INTERVIEWEE: THOMAS K. FINLETTER

INTERVIEWER: PAIGE E. MULHOLLAN

October 29, 1968

M: The tape is now running, Mr. Finletter. Let's start in a very general way. Can you recall the first time in your career that you came into contact with President Johnson?

F: I really can't. My governmental career in Washington started with an appointment as special assistant to the Secretary of State, then Mr. Cordell Hull, in the early part of, let me see, it was just before we got into the war--

M: 1941.

F: --but it was about February or March of that year.

M: Before Pearl Harbor?

F: Before Pearl Harbor. And I was special assistant to the Secretary of State at that time before Pearl Harbor, and needless to say I stayed on in that job until the war was won for all practical purposes, which was just before the collapse of the German armies in Europe and just before the time of the San Francisco conference.

M: And you were a consultant at the United Nations at that conference. Is that right?

F: I was a consultant. After I retired as special assistant to the Secretary of State, I was a consultant at the conference. So it must have been when I was special assistant to the Secretary that I first met Mr. Johnson, but I honestly can't remember it.

M: You don't remember his playing any particular role at the time you were in those jobs?

F: No, not at this particular time. As I remember his career, he was a very prominent--let's see, at that time--Congressman.

M: Congressman, yes, sir.

F: Not yet a Senator, I think I'm right in saying. And at San Francisco it was the Senators from the legislature who played the dominating roles.

M: And then later when you became Secretary of the Air Force, I believe at that time Mr. Johnson was in the Senate, and I believe he was on the Preparedness Subcommittee of the Armed Services.

F: Yes, he was the head of it.

M: He was the chairman of it. Did you have any contact with him in that position?

F: Yes, he did a certain amount of investigating of the Air Force at that time, and it was not very interesting work really. I remember him very well during that time because he was carrying on with his usual vigor in the investigation into the Air Force and its operations, and we had to defend ourselves, which we did, and I saw a considerable amount of him during that time.

M: I believe he was generally a supporter of the Air Force programs, was he not, the 70-group Air Force, which I think was the issue at that time. Is that not correct?

F: Yes, let me get that straight. We're talking about the time now when I was Secretary of the Air Force. Now before that I had been in London as the head of the United States' mission for the Marshall Plan. And then after I came back I was asked by President Truman to head up a commission on air power. That was in 1947-1948, the last six months, as I remember it, of 1947, the report being filed on December 31, 1947.

M: Excuse me, this is the thing that is referred to frequently in the literature as the Finletter Report, is it not?

F: Yes, it was a committee of five appointed by President Truman, of which I was chairman. The report, as I say, went in on December 31, 1947, and that gave our views as to the 70-group Air Force; in other words, the importance of air power as the force for peace.

M: Where did that 70-group figure come from?

F: That was a figure which came as a result of a great deal of close work within the Air Force itself, and represented their ideas, and in a sense it had an importance which is out of relation to its value. The important question was the big point: and that was, that with the advent of the atomic power, and the atomic weapons delivered by air, that it was the belief of this commission that I had the honor of heading that the United States should see to it that it was well ahead of everybody else in this matter of air atomic power in the interests of deterring war. This also had its relationship later on to the North Atlantic policy of the United States because such was the North Atlantic policy for the defense of Europe, and by the use of this air atomic power to prevent any adventures by the Russians. So this was, as far as I am concerned and from my point of view, an extremely important historical happening; and I think I may say with all proper modesty that our report did have quite an impact because it was the policy of the United States to develop air atomic power for the purposes of peace and for our basic European policy; and that was the thing which has been my major contribution to American policy.

M: I think there are some more things besides that, but that's certainly a major one. Do you remember Mr. Johnson taking a strong supporting stand in regard to that issue, or did he just play his expected role as chairman of the subcommittee?

F: Well, now, you're ahead of me on the facts here, because I've forgotten exactly what Mr. Johnson's role at this time was. I don't even know, to be honest, whether or not he was on the Foreign Relations Committee at that time.

M: He was never on the Foreign Relations Committee. He was on the Armed Services Committee, and he went there I think in 1949, so I suppose that would have been after the impact of--

F: That was after all of that. At this time, you see, my main contact with him was on the administrative side of his checking up--quite properly--on the functioning of the administration of the Air Force of which I was at the time the Secretary, so that I didn't get into these big things. I would have been much more dealing with Senators who were on the Foreign Relations Committee and were the leaders of the administration forces in the Senate. Of course, I did see people in the House like George Mahon and others, the leaders in the House, but my impression is that Mr. Johnson was not up in the forefront at that time of that group in the House and/or Senate.

M: I see. On into the 1950's, after you ceased being Secretary of the Air Force and the missile programs became public knowledge, particularly after 1957, I believe you remained a staunch defender of the utility of manned aircraft as a deterrent. Do you recall Mr. Johnson taking an issue on that matter--manned air force versus a concentration on guided missiles?

F: No, I do not. Because after all this was a highly technical point--the point was that you had to make the transition gradually. You couldn't suddenly jump from manned aircraft to guided missiles because the guided missiles weren't all that good.

M: I know. I was in an army missile unit when Sputnik went off, and I'm aware of the problems.

F: And the main task during all that period was obviously to make the transition and get the most modern type of weapon that there was and the most defensible weapon and also the most counter-offensive weapon.

M: So it wasn't a choice of one or the other, but a matter of phasing in one--

F: There was no ideology as between manned aircraft and between missiles. The idea was to get the best weapon system, and for a while they were both good weapon systems and there became a shifting relationship between them.

M: You said one time, I believe, that you thought we ought to move as rapidly as possible to a combination of the three services. Do you still hold these views?

