INTERVIEW II

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INTERVIEWEE: NICHOLAS KATZENBACH

INTERVIEWER: PAIGE MULHOLLAN

PLACE: Mr. Katzenbach's office at the State Department, Washington, D.C.

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M: Last session we spent almost entirely on your career in the Justice Department. Let's switch for this one over to here [State Department] and I suppose the obvious opening gambit is the background for why you came over here, why you reached the decision to leave the Cabinet and come over here as Under Secretary.

K: I think there were basically two reasons for it. The first reason was that it seemed to me before and seems to me now that the importance of this department in trying to manage the whole foreign policy of the United States is so great, it's so important, that the jobs over here below the Secretary level are in fact more important jobs than many of the other jobs with higher rank in the government; in terms of the future of the country and in terms of simply what's going on. As I put to some people at that time, in a way everybody else is playing marbles.

M: This is where the action is--over here?

K: It's tremendously important, and if you really look at Cabinet posts, I think the Assistant Secretary, for example, handling European affairs is wielding much more power than two-thirds of the Cabinet officers.

Secondly, I had always had a great deal of interest in foreign affairs; I had spent the eight years before I came into the

government working in the foreign field and I was anxious to get back in it, coupled with the fact that I had been in the Department of Justice for almost six years, and I felt that in many ways what I could contribute over there I had already contributed. If you can't get things done within six years, you aren't going to get them done.

M: So it was just time for a change in that sense?

K: Yes, it was time for a change in that sense.

M: Did the President talk to you at that time about the possibility of heading the CIA?

K: No, he talked to me about that before he made me Attorney General; but he never talked to me about that afterwards. I volunteered into the Under Secretary's job-- it was not the President's idea, it was mine.

M: Oh, is that right?

K: He called me on the phone and was asking about some people, what I thought of them, as replacements for George Ball, and I said, "Well, I've got another candidate for that."

And he says, "Who's that?"

And I said, "Me."

And he said, "Would you take it?"

And I said, "Yes." Then he said that would cause him lots of problems; that he didn't want to lose me as Attorney General. I thought he had rather forgotten about it until he finally did it. That must have been two or three months before he did it.

M: That caused him problems then of replacing you as Attorney General. Was Ramsey Clark the obvious choice there?

K: Yes, I think Ramsey was the obvious choice. I think the President's problem on that was that he knew I had good relations with the people in Congress, as far as that was concerned. He knew that I had had the confidence of civil rights groups and a good reputation with the bar, and I think he was just concerned about having to start all over again to some extent with a new Attorney General.

M: Right in the middle of a critical time, really-- the riots had started the summer before. When you got over here (this is really an open-ended type of thing), how did what you found over here compare with what you expected to find so far as administrative problems were concerned?

K: Well, I don't know whether it was what I expected or not. I think the whole job of administration over here is so infinitely more difficult than the job of administration in the Department of Justice was. Most problems in the Department of Justice were problems you could decide without a lot of inter-agency coordination, without a lot of other viewpoints being expressed. You had the law itself as a policy structure, which tends to eliminate a good many of the decisions that you otherwise would be free to make. You can find the answer right in the statute book whether you like it or not.

Getting a handle on this department was a very difficult thing to do, and it has taken me the whole time I've been here before I began to get real confidence in how you do make it work. Another

difficulty--you have to have the confidence of the people in it. This just takes time. Any bureaucracy can fight back, and this one, in many ways, is a real morass particularly because of the inter-agency aspect. Almost every other agency in the government is conducting a great deal of foreign business.

M: Right; and for some of them a larger share of their business is in coordination with State, I suppose.

K: Yes, and also they have much bigger budgets. They have all that goes with much bigger budgets. So getting this department to really work is domething I don't think we've been particularly successful at; getting it really responsive to the President is, I think, a difficult matter. I have some ideas about it now, but I don't think these have all been, by any means, accomplished.

M: You brought, I believe, when you came over here a Harvard economist, Thomas Schelling to try to put some method into the administration of it. He left very shortly· what was the problem there?

K: I think that the problem was two-fold. One, he never really was dead sure he wanted to come, and it caused him personal problems with his family and so forth to do it. Then I think when he got down here, he thought the job was, after looking at it for quite awhile, was bigger than it was going to be possible to accomplish in the one year he had indicated he was willing to come down· and in that judgment he probably was right.

