

INTERVIEW XIX

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INTERVIEWEE: JOSEPH A. CALIFANO, JR.

INTERVIEWER: Michael L. Gillette

PLACE: Mr. Califano's office, Washington, D.C.

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G: Let me ask you to describe this visit to the LBJ Ranch on December 22, 1964, when you were still at the Pentagon.

C: Let me start with the earlier meeting.

G: Okay.

(Interruption)

C: On November 9, 1964, Secretary [Robert] McNamara and Cyrus Vance went down to the Ranch and I was not with them. They were armed with a proposal we had worked on since April. In April of 1964 McNamara called the service secretaries and his key assistant secretaries and myself to a meeting. And he said that it was clear to him that Johnson was going to win by a monumental landslide over Barry Goldwater, that we should be prepared with a whole host of new initiatives, controversial things that we wanted to get done that we could do only in the wake of a landslide. The kinds of things that we talked about were a major base closing program, get rid of excess bases; moving

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the congressmen and senators out of the reserve, I guess; moving on creating a unified board of contract appeals out of all the separate services; all kinds of things like that. Creating a joint navy-marine force, army helicopter force that we had--it ultimately became Strike Command, Strike Com, which we had had trouble doing--a lot of things like that. And he wanted each of them to make up a wish list and get it to me. We would prune the wish list. They would staff it out in great secrecy and we would be ready to go the day after the election. And that kicked off something we called "new initiatives" and about a hundred new initiatives. One of those new initiatives was to close down a billion dollars in excess bases. And on November 9, Secretary McNamara and Vance went down to the Ranch to, among other things, tell the President he [McNamara] wanted to do this and that he was going to do it.

When he came back the next day and he came in he wanted a meeting held. I remember I had Tom Morris [in my office], who was the assistant secretary in charge of procurement, and he said, "We're going to go." I said to him, "How did the President react at the list?" And he said, "He looked at it, and he paused and sat there a long time, and then said okay." When we released the list, which was within a couple of days, because McNamara did not want to give the President a chance to have second thoughts about it. He actually--I should check my telephone books of 1964--but I remember [Lawrence] O'Brien calling everybody [and] wanting to have a [meeting] as they began to suspect it. We gave nothing to the White House, nothing to O'Brien and we announced it. We ultimately closed every single base on the list except Mansfield's air base in Montana.

G: Is that right? Why didn't you close that one?

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C: The pressure was just so great we just couldn't do it. And there were incredible moments.

I mean there was Bobby Kennedy coming over, raising hell about the closing of the Brooklyn Naval Yard. He'd just been elected senator and came in with Anthony Scotto one of the longshoremen who was indicted ten or twelve years later. Bobby saying and raising hell that it was a terrible mistake, and why pick this and why do that.

G: Who did he say this to, McNamara or you?

C: McNamara. And in the course of his argument he said, "You know, the army put this on the list"--so that the whole list would unravel or something. That's what he heard from the army. So we went back and we did some more study on it and we concluded that we should still close it. And Bobby came over and Bobby made that argument again. And McNamara said, "Well, maybe they did, and if they did I'll have to do something to somebody in the army. I want to tell you a story about Ford. When I was at Ford I put in a cost-cutting program. I said everyone had to cut 5 per cent. I started to get these nasty letters from retirees or about-to-be retirees that they were no longer getting a gold watch upon retirement. I called the personnel guy and he said, yes, he had cut out the gold watches which Ford had given out for fifty years. It was a great Ford tradition." And Bobby said, "What did you do?" He said, "I let the cut stand. There were no more gold watches given out at Ford and I fired the head of personnel." In any case, that's not Johnson. That's--the second time that fall they went down to the Ranch, I went with them.

G: Let me just ask a couple of things here. One, did you have any suspicion that the army in fact had loaded the list with some bases that they thought would unravel--?

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C: Probably did. Probably did, yes.

G: Really?

C: I would think all the services tried to do that. We probably tried to screen them out and we didn't get every one. But--

G: Maybe something in Carl Hayden's district or something?

C: I'd have to go back and look at it. Yes, there's no question about that.

G: Were there any Texas bases on that list?

C: I'm sure there were. I just have to go back and look. It was a public list. We put it out and it was done that week.