F: Yes, but in a sense that is a sort of an administrative affair which I don't think gets into major policy. I was always in favor of a consolidation of the services in the interests of efficiency and in the interests of doing away from the unreasonable competition that went on between the services.

M: Do you recall having any contact with Mr. Johnson between the time you ceased being Secretary of the Air Force in 1953 and the time you came back into government service as an Ambassador to NATO in 1961?

F: I doubt it. During all that time after I left the Air Force in 1953 when the Democratic administration went out and the Republican administration came in, my political efforts were concerned with Adlai Stevenson.

M: I was going to ask you about that next, as a matter of fact. Did you remain fairly close to Mr. Stevenson during the time he became Ambassador to the United Nations?

F: Yes, I did with this exception. That is, at this time, I myself--I was also abroad during this time, you see.

M: A lot of the time, yes, sir.

F: A lot of the time, and, therefore, while I saw him when he came to Paris and did occasionally see him here in New York, it wasn't anything like as close as during the time we were both out of government and when I was working very closely with him to try to get him to win the presidency.

M: I believe you worked fairly hard both in 1952 and 1956 and favored him in 1960 as well.

F: Not 1952, because I was in government at that time. The Korean War was on, and with Mr. Truman's approval and with Stevenson's approval I did nothing in the campaign except announce my support for Stevenson, but I was working the whole time right in the Pentagon and didn't take any time off for any political activity whatsoever; and such was the general rule of the Truman Administration. But with that exception I was thereafter always very active for Stevenson.

M: This may be a question that calls for a little bit of subjective judgment, but all the disclosures, so-called, that have been made about Mr. Stevenson's views on the Viet Nam war since his death--do you have any insights into what his role was during the period immediately prior to his death in regard to the Viet Nam situation?

F: No, because there, you see, I was not really in touch with him. Viet Nam was not my business at that time. I had really enough on my hands with NATO. And I was concentrating on that, and I wouldn't have presumed any views on Viet Nam. That was something where it was wholly within his purview as the United Nation's ambassador.

M: And you weren't close enough to him during that particular time to have had insights into what he was doing.

F: No, I didn't, because in the first place when I saw him during the years 1961 to his death, which was 1965, during all those years I was concerned

with the NATO thing full time. While, as I say, we'd go out for dinner in Paris and do all that sort of thing, we were mostly relaxing and not--

M: Not talking business?

F: Well, I was especially not talking business that wasn't my business. I'd talk to him a certain amount about NATO affairs, but to be very honest even during the times when Stevenson came abroad during those years, I never really had very intensive consultations with him about NATO and NATO affairs. My relationship with NATO policy was much more with Washington.

M: I see. Speaking of the activity you had in politics in the past, how would you assess the influence, or the effects, of Mr. Johnson's presidency on the Democratic Party in New York?

F: You mean since--

M: His general presidency. How has it affected the party since roughly 1964?

F: Well, that's a very difficult question. I think the Democratic Party in New York is much weaker than it was in 1961; very, very much weaker and very much more disturbed and very much more split. To what extent that is attributable to the Johnson Administration, that's difficult to say, but there isn't any doubt about it, the party is nothing like the powerful weapon now that it was then. For example, it's quite possible that Mr. Humphrey will win New York, but it's also possible he may not. This is a touch and go situation. We're only a few days off from the election, but this is the sort of thing you never dreamed about back in those days. New York was a solid citadel of Democratic power and it isn't today.

M: But there's no direct connection between the Johnson Administration and the weakening of the Democratic Party in New York that you can call to mind here--no direct cause and effect relationship between the two?

F: Well, I wouldn't specialize it on New York. I would say that there's no

doubt about it, the Viet Nam war has been very unpopular and the Viet Nam war has been treated as a Democratic war.

M: Do you agree with that, incidentally?

F: No, I was going to discuss that in a moment. But the fact remains that from the political point of view it is treated as a Democratic war, and politically this has hurt the party very seriously. You want to get off on the subject as to whether or not it's a--

M: Yes, fine, because you were in government service at the time this became a major war.

F: Well, I'll give you in a very capsuled form my summary on that. I think that the trouble in Viet Nam started, and I don't wish to sound partisan about this but you've asked me a historical question, it started with the Eisenhower Administration. And I think that we had been engaged in supporting a colonial war by the French in Indo-China, and that there was no reason at all in terms of any obligations of the United States that we should have taken any role other than they one that we did under Mr. Truman and in the earlier days under President Eisenhower, which was to support the French with money, and materiel, and to some extent training in our weapons; but always with a very firm statement of policy and of determination that we were never going to get into the war ourselves and that we were not going to take over the war and that unless the French could take care of it themselves, they couldn't count on us. And that was the American policy.

But the trouble is we yielded on this and no sooner had Ho Chi Minh and General Giap had defeated the French at Dienbienphu in 1954 that we took on morally and publicly the responsibility for seeing to it that Ho Chi Minh and company did not take over all the rest of Viet Nam, so it was a new commitment. A wholly new commitment.

M: That came up after 1954 by the Eisenhower Administration?

F: Just immediately after 1954--the Geneva Conference ended in the spring of 1954, and no sooner was that conference over than the United States' government took very heavy commitments to see to it that the Communists were not going to take over. In other words, we were making it an American commitment all by ourselves and not with any allies.

You will remember the famous case where John Foster Dulles very wisely said that, and with the approval of President Eisenhower, that we would not support the French except through "united action." In other words, that we would not go it alone.

