

INTERVIEW III

DATE: March 19, 1969

INTERVIEWEE: McGEORGE BUNDY

INTERVIEWER: Paige E. Mulhollan

PLACE: Mr. Bundy's office, New York City

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M: This time the subjects I want to talk about--and for your time benefit I hope we can wind it up--are Latin America, Europe, and the Middle East, particularly. Suppose we begin with Latin America, if that's all right. Mr. Johnson's first crisis there, I suppose, was the Panama one. You were out of town, I believe, when that one broke, is that correct?

B: Well, not very far out of town. I may have been out of town during part of it. I had a bargain with the President that he would honor an agreement that I had made with President Kennedy that I would go on vacation in January of 1964, I guess. Then certainly part of the Panama crisis was during that absence, but I do remember being around on the day that he decided to just plain call up the President of Panama [Roberto Chiari]. And I was around again on the day that he went and annoyed the Latin American diplomats. I think I probably drafted some of the more offensive sentences in that speech. We were in one of those heads-they-win-and-tails-we-lose situations in which if he hadn't talked about it they would all have said, "How shocking that he should come down and talk to a distinguished group of diplomats and not refer to a rather important subject." When he did refer to it they said, "How shocking that he should, in fact, discuss this delicate diplomatic matter in what is purely an informal meeting."

M: You can't win.

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B: I felt that we had a bit of a rough time with them on that. Of course, the thing finally sorted out. It was my first experience of watching the President's way of approaching a bargaining problem, and we had quite a lot of misunderstanding, I think, between him and the rest of us on this matter because we thought that it wasn't worth haggling, or haggling as much as the President wanted to haggle, over the wording of whether we would "discuss" or "negotiate."

M: A fine line, it seemed.

B: And he felt that it was necessary to bargain to the hilt on that. There is a kind of an instinct in the President that does lead him to feel that a bargain from which you don't get the last full measure is hardly a worthy bargain for a good man to go into. And that's an extremely sound position when you're dealing either man-to-man or dealing on roughly comparable bases of power. I never thought myself that it was all that sensible in dealing with a power the size of Panama, so that we weren't terribly helpful to him in the sense that we weren't attuned to his state of bargaining mind or state of mind on bargaining. And beyond that, he was receiving sort of congressional opinion on these tiresome people in Panama and weighing it more heavily than either the people in the State Department or the people on his White House staff would have tended to do.

M: Was he more inclined to listen to that type of congressional advice in the early [days]--that is the first month he's president, really the the second month--than he would be later? Did he evolve on that issue as time went on?

B: I think he became less sort of immediately responsive to congressional opinion of this sort as the years went by, a little bit less disposed to believe that it mattered that much

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whether his old friends felt comfortable about a relatively small decision. He always insisted--while I was there anyway, and I was, of course, only there full time until early 1966--on checking these matters and having the reaction from the Congress, and then he would take his own reactions. Nobody ever checked Dick Russell for the President; he did that himself, at least in my department. But I think that's a shrewd guess; I couldn't document it very sharply.

This thing came out, really in the end, about the way it could have come out quite a lot earlier. Then, of course, the President embarked on an extremely responsible and adult process of bargaining with the Panamanians. He got his friend Bob Anderson, who in turn got his friend Jack [John N.] Irwin, and between them I must say I think they did an extremely good job.

M: Irwin's back at it again now, I see.

B: He's now got an even harder problem, which is this tangle we have with the Peruvians.

That was done very well. It would have been better if it could have been done more rapidly, but the delaying factors were mainly in the Panamanian end. The President had a kind of confidence in Anderson that he had in relatively few other people for this kind of a negotiating process, and Anderson did meticulously build congressional consent as he went along, and understood the importance of that side of it in a way that the President found comforting.

M: You mentioned the President as a personal diplomat--in one of the earlier talks we had--with several people. What about this exchange with Chiari? Was it as passionate as the public press described it?

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B: The telephone conversation?

M: Yes.

B: No. It was a very grown-up conversation. There was nothing all that--and the text will be there somewhere, I'm sure. But I don't remember it that way.

M: This was not a case of bullying a small Central American president?

B: No, not a bit.

M: Let's move to the Dominican Republic, which is no doubt the greatest of the Latin American imbroglios, at least.

B: Yes.

M: Why don't you just sort of describe the events leading up to it, as best you recall them, in a way that might flesh out some of the documents?

B: Well it broke very suddenly in terms of serious White House attention, at least for me. The President, I think, was more concerned about it in a way than I had been. I remember being somewhat surprised that he had Ambassador [William Tapley] Bennett in to talk it over during that period when Bennett was in Washington just before the final request for troops, which came from Bennett after he had gotten back down there. And I have always supposed that the President will have talked to Bennett in terms that made it clear that he'd rather be safe than sorry in the Dominican Republic, and that he would be much more concerned to be told that he was needed in time than to have Bennett temporize or let the thing get beyond control where there wouldn't be anything we could do about it. That's guesswork, but I have that impression from the way he reacted when the telegram did come in and from the overall balance of his judgment on the enterprise

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right on through.

That's an extremely complicated tale, and I can't give you dates to go with this story, but I'll tell you my principal impressions. One, that when Bennett did ask for troops, initially to guard an area right near the hotel for the safety of Americans, we all agreed that was the thing to do. We had differing views as to how much we might do beyond that, I think, but they were latent. The mistake--if it was a mistake, and I think it was in retrospect--of not going after the OAS [Organization of American States] right away was less the President's than that of the rest of us.

M: You mean in the sense that you just simply didn't advise him to do so?