G: Well, here Lyndon Johnson had for thirty years tried to protect the bases in Texas--

C: Well, I think we may have trimmed some back. We may not have closed some. I think we did something to somebody somewhere. And he lived with it. We got some screams from the congressmen, but he held to it.

G: Okay. Well, let's go on to the second.

C: The second meeting was on December 22, 1964. It was a Tuesday and I flew down to the Ranch. I might note on the trip down and the trip back I had a hundred Redwell envelopes on the Lear jet and each envelope had three white manila folders in it with the decisions on these hundred initiatives. And on the trip down and the trip back, McNamara decided every one of them. I came back to the Pentagon and we just went like hell, moving on everything.

G: Is that right?

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- C: But in any case this was the annual meeting to give the [joint] chiefs their chance to appeal to the President on the budget.
- G: You mean appealing over the BOB [Bureau of the Budget] or appealing--?
- C: President Johnson always gave the chiefs the opportunity to speak to him directly about the Pentagon budget. There was language in the National Security Act that indicated they had the right to go directly to the commander-in-chief and he always honored that. I'm not sure every president has.
- G: Was this appealing a decision McNamara had made or--?
- C: These were appeals to decisions that McNamara had made. We had prepared these briefing books. One of the chiefs who was down there was Curt [Curtis] LeMay, if I'm right, of the air force. As usual he had the most appeals and was arguing for the most money. Going down on the plane, we went through the briefing book which I had put together for McNamara and Vance on the budget issues. And in one of the books--this was all for the chiefs' request--one of the things LeMay was asking for was an increase in pay. Under that increase in pay he would have gotten what in those days was a tremendous amount of money, maybe it was seventy or eighty or even a hundred thousand dollars eventually if you laid the economic value of his pay and allowances--
- G: For himself, is that right?
- C: As a four-star general. So as LeMay started talking--and McNamara said, "Mark that page because when LeMay starts making his case I'm going to slide the book under the President's nose and point him out to that and that will kill the budget appeal." And he did exactly that and it killed the budget appeal.

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G: Did it really?

C: I think it would have died anyway but as soon as he saw that it was over.

G: What were your impressions of the LBJ Ranch when you landed?

C: Well, it was very exciting. The President was gracious. He had a picture taken with me with one of his dogs or whatever dog he had then.

G: A beagle.

C: A beagle. It was just quite an experience. I just remember it as a tremendous experience.

I can't remember whether I had ever met the President or shaken his hand before then.

There was one point at which he spoke to the National War College at Hains Point and I was there. I know I met him and shook his hand then.

G: Anything else on the budget discussions that is memorable?

C: The only thing I remember [inaudible]--

G: Then you had lunch.

C: I just don't remember the lunch. I see it. I had lunch with the President. Was Lady Bird there?

G: Yes, Mrs. Johnson.

C: The other part of it was the Atomic Energy Commission budget. But I just don't have any recollections of--

G: Was he inclined in a situation like this to routinely affirm McNamara's judgment on these things?

C: McNamara never wanted to be overruled so in situations like this McNamara had normally gone over everything with the President in advance, that coupled with the fact

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that the President didn't like to be surprised. I'm sure there were occasions, but I'm sure it was quite calculated and orchestrated, when he'd give the chiefs a little more or give them something. But I think he wouldn't do it without letting McNamara know that he was going to do it.

G: I assume that they would have their own sources of influence on the Hill with [Richard] Russell and--

C: Absolutely. In those days even more than they have today.

G: Really?

C: Absolutely.

G: Okay. Let's talk about the *Hello Dolly!* tour of South Vietnam.

C: At some point in I guess August or very early September the President thought it would be a great idea to send the cast of *Hello Dolly!* to South Vietnam to entertain the troops. He liked the show because he had always liked Carol Channing.

G: Had they performed at the White House?

C: I was just trying to figure out when--the President decided he wanted to do that and I called David Merrick.

G: Had you known Merrick or had any--?

C: I don't think I had known him. He and a fellow named Alan DeLynn who was his partner. And they came down and I talked to them--it's somewhere in my date book here--and they were ready to go. They wanted to make sure we paid their expenses and covered everything which we ultimately did.

G: Were they currently presenting a show somewhere in New York?