M: Multilateral--

F: It had to be multilateral and not unilateral by the United States, and it was only a short time after that statement was made that the United States in effect took over a unilateral commitment before the world to defend South Viet Nam. We committed ourselves to Diem and to the very untried government that was being then set up in Saigon. And that was the thing that hooked us with the commitment. And from then on, after the Eisenhower Administration got out--the question is what were the Democrats going to do during that phase--and they continued to embrace this commitment which they had inherited from the Republicans. This in my opinion was a mistake, and I think that this was the time when we should have changed policies there and really to have insisted that we would not go it alone in Viet Nam. In other words it should not be unilateral, but if at all should be multilateral. We played around with some really frivolous adventures such as SEATO which looked multilateral but wasn't anything, and the Democrats took on this commitment all the time saying they weren't going to fight the war themselves, you see. And the first

thing you know they fought the war themselves in 1964 and 1965. Indeed, if I may quote [James] Reston of the New York Times, if he is correct, the story was told to President Johnson on the day or the day after the death of President Kennedy that either we had to get in there or the South Vietnamese were going to collapse and that this was the fact. And the decision in effect was made at that time subjectively by President Johnson that he was not going to lose this war.

M: You argue very persuasively in your book, Foreign Policy: The Next Phase, the 1960's, in favor of intervention only when we can do it multilaterally and legally. Would you say that Viet Nam satisfies either one of those requirements?

F: Neither. If I may just polish off one little point, the fact that we did establish an ad hoc grouping of the powers of the Far East, I think there were seven of them at the Manila Conference, if I remember, Australia, New Zealand, and so forth; that is not a real multilaterialism. That is an extension of our obligations rather than an increment in our strength. Do I make myself clear?

M: Yes, I think so. As opposed to action we might take similarly under the NATO Treaty which would, in your opinion, be genuinely multilateral.

F: Yes, that's right.

M: Let's move on to NATO. I suppose the best way to get started would be just to have you describe what your goal as Ambassador to NATO--1961-1965--was. And what were your general duties in pursuing that goal?

F: Well, as you know, the setup of the North Atlantic Alliance is that there is an alliance which at that time was composed of fifteen countries, still is composed of fifteen countries, who have a body called the North Atlantic Council in which each of the fifteen countries has an ambassador representing

it, with a chairman being the so-called secretary general who is, as it were, a functionary and does not represent any one country. He is merely the top agent of the North Atlantic Council. Underneath that it has what I think it is correct to call a subsidiary organization called the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, which is the military organization whose function it is to defend Europe. And there were in my day only fourteen members of that, because Iceland, which is a member of the Alliance, had no armed forces, and today has only thirteen members because France withdrew from NATO but not from the Alliance.

M: She still remains in the North Atlantic Council, then.

F: Yes. In 1966 she withdrew from NATO. So that's the general situation that you have. You say what was my job there. Well, my job was, of course, to carry out what the policies of the United States were towards the North Atlantic Alliance and towards NATO. And they were always, during all those days, very strong support of both the Alliance and NATO. Therefore it was my task to take on the daily questions that came up in the North Atlantic Council, in NATO, and in the various relations with my fellow ambassadors of the other countries to try to work out policies which would achieve a certain objective. And the objective, in oversimplified terms, was to create a position of solid Western-North Atlantic strength which would stand there as a bulwark of power of the North Atlantic area and particularly of North America and of Europe as this, shall I say, core of western strength in order to preserve the interests of the North Atlantic generally and the free world in particular, but also to project these functions and to create this power in such a way as to use the influence of this great body of potentially centralized power to work for peace and specifically for the prevention of atomic war.

M: What is the official called--I believe the Ambassador to the European Communities? Is there an official with that title?

F: I don't know.

M: I ran across this, and I couldn't figure out what the difference was. I knew that you were the Ambassador to NATO, so it must have been a mistake in the sources.

F: I think that was a mistake. There are various European communities, you know, and they have a representation of the United States. And, of course, there are things like OECD on the economic side and all that, but the main organ for the consolidation of North Atlantic power is the North Atlantic Alliance and the North Atlantic Council. Everything else is secondary.

M: You were serving there first for the Kennedy Administration throughout its time and then after the assassination for Mr. Johnson for a year or two. Could you notice any change of general American policy from one administration to the next in regard to your job at NATO?

F: That's a very difficult question. It involves first of all a statement as to what the attitudes and policies of the Kennedy Administration were, and there isn't any doubt about it that both on the record in the speeches and notably in the speech of President Kennedy at Ottawa in the spring of 1961, there's no doubt about it the very strong position that he took along the lines I just mentioned, namely for the creation of this core, this center of North Atlantic power. I believe that if you look at the speeches of President Johnson after he became President, you will find that his speeches are just as strong and just as eloquent as those of President Kennedy.

If you ask me if there was any difference in attitude of the two

presidents, I think I would have to say not very much. I think that President Kennedy was very easy to work with on this because there was no question at all as to his commitment to North Atlantic unity, and certainly he was, as I say, extremely easy to work with. And I always had the feeling that there wasn't any doubt about it that if there were any question as to whether or not he was going to support this kind of unity in the North Atlantic Alliance that it was very, very easy for me to call up, say, the Secretary of State and ask for an appointment with the President and come right back feeling sure that I would have the most sympathetic and immediate attention. President Kennedy was a magnificient handler of ambassadors--he really was. Indeed, I think he was superb in the handling of all his subordinate relationships and so forth.

Now when it came to President Johnson, I didn't have as much experience. I did run into an immediate difficulty which was centered around the famous MLF situation where I did feel I had to come back and consult him because I had been told that there was the feeling on the part of President Johnson of a lack of interest in development of the nuclear sharing plan.

M: Do you think this was a change from President Kennedy?

