INTERVIEWEE: WILLIAM P. BUNDY (Tape 4)

INTERVIEWER: PAIGE E. MULHOLLAN

June 2, 1969

M: You had gotten last time to the summer of 1966 with the decision to bomb the Haiphone POL, which came at the end of various efforts at peacemaking. The one question that occurred to me just as we left was you made the comment that after the Christmas pause of '65 that George Ball's commission to seek peace iniatives seemed to have come to an end. Did it devolve then on to Harriman--did the Harriman group date from that time, or how does that figure into this?

B: Let me see. Others would recall better than I, but the Harriman group came into being, I think, sometime after the pause along toward the middle of '66. Let's see. Tom Mann came in in succession to Governor Harriman as Under Secretary for Political Affairs in about April of '65, just before the Dominican thing; and for a period, the Governor did specialty things, as I recall. I'm not clear. He may have been given a broad mandate in the area of negotiation in July of '65, but his intense involvement came only after December.

M: So he would have been operating concurrently with Ball?

B: Concurrently--but the one that I described was very particularly George Ball's operation. Conversely, though, when the big pause came up, the Governor was the man chosen for the really serious mission which was to the Poles, and which played a part in what we now know to have taken place about the Poles sending Michalowski to Hanoi. My impression would be that the Governor was very much in the play right through from at least January '66 onward, and I don't know exactly what the mandates were. In all

frankness it wasn't as clearly defined as it might have been, although I think we certainly were covering the ground; that is to say, I seemed to get in to do a specialty job like debriefing Ronning in March and again in June, partly because I was less visible than the Governor obviously. But the Governor was giving thought to all these matters, and we had some thinking going on. Some of the early overall strategy papers date from [1964 and May of 1965] but the more systematic strategy papers date from early '66, along in there.

Well, in any case, the summer of '66 was given over almost wholly to seeing how the elections for the constituent assembly would come out. That preoccupied everybody, and I don't recall any significant major events in that period. I rather think it was a period, and there were some periods like this, when I just didn't see the President a great deal. He was obviously very fully engaged in other matters; there was nothing that was preeminently mine that was to the front.

Now, the next step, of course, was the Manila conference and the President's trip to Asia in the fall, and on that I suppose I have a fair amount to recount. The idea of a summit meeting of this type had been kicked around in the earlier part of the year. I find in my files mentions of it going back to May or June, that if [the South Vietnamese] got the constituent assembly [elections] done properly, this would be an appropriate time to get together. But, frankly, as the Congressional elections impended, it didn't seem likely that the President would wish to do it in that period. I have done a memorandum which is available in the Library. I wrote it to Walt Rostow before January 20, just quickly going through my distinct recollections on how the idea of a Manila conference came up. It was, in fact, the President's idea, although he went to very great lengths and with the willing

cooperation of Marcos to have it appear as Marcos' suggestion. And in fact the suggestion had been kicking around so much, particularly from the Koreans and Thai, that it was not basically spurious in the slightest to say that it was really an Asian initiative. But the immediate idea of doing it in that time-frame was certainly the President's, and through steps that I've put in this memorandum, Ambassador [William M.] Blair talked to Marcos, who had just concluded a State visit here; and that went through and Marcos, by the time he got to Tokyo, had agreed to do it and the dates were worked out. I guess he announced it in Honolulu, and then the dates were worked out when he was in Tokyo and so on.

Well, on that trip--which was certainly an epic in scale in the organization of Presidential travel, and I must say, possibly parochially, that I think it was epic in substance, too--I think this trip was handled brilliantly by the President in indicating what he was ready to do, responding very quickly so that a schedule could be set up on extraordinarily short notice by Bill Moyers, who for my money performed heroically in doing the advance job in setting up the schedule, and just by all hands, I thought it was really a remarkable trip. And I suppose it was designed, although I can't say this specifically, in the President's mind to dramatize what was happening in Asia and the relationship of what we were doing in Viet Nam to it. I never knew whether it [a trip] could have done that better at some other time, but it seemed to me it [the idea at the time] had a great deal to commend it. At any rate, it was handled extraordinarily, and I think the President's speeches and utterances, and all the people who worked on those--we had a very good teamwork operation. I and other suggested themes, and then the writers went to work on them and then they were hammered back and forth and they stood up pretty well.

Now, I didn't go to Australia and New Zealand, so I can't comment on those phases of the trip, but I do recall very vividly the Manila part of the trip and the President's performance which was, I thought, very outstanding. First of all, when he arrived late on a Sunday afternoon, he had to see a number of the key leaders--he had to see all of them really--to save face that night. And he did those calls very well. I particularly recall meeting with Park of Korea, who was obviously very worried about whether we were going to come out for some new peace positions that would be far too weak for his taste. The President was absolutely exhausted that night. It was one of the times where his extra ounce of energy and dedication really came into play. And he started off very slowly. And then the nature of Park's worries became clear to him--we had tipped him off what might be coming, and it did come. And he responded vigorously and reassuringly, without saying anything that he would live to regret. It was a remarkable meeting, and from that point on the Koreans were ready, willing, and able. They accepted that the President was solid, and they didn't have to worry. And they were wanting to make the best possible success of every aspect of it, and the President had done it in that Sunday night meeting with Park.

The other episode of that evening that Jack Valenti can recite more on were suggestions for change, to put it that way, in the Marcos' opening speech. Because Marcos had shown us the text of what he proposed to say, and it was in tone--not really in substance--but in tone a "peace tomorrow" speech. And the President did not think that was realistic and put Valenti, who had known Marcos personally when he went out with the Vice President to the Philippine inauguration at the beginning of '66, to work on it. And I don't know whether Valenti personally did it, but there was also a private meeting between Marcos and the President in which the President,

so one inferred at any rate, was very direct. At any rate, the following day it was really an epic to those of us who had seen the text to see how Marcos changed the words in about thirty differenct places--changed the word "peace" to something else, or something of that sort--in order to create a more balanced tone in the speech, and it made a difference. In other words the President was the broker of the conference. He was the man in the middle that everybody was really looking to for guidance.

He also saw the Vietnamese that night; we'd worked very hard with the Vietnamese on all kinds of documents and things. They were pretty well prepared. That didn't have the special flavor that these other two meetings had, but they are a piece of the President's performance that certainly lingers in my memory.

Well, then the following day the morning consisted of opening speeches. And then in the afternoon, it was up to the Chiefs to speak in order. There wasn't a systematic subject agenda. Everybody spoke. And the President waited until the end, I guess it was done alphabetically. And his informal remarks in the afternoon session were very powerful indeed. I'm not sure that any record other than the Philippine record exists of them, but they were very strong and they were his own--that we were going to see this thing through; we'd done what we were going to do, what was necessary, and so on. It was a strong speech, and it was a very thinly veiled, "Look, the rest of you get with this and do more." We had advised him very strongly that the conference should not visibly be the occasion for pressure for more force contributions, but he did it in this way. It was, again, a particularly Johnsonian performance, you might say; he didn't say it, nobody could say he'd said it, and yet anybody who missed the point would have had to have earplugs. And it was a pretty tremendous performance.

And the Koreans, who had felt they had done their share, were delighted with it. They didn't feel this was really directed too hard at them. They were delighted with it, and it, again, firmed up where they stood.

Then that night we had the communique group which I happened to be the chairman of and that's purely a story of its own--just the usual kind of working it out. I think there was some informal gatherings, but it was mostly quiet.

The next day the Foreign Ministers--and the Secretary of State--went over the draft, went over it in some detail and did a new text for the Chiefs. And then in the luncheon period and after lunch came the work that went into the withdrawal provisions and particularly the six months time limit. That had been kicking back and forth for two or three days. It was clear the President wanted to set a time limit. Frankly, I had advised against it, and I'm not sure how others had advised; but it kept coming back. And the President's second desire was to have a really crisp, clear declaration of basic principles--what became the Declaration of Manila--and that too had been kicking around. We'd done our withdrawal language, but not with the six months, in the Communique Committee, and we had done a communique, and we'd done a form of declaration, but we hadn't done a short-form declaration. We'd done a long-form declaration. The President wanted a short-form declaration.

Well, shortly after lunch, it's my recollection (and Bill Moyers is the other real witness on this), the President had been closeted in the back room having lunch quietly, I believe, with the other Heads of State. It was Marcos' office and Marcos' private parlor and dining room, and so on. And I was summoned over by Moyers. The President was alone in Marcos' office. This is just a story in a way, but it illustrates the

man in an involved historic decision. And the President said, "I understand you don't like the idea of putting in a six months' time limit." And I said, "No, sir, I don't. I think it will seem abrupt to many of your colleagues, and I think it just ties your hands against events."

And he said, "Well, as far as your first point is concerned, I've already talked to them and they like it." So that left me with one leg to stand on, but I hobbled as best I could the last lap and stood up and said, "I still think it'll hurt; my whole experience is that things said in flat-footed terms haunt you in due course." I may say, I think my fears were exaggerated, but this was what happened.

The President looked at me and said, "This is what is going to be," and I said, "All right, sir, that's the way it's going to be, so there's no possible doubt about that." I don't remember exactly what I said, but the thrust was, let's get with it, and there was no question in my mind. This was a Presidential decision. There was no question. Incidentally, I was embarrassed at this point because I had been called in apparently to be the Devil's Advocate, really. The Secretary of State wasn't called in for some time afterwards.

And the second issue was how did you get a short-form declaration?

And the President said, "I want the Four Freedoms." And I said, or at least I thought, that that was a lemon. Freedom from this, and so on and so on. Apart from being a straight crib from Roosevelt, it just didn't fit with the themes that we'd got in the long thing, which we had worked out with some care on the basis of original language that came from the Thai and lots of people. It would be a horrendous job to reshuffle it, and so on. Well Bill Moyers, looking at what we did have, sat down or stood, I think, at the table of Marcos' desk and scribbled something out

which became the four points of the short declaration, and said, "Mr. President, would something along these lines be what you have in mind?" And the President looked at it and liked it. And that's the origin of the Manila Declaration, I believe. Now, Bill may--Bill Moyers would be the real witness on this, but it was a masterful piece of quick thinking under pressure, and it produced something that was good stuff, good stuff! It was solid, it said what people meant to say, it gave you something to really hang your hat on. I felt that I had failed the President, in a way, by not coming up with that in the longer declaration, but we'd worked until three o'clock in the morning and we just hadn't finished everything.

And I think only the President could have sold it--the whole thing.

Well, then, we went into a session that was really comic. Because of course Marcos, as the host, was nominally in the chair. We were trying to finish up the communique. First we had to get the withdrawal provisions straight. That involved an endless amount of scurrying around to get the Koreans to understand translations, and this and that, to be reassured. And I'd be sitting next to the Thai Foreign Minister, and saying, "It's okay with you, isn't it?" And he'd say, yes, it was okay with him, and so on. And we were really scrambling. And I was right behind the President. He was using me to explain what was needed, and so on. And, as I say, the Secretary of State didn't come in until a little later.

Well, we got through the two key provisions, and then the President thought that wrapped it up; but, no, everybody then said they had lots of changes they needed made. We were just about to go to bed with a text that had lots of stuff that people still had problems with. In effect, it became a second session of editing with the Secretaries and at that point all the Foreign Ministers were brought in--the Secretary of State

came in properly and all the rest. And I simply became a messenger with Moyers and with the Philippine fellow to be sure the text was right.

Well, the President took the chair. Again, a Johnsonian vignette, if you will. The President, for all practical purposes, took the chair. This was his Senate training, his Senate training and his natural leadership. He said, "Has anybody got anything in paragraph one?" Anybody got anything in paragraph two? And the stuff would come up, and he'd handle it magnificently, go to almost any lengths that didn't change the sense to accept anybody's verbal quirk. We've all lived through this kind of session, I've lived through them at the staff level umpteen times. I don't think I've ever seen it done better. And it did the job in an hour which, in normal protocol, "After you, Alphonse" terms, would have been hours and hours and hours. Well, time was absolutely pressing at this point. We wanted to get the communique out, and this called for it to be redone, because obviously you weren't going to put one out that showed where you'd made changes. So you had to redo the whole thing, and the very primitive reproduction facilities of the Philippine show were just not equal to it. And so it hung fire. I was out there correcting sheets; Moyers was back and forth, looking for it from the press standpoint; it was a very comic couple of hours. And my phase of the thing, in effect, was that the thing was delayed and Moyers, I believe, was responsible for giving it to the two wire services who scooped the rest of the press, so that by the time he and I stood up to background the press at the Manila Hotel about nine that night, a madder bunch of men have never been assembled in any room, and particularly not in a hot and steaming room with inadequate mikes to begin with. So that was quite an experience. But that doesn't directly involve the President. The President did very kindly say to me

the next day that he thought we did pretty well explaining the communique, but that's all he comes in. Because he, himself, had by that time gone to the guest bedroom in the Palace where he had been housed and was having the private meeting on what became the trip to Cam Ranh the following day. And Westmoreland and the Secretary of State and Ambassador Lodge, all these people, were in there advising him, and he had to make up his mind whether he would go and if so, how; and Westmoreland produced a plan, and so on. All this I know at second hand.