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- C: I think Mary Martin was in the road show of *Hello Dolly*. I don't know whether the President--I do not know what put it in the President's head.
- G: It was his idea?
- C: It was his idea. But I knew he loved Carol Channing and I remember "Hello Dolly!" was "Hello Lyndon!" at the convention. So the troupe went out and I mean it went out on very short notice. From the time we first talked to them to the time they went to Vietnam was probably no more than a month. It was wild as those things go.
- G: It was not the entire troupe, was it, or did you send the entire troupe?
- C: We sent pretty much the whole cast because [Henry Cabot] Lodge argued that only-- When we told Lodge they were coming out, Lodge came back with a cable urging that we only send three or four members of the cast and that was rejected.
- G: Did LBJ himself--?
- C: LBJ rejected it. I was against it. And McNamara didn't think it was a major security problem. He thought Lodge was being a little nannyish about it. So off the troupe went and when they got to Saigon in October Lodge had a party for them and at that party when [William] Westmoreland gave Merrick some kind of plaque, Merrick took off and really belted Lodge.
- G: Did he?
- C: I don't mean hit him. He belted him verbally. He attacked him for being asleep at meetings. I mean it was really quite incredible. He attacked him for not inviting the whole cast, and he attacked him for, as he put it, forcing Mary Margaret [Martin] to sing for this elite group of guests and officers and what have you. This stuff was in the

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tabloids and maybe even the *Washington Post*. It was in the wires. The President called me furious about it.

G: What did he say?

C: What was the date on which he did this?

G: Let's see. It was Thursday, October 14.

C: It probably made the papers and maybe you should try and get the clippings if you can.

G: Okay.

C: I called out there.

G: Did you learn about it from the President or did you read it in the press initially?

C: No, I found out about it at 9:45 a.m. on the fifteenth of October. This is interesting. They don't even have the President calling me. They must have stopped keeping track of the hot line. My hunch is it was in the paper on the morning of the fifteenth and the President called me. The fifteenth. You know the [Francis] Morrissey thing was going on at the same time? I don't know how I'm going to get this across to the people. In any case, the President called me. If I was to bet, I'd bet that was the call on--

G: He learned about it before you did, is that right?

C: I think he brought it to my attention. Maybe I saw it in the *Post*, but all I know is I got a call from him and he said we had to do something--we ought look at my notebooks for that day, too--but in any case, he said we had to do something about Merrick. He wanted Merrick to apologize. We had enough problems with Lodge even though--and it was very funny because he said Lodge did sleep through meetings and maybe Lodge slept through

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the performance of *Hello Dolly!* but Merrick had to apologize. He's the ambassador. So I called out there and Merrick was drunk.

I got Alan DeLynn, his partner, and told him we had to--I got Merrick and Merrick didn't want to apologize and he told me that Lodge was a terrible ambassador and he was an old fart. I mean he really laid into Lodge. And I said, "Look, look, look, you've got to do it. You've got to do it for the President." Then I talked to Alan DeLynn.

G: Are you saying Merrick was drunk at the time he made the comments or he was drunk when he was talking to you?

C: He was drunk when he was talking to me and I always assumed he was a little drunk at the time he made the comments but I don't know. How do I know whether he was drunk? He sounded drunk to me. He sounded like a guy that was sort of half drunk that had been awakened out of a stupor. Remember we're at twelve hours off; I don't know, thirteen hours time difference. I got him and eventually, a day later he issued some kind of a statement making a weak apology to Lodge which got us through that event.

When they returned to the United States from having done all these great things, Merrick wanted to come see the President and there was no way the President was going to see Merrick after that incident even though the cast had been great. We toyed with the idea of maybe the President would see just Mary Martin and not Merrick, but that didn't fly.

G: She had disassociated herself from Merrick's statement, is that right?

C: She had disassociated herself from Merrick's statement. The reason Mary Martin didn't fly was we didn't know any way to get Mary Martin down alone without Merrick without

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having another story about Merrick's attack on Lodge and our refusal to have Merrick there as well. So Mary Martin was embarrassed by it. Westmoreland was appalled by it I gather now that I'm reading his papers.