F: I'm saying that there was this rumor. In fact, I was told by the foreign minister--I'll mention names at this point--of Italy, Mr. [Giuseppe] Saragat [former foreign minister--now President of Italy], in a meeting which I had with him and Ambassador [George Frederick] Reinhardt [U.S. Ambassador to Italy, 1961-] and myself and one other representative of the Italian government--there were just four of us present--I was told at this meeting by Mr. Saragat that Mr. Harold Wilson who was the not yet Prime Minister of England but was almost--it was known that he was going to be--had made a speech in Italy in which he said that President Johnson's

attitude had been different from that of his predecessor. I said that I felt sure from the telegrams that I was cognizant of that this was not the case and that I was going to straighten this out.

Now I'm going to tell you this story. I'm probably going to have to classify this for a while.

M: You may classify it at any level you want to.

F: But I'll tell you this is the actual story. I then went over to England and had a meeting with Ambassador David Bruce of the United States and the then Mr. Harold Wilson, the leader of the then opposition, in which I told him that this is what I had been told, without mentioning names, and he knew whom I was talking about. And he said, "Yes, that's right, that's what we think. We think President Johnson is 'indecisive' about the support that he intends to give to the Alliance in general and to this nuclear sharing idea--"

M: Broader than just the MLF then. It applied to the whole thing?

F: Yes. And that all of the work which had been going on since--intensively in the year 1963, in other words for at least a year under the closest supervision of President Kennedy--that all of this was not something that he was going to carry on with.

I said, "Well, Mr. Wilson, that's not my information, but I am going to go back to Washington and find out what the situation is."

Do you want the rest of this story?

M: Yes, sir, by all means.

F: So I did go back to Washington, and I got an appointment with President Johnson. The date escapes me, but I think it was April 10, 1964. And we had a meeting in the White House with Mr. Johnson--President Johnson--and <u>not</u> McNamara, <u>not</u> Rusk, which is somewhat significant, but George Ball

and Mac Bundy and Walt Rostow and others whom I can't remember, in which I felt it my duty to, despite some contrary advice from some of my colleagues, to tell the President exactly what had been said. It didn't seem to me it was my duty to censor what I told the President of the United States. And so I proceeded to tell it to President Johnson. And, oh, Bill Foster was at this meeting.

M: This is the Mr. Foster, head of the ACDA?

F: Yes. And he was speaking against the MLF approach. George Ball was speaking for it.

M: What about Mac Bundy?

F: I never could tell quite what Mac would be. I think he always was reserving his options, I think, with a perfectly understandable sense that it wasn't for him to announce policy. He wasn't that high ranking, and that he felt his duty was to serve--I'm giving him the benefit of the doubt.

M: What about Walt Rostow--just to get all the players that you've mentioned.

F: Well, I've forgotten--the fact is, I've forgotten whether Walt was there or not. Certainly if he was, he didn't make any impression on this particular meeting.

Anyhow, the President was very categoric about it. He said, "Has everybody said what they want to say?" "Well," he said, "I am tired of this nonsense. And we are going to go ahead with the MLF; it is to the interest of all concerned; and there's going to be no indecision about the United States on this; and I now give the following instructions: You, George Ball, you will see to it that Congress is apprised of all of this and that necessary steps are taken there; and you (to me), Tom, you will see to it that our allies understand that we are back of this and we

want their full support on it and so forth. And your instructions are to get the necessary documents ready for signature by the end of this calendar year."

Then he said to me, it was rather characteristic and kind of touching in a way, he said, "Now, Tom, you go out and talk to those (heaven knows how many reporters there were out there in the next room) reporters and tell them all of this," but as I was going to [he said], "Protect me a little bit; remember I haven't talked to Congress." A very sensible statement. And I must say I must have done too good a job because there wasn't anything in the papers about this at all, a very sensational piece of news. And yet I told them. It was very interesting.

M: Usually it's the other way around. They print more than anybody has in mind their printing.

F: I was afraid I was a little too, how shall I say, effective on that one.

Anyhow, that was the way that was and then, as you know, later after that, the President went up to a meeting, I think it was the Associated Press editors, in a couple of weeks, repeated the same thing right smack on the record; and then later in the Johnson-Erhard communique which I think was June 12, 1964, they announced their intention of going ahead with the MLF and of getting the thing signed up by the end of the year. So that's the end of that particular phase of the story.

M: Then what happens to it? I mean, why then later does the government withdraw support?

F: Why did it disappear? Well, I can only give you the evidence as to, second-hand, as to how it disappeared. And it was this: You couldn't get from that time on, I should say from shortly after the Erhard-Johnson communique, it was impossible for me in my position to get any support for moving ahead to do this.

M: From whom, now? From the State Department?

F: Well, it had to be from the President, because nothing was done with Congress. And here is a man who, after all, was at the height of his relationship with Congress. Here you had a man, one of the most skillful handlers of Congress that ever existed in the United States, as President of the United States--just having won an overwhelming victory over his opponent--at the very peak of his power with Congress, and he never really asked them to do anything, you see.

And the people I would see when they'd come over or I would go back to see them occasionally just were completely baffled. They were just like a bunch of people who had really been emasculated--they couldn't perform, and they didn't perform. I became increasingly worried, especially after seeing George Ball once in my office in Paris. He said, "You know, I can't do anything with the President. I'm sorry, I just can't."

And all this time here I was with the old instructions, and it was really an impossible situation.

M: You had never heard anything to countermand those original instructions?

F: I never got a thing about it. As a matter of fact, both the President and Rusk kept on saying fine things about it and after all this time--

M: Publicly, you mean.

F: Publicly. Rusk welcomed a--what, the U.S.S. Claude V. Ricketts, you know, came in and the test--the ship--mixed manning, and he made a big speech there. "We're all for it," and so forth and so on. Even as late as, I can't give you the exact date, but somewheres in December or January, the President made some sort of a speech saying he was still for MLF and so forth. But as a point of fact the MLF died just as a human being will die in the fall of 1964 and for reasons that nobody has ever been able to--I've never seen

any explanation of it. In this book I've written here, this Interim Report, I make the suggestion that the Viet Nam war had an impact on it.