M: You didn't go along--?

B: I didn't go to that meeting. Moyers and I had the job of getting the communique out and getting the press backgrounded, so we were on that job.

Well, to me it was a cold surprise the next day, which shows how well secrecy was preserved, when along about ten o'clock in the morning, I was told, "Get yourself to such-and-such a place, just get there!" And we went to the Embassy and from the Embassy we went out the back dock and over to Sangley, and lo and behold the President came helicoptering in from Corregidor, and there I was in Air Force One--the first time I'd been in it--and the President was getting aboard. And the press, grimy, disheveled, ready to be mad as could be--Pete Lisagor, Merriman Smith, the regulars--were absolutely caked in the dust of Corregidor, because they had ridden behind the President up and back. It was a <u>comic</u> sight, and they were given these wash cloths, and the wash cloths came out absolutely brown.

The President was in great fettle and put on a silk dressing gown as I recall, and then got himself washed, got everybody washed, and then received everybody--received this press pool group in the room--and told what he was going to do and so on as we flew to Cam Ranh. Well, it was memorable as all get out!

Then the Cam Ranh thing is history. That I can't add or subtract anything particular on.

M: Isn't that where the "coonskin on the wall" statement was, though. Was that written by anybody, or was that President Johnson's--?

B: That's where the "coonskin on the wall"--? Well, let me say in view of the total absence of foreknowledge that I had of exactly how he was going to do this. I have no knowledge at all. I might add that this account might make it sound as though this was utterly impromptu; of course it wasn't. We had gone back and forth ever since planning began on the question of his going to Viet Nam. We had left it as a loose card. We had left an opening for it in the schedule in Thailand, with an extra amount of rest that could be used if he jammed it up. We had anticipated he would want to do it, but frankly we had anticipated he would want to do it at a later point. I think his timing, his sense of how to do it, was excellent. It really threw the press off. The press was caught napping, and the surprise was achieved; and this was more than the question of getting maximum play, anything of that nature, because there was a very serious question of security. The one thing he wanted to be absolutely sure of--and that was the absolute condition, I believe, that he insisted on--was that there should be no men pulled back from the front who couldn't be spared, and that there should be no guard units and that there be no risk that anybody would lose his life or be hurt or anything as a result of his visit. And that was a tough condition to meet and only Cam Ranh and this surprise deal, which undoubtedly threw the other side off--they undoubtedly were watching for it--did the trick. It was quite a performance.

Well, then, let's see, what other episodes were there on the trip? None of any real note, I guess. The Thai thing--he didn't like the speech

to be given at the University; and Ben Wattenberg did a heroic job with Harry McPherson of doing a new speech from scratch the day before, and he approved it. In Malaysia, he failed to keep a schedule--one scheduled item, the only scheduled item to the best of my knowledge that he failed to keep in seventeen days, which is some kind of an epic. But he failed to show up to see their planning room--their development planning room--and they were disappointed. I happened to be there ahead of time because I hadn't gone on the preceding country jaunt, and so I did the best I could and made some very lasting friendships as a result; and their feelings were eased. He did so extraordinarily the rest of the time, with the toasts and all the rest, that there was no hurt feeling there.

And the Korean thing, of course, was simply an epic, any which way. I might contribute a vignette to history which only Koreans are really aware of. The President's speech for the arrival ceremony in the city hall place, an enormous place where there must have been a couple of million people gathered--the most incredible crowd I've ever seen, and others with much more experience have thought the same. That speech was translated consecutively by Dr. Crane--Paul Crane, who was the historic interpreter who had been with Park when he visited the United States. And Koreans were extraordinarily critical of the translation; and it was not Dr. Crane's fault--that's what I want to record because I think the President heard about it afterwards and, at any rate, they used the Korean interpreter after a time. It was a shattering experience for Crane. What had happened was we had sent the text from Kuala Lumpur, subject to final check with the President. And when we got to checking with the President, intending to do it the first thing when we got aboard the plane out of Kuala Lumpur, we found that through an oversight it simply wasn't aboard. So, in order to

get one that the President could check, Harry McPherson had to sit down and rewrite the speech. He had written the first one, and it was the same set of thoughts and the same order, but obviously the wording was different. And he put it together on yellow paper, and it was typed and in due course when the President woke up it was cleared with him. And it was sent on, we thought in ample time, for them still to have it and translate it. It was two or three hours before we got in. But it turned out--and this is a case where the best research I can make is that the message simply never got from Air Force One to the Embassy. It was not fouled up in the Embassy; it was not overlooked; there was no goof; it was a straight failure of communications. And there were two or three occasions on these trips when the only answer seemed to be that the message simply didn't get there. I don't know what the problem is, and this is one that maybe there isn't an answer to, but at any rate, Crane was at the airport when we arrived, interpreting for the President, and interpreting there at the airport in formal remarks, interpreting all the way in, whenever the President got out of the car, and all of that. He didn't have two seconds to rub together, and he had the speech as he thought clutched to his bosom. The moment the President got up and started delivering a different speech Crane was on his own. Out of direct earshot, fielding this thing off the buildings around this square in a most extraordinary and emotion-packed scene with two million people. It was the most invidious position an interpreter could have ever been put in, and I thought he was pretty admirable to do it at all.

Well, that's simply one little bit.

M: That's an interesting breakdown--

B: Well, there were other trivial episodes. The fact that the loading of the

officers' club at Walker Hill got so great that the Ambassador had to quietly tell people that they were going to have to leave and get a lot of them out in order to prevent a dangerous safety problem--

The other thing I do remember, and it's not all that important--in fact, not important at all in substance, but it's illustrative of the President's capacity to handle a situation quickly and size it up. We had a real hangup with the Koreans on the communique that they wanted. They wanted a substantive communique. This wasn't going to be worth a nickel in the United States, but it meant a great, great deal in Korea. And we got to a passage where we were going to say that we had no "present plan" to reduce the level of our forces in Korea. And the Koreans wanted to say we had no plan to reduce the "present level" of our forces in Korea. Now, that's the kind of thing that people hang up on in communiques, but you can see the subtle difference. "No present plan" indicated we didn't have one now, but maybe we'd have one before we were through. In point of fact, we had really what amounted to a gentlemen's agreement, as I always interpreted it, from when we'd got the first major Korean division--the so-called Brown committee named after Ambassador [Winthrop G.] Brown in early '66, I guess. We had pretty much undertaken that we wouldn't reduce our forces in Korea as long as Viet Nam went on, as long as they had forces in Viet Nam at any rate. And so it was a very sensitive point. And their Foreign Minister and their Defense Minister were after me in a room across the hall. We sat out the whole reception talking about it and its significance and so on and so on. The Secretary of State felt we had to stand firm, that this would cause us trouble. I think he was thinking of Congressional factors. And we finally had to bring the thing to the President. And it was clear that these Ministers were speaking for Park, that this

really was sensitive; it wasn't somebody showing off. And we finally got in to see the President. This was after the reception. And I remember barging into the room and nearly knocking over Mrs. Johnson, who was not three feet away, sitting on the floor as I recall. Maybe I'm wrong. No, I'm wrong on that--that Secretary of State was sitting on the floor. Mrs. Johnson was having an informal meeting with the lady press correspondents in Korea, which nobody had ever heard of happening before. It was an epic; it was the greatest day for the status of women in Korea that had ever been! And there it was, and the President was listening and doing it with style. It was quite a show.

We finally got through this and said, "We've got to see you, sir." And the Secretary of State was there, and I explained the issue; and the Secretary, of course, knew it. The President looked at it and said, "Let's do it their way. Let's just do it their way."

M: As simple as that.

B: As simple as that. And that was the last of substance that I saw.

Well, there are lots of things to say about the trip. As I say, for me personally, it was an epic--an epic in its substantive impact; an epic in the response everywhere we went which made a terrific impression on at least some of the open-minded press and should have; and an epic in terms of the President's capacity to carry through something that did have to be done pretty close to the script, which as I take it really, from everything I've ever heard and seen of him elsewhere, is not his instinct.

M: I was going to say that the critics' image, at least, is of a free-wheeling, tactless, boisterous, Texan-type--

B: He played this one to the script, with his own touches, and demonstrably his own touches. I mean he went beyond his toasts, he said things that

were--but I can't recall any, and I know I would, that were in the slightest degree wrong, and a great many that were just overwhelmingly plus. I mean, that Monday afternoon speech in the closed session of the Manila Conference was just not at all what was before him in any one of three different versions, all of which were rather anodyne. He simply felt, this is what I want to say, and he said it. He said it brilliantly. And his ability to take the lead in that back room and never let it be known. What happened in that back room has never, to my knowledge, come out--in the way it so obviously lent itself to a charge of overweening pressure by the United States. But it was not played in that way. And everybody knew you just had to get the job done and, I think in the end, he came out, oh, just with a whole, immense amount of credit all the way around the circuit. In effect we have lived off that and will be living off it for some time to come. And in terms of anybody who worked for him, it was he who had done it! So I thought it was an extraordinary success. And I think he used up everything he had there. He was a terribly tired man, and you could see this at different points along the way. But he went through with it. And, of course, it was a lifting thing--to end with the Korean thing--and it just couldn't have been finer in the ending.

Well, then I didn't go back with him. I went to Taiwan and then to Japan to recite briefly on what had taken place. This had been arranged before. So I wasn't with him there, and I pick up the threads after the election, which of course must have been a very serious blow.

Immediately after the election, the next thing that comes to my mind--two things, really. First, the President has got it dead-set that Secretary Rusk should immediately go back out to the area and really go after the Thai and the Filipinos, particularly, for additional forces. I say frankly

that I argued as strenuously as I knew how against that to the Secretary. I said it would probably not be productive; it was a terribly hard mission; it would be immediately picked up as that and put them on the spot, and so on and so on. I just didn't think it was going to be very effective. But it was clear that the President was absolutely 400 percent that this had to be done. This was a subject on which he very definitely had a strong personal impress throughout, and question of getting forces. It jarred him that they didn't contribute more, he didn't really feel this way about the Koreans, certainly at this period of time, because of course they had done a great deal. But he felt the Thai could do more. He felt that--and he'd softened them up a little bit in utmost privacy and of course had made that Monday afternoon speech at the conference--he thought Marcos was really not with it as he should be. And I add parenthetically that Marcos' State visit here in September produced one or two things. I'll come back to that. I'd like perhaps to tell that as a separate story. But he was absolutely set, and I never was quite clear whether this was entirely his own feeling. Whether it was clearly and genuinely his own feeling, and a very strongly held one, or whether it was that key elements on the Hill kept prodding him on this. Russell, Stennis, Symington, I have no idea who they were.

M: It was an obvious thing they would do.

B: But again, it seems to me that's where you look for planetary interference of that type.

The second thing he was set on was to step up the bombing program. And my recollection, which I haven't the files to confirm against, is that the Joint Chiefs came in with a very much stronger list of targets on his request on his return, and he approved a very large number of them. And

I was very much against some of them and said so to the Secretary of State and so on, and there was a back and forth. The President was by then down at the ranch and had had the operation. Eventually a number of the targets were removed, but several of them were left on and were authorized. These included the two targets five or six miles outside Hanoi that caused trouble in December. That's why it's of significance. The President was in Texas and gave the impression just by the way he had acted on this that he--"Get ahead with it! Get ahead with it!" That was very, very strong. "We've done all this diplomacy, now, let's get on with it. Let's do the job!" And he was undoubtedly not feeling very chipper through this period.