So Merrick came to see me on the twenty-second of October and to thank the President and he made a lot of suggestions about what we should do over there with the troops; smaller groups of people that could go on helicopters; younger, more swinging performers basically, all groups including females. Merrick was very much impressed by the troops over there and he kicked the shit out of the press corps over there I'm sure partly because of his own actions. But he did stick in our heads that there ought to be an Ernie Pyle in Vietnam and we got off--I remember that stuck in the President's head for quite a while. He kept trying to wonder could we get somebody over there who would write about our boys heroically the way Ernie Pyle did and not some other way.

G: Did the President do anything to secure an Ernie Pyle-type correspondent?

C: I don't know. The guys you should ask about that are the George Christians and Tom Johnsons when you interview them. Then when *Hello Dolly!* did a special on television, Merrick sent the President a print of it and the President didn't even want to respond to that.

G: Is that right?

C: That came in in February of 1966, so I sent David a letter thanking him for the print. He just didn't want Merrick to have a letter with his signature on it I guess.

G: What does this say about the President's relationship with Lodge?

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C: Well, I don't know. I mean, to be honest with you, I was at meetings in the Cabinet Room when Lodge dozed off.

G: In the President's presence?

C: In the President's presence. But the problem with judging that in terms of his ability is that the jet lag is so staggering. You come back and, you don't, he didn't come back on trips where he'd sleep for a day and rest and get straightened out and come and see the President. He'd land and two hours later he'd be in the White House. That's brutal stuff so it's very hard to render judgment on that.

G: Good point.

C: But it didn't stop Merrick.

G: Would it be fair to say that the President didn't want to do anything that would cause Lodge to leave that post, that he wanted Lodge in that position?

C: He wanted Lodge very much in that position but I mean while it had its amusing moments I do think that the President also probably thought Merrick was drunk or crude, rude. He probably shared Mary Martin's view of that. I really would like you to get the clippings because I think he really went out of his way to slug Lodge. And the story ran a couple of days. I mean there's the story and then there's the apology. Both stories.

G: Did this influence the entertainment of troops in Vietnam?

C: I don't think so, no. Oh, you mean did we send over smaller groups?

G: Yes.

C: Boy, you'd have to ask--I wouldn't know. I'm sure I passed that on in one way or another in the course of business to Bob McNamara.

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G: Okay. There's one thing I want to ask you about in connection with the [Mike] Mansfield memo and that was a statement by General [Nguyen Cao] Ky that the U.S. should do the fighting on the perimeter where the South Vietnamese army would fight or do more organizing in rear. This was a statement that was evidently provocative in terms of generating opposition in Congress, that the U.S. troops should have greater exposure to combat than the South Vietnamese. Do you remember that statement and the President's reaction to it?

C: I do not. I know the President was always sensitive to that issue and so was McNamara, not getting our troops out in front any more than we had to, and they thought these arguments about Ky making the war South Vietnamese and not an American war and . . .

G: The other thing that permeates Mansfield's correspondence is that the U.S. commitment to South Vietnam ended with [Ngo Dinh] Diem's assassination.

C: The other side of that argument, I just noticed that here in Mansfield's notes, was that Kennedy had in effect ordered or acquiesced in Diem's assassination. Our commitment, if anything, increased. You don't break your commitment by knocking off the guy that you had the commitment with. If for some reason you dispose of the guy you had the commitment with, or the head of state at that point time to install your own head of state--because there was no other way to get rid of him--the commitment's even stronger.

Now, I don't know whether Kennedy ordered or acquiesced in Diem's assassination. I mean a lot has been written about that. I guess I have assumed as I've read what's been written that he at least acquiesced to it and knew about it and that is the same as ordering it, if you will, the way the CIA ran in those days. The President--and I

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give you this as my personal view and speculation, some recollection and some . . . I have recollections of Johnson talking as though he thought we--Kennedy, who else? [Averell] Harriman, I can't remember, who was running the CIA then, [John] McCone, [Richard] Helms, whoever--were responsible for Diem's assassination. On what he based that on, I don't know. It's always difficult with Lyndon Johnson to know whether he was telling you what he thought on something like that or he was telling you what he wanted you to think he thought. But he said it more than once and I'm sure you've got other interviews in which people heard him say exactly that. With Johnson believing that Kennedy had had Diem assassinated and Johnson trying to pursue Kennedy's policies, which I have always thought was a very strong thread in what we did in Vietnam, Johnson would have had exactly the opposite view of Mansfield on what the assassination of Diem meant. He would have viewed it as further solidifying our commitment to do something for the people because here we, the United States, knocked this guy off. We put somebody in his place, Ky, to take over the country. Was it Ky?