B: We should have thought of that. It was more our business to think of that than it was his. They were alerted by the end of the evening, but by then the troops were there and there was a sort of ground for hurt feelings, and a feeling that it was a hasty unilateral action was that much reinforced.

Then we had a very complicated series of judgments about how much force and where it should be [used]. I don't want to rehearse those without having the papers in front of me, except to say that the President's own weight was always on being sure that there was enough. Having made the decision, he didn't want to be in the position of not having strength enough down there. He took the position--of which there's a good deal of sense to it--that politically you paid about as much to have two thousand troops there as ten thousand troops there, and you needed to have enough so that you really had control of the situation. I was of the view that rather smaller amounts of force were adequate for our purposes and that we looked a little heavy-handed, but obviously his judgment

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prevailed.

We had the further complicated problem of explaining it. This is really, in my judgment, where our overall management was least satisfactory. The President--there is book after book to show how he became compulsive in discussing this matter. And the difficulty is that in discussing a matter of this kind on an off-the-record basis, or half on-the-record basis, or in departing from text as he did in the Sunday night speech, his explanations were always more graphic, and his drawing of the cartoon of his reasoning provided these open-ends of just how many heads were rolling in the streets, and was the Ambassador under the desk. The graphics of Lyndon Johnson in full career didn't correspond precisely with the evidence that was available to substantiate his proposition. I have never thought that anyone could demonstrate sharply that there was going to be a communist takeover, but neither could they demonstrate sharply that there was no danger of that. The President was in a position where American public opinion as a whole always thought that on the whole--or most of the time has felt I think--that the Dominican adventure would make pretty good sense. But articulate, international-minded, Alliance for Progress-minded opinion did not. The President wasn't all that keen on tempering the wind to the shorn Harvard types on this issue, and he paid for it. And unnecessarily, because there really was a mess in Santo Domingo; there really was a problem of safety, and then a following problem of who the hell was going to be accountable in the long pull.

The eventual solution was very reasonable. That was worked out by [Ellsworth] Bunker. My own mission down there, with Cy Vance, was initially the product of the

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President's desire, stimulated by Justice [Abe] Fortas, to see if we could reach out toward the more reasonable rebels. Fortas was very close to [Juan] Bosch and thought that such a bargain could be made. The President was willing to try. He sent three of us down there, Vance and [Thomas] Mann and me, and then tried to proceed on the basis of unanimous consent, both in Washington and in this enlarged Santo Domingo delegation, to every step. Well, that didn't work. He eventually, in effect, pulled the rug on us. This is not something that I've ever put anywhere else, therefore the security of this is quite important. He was not willing in the end to go through with the kind of bargain that we had supposed he would be willing to go through with. He couldn't get that much unanimity for it. Mann was back in Washington and I'm sure was against it. So we tightened the conditions and they said they couldn't accept it, and then we went back.

Then presently Bunker, with much more leeway and much more time, worked out an agreement which was in fact more advantageous from the U.S. point of view, but which took that much longer. I think the President, on the whole, would still say that that was better than having an agreement that would have been harder to defend that much earlier on with conservative opinion at least in the United States. Several of the issues that he wouldn't agree to when we were doing it he did agree to when Bunker was doing it, because people weren't watching that closely and things were that much more stable.

M: Were you all dealing with the same people in Santo Domingo?

B: Different people. Different people in the sense that the man around whom Bunker constructed his compromise was a fellow called Hector Garcia-Godoy, who was nearer the center and less near the rebels than Antonio Guzman , who was the figure around

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whom we had hoped to build our compromise. And over those months the rebels became somewhat weaker, the center forces increased in strength, the spotlight went increasingly off the Dominican Republic, and Bunker's ability to use the OAS as an instrument of sort of international validation or hemispheric validation increased. Bunker's own patience was extraordinary and [his] skill very great. And he brought it off, which was just an enormous contribution.

Then under that provisional regime, presently there were elections, and [Joaquin] Balaguer won the elections, and the Americans troops came out, whenever they did come out--before the election, I guess.

M: Before the election. There were a few, I think, left.

B: The Dominican Republic is not that much better off than it was, but it's not that much worse off. Indeed, we had a very substantial AID [Agency for International Development] recovery program and that sort of thing. It's an impossible country in the sense that it is bitterly divided into factions of all sorts. Its economics are very difficult. Its sense of statehood is very incomplete. These are people who can get into a rage against the Americans, but if they had the Puerto Rican privilege of unlimited immigration they'd all be here.

M: None of these problems are new either. The Dominican Republic has been that way ever since anybody can remember,

B: It has been that way for a very long time, with ups and downs and ins and outs. What was most damaging about it was not anything in the policy decisions, it was the frenzy of explanation, and the belief that those explanations were self-serving and inaccurate, to

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put it mildly.

M: You did indicate that things like Johnson's second Sunday night speech, in which he said the rebellion had been taken over by communists from the outside, were departures from the text?

B: That sentence he just plain threw in. We fought over the text all day long, the President trying to strengthen it and the rest of us trying to tone it down. And we just plain lost. He was under demonic compulsion to wrap himself in the banner of defending the island from the communists

M: But the goals, you're saying, really didn't change? The policy goals stayed the same throughout pretty much?

B: I think he wanted to be in a position to prevent a Cuba in the Dominican Republic. The problem was not with that substantive decision; it was with the genuine wildness of the process by which he explained it.

M: How much is a policy on something like that decided by people on the ground? I've seen it intimated by [Theodore] Draper and others, I think, that the people in Santo Domingo really committed the United States so much against the revolution to start with that the provisional government couldn't have done much.