Indeed I think the only time you really can accomplish a job is to try to get going at the start of an administration and it's

going to take time within that administration to do it. I would hazard a philosophy that this was something President Johnson never in a way had a real chance to do. Your foreign policy is made more by the appointments you make than it is by any subsequent decisions.

M: That's an interesting philosophy. You mean that the man determines the job rather than the--

K: Yes. If you want the Department of State and the foreign policy to be responsive to the President, then the appointments that you make, not only in the Secretary's job but in the other key jobs--eight--ten of them here within in the department--are the way in which you get a handle on it. And then you have them as responsive to you as it is possible to be, and you do not put overlays of staff or anything else on this process. And that's the only way a President can get hold of it.

M: Did the President give you a sort of general commission to try to bring administrative order into the department when he sent you over here?

K: Yes, he wanted me to do this, and he wanted to make it more responsive, and I think in that respect I probably failed him to some extent. It's difficult to walk into the middle of an administration with a Secretary of State that has been there for six years and start to reorganize that department. I think we've done much better on some things-- I'm sure we haven't done it the whole way, and I think any President responds to some of the frustrations of foreign policy, but tended to think it must be something wrong with the personnel or the organization. The simple truth of the matter is that most of the events that you get that you don't like are events

we can't influence. They're not our doing and we have to work with a lot of foreign governments to resolve them. And they have their political problems and solutions that we want. And we have our political problems and solutions that they want. So sometimes the coming out where the President wants you to come out just can't be done.

M: What led you to choose the Senior Inter-departmental Group as the agency for bringing some order into the administrative problems over here? It did already exist when you came over, did it not?

K: Yes, it existed, but nothing had really happened. George Ball had not been particularly interested in it and didn't think it helped very much. I thought at least it was a tool that could be used and attempted to use it, but the job of administration in any department is to try to get the people in the department to do the work and not to do it for them. Now, this takes longer but you get more results out of it. And I've tried to use the SIG here as-- its real value has not been what <u>it</u> has done. Its real value has been what it has made the regional groups do. And there I think there has been some real progress made in some of the areas. Instead of getting inter-departmental coordination of things, problems have been taken up there with the people who are working on that area in all of the different departments. And they've been given the job of resolving that problem. And I think by this kind of participation, in the process you tend to throw

off a purely agency view and try to look at how do you solve the problem from the United States point of view, from the point of view of the President, and cast yourself more in that role. I think this has helped a great deal.

For example, take one minor success in a way. We took the AID budget last year and are doing it again this year. At the figures that the President is going to propose and then at lower figures, very sizeably lower figures; and then region by region decided if this is the amount of money, where will you spend it? And this has forced out of the group a series of priorities. As much as they don't want to take aid away from Country X, they'd rather take it away there than Country Y. This has resolved, oh I think ninety percent of the disputes we had the year before, because the decisions have already been made and in the event of a major change in the circumstances--

M: And different agencies have a voice in making these priorities so--

K: They've all had a voice in going over this and all-- while the responsibility for it remained with both AID and in a way with the Assistant Secretary for the region, you had the views and support of the Defense Department, the CIA, USIA, Agriculture, other people who were sitting in; representatives of the Joint Chiefs of Staff-- all of this. So the result of it--making the regional groups work-- has been that you really have not had a lot of disputes in the senior group. And by my insistence that the regional groups send everything up, whether they agree or not, has meant they knew there was somebody looking over their shoulder about everything they

were doing. I think the quality of the work has been excellent. We've had some contingency studies. Nobody likes to do contingency studies because mostly they never get used because mostly the contingency never arises and you've got all kinds of work gone for nothing. On the other hand I think they have a value because I think they raise-- not only do they have a value if the contingency occurs, but they also start raising some problems that really go outside the contingencies. People try to think about them, and I think they clarify some of the things you're presently doing.

I remember when the Czechoslovakian situation began to heat up, and the President wanted a paper on Czechoslovakia, I not only had a paper, I had two hundred pages on contingency with every cable drafted that you'd have to send, and the result of this was that when the actual invasion occurred, we were able to respond-- diplomatic responses-- within a couple of hours that would have taken you ten days under any other circumstances, just simply to do the physical work involved in it.