Well, this brings you to the events of the so-called Polish diplomatic episode that Kraslow and Loory make so much of. The facts behind that were that the Poles had sent Lewandowski to Saigon and to Hanoi--the ICC job. Lewandowski was somebody we had already noted. He had acted, through Norman Cousins, in January of '66, as I've already said. Well, he quite quickly established contact with Lodge. He went up in September to Hanoi and came back empty-handed, and then he started talking to Lodge and saying, "I need something more. I need a statement of position." Well, we gave Lodge a lot of things he could say, and Lodge was meeting quietly with Lewandowski, and Lewandowski was supposed to understand our position so that he could talk in Hanoi in a general way. We weren't trying to put too much on it, because we didn't trust him that much. And there was also involved this Italian--the Italian Ambassador in Saigon, D'Orlandi, who was in the middle. And the three apparently met, we have some records of it--I'm not clear we have all the records of those meetings. There may have been more than we were aware of. They were informal in many instances, quiet. But, in any case Lewandowski went up in mid-November and came back

on the first of December, saying, "I did this ten-point draft of what I thought you were saying to me, and I've shown it to these fellows in Hanoi, and they're prepared to sit down with you in Warsaw if you will endorse the ten points, as in fact your position."

Well, the ten points was a perfectly wretched draft, perfectly wretched!

M: That was the first time Lodge had seen it? He had not give it to Lewandowski?

B: Well, this you get conflicting testimony on. The Poles, to this day insist that if it was not seen by Lodge, at least it was based very clearly on what Lodge had said. Now, that is not what our cables showed at the time, and I don't mean to try to get to the bottom of that. I don't know the answer because, in a sense, they could have said, "That's what he said," but Lodge, I'm sure, was not talking on the theory that this would be put down in a Ten Commandments form. Well, this put us on the spot, but we rather quickly decided that we should respond; that we would accept but also have to say that the ten points had to be subject to interpretation. This was worked out with Tommy Thompson, I remember, and others in that weekend. And this was just before the Secretary and I left on the trip to go and try to raise more troops, on the way to NATO. Well, that was all right. Now, what happened with respect to the fact that the bombing authorizations, including those two near Hanoi, were carried out on the second and fourth, I am not wholly clear on. My recollection is the President was not easily available that weekend. He was certainly out of touch. He may have been--this is an interesting point to check. But, in any case, no serious effort was made to persuade him that we should call off these authorizations because, among other things, it was quite clear on the face of this thing that no

requirement with respect to the bombing had been posed. And we didn't think the President would buy, but whether the thing was ever put to him, I do not know. At any rate, we did bomb on the second and fourth, and this immediately started registering in the form of a protest from the Poles in Warsaw when they didn't have any North Vietnamese to show. I thought it was rather phony as we read the cables on the trip, but it had enough plausibility to be of concern. And they objected to our insisting that the ten points had to be interpreted, and they fussed and they fiddled, and Ambassador [John] Gronouski kept after Rapacki all through that period for several days in a row. Well, the personal side of that is that when we hit Saigon, we hit Saigon about the ninth of December with the Secretary--we met privately after a dinner party with D'Orlandi by Lodge's arrangement. And D'Orlandi said, "You've got to not do any of this. This really is something that counts." He gave it a very emotional pitch. He's a funny character, he's still living, although he was supposedly under a death sentence at that time. He was very evangelical about it. He obviously felt a sense of mission. And Lodge took it seriously, and we cabled back what D'Orlandi had said, which certainly the thrust of it was "Don't let's do it again. Whatever may or may not have been done, let's not do it again." We didn't so recommend--the Secretary did not so recommend in so many words. My understanding from when I got back is that on the receipt of this cable and in the light of all other factors, a recommendation <u>was</u> made to the President by the Acting Secretary, Nick Katzenbach, by Secretary McNamara, by Tommy Thompson--those three have identified themselves, in effect, as having gone along on that, or strongly supported more than gone along, strongly supported the recommendation that we in effect lay those authorizations aside and not do it again. Well, the President did not buy this

and Kraslow and Loory are miles off the mark when they say this was the left hand not knowing what the right hand was doing. I'm quite clear from what was told me by others--

M: They didn't bring the President into it at all here.

B: No--that this was the President's decision. "No, I'm not going to call it off." And I can surmise as his reasons: that there was no condition about calling it off, "These fellows are stalling, the thing looks like a phony, etcetera, etcetera."

M: They still hadn't made that a demand--?

B: They had not made it a demand, but the Poles were raising all kinds of fuss about it. In effect, it was an almost added thing--added in--and the President did not like to do business that way. So you can see his reasons. But I myself would feel in hindsight that it was handing the other side an enormous public relations advantage and, of course, in the event it was one of the rare cases where our aircraft either went over Hanoi or did drop bombs in Hanoi, we'll never know which, I suppose. At any rate, lots of anti-aircraft went up and came down, or bombs dropped, or both, and the result was a mess. And we were looking very sick indeed just in general terms, and it was before the Poles let it be known, which they speedily did.

And then they invited [Harrison] Salisbury up there, and they obviously decided to ride a big propaganda theme on this one. Well, I don't myself believe the Polish thing was about to mature. This is a matter of a refined examination, lots of things. Among other things, it is the fact that on the thirteenth and before news of the bombing in the Hanoi area on that date, Rapacki had told Gronouski, "The thing is postponed." In other words, he wasn't delivering his customers. The North Vietnamese, I believe, have denied they ever agreed to anything. Michalowski has told Harriman that

there was in fact some contact with the North Vietnamese in Warsaw who was in touch, and he tries to imply that it really had reality.

In any case, it then produced a ten days or so--eight or ten days--of going back and forth as to whether we should accept the idea that we did restrain ourselves near Hanoi and finally, I forget the exact date, along the twentieth to the twenty-third of December, the President yielded to--yielded isn't perhaps the word, but decided on the basis of various suggestions, and I think this came from Secretary McNamara, that we would accept putting the ten-mile circle around Hanoi that we wouldn't bomb within if this would lead to private contacts.

Well, then, we made the approach to Moscow. Tommy was back in Washington. [John] Guthrie was in charge, and we sent Guthrie in to see the North Vietnamese and he did establish contact.

M: This is the end of December--

B: End of December, beginning of January. And they had three our four contacts which didn't get anywhere. In the meantime, Hanoi came out with this interview with [Wilfred] Burchett, in which Hanoi changed their formula and said if the bombing stopped, there "could" be talks--words to that effect. Seemed to abandon the four points as a requirement. And this led to the Presidential letter to Ho and to the simultaneous diplomacy through Wilson to Kosygin. Now, the first was infinitely--

M: That's the most confusing two-three weeks of the entire period.

B: Oh, it's utterly, utterly confusing, but if you keep your eye on dates it gets clearer. Also, it included Baggs and Ashmore. Now, [William] Baggs and [Harry] Ashmore was handled as a separate matter; in fact, if it hadn't been for a lot of pressure from Baggs and Ashmore in the sense that they were in close touch with Senator Fulbright, I'm sure we would not have felt

anything they reported called for a follow-up. But they insisted so much that we believed they'd do a Sevareid, a La Pira on us, if we didn't. And so with the President's rather reluctant general blessing, we went ahead and gave them a letter form to send back which was rather general and tended not to cut across and to be recognized in Hanoi as not the real message, because, after all, Hanoi knew we were in touch in Moscow. I don't think it had been definitely decided at the time of the Baggs-Ashmore thing that there would be a Presidential letter, but in any case we had direct contact. We weren't going to fool Hanoi or confuse them by the Baggs/Ashmore thing.

M: They imply, don't they, rather broadly that they saw a draft, or that there was a draft of the Presidential letter that was consistent with the one that they say they sent? The dating in here is one of the confusing things.

B: Well, the dating--the files are very clear on the dating. The Baggs-Ashmore file is quite clear. I think we gave that to them on a Saturday and checked it out on a Sunday. And the letter went the Tuesday night.

M: Their letter or the President's letter?

B: The President's letter. The Baggs-Ashmore letter had to be mailed to Phnom Penh to some fellow there and it was, you know, a long shot at best. And when you had a full and direct channel; well, I went into all this in the State Department backgrounder, when Baggs and Ashmore sandbagged us the following September. But we gave them something that was as good as we could do on a channel we really didn't think could possibly be considered the real one. We didn't think Hanoi could think so, because Hanoi would know as well as we did that we were in touch. So their alarms and excursions, it seemed to me, were just that. And the real thing was the Presidential letter. Now, in effect, what we had been doing during the fall, what we had done to Lewandowski, and which he had embodied in a

footnote to the ten points, what we had done through George Brown, the British Foreign Secretary who went to Moscow and wanted some ammunition, was to launch a thing we called "Phase A-Phase B." That is to say, we would be prepared to stop the bombing with no visible immediate counter-action on the other side, provided that it was agreed in advance that there would take place a "Phase B" which would be a cessation of infiltration in key areas. But apparently dissociated. In other words we would give them the idea that the bombing stopped for nothing on the face of things, provided we in fact knew that something was going to happen.

M: Would Phase B involve some American action as well as--

B: No, it did not, at least in specific terms. That's the point. The Phase A-Phase B did not involve, in effect, an additional specified contribution on the American side. That Phase B--

M: Kraslow and Loory report that erroneously, then.

B: Well, what happened was, you see, that at the time we were looking to see what should be said, it occurred to somebody, and I don't know the origins of this idea really, I was not very directly engaged in the President's letter--I don't know quite why, but the Secretary of State went on it himself, and this was done late at night in the White House. The first idea was that we would say that, in effect, "In Phase B, we will agree to a troop freeze and no reinforcements." But also, in putting the whole package together Phase A and Phase B became effectively coincidental. In other words, the time phasing dropped out. The reason for that was, more than anything else, that we had very reliable, sensitive intelligence that they had three divisions or so massed just north of the DMZ, and we thought is we allowed a time gap--this was the line of thinking; it may have been wrong, but it was the line of thinking--if we allowed a time gap they could put the three divisions across and then say "Fine," insist upon no more moving

and them with three divisions. We weren't going to sit still for that. The President felt very strongly about that, and the Joint Chiefs felt very strongly about it and had urged this on him, and he bought this.

Well, that's roughly the background of the President's letter. Now, others can go much more into detail on it, Walt, the Secretary of State and others.

Now, the handling of the British was complicated because first of all, we had to be sure Wilson stood firm against simply stopping the bombing on the possibility of talks. That he agreed to do, but we were afraid Kosygin would budge him. That was round one.

Round two was that they knew Phase A-Phase B and were, in a sense, authorized to talk about that, the earlier Phase A-Phase B.

M: The British?

B: Yes. And they had talked about it and got a certain amount of response from the Soviets, which was surprising because they'd known it through George Brown since November. Well, they got all heated up, and they wanted a message. Well, we couldn't renew the old Phase A-Phase B on this channel without confusing the daylights out of Hanoi and putting the Soviets in a very false position. So we had, in effect, to have Wilson give the same message to Kosygin that the President had sent in the letter to Ho, but without telling Wilson or Kosygin, but Wilson particularly, about the letter because the President just didn't trust Wilson, particularly since the Haiphong POL disassociation. He thought he was trying to make time politically and I have no doubt that was, as far as it went, a correct judgment. But this put us on the spot. And our man in London, [Chester] Cooper, who had been told to stay and watch the whole thing, working with Ambassador [David K.E.] Bruce--they having Phase A-Phase B on their minds, worked out with the

British a draft that permitted a time phasing, but with a new element. They did not know about the element of no reinforcement. They had a time gap between Phase A and B, including a U.S. cessation of reinforcement, which was a considerable sweetener.

Well, they sent this back--I think this was the Friday--and they sent this back, and they clearly said, "The British understand that they are not to deliver anything to the Russians until they have a clear Washington okay on what we've sent you." They supposed there would be an okay, doubtless gave the impression that this was mechanical, that this was purely a check to be sure they had worded it correctly. It was far more than mechanical. And the President became very excited because obviously it couldn't be inconsistent, and they didn't in London know the difference, you see. We hadn't informed them--we hadn't informed our own people in London that we'd sent the letter to Ho, you see; which had gone in Moscow and had been delivered on Tuesday night late, our time.

And then Wilson jumped the gun, which he had no business doing, and delivered what had been drafted--

M: Without the okay?

B: Without the okay. And then we sent the message back and Walt was on the phone, I'm told, pointing out that it just wasn't it. And we sent one back that was different, and Wilson had to say, "So sorry," and deliver a new one. This may or may not have shaken the Russians--I don't really believe it would have because, very likely, the Russians were informed by Hanoi of what had come anyway. I don't know, that's just a guess.