B: Well, this is a very difficult question, and that's why I think that it is important to--we don't honestly know to what degree. They were committed in the sense that Bennett believed certainly, sincerely, and soberly, that the rebels were very bad news. He also had whatever guidance he did have from the President before he went back to his post. You can get differences of opinion on how far it was the embassy and how far it was

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Washington, who it was. These kinds of matters of the weight of this or that counsel are very hard to sort out, especially as some of the critical meetings are meetings one wasn't at, one couldn't be sure about. I have never believed it terribly valuable to choose up sides too sharply as to who was giving what advice at what moment in that Dominican affair, because I honestly don't know.

M: I think you mentioned or implied a while ago that no one was opposing it explicitly in concept, that is, the idea of being involved at all.

B: Of "just don't put people in there," no, that wasn't around the President. In the situation as it was presented by those cables from Bennett, there wasn't anyone holding that view. You see there was a formal government which was willing to make, indeed delighted to make, a formal request for assistance. Where the thing got to be much bigger was as we went along. And I just don't have those bits and pieces of day-by-day decisions clearly enough in mind to talk about them.

M: It's frequently written that he talked to you that week eighty-six times, I think it is, on the telephone.

B: Well, that's his figure.

M: Is that part of his compulsion, just to talk about it? Or was he keeping that close a minute-to-minute contact of what was going on?

B: A lot of those conversations were very small. It was intensely on his mind, but that statistic is one he had compiled and he put it out. What he was trying to show was how carefully he was controlling the matter. It was a silly statistic, obviously.

M: Yes, but I can't resist asking about it.

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Do you think that Lyndon Johnson really had a special interest in Latin America, as some of his biographers have said? Did he from his background?

B: No. He had a special, a serious interest, in Mexico, and he did have good relations with heads of the Mexican government during his time. He took a good deal of pride in that and always had a considerable pride in his good relations with the Mexican-American voting population in Texas. He had a certain camaraderie with some of the Latin Americans, but I would not be able to say that I would say he had that intense an interest in Latin America.

He worked extremely well with many of the Latin American presidents, for example with Frei [Eduardo Frei Montalva] in Chile. At one point he asked Frei for help that was politically rather difficult for Frei, on copper prices in late 1965. I thought he was asking more than he could get, and he got it. That happened more than once in his bargaining when I was watching him. He used [Averell] Harriman, as I recall it. And Harriman went down on a highly confidential mission and got Frei to agree that he would either roll back or not raise the copper prices at a time when that was not an easy thing for a president in Chile to do.

M: It was done by personal influence?

B: Done really by an appeal for personal support. Obviously it was closely related in the President's mind--but the negotiation was handled so that it didn't become offensive--to the U.S. aid and our economic relations with Chile generally. You know, our own good will was at stake in the matter, too.

But I don't recall the President sort of saying, "Now, in Latin American affairs

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we've got to do this and this because this will improve our Latin American relations." He was very content to have the Cuban problem itself sort of stay on the back burner, which it did most of his years, as I recollect it. He was alert to changes of government, like the unhappy one which occurred in Brazil. But again I don't recall that he was heavily engaged with Latin America. I don't think that in that sense--a sort of sense in which a professor of the subject would be interested in Latin America, or an assistant secretary of state would be, or anyone else you could name--that he had what I would call a deep concern with Latin American policy.

M: Of course, there are all sorts of individual events that might be gone into. I think the important ones we've mentioned here. Do you want to switch over to across the sea in Europe?

B: Yes.

M: How about the birth and death of MLF [Multilateral Force] then? The most misreported or widely reported event of all.

B: Well, there was a lot of reporting on it, and some of it comes fairly near the mark. I think that the President in 1964 was for the MLF, without having taken a great deal of time to consider it and certainly not having taken the time to consider what he would do about getting it through the Congress in whatever form it came before the Congress. I don't mean that he hadn't formally considered it, but that he hadn't crossed it in that serious legislative sense in which he was figuring out where the votes were and what he was going to do to get them. He did give a kind of a green light at an important meeting I think in the spring of 1964, and the brethren went ahead. I didn't go back to him and say,

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"Look, do you know what you're doing and did you really mean it?" because it seemed very clear in the meeting that he did. He had been briefed on it pretty thoroughly. He had been to Europe once as vice president and had made speeches about this sort of thing, a speech anyway.

Well, not much progress was made in that period. Then the matter came up again at the end of 1964 in the context of a visit from [Harold] Wilson. And he just wasn't ready to make it a bargaining issue with Wilson, which he would have had to make it to get the kind of progress that was needed, or with the Germans, who either had come or were coming again fairly soon.

M: I think both, in that case, had come and were coming again.

B: Was it? So then we had a showdown about it of sorts. And I did produce--at one stage of the bargaining or discussion I reminded him that President Kennedy had had the same kind of a problem, and showed him the exchange I had had with President Kennedy on the subject, and said that I thought he had a perfectly clear-cut alternative option, which was not to go ahead with it but to let it slide away, that nobody could ever agree on it if we didn't push it, that all he had to say was that he was only for it if other people were for it.

He not only agreed to that and made the decision in internal government terms, but told Scotty Reston that same night, deliberately I'm sure, so as to get the decision out where it would stick. And it was on the front page of the [*New York Times*] the next morning at a time when most of the State Department didn't even know it had been made, and the brethren all thought I had done it. So I made it clear to them that I had not done

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it, that higher authority had done it, because they might as well know it was his decision and to stay with it. And it never came back. It at once disappeared, really with astonishing speed for a major diplomatic issue. I think what brought him to the point was the proposition that in order to get it through he was going to need to make it a major issue in the Congress, and he just didn't think it was worth it. I really think it was that kind of a point.

