our understanding of each other, and a combined understanding of nuclear weapons and their limitations, was advanced.

End of Interview I

NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION

LYNDON BAINES JOHNSON LIBRARY

Legal Agreement pertaining to the Oral History Interview
of ROBERT S. McNAMARA

In accordance with the provisions of Chapter 21 of Title 44, United States Code and subject to the terms and conditions hereinafter set forth, I, Robert S. McNamara of Washington, D. C., do hereby give, donate and convey to the United States of America all my rights, title and interest in the oral history interview conducted on January 8, 1975 and prepared for deposit in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library. I had previously required that no access to this interview without my written permission. That restriction is herewith lifted.

This assignment is subject to the following terms and conditions:

- (1) The transcripts shall be available for use by researchers as soon as they have been deposited in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.
- (2) The tape recordings shall be available to those researchers who have access to the transcripts.
- (3) I hereby assign to the United States Government all copyright I may have in the interview transcript and tape.
- (4) Copies of the transcript and the tape recording may be provided by the Library to researchers upon request.
- (5) Copies of the transcripts and tape recordings may be deposited in or loaned to institutions other than the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.

Signed by Robert S. McNamara on March 16, 1996

Accepted by John W. Carlin, Archivist of the United States, on March 29, 1996

Original Deed of Gift on File at the Lyndon B. Johnson Library, 2313 Red River, Austin, TX
78705

ACCESSION NUMBER 90-4

NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION

LYNDON BAINES JOHNSON LIBRARY

Legal Agreement pertaining to the Oral History Interview
of ROBERT S. McNAMARA

In accordance with the provisions of Chapter 21 of Title 44, United States Code and subject to the terms and conditions hereinafter set forth, I, Walt W. Rostow of Austin, Texas, do hereby give, donate and convey to the United States of America all my rights, title and interest in the personal history interview I conducted on January 8, 1975 in Washington, D. C., with Robert S. McNamara, and prepared for deposit in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.

This assignment is subject to the following terms and conditions:

- (1) The transcripts shall be available for use by researchers as soon as they have been deposited in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.
- (2) The tape recording shall be available to those researchers who have access to the transcripts.
- (3) I hereby assign to the United States Government all copyright I may have in the interview transcript and tape.
- (4) Copies of the transcript and the tape recording may be provided by the Library to researchers upon request.
- (5) Copies of the transcripts and tape recordings may be deposited in or loaned to institutions other than the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.

Signed by Walt W. Rostow on 25 June, 1996

Accepted by John W. Carlin, Archivist of the United States, on July 1, 1996

Original Deed of Gift on File at the Lyndon B. Johnson Library, 2313 Red River, Austin, TX
78705

ACCESSION NUMBER 90-4