M: Well now is the SIG in this sense an arm of the President, for staffing the President, or is it the arm of anybody?

K: It's really the arm of the President. I had some small problems with it. The fact that it's chaired by the Under Secretary, not the Secretary, I think is wrong. Just simply because of my own sense of order, I think the Secretary ought to chair it and then I think <u>he</u> ought to delegate that function to the Under Secretary

and not have it come directly from the President, because I think it's wrong to create an impression that the Under Secretary is making recommendations to the President which the Secretary might or might not agree with.

M: It's a chain of command problem-- ?

K: I never have. I've always talked with Rusk about anything that I thought there might be any problem on. I'd prefer a chain of command idea on this so that you don't at least create another impression.

M: How does the problem of administering the State Department relate to the national security advisers in the White House, now the [Walt W.] Rostow operation? There was some trouble with this, I think, allegedly at least, during the Kennedy Administration. Has that continued?

K: I think it has. I think it's a very difficult problem to really resolve. I think Kennedy was right in dismantling the National Security Council. They had an awful real system of overlays there that was just--

M: They say they're going to rebuild this next January [1969].

K: If they do they're utterly foolish.

M: I read that in the paper this morning.

K: Yes, I think they're utterly foolish if they do that. We'll see. On the other hand, the substitution of too large a personal staff on the part of the President can tend to diminish the feeling of responsibility that departments and agencies have. I think this is the difficulty. I think there are too many people working on the Rostow operation; I think this has been something of a handicap.

There has been something of a tendency, although I don't think Rostow himself has wanted it, something of a tendency to build a small state department in the White House, which does tend to diminish a feeling of responsibility here. You get the attitude of people in the Department when they're writing a memorandum for the President, "Oh, well, it'll be rewritten by somebody in the White House anyhow." And generally that has been true. Some times because it ought to be rewritten, sometimes I think just busy work. People want their <u>own</u> memos going to the President and not somebody else's.

M: Is there a means of coordination between the Rostow operation and the Department on a regular type of basis?

K: Well, to some extent. I think philosophically Walt and most of his people would agree with me that the Department ought to be doing various jobs. I just don't know how you get away from the notion that somebody working in the White House is going to shape things up as far as the Department is concerned. That is, a call from somebody on that staff to the Assistant Secretary, or a Deputy Assistant Secretary, tends to make the policy decision before the staff work has been done, even if he scrupulously says that he is speaking for himself and not for the President because <u>if</u> he has a view about it, you know the President is going to hear that view. And you don't know that he's going to hear yours.

M: How do you go about staffing the President for a crisis, let's say, so that he not only has a number of alternatives at the origination, but has the continuing exposure to all of the alternatives?

K: Well, (one) by trying to get the alternatives put up to him. I don't think memos should go to the President, they shouldn't even come up here to the seventh floor, without a discussion of what the alternatives are, even though they have a recommendation; because presumably no decision that is going to the President is going because it's an easy decision and the answer is obvious.

M: It would be made by somebody else in that case--

K: Would be made by somebody else. The only kinds of those that he ever gets are the decisions where he really has no choice but it's going to be damned unpleasant. Where he's going to agree that he has no choice because there really are no alternatives that are feasible. But it's just simply going to be unpleasant with the Congress or with the press or something of this kind so that he ought to know he's going to have some dirt thrown at him for doing this. But in fact the decision has already been made, maybe made by some prior occurrence, by some prior assurance that he gave, or something of this kind.

The other ones are all difficult so obviously the alternatives ought to be discussed. They ought to be discussed on a piece of paper; they ought to be discussed-- if he wants an oral discussion -- this depends on the personality of the President. They shouldn't be discussed until they've been staffed out. The President has got to give some time to do the staff work that's necessary and this is where sometimes an organization like the SIG can be terribly helpful because if you can anticipate what some of these

problems are, you can make sure your staff work is done when they come up, or when the crisis occurs; that you really had the material ready and it has really been thought through.

I think the major problem of administration in a department is how do you put together all the experience, all the information, all the intelligence, all of the judgment, in a way that gets it manageable and communicable to the President, who after all, has to make that decision. The worst is where he makes that decision before he has had this.