M: The congressional opposition?

B: Well, the congressional cost.

M: You've called them the brethren. They're variously called the theologians and the cabal and other things. What happened to them? When they lose, what happens to them?

B: Well, when he made that decision, it was very clear that that decision was there to stick. The MLF in early 1965 was a much weaker phenomenon than it had been in early 1963 after the Nassau Conference, when it was for various reasons an attractive alternative for Germans and Americans. And in a certain sense it was a *quid pro quo* to have some British nonopposition to it in return for the Polaris missiles that they got at Nassau. And the French hadn't come out against it then as they had later on, partly because they saw it getting more lively in 1964. One of the things that happened in 1964, as I recollect it, was that as the official American policy of being strongly for it pressed forward in operation there developed an explicit French opposition which made it much less interesting to the Germans and much less clear that they would, on their own, do this unless they were kind of dragged into it. So the moment President Johnson backed off into a position that he would support whatever Europeans would support, the thing

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disappeared.

M: Is it dangerous for bureaucrats to push a plan like that so far? Any chance of retribution on, say, jobs or future appointments and so on?

B: You mean, did they suffer as individuals?

M: Yes.

B: No, I don't think so. I suppose the senior man with that kind of commitment to it was George Ball, and the President didn't lose respect for him at all. Another was Walt Rostow, you know. No, no, I don't think the President felt that they had diddled him, nor did I. He had given them a clear green light. I think that simply was a case where in giving them encouragement to go ahead with it, he wasn't in his own mind saying, "This is now a policy that I as president am going to drive through with all my leadership and powers." You don't really have a blank check. But part of their doctrine was, you know, that the American lead was decisive in European affairs, a much wider sentiment that just that surrounding the MLF. This was why people like [Jean] Monnet and [Dean] Acheson, and in a slightly less degree people like [John J.] McCloy, felt almost, "We don't care what your policy is, but pick one and push it through so as to prove that the Atlantic idea and the American leadership for equality and partnership and the future of Europe and all that are still very strong."

The trouble was that the MLF, the real trouble--another interesting change that I think is left out by a lot of the analysis is that when the MLF, or the notion of that kind of force, was first developed--which was really in 1959-1960 in the State Department and largely by Jerry [Gerard] Smith and Henry Owen and people like that in the then-Policy

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Planning Staff--part of the reasoning behind it was a very deep-seated feeling that we were going to have a requirement for nuclear reinforcement to balance the Soviet MRBMs [medium range ballistic missiles] that were already in prospect--maybe some of them in place, I don't recall exactly. This continued to be the view of the NATO commanders, you know, that they needed their own medium-range missiles one way or another, and nobody wanted to put land-based MRBMs in Western Europe, or least of all mobile ones rushing around through the French forests, and the first generation liquid fuel missiles--

M: I served in a corporal battalion in the mid-fifties I know what those are like.

B: You know what we are talking about. That seemed a very poor arrangement, so let's make them seaborne and let's multilateralize them. With this new necessary force let's also get the political advantage of having some effort at partnership, and so forth.

Well, partly as a result of the Cuba crisis, partly as a result of the cooling off of Berlin which came after the missile crisis, partly as a result of the more general placidity of the Cold War in Europe in 1963 and 1964, and partly because people weren't meeting their defense budgets for a whole lot of other things, all of these things interlocking together, the sense that "We have to have a new weapons system" was sharply weakened. You can't really meet a political objective with a military instrument whose military justification is already severely undermined and the cost of which is no longer attractive on military terms. The felt need which had undergirded the whole notion--it almost was, "We're going to have a new weapons system. What is politically the best new weapons system to have?" Well, that was transmuted into a situation where "We don't need a new

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weapons system, but politically we need this." Well, you can't do that, and especially not if it's nuclear and not if it involves the United States Congress in pressing something that looks somewhat like a nuclear capability on a lot of other people.

M: Does the same issue arise now in such things as the [Charles] de Gaulle action in asking us to leave France--the decision as to what to do about that, what to do about de Gaulle? For example, whether to push hard or whether to let him have his way?

B: No, it's a different issue in a way, because although there was that kind of a difference of judgment as to how to react to it, there were those who felt, "This is outrageous and let's be just as mean to him as he is to us," and, "Isn't there some way we can be disagreeable to him?" The President was sufficiently interested so that every now and then he would say, "I want somebody to make a very long list of all the things we can do to General de Gaulle." People would make that list and then they would discover there wasn't all that much we could do to General de Gaulle without also damaging our own interests or our own purposes. I always felt that the President's basic policy toward General de Gaulle was very good. He got diddled a little bit in the first interview as to whether General de Gaulle would come and visit him or not. Rather foolishly, or rather incautiously, he announced that General de Gaulle was coming and then it turned out that he wasn't, and that was mildly embarrassing. But he didn't let that bother him more than a little. He was always correct. The negotiations with the French about how they got out of the Organization although not out of the Alliance, and how we got out of France, I thought were very skillfully handled. I forget, was that the one that Acheson handled? Somebody did.

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M: Acheson went to France, yes.

B: And I think it was handled with dignity and without a kind of silly scrapping over it. It was a firm French decision; it wasn't going to be turned around.

M: The President was normally on the side of responding moderately to de Gaulle?

B: Moderately. Not getting mad at him and not making issues where you weren't going to make any progress.

M: What about the pressure that we had to put then and subsequently on the Germans for our balance-of-payments difficulties, particularly?