M: On the lack of support?

F: Lack of support is the term because there wasn't any clear-cut decision. There was a lot of peculiar business about Harold Wilson that--

M: This would then be after he was head of the British government--

F: After he was head of the British government, he came over and had this meeting with President Johnson and all of the things that he was reputed to have said before he was Prime Minister--certainly was the way he operated during that visit--and the people can disagree as to when MLF was killed. Some people say at the Wilson visit. My own judgment is it was killed by the inaction of the President right after the Johnson-Erhard communique.

M: Which would be as early as the middle of 1964--

F: That was June 12. I think it died right in there. Either you were going to go ahead or you weren't. And I must in all honesty say, and I shall probably edit this, this was not a glorious moment of American foreign policy.

M: I assume then from your remarks that you think, in your opinion, that our European allies were pretty well favorable toward MLF?

F: That isn't quite accurate. I can be more specific than that. I have to be a little obvious here by saying it's very important to understand that a lot of things were done within the North Atlantic Alliance by less than a unanimous vote. The fact is the whole power of that alliance was the fact that it was understood that as many as two, three, four, or half a dozen, or any number you wish, less than a totality, could go ahead and do things provided they kept the North Atlantic Alliance fully informed. All of the so-called infrastructure was done that way. All of the various

arrangements for building certain kinds of aircraft and certain kinds of weapons and so forth were all done on this less than all basis. It was never expected that you would be able to get fourteen or fifteen, let's say, fourteen minus Iceland; remember, in the first place, the DeGaulle opposition was growing at this time.

M: Do you mean the opposition in France to DeGaulle?

F: No, the other way around. The opposition of DeGaulle to the Alliance and to NATO was growing at this time. Nobody ever thought for a minute that France was going to come in on it. For example, the working group that prepared the papers for the MLF was composed of eight countries. France was not one of them.

M: France opposed it from the beginning then?

F: It just didn't join in. And some of the countries were extremely lukewarm. The British were very, very lukewarm. They were in a phase of lack of leadership at this time which was very marked and while they were sitting in on the meetings and all this sort of thing, we never really counted on them. There were only four countries that we really counted on as the nucleus for the first tranche, and those were the United States, Italy, Holland (superb Holland) and the Federal Republic of Germany.

M: Was it true that the MLF was really dreamed up in an effort to, in some ways, satisfy what was thought to be a demand on the part of Germany?

F: No.

M: That's not true? Every account I've seen of it, incidentally as you're probably aware having just finished this book of your own, says, I think, that in one way or another.

Absolute nonsense. The reason, I will say, that President Kennedy made the Ottawa speech was because he believed what he was saying, namely, that in order to have an alliance of real sovereign powers there has got to be an alliance which is dealing with the important facts of life and that atom power is one of those important facts of life. And the thing to do was to have this undivided interest of the countries in a joint ownership of part of the nuclear power of the Alliance and to let that spread out both ways from there. Start it off with the first group we started before that I've just mentioned and then the others would have come along. They couldn't have stayed out. And gradually to expand to this so that it wasn't an American protectorate. Because there is a great deal of discussion on the proposition that this was an American protectorate. We were the only ones that had atom bombs in the proper quantities; the British didn't have much of anything; and the French didn't have much of anything; and we were it. We were the atom power. This wasn't right. This was something which should be shared both as to the power and as to the expense of keeping it up. And I am sure that President Kennedy had those higher concepts, and as for any little cheap nonsense about we were trying to make up to the Germans, that is simply propaganda of the most stupid kind.

M: That's the kind of thing I'm trying to get, because as you say, there has been more written--probably erroneously in this regard--than on just about any subject in recent times you can mention.

What about the general problem of integration, I think is the word, that you used? Was MLF an attempt to bring about military integration in somewhat the same way we try to encourage political integration among the European partners?

F: Well, you can say that, yes. The word integration is such a broad, fuzzy word that it troubles me. What it was was just what I said, namely that an alliance has to deal with the important facts of the alliance if it is going to have strength. And those facts are political and they're economic and they're military. But to exclude atomic power, their number one weapon, is another way of saying it's going to be a paper shell. Or you may say, do I think the North Atlantic Alliance is a paper shell now? Well, I'll answer that by saying it's a great deal more of a paper shell than it would have been if we had gone ahead with these four powers who had agreed to it and as we had said we would back. And if it had grown, as undoubtedly it would, because Great Britain would come in and Belgium would have come in; France, well, France would not have come in. France, for all practical purposes, is not in the Alliance now, not on account of this, but on account of the individual philosophy of General DeGaulle.

But the Alliance would have been a much more solid thing and a much safer thing if we had had the MLF. I've never read about a subject--I'm not--you know, never have I read such really low-grade attacks that were made on MLF--even people who should know better and shouldn't use words like "zealots" of the State Department and "fanatics" and all this sort of thing. Good God Almighty, calling all of the Presidents of the United States fanatics then who had supported this and zealots and so forth is really the most tawdry, shameful thing that you can read.

M: Do you think it might have something to do with the fact that we were presumably shifting our strategic concept for the Western Alliance at that time?

F: No, I don't think so. I think it was a much lower grade of motivation than that. I think that the plain truth of the matter is the memories

of the German war were still there and people didn't like the idea of letting the Germans even getting their fingers on an undivided interest in atomic weapons. I think it was a great deal of anti-German hatred that was still surviving in all of that.

Well, the answer to that is if you feel that strongly about it, throw them out of the Alliance.

M: They shouldn't be in the Alliance unless we could trust them.