G: Well, not initially. There was a whole succession of guys. That was Mansfield's point that there really was no--

C: But we were putting them in and therefore we had assumed in effect the presidency of South Vietnam as one of our countries, one of our states, one of our something and therefore increased our responsibility. So on that they had exactly opposite views. Now, sitting where Mansfield was sitting [inaudible] all the qualms he had about the war and making it an American war and not a Vietnamese war, there's no reason for Mansfield to know at this stage in time that Kennedy was responsible for Diem's death and

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assassination. So had Mansfield known that I doubt he would have made this argument.

Put another way, the fact--I mean he was a man of such monumental integrity. As I may have said to you, Johnson used to say, "Why do I have a saint for majority leader? Why can't I have a politician?" And he would--Mansfield making an argument like this, to me, is evidence that Mansfield did not know. My hunch would be that even if Johnson told him at a later point that John Kennedy knocked off Diem, this makes our commitment stronger, I'm not sure Mansfield would have believed him.

G: Apparently [Gerald] Ford leaked Mansfield's letter of dissent to the press.

C: Which letter now? Not his talking points, not the notes?

On July 28--I just want you to stop and think about the fact that's my third day in the White House--I had obviously gotten Mansfield's memo that same day off of his meeting with the congressional leaders. I sent it over to McNamara. I sent it to McNamara to get him to give us a draft answer. I send it on in to the President that night. This looks to me like the President's handwriting. Isn't it?

G: Let's see. I don't think so.

C: Some of it is [McGeorge] Bundy's handwriting. Some of it is my handwriting, but some of this looks like the President's.

G: That is right there.

C: The President's?

G: Yes.

C: Now, there is some point at which Mansfield said he didn't like McNamara. Yes, "McNamara's been a disappointment in handling this situation probably because he's

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being used in a way which he ought not to be used." I don't know if we ever . . . Now we got--what I don't have here is the final letter that went out. I can't remember whether it went out as a letter or whether--yes, the President sent it out as a short note with a defense of McNamara. I don't have the final version of the memorandum. It should be helpful to have. [*Foreign Relations of the United States* 1965, Volume III, #96]

G: Okay, I'll get that.

C: But on that same day the President signed a note and he said that--he listed the first eighteen points in a letter that I guess Jack Valenti and I did and the President must have done a little editing himself because all of our initials are on it. Those incredibly prescient--Mansfield, wasn't he?

G: He really was. He was also worried about the situation at Pleiku, that the U.S. garrison there was quite vulnerable and he envisioned another Dien Bien Phu.

C: I don't know where Mansfield was getting his information from. I just don't know the answer to that, whether it was coming from people on the Foreign Affairs Committee or people on the Armed Service Committee. But, I guess he was on the Foreign Affairs Committee. He was very well informed, by and large, about Vietnam.

G: Did LBJ consider this letter something to deliberate over or was it simply something to respond to? Did he ever--?

C: Well, I think by the time--you have to put the letter in context. Prior to the letter, Mansfield in private meetings with the President--Mansfield that day, as you got from my notes and now I see more elaborately in the statement, the day we announced the build-up or the day before we announced the build-up when we met with the leaders, was very

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strong, [he] made his views known. But my recollection, and you should probably talk to Mansfield, was that the President knew of Mansfield's views before he made the decision. He's not going to make a decision to send fifty thousand troops to Vietnam and not know the views of the Majority Leader before he has a meeting with the leadership. So I think the reaction to Mansfield's memorandum or letter was really to answer it. We had heard those arguments before, presumably, the troops weren't going. We'd made the announcement. Presumably we had answered all of those things. I remember--

(Interruption)

C: I don't know at what point this occurred but when I see that attack on McNamara there I remember--maybe when we get further along we'll place it. There was a point at which the President talked to me about McNamara and the war, and his concern about McNamara and the press was calling it McNamara's war. And he said, "That man is under a terrific strain and he can't take that. I've got to make this my war. I've got to stop the press from calling it McNamara's war because it will break him. And I need him and I want him here." So there was a conscious effort, conscious decision by the President to make it Johnson's war and a conscious effort by him to lift it from the shoulders of a man he thought were getting bent and stooped under the weight of it.