B: Well, I don't have a great deal to tell you about that. I wasn't terribly close to it.

M: It was just beginning, I guess, before you [left].

B: Well, it was a recurrent matter. It goes back even to the Kennedy time, and the fellows who had to do most of it were in the Pentagon. I think the President believed that the Germans could and should do their share to offset our costs in the Federal Republic, and the Germans generally did. That got sharper, and the Germans less cooperative, as the years went on.

H: That was mostly after you left?

B: After I'd left.

H: What about the general German problem? Every analyst says that is the greatest problem in Europe, and what we're doing about it, if anything, gets less publicity than practically anything else. Was there any movement, any hope, for a short-range German solution that we actually pushed at any time while you were there?

B: The President used to say to [Ludwig] Erhard that he needed the Germans to get out there

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and think about that, that we couldn't support any solution that they didn't support, that it was more important for the Germans than it was for us. He needed a German lead. He would have liked to have made progress on sort of a settlement in Central Europe, but it wasn't a propitious time, certainly in 1964 and 1965. The President's principal speech on Europe is the speech of October 1966, and the man who had most to do with that is [Francis] Bator. He's the fellow to ask about LBJ and European policy in 1966, 1967, and 1968, I think.

M: Was he your deputy by the time you left?

B: He was designated with the title of deputy just before I left, and it was really curious, because he and I think [Robert] Komer became deputy special assistants for national security affairs, and then when I left they didn't reappoint a special assistant for national security affairs.

M: Deputies to a nonexistent job.

B: Rostow was appointed simply special assistant, because the President was hoping to not have people revive all that White House-State Department stuff that was a part of life and still is.

M: Any other European matters that don't come to mind? Europe was sort of in kind of a quiet stage in 1964 and 1965.

B: No. It was in a quiet stage, and the quiet stage was the product of the situation. Even if there had been no war in Vietnam and no preoccupation with the domestic society, you might have seen the President touring through Europe and making a few speeches, but you wouldn't have seen a great deal of movement because there wasn't that much that was

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moveable.

M: That was my impression as well.

Let's move to the Middle East. What about your appointment as special task force chairman when the crisis arose in June of 1967?

M: Well, I had been in Europe, actually looking at this business of an East-West center for advanced management studies and that kind of thing, which at Bator's instance the President had asked me to look into. I got back and found a call from Rostow, would I come to Washington early in the following week, because they were troubled about the Middle East. The President sort of wanted a number of people to get briefed and then talk with him about it, sort of a wise man frame of mind that came up once or twice in other contexts. Sure, I said I would. Then the first thing I knew, early on Monday morning, "You'd better come down right away because there is a war, and he wants everybody there today--instantly." So I did.

Through the day we sat around in the Situation Room and the Cabinet Room, watching the first bulletins and getting the first message in and the first answer back on the hot line. And the President handled all that with great skill. The worst worry, which was are the Israelis maybe going to get licked, that we were going to be on the losing side, now what are we going to do about it there, that dissipated itself during the first day. So the worst problem never arose.

The President was driven up the wall in a lower-key sense of importance by a State Department announcement that we were neutral in thought and deed and word, which was not what his friends in New York wanted to hear. So he heard about that from

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the Arthur Krims and the Abe Feinbergs of the world.

There was also, and obviously had been developing over the weeks of the Gulf of Aqaba crisis, the question of how far we could get along with the British, and a tension inside the executive branch as to how these decisions were being made. [Robert] McNamara in particular had a very strong feeling that they weren't being staffed out in a way that gave everybody a chance to be heard on them, and gave the President effective control over his own proceedings. So he [McNamara] said to me, "We're in this kind of a mess, and it is all loused up. It needs somebody to do what you used to do at the White House. Would you do it?" I said, "Sure, if it's that serious and if the President asks me to." Within half an hour the President did ask me to, and I've always assumed that that was McNamara talking to the President, who felt that there was probably a job that needed to be done. And also I think he was looking around for somebody who, given the accidental circumstance that his UN Ambassador was Jewish, and one of the top men in the State Department and the one who seemed to have most to do with this continuing problem was one Rostow brother, and the other in the White House was the other Rostow brother, that it would be helpful to have someone with some visibility who didn't happen to be Jewish. That wasn't a matter that related in any serious way to the substance of policy, because those three individuals all had different views of policy actually, and so did many others--shades of difference.

But the President's [policy], the policy of the United States, the one that [is] the crucial issue in the area, was that the Israelis should not get beaten, and the crucial political issue at home--not because of the sentiments of the Jewish community, but

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because of the sentiments of the American people--was that they should not get licked.

There never was an issue where public opinion was more in accord as to who were the good guys and who were the bad guys.

M: So events really kept any serious policy question from having to be decided?

B: In my view there was no enormous policy question. Now, there were very delicate negotiating questions with the Russians, and the ceasefire problem was a tricky problem. And one or two of the Russian messages raised the temperature level. Now, there's a difference of judgment retrospectively as to how grave that ever became.

M: This is hot line messages you're talking about?

B: Yes.

M: The text of those do exist, do they not, somewhere?

B: Oh, sure. The President has conducted his own sort of review of it in the last weeks or so, months, before he left the White House. He had all those messages and had a young fellow working on it. He has told people that he thinks this was the most serious diplomatic crisis of his time in the White House. I honestly don't share that view. I think it was--the Russians used some fairly brisk language down toward the end of the week, but they knew and we knew that the game was just about played out, and certainly the Israelis did. I am not one of those who thinks that there would have been global war over the Middle Eastern crisis if it had gone on another day or two, but it wasn't certainly worth having it go on. And we gradually increased the pressure on the Israelis to stop. They gradually acquired most of what they wanted. The Soviets were discomfited but by no means driven to the wall on the question, and the ceasefire came. But it was coolly

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handled by the President. It was a very intense week, but not a dangerous week in the sense that the Cuban time was dangerous.