F: They shouldn't be in the Alliance; that was a main motivation of the attack on the Alliance. That was that and that was very, very strong, especially if you look at some of the commentators who did the commenting about the MLF.

Then, of course, there was the other maybe more fundamental difficulty, and that is that it was a new idea, and as you know new ideas don't prosper long after a great war.

M: That's true. What about the change to what they call a flexible response?

F: Oh, well, that's a lot of words.

M: There's no essential change in our strategy in NATO?

F: No, no--flexible response--you always have a flexible response. That simply means that you're going to try to act intelligently in the handling of your--

M: You don't think, then, that there was anything basic in the way of changed strategy from, say, 1962 on?

F: No. That's all words. There was a lot of talk about this. There was another device which is, I think, highly commendable probably, I suppose, which was to set up the so-called McNamara committee and which was going to talk to everybody about joint policies as to atomic weapons and so forth. But these were words. They had nothing to do with the key issues. The MLF was a real thing. There was hardware there. It was a control for and a

paying for an undivided interest in this atomic power which gave reality to it. All these other things are devices; these are the diplomats at work and not the sensible people.

M: But the fact is that just because we killed MLF doesn't mean that we have pulled back our commitment to use atomic deterrents in your opinion?

F: So far, no. But we weakened it. I think it's miraculous that this commitment to use our atomic power to defend Europe has survived. And I'm not talking now just about the language of the North Atlantic Treaty. I'm talking about the fact that the presence of the United States' Seventh Army in Europe is an absolute guarantee that we're not going to let that Seventh Army be run over by anybody, and we're going to use our atomic power to stop it if anybody tries it. And that's the thing that has kept the Germans and Russians under control all these years.

M: Do you think it's possible that--I don't know of a very subtle way to say it--there was a trade on the MLF for some disarmament measure like, for example, the non-proliferation treaty?

F: No. I think that the Russians used it. In this book I've got a chapter on Russian maneuvers to break down allied unity, and I don't--the Russians were so much smarter than we were, because they did use the non-proliferation treaty and said, "We won't sign this thing unless you kill MLF." And they were very, very effective on it. And I regret to say that a lot of our American statesmen fell for it, but it's a masterpiece of destruction by the Russians of the interests of the Western world, among masterpieces.

M: You've been a strong supporter, at least in your written work, of disarmament as a principle. Do you not see anything inconsistent between a nuclear sharing program for Europe and the principle of disarmanent there?

F: Just the opposite. You cannot get disarmament; you cannot get world peace except from a position of strength; you cannot unilaterally disarm--and I have never advocated, you know that--disarm--although I have advocated a world government, if you will. But I have also said that I think it's next to impossible to get but that we ought to work in that direction, because you can't get yourself in that direction by falling for Russian tricks.

M: I believe Representative Finley of Illinois, didn't he, a year or so suggest that we try to make NATO immediately the core of a world federation. Do you have any thoughts along that line; is that a role that NATO should play?

F: Wild blue yonder, I'm afraid. I think that I--I'll answer that with a little bit of an evasion but still with I think a constructive light. I think it must be United States foreign policy to develop a foreign policy over the years to come which will be much more concerned with the pursuit of world peace than the present policies are. I do not think it should work into a world government fast like that at all, but I think what you can do is by making it the number one purpose of this very important country, the United States of America; I think you can create the possibility that something really may happen along these lines to increase the chances of the prevention of atomic war and the creation of conditions of peace even despite the revelation that the Russians have given of themselves in their recent action in Czechoslovakia and even despite the obvious violent hostility of Chinese Communism to anything like a decent, peaceful world. I still think the great role of the United States is to lead in this pursuit of peace.

M: Do you think that NATO can be broadened to harmonize policy outside of Europe?

F: Well, that's one of the main themes of my book in which I urge that this

be done. I divide the world into the treaty area--into the abstract treaty area--and I say that the Viet Nam war has about killed the efforts of NATO and of the North Atlantic Alliance to do very much of anything about the world outside the treaty area and that it is terribly important that it do so. While we must always maintain the treaty area as a nucleus of power, still we must work out methods of consultation within the North Atlantic Alliance for the concerting of policy and the development of policies worldwide.

M: When you were ambassador to NATO, did you feel like that our government did in fact consult with its NATO allies for policy outside, such as the Congo matter, for example, the Angola revolution in the U.N.?

F: My answer is roughly no. We did occasionally go through the motions of having some consultation within the Alliance, but I do say that in all the days that I served on the North Atlantic Council, I never found any really proper consideration of extra-treaty matters in the North Atlantic Council. We never told them anything about Viet Nam. We tell them after the fact and we send junior officials over to report on what we have been doing. We completely defaulted on our obligations to consult about extra-treaty area matters.

M: Didn't the European allies, in your opinion, resent this fairly badly?

F: No, because they themselves had their weak spots. Some of the best countries, the most powerful countries, of the Alliance were not carrying on their responsibilities: France which was actually hostile to the Alliance and, as we know, withdrew from NATO in 1966; the British were in a lukewarm period at this time; the Belgians were never as strong as they could have been on this matter; the Greeks and the Turks were at each other's throats; and indeed it's only the basic four that--the Norwegians,

despite the leadership of a man like [Halvard M.] Lange [former Norwegian foreign minister], were never at their very best during all this time; and the Danes were helpful, but it was basically, as I say, the four countries that I've mentioned who were the nucleus of working together, not only for MLF, but in general.

M: Do you think it's realistic to hope that NATO--let's say the Viet Nam war ends in the reasonable future--do you think it's reasonable to expect that they will be able to concert policy outside of Europe?

F: Yes, I think it is possible. I think if we don't do it we're going to be in for trouble. I think it all depends on which way the Alliance goes.