Well, then it follows on, the question of whether we'd keep the bombing stopped through Kosygin's visit, which was a thirty-six hour extension of the TET truce. This all came, you see, during the TET truce.

And this the President agreed to do, I guess, by Sunday morning. I now forget. Because I remember a lot of us were urging that, feeling that that was the least we could do, and we wouldn't lose anything by it, and the President was very resistant to this. This is just typical of his resistance to playing games of this sort, that you'd get suckered into something; which there was a danger of, but on this short time period we thought it was imminently worth it. He finally agreed to do it, and this sent the British back to Claridges' in the middle of the night Sunday, saying. "You have a golden opportunity--get a response, and so on and so on and so on." And whether the Russians were impressed or not, I've never known. Whether they communicated with Hanoi, I've never known. I'm told now by the British newspaperman, [Henry] Brandon, who had it direct from Wilson, that the British are convinced that the Russians never in fact relayed the message at all. That they thought it had too much of an ultimatum flavor, or whatever it may have been, in any case, didn't relay it. So, my own hunch is that the whole Wilson-Kosygin business has no significance whatsoever in terms of communication between Washington and Hanoi. It has great significance as a source of lasting distrust and feeling of misunderstanding on both sides, between the President and Wilson. If they were not too well off before, they were infinitely worse off after this whole week's work.

M: Was the Guthrie channel closed by this time in Moscow?

B: Well, what happened then was that on the fifteenth, we got a very crisp and curt reply from Ho saying, in effect, just repeating his position, "Your proposal totally unacceptable, and there's no point in any further talks." So he broke off the channels on the fifteenth of February.

Now, March 21. In the meantime, I think we made one effort. On

March 21 Ho made the correspondence public, which--I happened to be in London--and it had the momentary effect, at least, of making us look pretty good, because we may not have been as tactful as we might have been in the wording of the letter--the President's letter--but we looked better than Ho did by a good deal.

Well, all this leads up and is part of a consecutive story that I suppose is best told in this way to the decisions on the bombing program of the spring and summer of 1967.

M: Before you start that, though, there's one other that happened simultaneously. The Robert Kennedy business occurred at the same time, did it not? February 4 or 5, or something like that?

B: Robert Kennedy was in Paris a day or two after the Burchett interview. And the North Vietnamese had been to see a man in the French Foreign Office named Manac'h, who in a sense was my opposite number. A man that I don't know well personally, but I have considerable respect for him as a man of intelligence who would do all he could within Gaullist limits. Well he saw Kennedy and he told him that he had been told that this had significance. Then [Theodore] Weintal in Newsweek got this in the "Periscope" section, that Kennedy had received a message when he was in Paris--

M: Do you know where he got that?

B: I have to say that weighing all factors, motives, and all else, and weighing my knowledge of what happened on the cable reporting of the conversation, I'd have to say that my belief is that Weintal's source was in the Department of State and not from Bobby Kennedy or his people. I don't believe the President believed that or would believe it today. But I am convinced that that's the case, because the conversation made clear that Manac'h was simply reporting what the North Vietnamese had said to him.

He wasn't claiming to pass it on. If he was passing it on to anyone, he was passing it on to an official, to the American Embassy officer who was present with Kennedy. Incidentally, it was clearly Manac'h's own improvisation, and he caught hell for it. He was very nearly fired.

M: From his government?

B: From his government. He was very nearly fired as a result.

I just didn't see what Kennedy would gain by this, but I may be wrong. At any rate, a technical mistake was made in that the reporting cable was sent back in what we call Limdis, which is not very closely held and goes all over town. And it was a sexy item. It was just sexy! Now, ordinarily this would be the proper thing to do on a visit of this sort by a VIP, not in the line of command, you might say, in the government. But not <u>that</u> VIP and <u>that</u> message. And so many people had access to it. And so many people might have been titillated enough to say something that it just doesn't seem to me that this is what Kennedy would have said and I don't think Kennedy would have so understood it. Kennedy did not understand it as a message. He did not believe he was a messenger. Somebody reading the cable very loosely would have jumped to that conclusion and thought it was sexy as hell and told Weintal about it. Now that's my interpretation. I can't prove that; I have no indication of it. And I have to go back and say that I don't believe this would have been anybody in my shop because I think they were disciplined. And I know Weintal never got the time of day in our part of the world. But I think others around town were a little gossipy, and Weintal himself may have added something to what he was told. At any rate it was a most unpleasant episode. I gather it caused a very unpleasant scene between the President and Senator Kennedy.

M: But it didn't call for any further action by your shop as far as following up as a peace initiative?

B: No, it was not a substantive thing, really. Because all it was was that the North Vietnamese had said, "This is an important message," in effect. And Manac'h said, "I think it's important, too." And that's all. We were prepared to say it was some kind of a message, and we were, in effect, handling it and responding to it through these other channels.

M: It does muddy the water. That's the reason I asked you to go back.

B: It muddies it, and you're right to raise it. I merely say that from the professional workman's standpoint it does not signify. If it stands as anything, it stands as a monument to who was skunk enough to leak, and the relationships between the President and Senator Kennedy.

Well then we tried twice in March to reopen the Moscow thing. I thought we almost went too far by way of the most unctuous phrasing, but they didn't. They wouldn't respond. By the spring of '67, you'd have to say there just wasn't anything showing. No lights were lit up at all anyway near the board. U Thant had been in with a new initiative, which we had fielded with the South Vietnamese, but we never thought Hanoi would respond and it didn't. And it was a dead board.

And against that background and in the face of general feeling that we had to accelerate the pace of things, the President decided on a very significant upping of the bombing in April and May and really, in effect, on through the summer. Now, there was a considerable debate within the administration on this. The papers will show a great deal of this. McNaughton did have some drafts; bombing policy had a relationship also to how big a force increase you had. The two got together. The part I know about was the bombing. And numbers of us suggested from inside the government, my brother Mac from outside the government, and I hasten to say, absolutely independently--absolutely independently. I do have a copy in my files of

his letter to the President, but it was after he had delivered it to the President. And I think it has a note on it that the President wished it to be known to a limited circle. It had come to me through official channels. That's how it had come to me. And he urged that we, after a period of stronger bombing, cut back in some fashion. The problem of cutting back to the twentieth parallel was even then in the air and was aired at that time. And I am told, and this is second-hand and just definitely hearsay evidence, that when the President saw Pearson of Canada in late May, he left the impression with Pearson that he was thinking along these lines and that this was probably what he was going to do.

Well, it seemed to die as the summer went on and the President went up the line into more and more of the JCS targets, and I don't know the ins and outs of that. To what extent he was obviously aware, as he must have been, of the plans for the Stennis committee hearings, the attacks that were being made on him, the question of responding to, "Why hadn't the Administration chosen to bomb, the President chosen to bomb, the targets recommended by the Chiefs" and so on. At any rate we ate into the list of all those Chiefs' targets, and I frankly say that the thrust of my advice to the Secretary of State and in conversations and exchanges of memoranda with MacNaughton and others was that this was not going to get us anywhere. I thought it would cause rather more of a hoorah than it did abroad, which was an area in which I felt within my province of giving advice. It didn't do that, and you had to admit it didn't do that in visibly serious form. My own hindsight, however, is that it very definitely shortened the fuse of American public support in a rather key area. I know from my own contacts at the time that the people I saw outside government were much more exercised than they had been. "Why are we doing this? What's this

going to accomplish?" They were disturbed by it, and I think it had a really disturbing effect on a large number of people and on student opinion and the other factors that, I think, perhaps we all tended to underrate the significance of. But that's in part hindsight. I did think so at the time in a general way, but that it seems to me is what it did. And without any really major effects on Hanoi that I could ever discern. Now there I don't speak as an expert at all, but this is in all the records you can piece together.

Well, in June and July it became very clear that Hanoi was having a major conclave and this is what we were reporting to the President--some kind of major gathering. They brought all their Ambassadors back or a great many of them. There was plainly something major going on, and it was announced about that time, about July 4, that a man called Nguyen Chi Thanh, who had been the commander in the South, had allegedly died of a heart attack. Well, there was other intelligence suggesting that he had actually died in the South from our military action, possibly a bombing. And there was just a general feeling that they were going to come up with something. We thought it would be in the peace area. I think we know in hindsight clearly that this must have been the period when they decided to go for broke in the TET offensive.

Well, this is not stuff that directly concerns the President.

In August of '67, the next diplomatic move which involves the President is the handling of the two Frenchmen.

M: Through [Henry] Kissinger.

B: Through Kissinger. Right. Kissinger had run on to these two guys at some international meeting of scientists and had discovered that one of them had a lot of past ties with Ho, which checked out. He had been Ho's host

during the Fontainebleau meeting of '46. This is Aubrac. The other fellow was Marcovich. And they wanted to go to Hanoi, and we said, "Okay, go ahead. See what you can find out." And they reported back very fully and accurately through Kissinger. And he gave us the report. Well, it wasn't new. There wasn't anything new in the position. They insisted the bombing stop totally, which had been the position now for over a year. The question was, "Should you try to use the channel?" And I don't know the ins and outs of who proposed it, or how the San Antonio formula was developed. where it came from. Some say [Paul] Warnke, some say [Nicholas] Katzenbach. To me, it was just one of these things that rather quickly registered. "We are going to take this up." I didn't really think we could do much of anything with the bombing thing what it was anyway. We were in the middle of the Stennis hearings. But the decision was made to take it up and send Kissinger back with what amounted to the San Antonio formula privately, and also with the suggestion that we could easily discuss privately ways of, in effect, reducing anything involved in hostilities on a reciprocal basis. Something like the twentieth parallel, in effect, was at least covered in general terms in that way.

Well, Kissinger went back and on very meticulously conveyed instructions and in what seemed to me a highly professional manner played this string out and finally seemed to get a clear negative answer along in October. During this period, the President, I think on the twenty-ninth of September, had confirmed San Antonio at San Antonio, you might say, had delivered the San Antonio speech that has given the name to the formula.

Well, at any rate it didn't seem we were getting anywhere by mid-October. There was an interview with Burchett that seemed to be a sign-off. Now this whole period was agitated, very strongly from the President's standpoint,

and from all of our standpoints, by the overriding impression [of stalemate] the press began to convey explicitly and in every sense from mid-summer on. It was overlaid by that; it was overlaid by the elections [in South Viet Nam]. The elections went very well in September, that was fine. The President certainly was largely responsible for the idea of sending a group of private citizens out to look at the thing, which went well and simply confirmed what we believed and what I believe in hindsight, that this was as fair an election as you could possibly expect to see.

But the stalemate talk was bugging everybody. The idea that we weren't getting anywhere. And public opinion was really starting to build in this period, and the President was just obsessed with this and just going at us indirectly, directly, one way and another, "How do we get it across to people we're making progress?" Komer would say things in Saigon. Somebody would say things here. And I think we over-responded, frankly. I think it was one of those times where if it was really going well, and we honestly did believe it was, you just had to live with this and then show that you knew better than the other fellow as the results began to become clear. But we beat ourselves very hard indeed. I always felt that there was a limited amount you could do on this kind of thing, and I think we may have over-reacted. At the same time we did get into being a good public information group under Walt Rostow, and this was very helpful; but I just thought we were trying to win with figures, particularly, where you really couldn't buck this tide by a charge. You could head it off, you could fence it in, you could deal with it in a low key and hope to get better results--well, that's the way I felt about it.

M: This is McNamara's period of leaving, too? Is he a casualty of this?

B: And it's McNamara's period of leaving. I know nothing about that. I know

nothing about that. I literally know nothing. He has never talked to me about it. Needless to say, the President hasn't. I know nothing about it. It was the period of his leaving.

And so it went. An edgy and unhappy period, really, to the end of the year when we had this diplomatic initiative--the Romanians; then the TET Offensive, and so on. I don't know that I am in a position to add a great deal to that. The President certainly directed a meticulous exploration of the change of verb on December 30, and Harriman handled that with the Romanians brilliantly, I thought, just brilliantly. And then, as we thought we might be going to get a response from them, no response except the TET Offensive, which triggered everything. And then, of course, the Pueblo came in at just the same time, which added to the general concern.

To cover the Pueblo briefly, I was on duty the night it happened, in the sense of sending off the first cables to Moscow; but I was not in on the discussions, and my Deputy [Samuel D.] Berger, handled most of the key parts of this. I really don't have much to add. I don't know. My impression would be the President never seriously contemplated doing anything more, but I'm really very limited on that.