M: Were there thoughts then of four-power cooperation, such as is being talked about now?

B: Nothing quite that formal. The French were talking about it, but the rest of the countries concerned were not particularly. The discussion was bilateral in that sense, fundamentally. The ceasefire was the Israelis getting enough to have a place to stand, we having enough heat on them to get them not to go further, the Arabs being willing to accept it because they were getting so badly clobbered, and the Russians pressing them, and pressing us, and leaving some uncertainty as to what they would do if not, and so forth.

Then the thing shifted to the UN where, of course, a great deal of the action had been right along. [Arthur] Goldberg carried on up there. And we had the Glassboro meeting.

M: That was my next question. What role did Glassboro play in the general circumstances of the Middle East?

B: It didn't prove a great deal in relation to the Middle East. We came out of it about where we went into it on Middle Eastern questions, but it was a meeting whose principal value was that it represented kind of an assertion of the usefulness of peaceful coexistence by both sides. It was a tremendously--it was sort of short term, but a very powerful stimulus in terms of public opinion. It was a much applauded meeting. The mood was what the American people wanted it to be, and [Alexsei] Kosygin played along with that. It was in that sense a very successful meeting. There was no significant diplomatic advance or

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retreat on either side.

M: You met with [Andre] Gromyko and [Dean] Rusk and McNamara and others during that time, did you not?

B: Yes.

M: But no particular new initiatives from either side?

B: Indeed, the one serious subject we tried to open with them there and had hoped we would move a little bit further was strategic arms control, and on that they weren't ready and felt, I guess, that we hadn't really produced very much either except a standard speech which they had heard before in one way or another from McNamara. We didn't think our initiative was all that serious, and they gave really a very--Kosygin gave us something a little less than a tirade in response to that. It wasn't until more than a year later that they indicated a more serious readiness to go ahead on that subject. Then, of course, those negotiations, about which I know only indirectly, were interrupted by Czechoslovakia.

M: Then how long did you continue in this--?

B: Well, I was there sort of for a month, or for the month of June full-time, or about that length of time, and then about half-time during the month of August. I had to look it up, because Wright Patman said I was down there as Ford agent, trying to protect Ford Motor Company interests in the Middle East. I had already informed his staff man that I, in fact, served without Ford salary during the time that I was in Washington. And I think it was full-time in Washington with a consultant's pay down there for the remainder of June, after I went down there, sort of June 6 or whenever it was.

M: That's a tenuous conspiracy, to spend a month down there two years ago.

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B: And half-time in the month of July. And while there were some days we worked in August, I didn't charge the government for them.

M: But it was a short-term thing, and you didn't then stay with it in the subsequent months?

B: No, the President, in a way--again, it was a very characteristic affair. We never announced that I was going back to the Ford Foundation, because he didn't want to say that the crisis was over one day and have the fighting flare up the next. So I just sort of sneaked back here and gradually turned up back on the job.

Every now and then pretty much until the end of the term, Rostow or Saunders would say, "The President wants you to look at this cable," or, "He'd like you to comment on this proposed statement," but that faded out pretty much. He did a very careful statement on the Middle Eastern situation in I would guess the end of the summer or early fall of 1968, and I was not involved with that. I thought it was just fine. I worked when I was back there; Walt let me have the full use of Hal Saunders, who was his Middle Eastern man, and who is well worth your having a talk with.

M: He's not on our list, too. I'll be sure to add him.

B: Well, you ought to put him on the list because in a way he followed Lyndon Johnson's views in the Middle East with more sensitivity than anybody in that last two years. He's still there; he's doing the same job for the Nixon Administration.

M: There's a whole potpourri of what you might call minor issues that I might just mention to see if you think there's anything worth commenting on in any of them. One of them, the general problem of disarmament and Mr. Johnson's position at various times or any particular time.

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B: Well, I wasn't there when the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty was making progress. It didn't make much while I was there. I think that the President was for disarmament, you know, responsibly for it and serious about the reasons for being for it. I just had lunch with John Cowles, who doesn't really think the President was very lively about it, because except in the election year of 1964 he didn't pay much attention to a high-powered establishmentarian committee.

M: Was that the Disarmament Advisory Committee?

B: The Disarmament Advisory Committee, with McCloy at the head of it. But I think that's probably not right. I think the truth of the matter is that he had a very practical approach to it. When he saw a chance of making progress, he wanted to, and when he didn't, he didn't sort of pretend that he--except in election years when disarmament is a good thing to be for. No, I don't have a great deal to add to the record on that. It wasn't, as I say, a thing on which we were able to make much progress up through early 1966, and they were able to make progress with the NPT later on. I think the President was good and steady and forceful in working for that.

M: Closely related to that is the general policy that Mr. Johnson called "building bridges to the East." That seems like one that would be contrary to what you mentioned on the MLF, where he'd take a position that was not popular in Congress and push it fairly hard.

B: Well, he pushed it fairly hard, but not when he had to go for legislation particularly. He never pressed for the amendments that would have made the [J. Irwin] Miller report, the East-West trade report, actually happen.

M: He put the bill in and never pushed it even to committee hearings.

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B: Is that what happened?

M: I think that's what happened.