G: Do you think this was after McNamara was beginning to have doubts about that war?

C: I don't know. We'll have to get further down the road. It's way beyond this point but when I see Mansfield worrying about McNamara's advice to the President . . .

G: Any recollections of Ford leaking Mansfield's letter?

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C: No, I don't have any recollection of that. Johnson was always ambivalent about Ford. I mean he made that much quoted comment, "He couldn't chew gum and walk at the same time." He just didn't think Jerry Ford was very smart.

G: My impression is that he had a much closer rapport with [Everett] Dirksen.

C: Very close with Dirksen.

G: Really?

C: And they understood each other. I mean you've heard the stories, the telephone story, the car telephone.

G: Yes.

C: When Johnson was drinking, Dirksen would come over. Dirksen would get a full shot which was probably an ounce and a half, you know this, of bourbon and the President would get a half an ounce of scotch. That was always done with Dirksen. It was probably done with other people, too. And Dirksen would get a little tipsy and you know have a few. It was part of the negotiations as far as the President was concerned.

G: Did it work? Would Dirksen agree to things?

C: Well, I don't know if he agreed to things because he was drunk. He was a pretty savvy guy. He had his price. He knew how to exact the price for what he did.

G: What was his price, you know, because he did cooperate enormously?

C: Well, as we go through this stuff I'm sure I'll find it and as I go through my papers but I can remember on many occasions doing things for Dirksen.

G: There was one suggestion that Dirksen wanted to name a man to every regulatory commission.

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C: . . . now, but make a note and get the papers together on the Subversive Activities Control Board when we put Dirksen's guy on and we put Vicki McCammon's, McHugh's, husband [Simon] on there. God, Vicki was a--they're divorced, aren't they?

(Interruption)

G: Anything else on Dirksen and appointments as long as we're here? You were going to recall a time, not the Subversive Activities but--

C: I remember that one. Maybe we'll come across others. But just get the stuff on that, on those appointments. I had to handle that against the background of having urged him to abolish the board.

G: About the same time as Mansfield's questioning on Vietnam, [William] Fulbright was beginning to question the Dominican Republic and had given a speech on the Dominican Republic. Do you recall that?

C: I don't recall when it was but I do recall Fulbright doing that. I've got to say I think the President and I to this day and I think history has judged that a very wise decision. It cooled off [Fidel] Castro for years. The Dominican Republic is prospering. It has a good Democratic government. But I was in the Pentagon then. Among the things I do remember is getting Abe Fortas and McGeorge Bundy and Vance I guess down to the Dominican Republic to get [Joaquin] Balaguer put in power.

But I think, you know, Johnson always thought that Fulbright didn't like that and he didn't like Vietnam in part because he didn't like blacks and he didn't like brown people and that there was a little bit of a racist streak in Fulbright. He used to talk about

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Fulbright voting against the minimum wage when the proposal was made for twenty-five cent an hour minimum wage. I don't know whether that's true or not. He talked about Fulbright voting against every civil rights bill.

G: Southern Manifesto, signing that.

C: Did he sign that? And he used to tell a wonderful story of calling Fulbright in when he was going to appoint an assistant secretary for cultural affairs in the State Department and having a folder and telling Fulbright he had this fantastic guy and laying out all of his credentials. Graduation from the greatest college and a Ph.D. and tremendous history of exchange programs and handing him the folder and having Fulbright open the folder and he had a great big black and white picture of this guy who was black. And then the biography on the other side. And Johnson would describe Fulbright as saying, "Well, Lyndon"--you know--"Mr. President, we ought to think about this and we want to make sure we get the best man for the job." Whether it ever happened or not I don't know, but he told me.

G: It's the sort of thing that LBJ would tell.

C: It's the sort of thing he'd absolutely do and *do*.

G: Do you think that racism was an element of Fulbright's opposition? Do you yourself [think so]?

C: I think Lyndon Johnson genuinely believed that it was. And I think Johnson genuinely believed that there was some feeling in the country, in the South, where you had the tremendous support for the military ordinarily, about the fact that we were dealing with brown people and not white people, not white Europeans and that their attitude might

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have been a little bit different if we were fighting for white Europeans than fighting for Asians. Johnson's views on that were so--I'm not the expert on those views. I just know--I mean he also talked about the fact that the East was the future and we should be ready. I think we proposed an East-West university--

G: Trade Center.