Then, in effect, you come to March '68 on this--I'm afraid I'm talking Viet Nam, and I want to go back over some of the contacts with other nations, because this gives more of an impression than is correct of the President obsessed with Viet Nam. There were other Asian matters.

M: I've got this down. I won't let you forget it.

B: Well, March '68 is going to be so fully covered in the notes Tom Johnson took of those lunches and in the various papers that I don't know what I've got to add, except that to me it was very early clear, and I think I may

have said this earlier to you, that the force increase was going to be small. It was progressively reduced, but it was never going to be high. It was clear from very, very early that we were going to put tremendous stress on strengthening the Vietnamese. And all of this was what was being worked out toward the last week. And along about the eighteenth or twentieth, the idea of cutting back to the twentieth parallel was put to Bunker. The cables show this. Bunker came back and said, "A total halt would just be very bad, that the twentieth would not be good, but maybe they could take it if you put it in the right way or delayed it a bit." I don't think he thought we ought to do it right away. But it was a very careful and measured response, so that it was before us.

M: His opinion was based on what it would do to the South Vietnamese rather than military considerations?

B: Oh, yes. He said, "I can say that for a trial period you could live with this." But he said, "It would be disturbing, not as disturbing as a total halt, but it would be disturbing."

Then you had the elder statesmen coming in and which my records show as the twenty-fifth. I'm rather astounded that the Pentagon files repeatedly refer to this as being the eighteenth. My records are very clear that it was the twenty-fifth. And I have some of the contemporary briefing notes and papers. At any rate that session with them that evening and I think on into the following morning with [Philip] Habib, [George] Carver, [Lt. Gen. William] Depuy and I briefly on the diplomatic side. It has been said that that was an alarmist or a bearish briefing. I wouldn't have construed it that way. I would have said that the elements of hope were given their due, that it was a very, very professional job by the best people there were, the best people there were, the core, I may

say, of the informal Viet Nam working group which had been in existence nearly a year under Habib's chairmanship, but with my filling in for Habib when he wasn't there; which was an extremely good group--the aggregate real service in Viet Nam of this group was extraordinarily formidable. They knew what was what and could really get to the bottom of things as near as you could from Washington. But they did quite a job, and the effect on the senior citizens was that this was just going to be a whole lot tougher than they had been led to suppose when they had come in in a similar fashion in November. And I think this was the difference between November and March, and not that the thing was deliberately painted blacker than it was in November. Because by March, we obviously knew this was in some respects a setback. This was going to give us a lot to tidy up. Pacification had been set back. In all probability they'd paid a higher price for it than the gains they had got. You could argue that, and this was well and truly presented. But it certainly left this senior group, and I wasn't present in their meeting with the President so there's nothing I can add to that--but the impact of their advice to him plainly was, "You've got to find ways of moving this thing toward solutions in some fashion." They didn't endorse any specific diplomatic ploy, but they said--certainly, they <u>emphatically</u> got across their view that more forces were in <u>no</u> sense the answer, that you had to put the monkey on the South Vietnamese backs much more and they said, "If you can think of something to do toward peace, do it." I would take it that was the three-fold thrust of their advice.

M: This was fairly dramatically different from their November '67 advice?

B: In November, they had been persuaded--again the same briefers and arguing honestly what they thought the situation was. We all thought the situation was better, slowly better. Nobody was exaggerating. I think it may have

been wise or unwise to have Westmoreland speak to the Congress in April of '67 and to have Westmoreland and Bunker do extensive public stints in November. Again I always thought that was a little over-kill. I thought so at the time, and I'm afraid that it made the disillusionment, if you want to call it that, of people at the TET thing more severe. And that is a risk you ran by getting that vehement about what you thought it was, where you really couldn't be all that sure. I say, I did think at the time this was laying it on a bit thick, but that's no use to anybody. I didn't have the responsibility.

M: Do you know in March '68 if it was ever even hinted to the elder statesmen that one of the considerations in giving advice might be that the President didn't intend to run again?

B: To the best of my knowledge, nobody in the senior statesmen group would have had an inkling of that. I would be absolutely astounded to learn that they did.

M: That's asking for advice without giving them all of the facts, really, it seems to me.

B: Well, yes and no. I suppose it is, but what else can a President do? I remember a parallel story when Harry Truman decided to get up at the Democratic dinner in March of '52 and announce that he was not going to run. He was sitting next to Mrs. [Dean] Acheson, my mother-in-law, and he told her what he was going to do. And it was a complete surprise to her. And she said, "I'm going to go over and tell Dean and have him stop, just stop this." And he said, "Now you just sit tight, little lady," or words to that effect. In other words, that isn't really what was said, but she said she'd faint or do anything to stop him. Well, the point is that Dean Acheson didn't know Harry Truman was going to make his announcement,

so in holding it very much to himself President Johnson was right in what seems to me an inevitable, I won't say a traditional because it takes more than two to make a tradition, but if ever there is anything a President has to hold to himself, has to, it's that. And so I'd be convinced the senior statesmen didn't know, and I don't believe that any of the senior Cabinet or anybody else knew until the time when the President told them, which as I understand it was Sunday evening just before he spoke. And I know there were one or two people who were notified at the very last minute or, in effect, while he was speaking, that he was going to say this. Marvin Watson was responsible for a series of phone calls that included Jim Rowe, that happens to be one I know about, so that people who were deeply involved--Jim Rowe running the campaign or helping to--would not be just cut off at the ankles in front of the television screen.

M: Some of them felt that way, anyway.

B: Yes, oh, I'm sure they felt--how could they be otherwise, but how could the President do it otherwise? I don't see how that comes in.

Well, anyway, what I was really talking about was the nature of the briefing given and the senior statesmen's advice, which I'm sure had weight. It hardly could have been otherwise. At any rate the main thing I remember very well is in connection with March 28. When Clark Clifford said to this group in the Secretary of State's office that we had to change, this met with a "By golly, you're right. We really have got to see how it looks. We don't think it'll work. We don't think the chances of Hanoi responding are great, but it's got to be done as a serious, considered effort to give the peace tone to the speech." And doubtless that reflected a generalized response to what was happening in public opinion all around us during that month. The point I would make is that Clifford's role was absolutely

crucial, but that it was another of those cases which in my mind are the rule rather than the exception. It was sort of an osmotic feeling. Once you'd launched this one, everybody said, "Yes, that's right," and people go back and forth. You'd all seen the difficulties, and from where I sat, And I think this was true of Governor Harriman and true of others--Nick Katzenbach--we wondered whether you might by taking a half-loaf crack at things in this speech, in effect, make it less likely that you could take a whole-loaf approach later on. We'd thought in terms of six weeks and then possibly stopping under the San Antonio formula, stopping altogether. I have no idea whether that was ever broached to the President, but Bunker said, "If you go another period of time and they're strengthening themselves, this you could do." And we were responding to that. So it was a serious question of what in fact would contribute most effectively to peace, in all bluntness. It wasn't just a captious business of not wanting to talk about peace, it was a question of how are you going to get the peace. But in any case, as it turned out we got the best of both worlds, I'm quite clear on that.

Well, then the April period was, of course, the period of back and forth on Pnom Penh, which was an easy reject; Warsaw, which the President immediately rejected--<u>immediately</u> rejected. And some of us said, "We'd better walk around it a bit. We don't think we ought to take it, but we ought to figure out our reasons." But the point was the President was just absolutely flat and firm. Bunker was breakfasting with him that morning on a trip back, and that was just no dice! And there was a meeting at Camp David at that period which I have pictures of and recall to go over the instructions to Harriman, which were at that point rather general, which were in effect, you get something like the San Antonio formula.

And the record, I think, will show that what happened really was that after the second offensive against the cities in May and early June, we in effect stiffened our position. That if Hanoi had only known it, they could have had the bombing stopped for something much more general than we finally insisted on and got in October, with the cities and DMZ specified.

Well, to carry it through on the handling of Paris, the President trusted his negotiators, the initiation of private contacts. This was all worked out without dramatic breakpoints.

M: How soon did the private talks start?

B: The private thing started June 26 or 28. There was a contact at the press-man level, Jorden and [Nguyen Than] Le in late June; then one at the Vance level along about the twenty-eighth, as I recall. And then there was one on the fifteenth of July, which was important and was a real discussion in which we laid it out with him. And in between we really worked on the position and that was where we had a high level go-round and insisted on the cities and insisted on the DMZ, insisted on the representation formula, were prepared to discuss a force freeze, but the papers will speak that story. I don't want to seem to be reciting it.

Well then we had the question of Thieu coming to this country which finally settled itself in the Honolulu visit of July. This had been at one point suggested for June, and we had looked at just the straight security and noise level characteristics, with the Poor People's March and all the rest, and told them we just couldn't do it in Washington. And it ended up in Honolulu in July. And that meeting was not a very successful one, I didn't feel. They got a communique, which said things firmly which were what we believed and it wasn't a bad communique. I worked on it very extensively, but as far as I could tell the President didn't really prepare

Thieu for the possibility that he would wish to move, or exactly what his bedrock thoughts were, which by then had taken shape and had been instructed in Paris, and Bunker knew. The President, I think, may have left the impression with Thieu, "This really isn't going to happen unless they cave a lot more, an awful lot more." The President was minded to hold firm, felt he was being pressured to go along on nothing which he wasn't about to do. And then there was the episode at the end of July which I could track in dates in terms of my getting back on a--coming through Paris and seeing the delegation, and then coming back on Monday night, and so on. A cable came in on Monday night about the last day of July, that week, from Vance and Harriman saying, "We think that with the reduced military activity you should consider stopping on the assumption that this is being continued," and so on, and "Say so." On faith in a degree, but on faith where you would have put the other fellow in a considerable spot.

M: The intelligence did show an activity reduction at that time.

B: Yes, this is a sensitive one, a very sensitive one, because it's now somewhat generally known that such a representation was made, but the part played in it by different people and the President's response to it has never come out, and I simply flag this to be handled with some sensitivity. As I went through Paris, I was immediately caught up by the group in what they were working on intensively, which was this cable. I had no knowledge that they were working on it. But Vance had the impression that when he had visited Washington just before the President went to Honolulu, the President had said, "I will want to see something like this in about ten days or two weeks time." And he had the impression the President was going to talk to Thieu along these lines, which I have a distinct feeling was not

done. There was some rumor out of Saigon that the President was really talking of some kind of way of stopping the bombing, and the President said, "That's just junk," in effect, a most emphatic rejection, in press terms when he was in Honolulu. And I think that cut across what he might otherwise have done, but I really have no knowledge.

At any rate, Vance and Harriman acted in the belief that they were offering the President a suggestion in response to what he had said, "I would want to look at this in ten days time." That was the spirit in which they worked. They were motivated by the fact that the reduced level was continuing, that there were at least very faint whispers that it might have political significance; they were motivated by a feeling that if we went into the Democratic Convention it would be a hulabaloo, as it of course turned out to be; and couldn't we, on the whole, do this? Well, the cable came in on a Monday night. And I left Paris on a Monday morning, Katzenbach flew back from India on a Monday afternoon. We didn't cross, but he saw it before it went, and it arrived about the same time that I arrived. And it caused a furor! I saw the Secretary of State practically at once and explained the background, and he didn't seem ill disposed toward it. But it quickly became clear, from reports and the rest that the President took a very dim view of it. And the following day he called me over at four o'clock and said, "This is just absolutely no dice!" This was just the two of us. And I said, "Well, Mr. President, here is why it was done." I was chiefly at pains to get away from any idea that this was a conspiracy or anything of that sort, that "Cy had thought this was something you wanted to have put to you, a cable seemed to be the only way to do it." He was disturbed that it had come by cable, and "Had it been held narrowly?" And of course we had put immediate clamps on it. I had taken pains to say to Ben Read,

"If there comes a cable from Paris, don't send it anywhere without the direct authority of the Secretary of State!"

M: That shows you were expecting it, too.

B: And I was expecting it, because I had been working on it. I had worked on it; I had contributed ideas to it, and I made no secret of this to the President, and I wouldn't have wished to do so. Because as I said, "This is something I'm not prepared to say flatly you ought to do, but I think it's something to take very seriously. It's a tough one. But it has got the real possibility that you can put the other side on the spot."