B: And that would be true also of the Consular Convention. He was for things, but not--I'm not quarreling here, because I don't know the balance of forces. I think the President was for sober and responsible relations with the Soviet Union, and he did push the Nonproliferation Treaty when he got it to that point and would have been glad to see it move faster, clearly. But I think he felt that President Kennedy had overdrawn his accounts on the wheat deal.

M: But Johnson pushed that pretty hard, feet-to-the-fire type thing to get it through.

B: Well, he did. But it was one of those cases where he wasn't in a hurry to have to do it again. I'm not blaming him either, because I think that was very uphill work and you had various kinds of complicated alliances against you there. I forget which of the seamen's unions it was that, you know, wasn't about to load all that quick Red wheat.

M: What about in the executive branch? Was there a considerable bloc of opposition there to the general policy of trying to build bridges?

B: No, more a kind of slowness and lack of affirmative constituency, except in the White House staff, would be my guess. The arch bridge-builder was Bator, and he would be in a better position to recite than I. I did put together the Miller Committee [Special Presidential Committee on U.S. Trade Relations with Eastern European Countries and the Soviet Union], and Ed Fried was its executive director [executive secretary].

M: This is not meant to be impertinent at all, but was that a stacked committee to come up with a report you'd like to come up with?

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B: Well, allow me to put it the other way, that we picked people that we thought would walk around the subject and come to a solid view that a responsible increase in East-West trade was in the national interest. Yes, in that sense, it was a committee--which is normally the way you do pick advisory committees in the executive branch, not that you want to know precisely what they're going to advise you, but that you have a policy--that you think their advice will be the kind you'll want to follow. The committee could have come out within any guidelines we gave it for a narrower approach, or a substantially broader approach. But there was that much thinking hard about what kind of counsel do you want to get, yes.

M: What about Johnson and foreign aid?

B: When the President would appoint committees and didn't think that through, he was always very disturbed at the first--

M: Later when they reported?

B: You know, a president--you use that kind of advisory committee just that way in the government, and you should. You don't try and spell out where they're going to come out, but if you don't have confidence in where it'll come out enough to believe that they're going to give you an opinion you want to follow, then you don't appoint them.

M: Does Mr. Johnson have a foreign aid position that's different or noteworthy so far as you know?

B: Well, he never was comfortable with foreign aid. He begrudged the amount of political capital it required to pass it through. He tried very hard early in his administration to sort of break it up and put it in different parts of the government so that it wouldn't have all

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that many enemies. He wasn't able to solve that problem; he kept asking George Ball to do that job, and George would come back and tell him that he couldn't square that circle. Then the President would feel, "George Ball isn't as good a man as I thought he was." What he really--you know, he couldn't help thinking that it would somehow be easier if it weren't all up there where everybody's gripe could be used to beat it over the head, but the congressional advice of the experts was, "Well, if you break it up, all you'll do is sink the part that has no real friends," which is the economic assistance. And so he would hem and haw and huff with that. I think he liked both [David] Bell and [William] Gaud, but he didn't really think either of them--you know, they were messengers of bad tidings congressionally; they were always asking for his help instead of going and getting their own damned bills through. And unfortunately, this was the nature of the problem. There wasn't that kind of constituency; you didn't have a situation which you had with most other appropriations where you could go and find good friends and drum the support. The President did teach an administration that wasn't that closely oriented with the problem of legislative action that legislative action, if you needed it, was something you were supposed to go and get the support for yourself. That was a counsel without not only an imperfection, but an impossibility to--they didn't have that kind of authority. They couldn't do what Jim Webb [at NASA] could do with his billions to spend on domestic hardware.

M: And with a program that could get good publicity periodically.

B: Good publicity, and if he needed intellectual friends he could set up a bigger scholarship program than the goddamned Ford Foundation ever had, and so forth.

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The President didn't love aid in that sense; he believed in it and the logic of it, but he found it dismaying that it was so unpopular.

M: That affects the program without any question when that happens.

B: Yes.

M: Only one other thing, and this is a little bit irrelevant to Lyndon Johnson, but I don't think it's irrelevant to foreign policy in the Johnson Administration. You've mentioned the term several times in referring to other people, "the establishment," or "the establishmentarian." In the Johnson Administration, how close-knit an establishment was important in the foreign policy advice spectrum? Is it a pretty close-knit group? You know well all these people apparently.

B: Well, it looks closer knit from the outside than it does from the inside. And I think that's probably usually true of human affairs. We have that problem now with the Ford Foundation, an unknown, semi-invisible, powerful force. And oddly enough, the far left thinks of it that way, the far right thinks of it that way, and I'm beginning to think the center thinks of it that way.

M: And Wright Patman, who is still a populist, thinks of it that way.

B: He thinks of it that way.

Different issues, different kinds of closeness in a way, and different configurations of people closely involved. The closest sense of harmony in the administration, and the easiest in a way, was the election of 1964. Everybody felt the same about that; everybody was easy about who the enemy was and comfortable about who our champions were. And there were some very, I think, overriding and important

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foreign policy issues there. I think it was foreign policy in the sense of who can you trust and who can't you [trust] that had the most to do with the President's margin that year. And I think that the country was right. I think that the later sort of attacks on Lyndon Johnson for having adopted a so-called Goldwater policy are dead wrong. I don't think he ever did. He always kept a kind of control over the war and over events in Vietnam and in the Dominican Republic that was not consistent with the way Goldwater used to talk. I don't know what Goldwater would have done. But I'm not sure I know how to respond to your question.