M: Meaning what, sir?

F: Up or down.

M: You mean stays strong? In line with that, is it realistic, as our officials are fond of saying, that the Alliance without France can be maintained as strong as it was with France?

F: Well, no. It would be obviously better to have France in it, but you're not going to get France in it as long as General DeGaulle is there and he has this different philosophy. You remember in his book, Le Fil de l'Epée, he says to be a great man you must maintain a great quarrel. He quotes Hamlet on that, I've forgotten where it is in Hamlet, but--

M: I don't remember it, but I suppose it must be there if he says so.

F: Well, I'm not sure. But anyhow, be that as it may, that's not going to help in an alliance.

M: He's generally accused of supernationalism of some kind. Is this the drive that motivates him in your opinion?

F: Well, I think he is essentially a nationalist, that is to say, a French nationalist. Yes, I think he is a man of enormous character, enormous

intelligence, and I think the quote that I have just given you about maintaining a great quarrel as a way of being great will give you a certain amount of understanding of why he doesn't work very well with any alliance.

M: To an outsider perhaps, it seems sort of a little inconsistent. We talk a great deal about the virtues of nationalism in East Europe and in Southeast Asia and elsewhere, and yet we send our NATO ambassador presumably to talk about the dimunition of sovereignty in integrating the European community. Did that ever cause any difficulty for you? Did the European allies ever say, "Well, how come nationalism is good for somebody else and perhaps not so good for us?"

F: No, I never had any problem with that. As a matter of fact, even apart from the basic four that I have mentioned, the Belgians, the Danes and the Norwegians, and when they weren't having troubles, the Greeks and the Turks--were really perfectly splendid and really trying to do things for the common good. I've never seen anything like the atmosphere of that NATO building in Paris. The sense of confidence that each ambassador had in his fellow ambassadors and the willingness to make points and to try to get in agreement on things and to avoid the vagaries of nationalism, why, it's fantastic. I've never seen anything like it in my life.

M: How widespread is the fear in Europe that American economic encroachment is a danger to them, or technological encroachment, I believe, is what they are now talking about.

F: Well, fairly serious, fairly serious.

M: Would this endanger the NATO Alliance in any way?

F: I think that there's something which will override that and that is that if we were to liquidate NATO tomorrow and pull the Seventh Army back and

all the other troops out of NATO, this would make Europe a slave of Russia, and I think they are aware of that and they don't want to be the slave of Russia.

M: And they will chance our economic encroachment in preference to--

F: I think that they may, yes. They may protect themselves against it, and I think this probably will be a good thing. I think it will be well for them to maybe make some improvements independent of their commercial activities.

M: Does the idea of a lessening of tension with the Soviet Union, a detente as they call it, necessarily mean a weakening of NATO?

F: Well, that was the purpose of the Russians, yes. What they were trying to do is to talk about detente and entente and to say that--and to persuade a lot of Western statesmen to say, "Oh, well, we don't need NATO any more. We can cut down on our forces and let's just forget the whole thing because after all we're working along splendidly with the Russians."

After all, this is the DeGaullist philosophy.

M: Yes. Well, hasn't that become, since you left the job of NATO ambassador though, the stated goal or at least one of the stated goasl of detente with Russia--the Harmel exercise that was formally, I think, adoped last December or--

F: Yes, but that was really quite different. Tht was quite a radical--that was a very forward-looking effort. Drop Harmel for a moment and just take the entente-detente trick of the Russians. You're quite right. That was really making inroads. Some of the speeches of some of the European statesmen on the subject of entente and how you don't need NATO have just

made the people in the Kremlin happy. But Czechoslovakia has slowed that one down, of course.

M: Yes, it did, and apparently stopped some further disarmament talks among other things. Well, what about the Harmel exercise then?

F: The Harmel exercise was a fantastically forward looking thing because it has some extraordinary statements in it, one of which is about this extra-treaty area consultation that you and I were talking about a moment ago.

M: But it didn't provide for it in any way, did it?

F: It was a commitment of all fifteen countries.

M: Fifteen?

F: Fifteen.

M: France participated in the Harmal exercise?

F: Yes, all agreed that there should be the closest consultation as to the extra-treaty matters.

M: Without asking you at all to comment on your successor, Mr. Cleveland made a statement a year or so ago that the primary problem for NATO now is political, not military. I take it you would not agree entirely with that.

F: Well, I don't really quite know what that means. I don't see how you're going to dissociate--actually we never mentioned economics here and we don't talk much about it in the North Atlantic Alliance, but I think that the Alliance has got to be binding in all its functions. And I regret to say that, with the present state of affairs and the huge Russian military power in Europe, there is no--possibility that the military side of it can be down-played is--I would not agree with that.

M: There is always a danger in conducting an interview of this kind, as you no doubt are aware, that there will be something of extreme importance that in my preparation I won't have come across. Is there anything

regarding NATO that you think is of major importance that you would like to mention before we move on to another subject here?

F: Well, it's a little bit hard for me to answer that. I've been away from NATO for about three years and try to give, what I call, an Interim Report on the status of the--

M: This is the name of the book that's coming out?

F: Interim Report. And I've tried in this book to give my analysis of where we stand at the moment in the problems of the Alliance and needless to say, there are a lot of things we haven't talked about which are in the book.

M: The book will be available to historians to look at.

I wanted to ask you entirely, or at least mostly in a different light here, you're a director, I believe, of the Council of Foreign Relations.

F: I've resigned.

M: Oh, you have resigned now? Well, maybe you're the best one to ask about it then. There's always a claim made by writers such as Richard Rovere, among others, and you may be aware of some of this, that there is in the United States a foreign policy establishment which they always spell with a capital "E" and sometimes even list the officers of this. Is there such a thing made up of people like yourself who are influential in the Council of Foreign Relations and other such groups?