But at any rate the President just absolutely flatly rejected it. And at the same time, as I independently know and I guess the President must have known, some of the Humphrey people were concocting language that seemed to have the same thrust to it. Now, I'm sure in the President's mind this would have indicated everybody was working together. They were not. This came to me independently through a member of that group that they were thinking along these lines, and I said, "Well, I would think four times before I got to anything that wasn't what the President wanted to do, because you can't have a candidate and the President at different points on that."

Well, at any rate, that's the short episode there. Now, I guess that's as good a place as any to stop, isn't it?

M: What are your plans for the day? Do you want to try to tie it up this morning?

B: I'd just as soon. Let's just finish it up.

Well, then I don't have anything new to add on the Czech thing. I know, of course, that the announcement was ready to go, the announcement of the President's meeting with Kosygin was ready to go, because that came,

bingo, as I got back to Washington on the day, which was the nineteenth or twentieth, I don't remember which it was. And then I don't know really about what went on on the platform thing. I've heard various tales, but they're all hearsay. And the whole of the convention I simply suffered through as everybody else did. And then the period afterwards, and so on.

The important thing afterwards was that the President quite readily agreed that we should have another hard crack at private contacts in early September, and this was resumed on September 7, and you immediately saw the other side was at least talking, going back and forth. And this led up to the whole series of events in October. Along about October 9, it was conveyed to us, and I've forgotten whether it was the Soviets or the North Vietnamese--this is all in the file--that perhaps they would agree on the representation of the South Vietnamese and bring the NLF on their side, which we had always made clear they could do on their side; and that they were at least understanding us on the two military things that it had narrowed down to--the DMZ and the cities. And so in effect there was an intimation that a deal was possible along about the ninth or eleventh of October. Well we sent Bunker to see Thieu, and Thieu agreed that we could do this, and we expected that it would follow very quickly, in fact at that time. Now, to cut the story short a little bit and focus on the key elements of Presidential decision, there was a key decision the President had to make when, after Thieu had cleared it and Harriman and Vance had brought it in to the North Vietnamese in Paris, the North Vietnamese said, "We will accept representation by the South Vietnamese, and we'll bring the NLF," and we repeated again what we had said about the DMZ and the cities, so that that made us clear. And they would always respond, "Well, we understand that you agree that it's unconditional." In other words,

as long as it wasn't labelled this way, they understood that this was our position on the DMZ and the cities. A tacit understanding, never made really bilateral. It's a hard one to describe. But at any rate we had all the ingredients in place somewhere along about the fifteenth or sixteenth, except that the report from Paris was that they would not agree on a date. And we had always supposed that we would have to go right at it, forty-eight hours, twenty-four. And had talked to Thieu in that sense. And it was a real Presidential decision. I think Harriman and Vance had indicated, if not in cable form, at least on the phone, they thought we ought to buy this even with the date left open. My advice to the Secretary, and I know his to the President, was "No, we just could not do that," and Read, I know, agreed, all of us feeling we'd love to get this deal if we could, but you just can't leave yourself loose-ended on this thing.

(End of tape)

INTERVIEWEE: WILLIAM P. BUNDY (Tape 5)

INTERVIEWER: PAIGE E. MULHOLLAN

B: Well, at any rate, that was a clear decision point, and no adviser to the President that I can recall even remotely suggested that he take this undated--no adviser here in Washington. Harriman and Vance had conveyed the impression that they thought we should. Bunker was treble-died negative when he saw the report and said of course we were right not to touch that. But it was a tough point. It was a point where a lesser man might have said, "Yeah, I've got it." But he'd have had a phony deal; he'd have had a deal that might or might not work where they'd have played with the open limit. And this became very clear in Paris. Because we went back and said, "We've got to have a date." And they kept countering, "Well, we want to see a memorandum of this," and they pushed us very hard for a memorandum of understanding that would have been very hard to handle in Saigon, because it would have appeared to indicate the thing was without conditions and it would have described the seating formula in an ambigous fashion which, of course, was the only way you could get anybody to agree to it if you tried to put it on paper. And you had this two weeks go round, or twelve days to the twenty-seventh, in Paris, of a very tough nature.

Meanwhile, Bunker began to encounter heavy sledding in Saigon, and a lot of captious objections which we thought had already been disposed of were brought up, and it was rough.

Well, that was the backdrop when on a Sunday afternoon, the twenty-seventh, the North Vietnamese said, "Yes, we will, and we'll agree to talk on," or whatever it was, "the thirteenth," whenever it was, thirty-first, the dates would show in the file. And this came back to the President that

in the position where Thieu vetoes an action approved by Bunker and Abrams." And I may say Bunker and Abrams way back on October 10 had come in with the very strong, "Yes, we can and should do this!" Bunker had said earlier in the summer, "You've got to wait until this offensive runs its course, and then we'll see." That had happened; he was true to his word, and his analysis was a very strong one, and we used parts of it with some of the third countries we had to persuade.

With all of the President's advisers in favor of this, it was a solid case for doing it. To get in the position where it became known that but for Thieu, who had previously agreed, reneging, that could have pulled the plug on the American public in general, not simply the Democratic party. Well, I'm not reconstructing something in hindsight, this is the argument I made to the Secretary and which I have some reason to suppose others must have made and that the President could have undoubtedly figured out for himself, that he was in an impossible position unless he went ahead. He directed Bunker to try right to the last minute, and we literally were up to the time of the President's announcement, we were trying to get agreement. We were on the phone to Saigon, back and forth from Bunker, the Secretary of State was there personally, and we gave it every last try. And at the end, it was clear he [Thieu] was dug in.

Now the President comes out of that certainly having been consistent and clear and non-political. Nobody can say he tilted the board for political reasons any way. I don't get into the question of how he handled his relationship with the Vice President, all of that; but as far as where I sat this was a straight play of the hand. We could look at ourselves in the shaving mirror and say, "We haven't played this politically. This is too important, and it hasn't been played politically." And I don't think more could have been done, from where I sat. Bunker seemed to me to do an

extraordinary job; I think he was just asked to do more than the traffic would bear in the atmosphere of the concluding days of an election campaign, and with both Hanoi and Saigon having formed the judgment that Nixon would be okay from Saigon's standpoint, bad from Hanoi's, and that Humphrey--the reverse. Now, this white hat-black hat syndrome on the part of both Vietnamese capitals and possibly in Moscow in the same way that Hanoi saw it--

M: How much importance did our campaign have?

B: It may have played a part. It's really awfully hard to imagine they'd have chosen that time without something of this sort in mind. And I think they may have been influenced by the Salt Lake City speech by Humphrey; they may have been influenced--certainly their later reactions may have been influenced, frankly, by my brother Mac's speech of October 19. And concurrently on the other side of the fence, I am sure that Republican voices were expressing themselves to the South Vietnamese in one channel or another, not I believe with the authority of the present President, to the effect, "Why are you handing this thing to Humphrey on a plate? If you let yourself go along with a pause that is not right any way, or a bombing stoppage that is not right any way, you are crazy."

M: Is this other than the fairly well-publicized Madame Chennault effort--other Republicans?

B: I know of no others, but I would put another string in the Madame Chennault bow that I don't think many people have thought of. We know that she was talking to the Ambassador here in some fashion. I myself believe the Ambassador here would have tried to say, "Look, it isn't really that way between Humphrey and Nixon, don't get fooled by this." I think he's a pretty sophisticated fellow, I have a high respect for him. But I'm sure

he would have reported what she was telling him. He'd have had to do that, probably by phone or in some devious fashion--we don't really know. But in addition to that, one of the major complicating individuals at the Saigon end was Thieu's brother, named Kieu.

M: Do all South Vietnamese Presidents have brothers that are bad?

B: Well, this one was not necessarily all bad. He had been in Taipei, number two, I think, in the Embassy in Taipei, and he came down from Taipei to Saigon along about the 16th, 17th, 18th, 19th--along in there. And according to the cables of the period, his influence was just utterly baleful from the moment he landed. And knowing Madame Chennault's very strong influence in Taipei and the fact that the Taipei government was the one in all of Asia that didn't even clap politely when this bombing stoppage was announced, I think that channels were set afoot to tell him, "Get down there and don't let this happen." I just believe that that's another aspect of Anna Chennault's activity.

M: She didn't have to really influence leading Republicans--

B: Yes. Now if you put yourself in Thieu's shoes, you don't have to assume--and I don't assume--anything on the part of the present President or with his authority, anything from his real inner circle. But it would have seemed as though, "These Republicans are telling us the truth. They are more reliable. You can see it," as they read the way we speak politically in a campaign. I don't think it was true, but that's the way they read it. And here they're telling us, "Don't get suckered into something that just hands the election to guys that we all think are weaker." Well, you can't honestly say that it's un-understandable; Thieu was in one Hell of a spot, and a lot of voices in Saigon must have been raised, "Don't do this! Certainly don't do it to affect the election." Well, the result

was what happened. It's one of those cases which was tragic which I don't think we overlooked any significant thing we could have done. It has been said that if we could have locked Thieu in harder on the "your-side, our-side" formula and got him to spread it with others, maybe it would have been better, and maybe it would have. And the President did insist on great secrecy and gave Thieu no room to maneuver, and I've talked once to Ambassador Bunker who said he thought that made Thieu's task more difficult. That he didn't feel, had not felt at liberty, to discuss what we called the "our-side, your-side" formula, under which the South Vietnamese come, but equally on the your-side, our-side basis the NLF would show up on the other side of the table, which was always something that would cause anybody to gulp in Saigon. They'd recognize if they looked at it that there was no other way to do it, but they'd gulp.

M: They still didn't like it.

B: Still didn't like it. At any rate, we made Thieu's task harder in that respect, and this was the President's insistence on secrecy, but I'm not prepared to say that was unreasonable because if it had leaked, maybe Thieu would have been forced into a position where he couldn't have done it in any circumstances.

Well, the result was what happened, and what is there to say after that period? Because in effect I regard that as the last great decision the President had to make.

In the latter months of '68, I must say I couldn't understand entirely where he personally stood. We went ahead and tried to get the ship back afloat and did so on the twenty-sixth and twenty-seventh of November in the two U. S. statements. And the President reviewed all that. But I particularly never understood how the President stood--and I suppose this

is sensitive and I don't want to sound too personal about it--I never understood how the President stood with respect to Clark Clifford coming out in public and denouncing the South Vietnamese. I know I thought that was just a great mistake. I was as unhappy about the October and election outcome as anybody. But just in terms of getting a result, of seeing whether you could make some headway which we all cared about, the election was history. That was what had happened. And I'm a Democrat, and I felt as strongly as anybody about the election. But it just seemed to me that today's business was to get on with it, and that denouncing people in public didn't help, and I couldn't tell whether the President was in some sense, in effect suggesting this to Clifford or whether he didn't like it but just wasn't going to say anything about it, or what his attitude was. I couldn't figure it in this instance, practically the only time I can recall in the five years I served him, I couldn't tell what his line was. I couldn't tell what he really was trying to do.

And then we got into the table business, and this was, of course, immensely aggravating; and Clark Clifford again said it in public, which, I'm sure, set us back and finally we got it, through the Soviets and various other things.

I don't know that there's anything much to add to that, except that again the President would not take cheap and easy solutions. He just wouldn't do it, and this was true throughout, so that he left office not having compromised anything that he believed in or having done anything for political effect or in order to accomplish it while he was still president. It must have been aggravating, an immensely aggravating and annoying period, and I thought that he came through it very well, that he came through

with his principles and having played the thing carefully in accordance with valid criteria.

And as you look back on the whole thing, I think that was true of his whole stewardship in this Viet Nam area. There are lots of things I differed with, as one would differ, as any two men would differ. But in terms of really taking what he believed to be the right position, certainly in the negotiating area. He was tactically probably very hard for the other side to read, I suspect. This was a real difficulty. I wouldn't have thought they'd have known what to make of a thing like the letter to HO. And I think the urge to put something rather dramatically was just not the way I would have done it, but this is one man's line of thought and I may be quite wrong. I've said I was wrong as to the dramatic way of handling the December '65 pause, where I think drama had its part. But I think the idea of a letter to Ho, putting the number one man on the spot, the face implications, just wasn't a very good idea; and I think I said so at the time in February of '67. And I think his way of appearing to thunder messages, the rather crisp way things would come out, may have had an effect; but add it all up, and give and take it, I don't believe Hanoi was ready for serious talks any earlier certainly than '68, and really in '68 they thought we were going to cave, I think. So I don't think we missed opportunities for peace. The President was difficult to work for in this area as he was in others, but you could see the line of principle and thought that was going into his thinking. And so I, in the end, give him pretty high marks on the substance, but am more doubtful about the public relations.