M: Really what I have in mind, I think, is whether you think there's a group of people who are prominent in foreign policy advice who have such a similarity of background, interests, and opinions that contrary opinions, if such exist, might have a hard time getting through.

B: No, I really don't think that. I think that the President had before him on big issues a range of opinion and an access to a range of opinion that was always, on big moments, very wide. Now I would agree that he often preferred a very small group, and he did have--although the Tuesday luncheon grew larger and larger as the administration grew older. When I came back to the government in 1967 and was included in it at times when the Middle East was on the agenda, as it obviously was in June, it tended to be ten, twelve, fourteen people very often, whereas it had been more nearly four or six or eight in my time. But there were always considerable ranges of view available to the President, not only through that group--because Rusk and McNamara and I are temperamentally three quite different people, and in policy views quite different people, on Vietnam and

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on other subjects--but also because there were, and the President insisted on there being, additional ways for him to hear of important differences of view. No, I don't think there was that kind of tightness, really, on big issues.

M: You mentioned the suspicion of the Ford Foundation. I think the same sort of suspicion exists from both left and right about the existence of a little group of men.

B: Yes. I think that's right. And there is a sense in which a wider visible structure of counsel does help to diffuse that a little bit. But you get that now. They've stopped it at the moment. It's not newsworthy; it was all written in the first round of stories. But people are going to say that the President only listened--well, you can see it in the *Times* this morning: "President Nixon did not consult outsiders whom he specially trusted as Lyndon Johnson used to do, or university people that President Kennedy used to do."

M: I just read that article before I walked in here.

B: "He consulted only with--" and there they have pictures of the [David] Packard-[Henry] Kissinger cabal that produced this one 1969 decision.

M: Maybe that's one thing this project can do by getting the testimony of all of the establishmentarians. The differences that do exist in their viewpoint, as you mentioned, will become apparent.

B: I would hope. I would think so. I don't mean to say that you don't develop a kind of a closeness in human terms which can be inhibiting. Someone made that point in an article not long ago, that one of the troubles of this business is that people do get to be so intimate with each other that they may pull their punches in commenting on each other's proposals.

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M: I saw the same article, and I can't recall the source either.

B: I don't think I ever had that kind of a problem with my friends in the Department of State, but I probably think there was--that as between McNamara and me there got to be a degree of affection and of trust and of respect which made us not terribly critical of each other. I think that's probably true. I think now we're such good friends that we aren't inhibited.

M: You reach a point and pass it.

B: He's on my board, and he doesn't hesitate to tell me when he thinks that I've fired over my shoulder.

M: Don't let me stop you. Do you want to add anything here as a *carte blanche* closing? Go right ahead and do so.

B: Well, I probably have said this. I'm not clear, of course, just what we've covered and what we haven't covered. I think the thing that is most important to get across about President Johnson, when all the ups and downs and ins and outs are over, when you've talked about how much a child of the Congress he was and how his calendar was the congressional calendar--and his sense of decisive American sentiment was largely in terms of what would and wouldn't carry on the Hill--when you talk about how he made his own troubles over credibility--and he did to a very large degree--and what a hell of a time historians will have with what really did and didn't happen, and how hard the bargains he drove were, and how often he managed to make it hard even for his most loyal staff members to know what he was really trying to do because of the very high premiums he placed upon masking his intentions until he'd achieved his results. You

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could go on at great length about weaknesses in his processes of administration, degree of belief in secret information, FBI information, gossip from reliable political subordinates that outpaced the reliability of either the FBI's information or the information from reliable political subordinates, the difficulties that Scotty Reston used to write about at such length of believing that he never would be properly trusted and valued by Easterners, Harvard types, *New York Times* editorial writers, the sense of both the pride and unfairness of being a Texan. And when you write down on the other side the extraordinary talent in the process of legislation, at least in the short term, in holding together the process of government in Washington for very hard courses of action with great costs attached to them, willingness to use all kinds of men, those he found and others that he had found for him, if he had all that much trouble with the Eastern Establishment and with the Harvard types, how could there have been so many of them so devoted to him for so long and used so effectively? If he didn't understand the executive branch, how could he have built a relationship to the professional federal service through John Macy that is the best that any president had? How could he even have worked with Macy? If he wasn't going to work with men who had these approaches to the processes of government, how could he conceivably have had as his three highly-prized budget directors [Kermit] Gordon and [Charles] Schultze and [Charles] Zwick? And if he's the demon that you'll find in the *New York [Times] Review of Books*, how could so many people, so many very different kinds of people, have the kind of simple and deep affection for him that you'll be finding, I'm sure, throughout this oral history, from all sorts of people?

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He's terrible in lots of ways. If he doesn't like what you've done you never get it from him; you get it from Marianne Means or William S. White or some other form of dribble off the mouth, and you're intended to notice. And you get three months of sort of frosty silence and everything opens up on another front. And sometimes it's a calculation; he needs your help. But it's mostly not. It's mostly that that rage is over, and he was not that mad, and you're back in business.

He's a rare natural force! He's much his own worst enemy, but he's also his own best friend. And he's a great man with great flaws, and the qualities far outweigh the flaws in human terms. In the long run I think history will deal with him more kindly than contemporary opinion has in the last year or two. Certainly I know very few people who worked with him in the kind of way that I did who aren't, you know, in the end full of admiration and affection for him. And, of course, for her, too, because they're not to be taken separately. Some of his most difficult and least explicable times--the very toughest moments of this Dominican business, she's not there. And the times when she's not there are not the best times. And that's something, I'm sure, he'd agree with.

M: I'm sure that's about as good a summary as I can ever hope for.

End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview III

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