C: In Hawaii. I think we got it passed. Because he wanted to have that; this was the future, the United States had to have a presence over there. It wasn't just the domino theory; it was the--if you want to talk about vision, he certainly saw the resurgence of Japan. He certainly the resurgence of China. He certainly saw what was going to happen in South Korea, the way people were in Taiwan, Thailand, all of that. I mean he saw all of that and he knew that was coming and that's one of the reasons we were over there.

G: Do you think that he learned the wrong lesson from the Dominican intervention, that we could get in, police an area militarily and get out? Was this transferred to thinking on Vietnam?

C: I know what you're asking and I guess my answer is I can't--I don't know the answer to that. And part of it is that it's at this stage of my recollection as I'm just starting to read this stuff. Maybe as we go along I'll see things that will kick my memory about other things he said.

G: But you don't recall an analogy with DR in these meetings?

C: I don't recall him saying that.

G: Or McNamara or Bundy or any of the others?

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C: I don't recall anybody saying that at this point in time. But you've made me recall things I never would have remembered. I do think we all regard the Dominican Republic as a singular success. Indeed I even put a book of cables together of the whole history of the Dominican Republic thing in the Pentagon and sent it to [Jack] Valenti in the White House--it's probably in your files somewhere--while I was working in the Pentagon. I put something else together I'd like you to get if it's available which is a book trying to reconstruct minute by minute and second by second the Gulf of Tonkin. I put a chronology together. I remember listening to the tapes of the [joint?] chiefs and sent it over to the White House. It's probably classified to the hilt and I won't be able to look at until I get a clearance of some kind.

I believe in turn--difficult on Vietnam except I think Johnson also thought Russell had a problem. Russell's problem with Vietnam had nothing to do with fighting communism; it had everything to do with the fact that they were brown and were not white. We also had problems with Russell on the civil rights legislation. He used to tell a story that he claimed he told Russell that during one of the discussions on civil rights trying to get him to back off the filibuster. And Russell--maybe you heard of this black guy that's in the house of this white master of the plantation or what have you and he's screwing his wife. And the head of the household comes in and the black guy jumps. She says, "You've got to get. You've got to get out." The black guy jumps out and runs to the nearest closet and opens it and she slams the door on him and it's the linen closet and he's pinned like a washing board between the shelves and the door. And the husband says, "Somebody's here. Somebody's here," and starts going, looking under the bed and

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everything and opens the closet door. And this black guy jumps into a standing position.

He sees this black guy just standing there like that and he's just pinned into this thing.

And the white man says, "What are you doing here?" He says, "Everyone's got to stand somewhere boss." And he said to Richard Russell, "Dick, that's what you're saying. This is your stand. You're telling me you've got to stand somewhere, and that's where you're standing."

G: Was Russell of the persuasion that we ought to be in all the way with a much heavier commitment or--?

C: I just can't remember and I wasn't privy to those conversations. I do remember the President talking more than once about Russell's doubts being related to the fact that these were brown [people].

G: Anything on the Lockheed contract?

C: I don't remember. Doesn't mean it wasn't relevant. McNamara's pretty tough on the contracts though. I don't think there was anything funny about that.

G: Now, I wanted to ask you about the two Tuesday luncheons that you attended in September.

C: Let's start tomorrow morning with that, okay?

End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview XIX

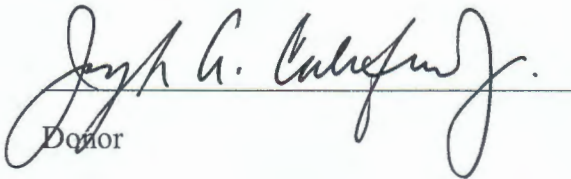
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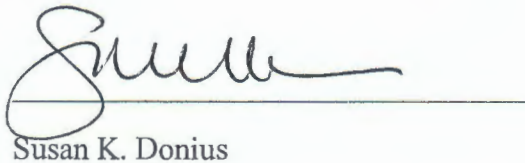
Joseph A. Califano

Interviewed by: Paige Mulhollan, Joe B. Frantz and Michael L. Gillette

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