F: Well, I don't want to be disloyal. And I don't think that the leaders of the Council at any time think of themselves as being anything more than what they are which is the center for the development of thinking about foreign policy. They're not after the exercise of any power; they're not seeking anything for themselves. I think that it is very easy to accuse an organization like the Council which has a very big, impressive house up on Park Avenue and a very impressive board of directors and has the

leaders of the free world and some of the non-free world coming there to appear and talk and so forth--it's easy to think of that as an Establishment, but I must say I don't see why it isn't more sensible to say it's simply an organization of private people not seeking any power. They don't exercise any power that I know of. I never heard of them saying, "You should make so and so Secretary of State, or you should send somebody as ambassador of--"; I never heard of that. I never heard of their taking any position--a partisan position--in the political area. In fact, they very definitely don't do it.

It is true that they have an awful lot of important people in their membership list. That is true.

M: It seems to those who look for conspiracy, I think, that the foreign policy leadership is almost always Eastern, is almost always Ivy League, it's frequently associated with some organization such as the Council on Foreign Relations and this type. You don't think there's any substance to the conspiracies that certain journalists--

F: No, there are no conspiracies. That is really--there is no conspiracy. Any organization as successful as the Council of Foreign Relations is, needless to say, going to have some power.

M: In your--

F: Why not the Foreign Policy Association?

M: The same would apply to them. I was using the Council on Foreign Relations because of your association with them.

What about an official press? I believe you're associated, are you not, with--have you not been associated with newspapers at one time or another?

F: I was once with the Post for a brief period of time.

M: Is there an "official press" in the United States?

F: Gosh, I don't know. I suppose there isn't any doubt about it that the press has a very special power. Now, you're talking about real power. This is not like the Council on Foreign Relations.

M: I was thinking of your relation with the Post, and I was not imagining conspiracy. I was really just trying to find out if you think there's a relationship between the press and the foreign policy portion of the government to sell the government's foreign policy in a conscious way.

F: Oh, I don't think so. I honestly don't. Goodness gracious, there's so much writing going on that there isn't any monopoly of the writing and Rovere doesn't have any particular monopoly on his access through the papers that--. There's no doubt about it, the New York Times is a very important sheet and it has an enormous influence. But I don't really get too much worried about that because there is so much competition. Anybody can write anything these days. I don't really think there's any establishment factor in there that is serious.

M: That's what I was trying to get to. I'm glad to get that because, you know, at first reading the accounts of some of these people you can imagine closed meetings with people making broad decisions and this just doesn't happen.

Finally in your earlier books again you come down for what you call, I believe, an "offensive" policy but without war. I wonder if you might elaborate in the light of the years that have gone by since then what kind of offensive policy you think the United States can--

F: Well, I've forgotten if I did use that term "offensive" policy. If so, I would certainly not use it today because I think that the United States has got to have certain responsibilities in the world that it should carry

on. I think first of all we should carry the ball, not alone, but in collaboration with the other powers; I think that the idea of the "united action," quoting Mr. Dulles again, in other words, multilaterialism as opposed to unilateralism, is terribly important. Even though in this day and age in dealing with Russia and China we are the only country strong enough to do it, nevertheless I think we ought to play it multilaterally. I'm talking about offensive--If I did use that term "offensive" in some of my previous writings, I would certainly change it today because I think it connotes the notion of sticking our noses into things that aren't our own business, and I'm not in favor of that. I think that--I'm jumping a little bit--I think that we do have a responsibility to use our power, which is great, (a) multilaterally, and (b) in aid of good ends. I'm asking for really a moral approach here. And I think that one of the great moralities of today is the one I mentioned before--the importance of using our power to destroy the institution of war. I've always felt this is extremely important. I think it's a very idealistic, maybe possibly hopelessly impractical thing to do, but we have got to try that. But in general, I think, our approach has got to be moral. Now I'm not talking about looking down our noses at people and telling them what to do. I am telling them to look inward, and, if you will, in a sense think of it in existentialist terms, to make it from within something good that we do, I think this is enormously important and has been neglected.

Just as a little sideline on that, I think one of the most important things we have to do on this morals side is to have the fortitude of character to be willing to seek the truth and to face up to it when we get to it and not to allow ourselves to be deluded with slogans. I will now make a little bit of an attack on the side on my countrymen. I think

we have a terrible weakness to get pious notions for doing something which have very little reality to them, but which sound good. I'm afraid it's the speech writers; I'm afraid it's the second echelon that gets control, because I don't really believe our leading men believe a lot of these pious platitudes that they get off and which are so dangerous. First of all, they're dangerous because they're unattractive, but also because they excuse us from really making the moral drive to find out what the truth is.

M: Sometimes the platitudes becomes the policies, I believe somebody has said.

F: That's right.

M: I've forgotten who. What about the--you mentioned, I think once or twice earlier today and in your books, too, the force of world opinion, moral force of world opinion. Do you really feel that moral force of world opinion can determine the actions of a nation?

F: Well, let's put it this way. I have no doubt about the fact that it was the moral condemnation by American public opinion which was fostered by the condemnation of other free world's opinion which has produced the present crisis in the Viet Nam war and in our situation there and has produced the retirement of President Johnson from the presidency and the disapproval by the United States' opinion of the conduct of the Viet Nam war.

M: So you do think it can influence national policy very definitely?

F: Yes.

M: Well, I'm very sorry that I didn't know you were writing a new book before I had a chance to come talk to you. I would have tried to become at least a passing expert on it. Is there anything on any subject that you'd like to add before--

F: I've talked too much already.

M: I certainly thank you for your cooperation. You've been most helpful, sir.

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