M: What about the publicity aspects? This is in line with that. You said in relation to the '65 pause, for example, that you thought there were beneficial public relations aspects to the type of diplomacy that was carried out

there. But in general it doesn't seem that the President did try very hard to sell the war. Was this a conscious decision to hold back, as opposed to going out to the country and saying, "Look, this is war!"

B: I never understood that, because I don't know what the returns were when he did speak on the war. I would have liked to see, and I don't think this is an area which my judgment is much good, a more careful explanation at a much earlier time, to see a less exciting and less simplified speech in mid-'65, early '66, several places along the way where I thought this might have been done. But I feel awfully vague in this one. I don't know. Obviously, he didn't get across the depth of thought and analysis that had gone into the whole decisions, and believe me, it had! And it had in his mind, and he had weighed it and so on. I think his style and feeling was that you had to make it simple, and the people reacted to it simple, and I'm not prepared to say he was wrong. Because for the country as a whole, where he lost out was on the people who wanted to think in a more sophisticated way. And I don't think the combination--this is the combination of the President, and Secretary of State, what all of us said, I don't think we did a very good job. I don't think we did a good job on that. And I have to say that, having said that I don't think any big major opportunity for peace was missed or probably would have existed, I don't think we had an adequate machinery for thinking through what our real strategy was in the war. What were we really trying to do on the bombing? How could we play the bombing to bring about favorable psychological results from our standpoint in Hanoi? I just think we had the worst of both worlds on the bombing. We caused a maximum fuss here and did minimum damage on the other side, and I think you could have had one or the other. Personally, I would have felt that to go up high and hard in '65 would have run very significant risks of the Chinese, and possibly the Soviets, reacting. I

therefore believe it was right not to do that. But I would have set it at cruise speed and then held it there and said, "We're convinced that bombing directed primarily at the communications means, not on such a massive scale is right." I think he put such an enormous machine to work on the bombing, and I frankly admit that I guess this is something that I've at least inferred from things Secretary McNamara has said. By the time you had the enormous amount of aircraft and bombs and things, the urge to hit something more was enormous. If you had just said, "This is going to be a limited effort, it's going to keep Hanoi on its toes and any really juicy targets we'll hit; but it'll concentrate on the lines of communication." Then people would--you'd have settled down to it, and you wouldn't have had the horrendous stories and the whole kind of thing that Salisbury created and all the rest, which I think really did play an immense part in shortening the fuse of public support in this country.

And the same with the force increases. I think the President ran the war on the theory that whatever the military in the field wanted was theirs. And I don't think that the field served him well in the sense of coming in and saying exactly what difference it would make, but you really can't expect that. But it wasn't pulled together and somebody saying, "Look, how about the cost of this? How about the whole--?" Now, maybe this was done, and I make myself sound as though I'm saying that a fellow at my level ought to be in on that, which I don't necessarily believe. I do think there should have been a real inner-war cabinet that was looking at the whole thing and that had a small staff working for it. It was not a coordinated operation; it wasn't coordinated from day to day; it wasn't coordinated that I could detect really in the strategy. The President took it all in his own hands. All the threads ran only to him and not sideways to others, or at least too

many of them. Those are feelings, those are things that a man ought to look at who's going to examine the whole conduct of the war under President Johnson.

There never was an adequate staff level function really until--and I take partial blame for this--it wasn't as good as it should be when it was under [Leonard] Unger, my deputy; it became what it should be under Habib, who was just an immensely able man. But George Ball, or somebody, should have been pulling together a group that would sort of go over the thing and say, "Here are our worry areas. These are the things that we'd like to be discussing." And I know that Nick Katzenbach tried repeatedly to get something like that set up and was able finally to do it only in terms of a Thursday night quiet drink with people, which was most calculatedly a non-meeting.

M: That was what it was called, wasn't it?

B: Yes, the Non-Group. Well, this isn't good enough. It was helpful, but you needed a bunch of fellows who were brainstorming and thinking. And then on occasion you could go rigorous and say, "Don't we need to see this and that"--really helpful? You know I had the feeling, quite frankly, and I report it only as a feeling, that the President did not wish his advisers, in effect, to gang up on him; and that this became rather obsessive. As I compare it to the modus operandi, which I did know something about, of Acheson and [George] Marshall and Marshall, Acheson and [Robert] Lovett--and Harriman with both--in the Truman Administration. In that Administration, if I read the records and what I saw at the time and what I've reconstructed, you had the senior men in very, very close touch with each other, keeping the President advised what they were doing, because you must never have the Cabinet meeting without the President, in effect. But a great deal more

juice flowing all the time before it would come to the President. Now, I don't know. This is the kind of thing that people can write and think about, and it always comes back to the style of the man--you can't change the style of the man more than a certain amount. But, for example, I thought the Tuesday lunch was an abomination from where I sat, in all bluntness, because it was so unstructured, so without any opportunity to know what might be discussed. You'd make a guess at it and you'd volunteer papers and this and that, but there was no one in touch with anybody to say, "I think the President's going to want to know about this, you'd better have a paper on this," and so on. There was no preparation. And there was almost no read-out. Now, there was a good deal of read-out up to early 1966--I say frankly, this is one respect where my brother Mac I think did a better job than Walt subsequently did. Walt was not very good on read-out, because he had been so engaged in the argument, but that just wasn't what he did. And there was nobody else commissioned to read it out, so you'd get--and the Secretary of State would usually come back and find himself an hour late for his next appointment, and so he'd have great difficulty reading it out. Quite frequently, I'd get it when McNaughton was alive and to a degree even when Warnke was there, but McNaughton was extraordinarily--he and I were very close. We'd call up and say, "Is this what you understand to have happened?" But it just wasn't good, you know, it was too loose-footed. It was just not--I'm all for the President having a small private gathering of his senior advisers, and he might well have--just to give you one way of doing it, he might have said, "The meeting will come at eleven-thirty, and we will go through points x, y, and z on the basis of papers before us, and then we'll adjourn to lunch. Now, that would give him the option of saying, "Look, get rid of all the staffs and

everybody who's no use to me and that I can't talk absolutely freely in front of, and then go to lunch and we'll really--." That would have been very understandable, and then go back after lunch and say, "Now, where we come out is this, and this, and this. This is where we come out." The President was very difficult to pin down on where he had come out on a thing. I think his style generally carried lack of system and structure way too far; I lived through the Eisenhower period when there was too much of it, but there was just a lot too little of it for the effectiveness and the sense of working together of senior people. And I suppose I would count myself senior in terms of Viet Nam problems--a senior workman if nothing else. And it was just a whole lot harder and more difficult to see what you were doing, and much harder to take a real bite at a problem, "What really do we think our bombing's doing? What really do we think our forces add up to?" Now, I think a part of the reason the President wouldn't do this is secrecy--more than any President I have known he was obsessed by this, and that he must keep it up his sleeve if he was thinking of doing anything new. I think he could have trusted people; I think he could have trusted the State Department as I knew it and the men in it; I think he could have trusted the Pentagon, as I knew it and worked in it; he didn't feel he could. At least that was my impression.

Well, these are random notes--

M: Did this have substantive fall-out though? For example, did a policy that didn't have a constituent representation, like the pacification program, get shuffled out because it didn't have someone in there to protect its interest?

B: Well, of course, it probably should have had somebody full time sooner than it did, but when it had Komer--in that year it had Komer and then when Komer

went to the field--Komer was his own lawyer from the field. I think we were giving it a lot of play then, and it was awfully hard to have got it tightly organized much before that, because there was just so much else. I don't think we could--the sheer capacity either in the mission or the Vietnamese didn't exist to do it until early '66 or along in there.

M: But it wasn't a procedural matter that shuffled it out?

B: I don't think that was a procedural matter. Myself, I'd like to have seen a sort of managerial structure. Actually, and I say frankly, one of my regrets--when Bob Komer, who was an old friend of mind whom I had recommended to my brother, was that when he operated, he operated so much as a lone wolf he didn't come to any meeting or see anybody. In the year that he was around Washington we didn't have the kind of thing that we later had in the Habib group, where you really did feel that people were leveling and at the same time, we never had a leak from that group. Nobody even knew it existed. And again and again, it would be able to sort of say, "Well, now, there's concern in this about this; we really ought to take a look at that." And I think a lot flowed from that in an invisible way. I simply think something higher up the line and something sort of structuring the meetings that the President participated in, in which he would be kept fully informed, could have been done.

M: What about the distraction from other countries?

B: Well, let's talk for a moment--because I talked so much about Viet Nam--just say a few words about the President's role in dealings with other Asian countries. With the Japanese, he was excellent in his handling of the Sato visit, January '65, and again in November '67, where he had a very rough time because Senator [Richard] Russell refused to accept what could have been construed as a rather forthcoming reference to when we'd

decide on reversion of Okinawa, and had to change that at the last minute. But the President kept very cool about it. It was a very unhappy first day, and the second day came out just right, and it was fine. And government functioned very effectively, I thought, and the President did it extremely well. He was very good on Japanese decisions; he bore down on them. I thought he quickly understood what was going on, he handled things--a lot of Treasury matters, a lot of different things enter into a Japanese relationship, and the President doesn't really face climactic things, but he sure gives the guidelines and I say the President did and did it very well.

Korea--he was brilliant! Just had Park as a real friend, respected him, thought very highly of him. Park visited the United States in--when? May '65--anyway, it was a most successful visit. And of course the President's visit there in '66. There was real rapport there. The President would come out of a meeting with Park as at Canberra in December '67 and say, "There's somebody," and it was! He was very good.

With Taipei, the President did a good job when their Vice President visited here. He was always a little bit impatient about Chiang Kai-shek, and I really couldn't blame him for it. He x-ed him very firmly from any thought of stopping there in the October '66 trip,which Chiang would have loved. I remember the President x-ed that. I sent over one schedule option with Chiang on it, and it just got phhhht! And he replied, he didn't knock himself out at all to reply too quickly to anything Chiang sent, and Chiang undoubtedly felt just a touch neglected, but that's describing the President's personal role in that.

Then Marcos and the Philippines. The September '66 visit was outwardly a success, and in many ways, well, in many ways it was; but in the inwardness

of it, the President was forced by Marcos to confront six issues in the concluding session, and which Marcos had been told in every known frequency for days and weeks before that we had to answer "No" to at least five out of the six. And the President had to say that "No" because of the way Marcos played it. I think the President resented that. He was feeling terribly tired that afternoon, and put Marcos on the spot in front of his staff--it was just all wrong. Then they worked very closely together in the setting up of the Manila conference right after that. So it didn't linger, in a way. But the President--you know, I told you the episode of the speech at the Manila Conference and the President getting that changed. He always thought, "Well, maybe this guy is a pretty good politician, but he really isn't somebody of any great substance." And then in December of '67 on the Canberra trip, Marcos tried to hit the President for a whole raft of little things in and around that. And he was the last caller at 10:30 or 11 at night, and the President was really--I've never seen him in a protocol situation where he obviously wasn't going to lose his patience, so near to it. And I thought with good reason! I thought he was absolutely right, and he said the next day, "That fellow is really the living end!" And I couldn't have agreed more. I just thought he was the bottom of the people that I had responsibility for.

He was pretty good with the Thai, but it's always difficult. You don't communicate that much. He went to great lengths to see the Thai Foreign Minister; he was very good about the Thai, very good about the Thai, and I thought right and hard-hitting in his decisions, including military aid decisions that were split between Secretary Rusk and Secretary McNamara in the fall of '66 just as he went on the trip. He had to decide in favor of the higher level that we recommended basically

for political reasons against the lower level that McNamara recommended, which he did. Handled himself very well there, had good relationships there, and went to considerable pains. He was a little careless of their feelings, I thought, when he flew into Thailand in December 1967 without really any effective notice, and the whole trip. But that's the only thing I would mention there.

He had an immense personal success with Ne Win of Burma, and this was a quiet, low-key relationship that was a real small asset. Their visit here was a real success, the two men really talked privately, the President directed that notes be destroyed, so none of us kept any notes of the conversations. I'm not sure that anybody was even present at the key ones, but insofar as he even mentioned it to anybody, he said, "There will be no record." Ne Win appreciated this, the way the whole trip was handled was immensely successful, but the key to it was the President and the fact that he thought this guy had something, talked quietly to him, got a lot of advice from him I assume; it was a success. And this was a personal success for the President.

The President's relationship with Lee Kuan of Singapore became a very warm one by the close of his term. Lee paid a visit in October of '67, and the President received him again in November of '68 and was glad to do it I understood. And saw him at Canberra, and the whole visit, and so on.

The President's relationships with Malaysians--he got along all right with them. I think he found it hard to sort of come to grips with them; they are rather easy in their manner. But he worked on these problems and worked very hard on the Malaysian rubber problem, which was a tough choice between stockpile disposals and the rubber market and assumed that in fact marginal impacts of stockpile disposals on the rubber situation--

it really wasn't as much as the Malaysians kept making it, and the President knew it wasn't. But he handled that well, handled the official visit of the Tunku in '64 very well indeed. He got along easily, and they were impressed and I think felt very warmly toward him.

The Indonesians--the President on Indonesia very quickly grasped the inner meaning of what happened after '65. I may say that he confronted this right away when he came into office in early '64. There was the question of whether he applied the Congressional requirement of Presidential determinations. Roger Hilsman thought he was tightening it by not making the determination. He wasn't tightening it at all. He was just keeping freedom. He didn't have to do something; the lawyers said he didn't have to do it, so why do it? So, play it out, and in fact he played it very adroitly. This was the policy we recommended from the State Department--to hang on as long as you can, doing minimum things for them but holding on. And he approved the appointment of Ambassador [Marshall] Green. I can't say that I can recall anything that came to him, but he understood it and understood what we were trying to do and kept cool about it and so on. And when you got the break in the fall of '65, he understood absolutely and kept impressing it on us--we like to think we were impressing it on him too--that the one thing to do was to keep our mouth shut. And he teed off a couple of times and said, "You fellows have got to learn to keep your mouth shut." And I said, "Mr. President, we'll try to keep our mouths shut." Well, we did succeed in keeping our mouths shut, whoever's idea it was, it doesn't make any difference. And when Suharto came out on top, he knew what we were doing, keeping in touch, and so on. And eventually, of course, the real increments of aid began in February of '67, and that was when we had to clear it up with him and get it through, and that happened very quickly. Except he insisted on congressional clearance, which we should have anticipated. It was

our fault, and we had to call a dozen people over the Washington's Birthday weekend in February in order to get a clear picture to the President that the Congress was with this, which it was. There was no question about it. But he handled this and kept the pressure on. The general feeling was perfectly clear. It was one of these cases where dramatic decisions didn't come to the President, but the sense "The President cares, this is an important priority--Orville Freeman, grow some rice if that's what has to be done, everybody is with this." It was a clear case where the sense of the Administration was clear, and nobody had any problem with it. There really wasn't anybody whose ox was gored by it, so I suppose that makes it easier. But there was no question, you could go to the President if you needed him in a crunch, and you'd get help.

M: It's also an indication that he was not distracted away from non-Vietnamese Asian considerations? That's a good instance of it.

B: No, he knew what this one was doing. Well, he cared about Asia, he cared about Asian people. He meant it, all the things he said on that trip, and he meant the Declaration. I think he told the story--he had some language in a speech that Harry McPherson told me was a deliberate response to something Fulbright had said--that these people are worth caring about. They count. They're important people, as people, and because we're all humans. Just the most basic reasons. And that the form of words was, in effect, a veiled retort to something that Fulbright had said, that these aren't our kind of people.

M: Yes, I think I recall that.

B: I think he said, "There are those who say these aren't our kind of people, they couldn't be more wrong." I never would have doubted for a second at any time I knew the President that this was something he felt very deeply about in general terms anyway. He had been enough to Asia before he became

President, and he had a feeling for the whole thing. I think this grew in office. I described the trip.

And perhaps another illustration of it and a good one to end on is the trip to Canberra in December of '67, which was a tour de force. He saw, I think, between eleven and thirteen senior people, heads of state or government in most cases, in Canberra and then in Melbourne. They were short meetings, most of them, lunch with Park, dinner with the South Vietnamese, but most of them were half to three-quarters of an hour. And it was a mad scramble. And he was dead tired, as everybody would have been. And he went through a fantastic day, arriving at five o'clock in the morning and working right through until this incident I've described with Marcos at midnight, very nearly. It was a fantastic day. And he never missed a cue. He sometimes talked about one or two things where I thought the other fellow needed to get an oar in, but not to any real degree. I think the results were just anywhere from good to excellent on all those conversations, and that's a remarkable--

M: A good track record.

B: A very good track record. And his capacity to get along with those people and his enormous size and his utter American quality is something that they felt and they felt that he could make himself seem and be their humble guest. And they appreciated this.

So I think his Asian policies--I think history will judge those in a sense--but his caring about Asians was something that was quite unforced. This was from his heart. This was a real thing. I think he felt more at home with them than he did a great many Europeans, just as a superficial impression. These were self-made people to a large part, they were new, they were fighting the same kinds of problems he had known and had spoken

of, as I think I recalled earlier, so movingly in the Ayub 1961 visit. It was just a part of him. There are some aspects to the whole trip that were--the scheduling was rather fantastic, but I don't think that's the story that really is important. It came out extraordinarily well. And the Thai were happy, and the Vietnamese were happy, and I think the meeting with the Pope had substance--it couldn't be expected to advance things rapidly. And frankly, I at one point joined with two or three others in urging that he not make the Rome trip. This was when we were over Northern Australia somewhere, but we were rather quickly told that that wasn't his judgment, so we went ahead and did what we had to. He was quite clear and firm.

Well, I've sort of run through it, I think.

M: What about China--Communist China?

B: Oh, Communist China, yes.

M: We generally see the picture of policy as being very rigid and unbending--

B: Well, no, he was always looking for the handle on that, and he went along on two or three pieces of language in State of the Union messages and one or two other speeches, which were quite forthcoming. Jim Thomson, when he was working over at the White House, used to--I think his sole mission in life was to get phrases in, and the President would buy them. I think he basically believed you had to get along in the end, no question about it. And when we used "peace and reconciliation" in the Manila Declaration, we knew it referred to Communist China. And he gave a very forthcoming broad speech on our whole relationship with Asia at Honolulu on the way out, which was initially drafted by Thomson, at my request. No, I think he had the broad view in the long run, but there wasn't much to work with for most of the time he was in office. He appreciated the dangers of their

reacting militarily, and I think history will give him real credit for the restraint with which he operated on the bombing program. I wouldn't have pushed it even to the point he did, but he was very clearly conscious of those limits and stopped well short of where it really could have triggered anything. And as far as reaching out to them, I don't think--you see, they were in the cultural revolution for a good part of his time, or he was preoccupied with the Viet Nam thing. There wasn't really any opportunity to do much. He did hold the line at the United Nations, but he had been close to change--I say this as a footnote to history. In '66 after you had had the tie vote in '65 at the United Nations session, in '66 up to at least August, it looked as though we had to find some way of adjusting, because the vote was going to go against us. So for that reason alone it was compulsory to review it. Now, I don't know the exact sequence, but what I most vividly recall is that my United Nations Assistant Secretary colleague, [Joseph] Sisco, and I recommended to the Secretary and I think he to the President, that we devise a strategy that would deal with this through having the Canadians or somebody come forward with an initiative that we wouldn't be associated with, but which would give another exit at a two-China kind of thing. And this was the way we worked. We talked to the Canadians about this; the Secretary of State by way of softening up the people in Taipei on it in June, and this was all at the President's expressed direction. And what I would record is that the President didn't fight the problem for a minute. I was present with him alone with the three of us, with Ambassador Goldberg and myself, on this subject. He asked me to come over, I have forgotten why--the Secretary was away or something--and explain where we stood and what we were thinking of doing. And I said, "Mr. President, I think we've just got to adjust to the practical fact that we're going to lose."

Now, in the end the cultural revolution changed it all around and made the thing academic and a whole different set of things had to be done in the fall in a setting where the Russians and everybody else didn't want the Chinese in--didn't want to fool with it. But at the time of this meeting--and I can't date it, it was sometime in the spring, I should think, the President was very calm about it. "What do you think we ought to be doing?" And Goldberg said what he thought and I said, "I wholly agree with Ambassador Goldberg. We've got to work toward getting this thing handled this year in this fashion. In some fashion." And the President said, "Well, why do you think we ought to do this?" And I said, "I think we ought to do it for the practical reasons." And Goldberg was arguing that we ought to do it because it would open up all kinds of channels to the Chinese, and I said frankly I didn't really believe it would do that. It might in the long run, but they were going to be very tough and difficult, and this wasn't going to change them in the short run. And anyway they wouldn't show up in the short run, because they wouldn't come as long as Taipei was there. And, in short, you were playing a tactical game because of a practical situation, although you could make it work in the long run so that it had some real meaning in settling down the relationship in the right way. But Goldberg was decidely more optimistic than I was. And I remember saying to the President, "Mr. President, I think you've got to take this girl out, but it's not because she's beautiful. She has got stringy hair and wears glasses, but she's all you've got." And he bought the course of action. Now, he had no reason to decide whether he took the Goldberg view or my view. It didn't matter. By September, we would both have been in accord that it was nonsense to fool with this with the cultural revolution raging, you see. So,

in a sense he never came to crunches on China policy. I don't know what Goldberg would say, but he [the President] was flexible about it. I think he was acutely conscious that you couldn't take it more than so far on the Hill, and we'd occasionally have a very minor reduction in our trade restrictions in the non-strategic areas that would just not be hacked, and it would come back with static levels on the Hill. And it was obvious that nobody felt they would go the President with any expectation that he'd say, "Damn the torpedoes! Go ahead!" Because we wouldn't have been urging that ourselves if the static level was high. Congressional reaction was always something somebody else had to tell, but assuming it to be high, you couldn't do it. There was that much--you couldn't argue to the President that this was the great thing, that this would insure that China would be friendly to us in five years time. I mean, it wasn't in the cards. So, I think he was realistic, practical in this area. I think he was happy to take the posture positions that were right. And when one of us--the Secretary checked a couple of remarks out, the Secretary was very careful in this area--the President was more inclined to take a flyer every now and then, actually. But I don't think it was any great difference. I don't think it was any underlying difference in the practicality with which he looked at the problem. But he didn't want to fight the Chinese at all. He wanted to see an Asia that was settled down, and I think he was going about it in the right way.

M: That's a pretty good peroration right there. You've been awfully generous with your time.

(End of Tape)

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Gift of Personal Statement

By William P. Bundy

to the
Lyndon Baines Johnson Library

In accordance with Sec. 507 of the Federal Property and Administrative Services Act of 1949, as amended (44 U.S.C. 397) and regulations issued thereunder (41 CFR 101-10), I, William P. Bundy, hereinafter referred to as the donor, hereby give, donate, and convey to the United States of America for eventual deposit in the proposed Lyndon Baines Johnson Library, and for administration therein by the authorities thereof, a tape and transcript of a personal statement approved by me and prepared for the purpose of deposit in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library. The gift of this material is made subject to the following terms and conditions:

1. Title to the material transferred hereunder will pass to the United States as of the date of the delivery of this material into the physical custody of the Archivist of the United States. The donor retains to himself for a period of ten (10) years all literary property rights in the material donated to the United States of America by the terms of the instrument. After the expiration of this ten (10) year period, the aforesaid literary property rights will pass to the United States of America.

2. It is the donor's wish to make the material donated to the United States of America by the terms of the instrument available for research in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library. At the same time, it is his wish to guard against the possibility of its contents being used to embarrass, damage, injure, or harass anyone. Therefore, in pursuance of this objective, and in accordance with the provisions of Sec. 507 (f) (3) of the Federal Property and Administrative Services Act of 1949, as amended (44 U.S.C. 397) this material shall not, for a period of ten (10) years, be available for examination by anyone except persons who have received my express written authorization to examine it. This restriction shall not apply to employees and officers of the General Services Administration (including the National Archives and Records Service and the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library) engaged in performing normal archival work processes

3. A revision of this stipulation governing access to the material for research may be entered into between the donor and the Archivist of the United States, or his designee, if it appears desirable.

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5. I hereby designate McGeorge Bundy to have, after my death, the same authority with respect to authorizing access to the aforesaid material as I have reserved to myself in paragraph 2 and paragraph 3 above.

Signed William P. Bundy

Date Feb. 23, 1970

Accepted Harry J. Middleton - fn
Archivist of the United States

Date March 11, 1975