M: Once he has made a decision like that, is there some kind of group, formal or informal, in the State Department that continues to examine options and push those up to him?

K: Yes, where you have a crisis situation going this does occur, and you can keep a group going on this. You have a group right down in the operations center here which is where I think it should be. And it's an inter-agency group that's there that's usually with the Assistant Secretary there with putting out situation reports three or four times a day and keeping the Secretary sufficiently informed so that at any given moment he is pretty well prepared to go discuss things with the President.

You can bring into that, if you want to--and I think any President wants to from time to time--people who have had hopefully some experience in similar problems in the past, at least some experience in foreign affairs.

M: Perhaps from outside of the Department?

K: Yes. Any President likes this. He's always suspicious that he's getting a purely bureaucratic judgment, and I think it makes him feel better if

he has other people doing this. And there's nothing wrong with that if they also have taken the time to do their work, that is to really study the papers. The danger of outside advice to a President is that it comes from extremely able people with good judgment who are just badly informed.

M: Busy doing something else probably.

K: Busy doing something else.

M: Has there been a high level group of that kind on something, let's say, like Viet Nam, which has operated rather regularly?

K: Yes. Not really regularly. They've come in two or three times to look at things. I've never been sure that Viet Nam has been as well organized as it should. It's an immensely complicated problem and whether outside advisers coming in, even if they spend what for them is a considerable amount of time, can really get much of a feel for the terribly complex things in Viet Nam, I don't know.

M: I'm sure it can't be mastered by someone on a weekend away from a busy job.

K: It really is hard to master it on a weekend and to come up with very sound advice.

M: When Mr. Ball held your position, he frequently was referred to in the press as the devil's advocate, on Viet Nam and other things; and when your hearings were held, I believe Senator [Mike] Mansfield asked that you continue that role. Have you continued that role, in your opinion, or do you think that's the proper role for an Under Secretary?

K: I don't really think, in a way, it's a proper role for an Under Secretary. If it's what people think commonly, that you're always going to argue the other position. I do think it's proper that the pros and cons of every-

thing be put up to the President, if nobody else is telling him. That really ought to be just a regular thing in the government. You're hired to give the President the basis he needs for decisions and to give him your own advice on what it would be. I don't think you should give him advice that goes one way rather than another just because nobody else is getting it to him. I think he's paying for your honest advice; and that's what you ought to give him. You certainly ought to be careful to point out all of the pitfalls in any direction, in any problem, what the pros and cons and alternatives are. But I think when it's a question of advice, you should not be arguing a position you do not believe in.

M: But if the SIG, for example,makes a decision in a group, there's going to be a minority view. Does it get up to the President?

K: Oh, yes, if there are any minority views, it does. In general I think we've all been in agreement about what the decision is. Even that tends to lock the President in, so I've been careful that when any paper is going to him, just to tell him, "Well, this is where we all come out. It's not a particularly comfortable place to come out, and we examined these alternatives in the SIG and we determined the best was alternative A; but here are the others, and they have these advantages and these disadvantages."

M: How far can dissent go by somebody in a higher position in the Department?

K: Oh, it can go just as far as they want it to go, really. I've always tried to encourage this to find out if there are any differences in view and if there are, I want to hear them. I had the same feeling over at the Department of Justice. I learn more about something by hearing

people debate it. Usually the dissent, as you get it here, is not particularly good; but it tends to come up because two bureaus are arguing one with the other. And there is a problem over in the Department of State that I have not solved, which is that you tend to get too one-sided a picture because you have a lot of special pleaders. The Ambassador to a country tends to plead what's going to make his life more comfortable. The Country Director tends to support the Ambassador because it's also his responsibility, and he doesn't want to hurt relations with that country. The Assistant Secretary tends to take the advice of those people. And it all comes up as though it's a one-sided proposition. How you build in some tensions so that you look at some alternatives-- unless you have a situation such as we have in the Near Eastern affairs; there any decision that is made has some advocates for the other viewpoint, because they have so much tension within the area that anything that affects the Arabs, affects the Israelis; or affects the Pakistanis, affects the Indians; or affects the Turks, affects the Greeks, so that--

M: That's because we have relations with all the countries?

K: Yes, they're all arguing with each other about something so that there you tend to get shaken out within the bureau on the pros and cons. Other than that you get in on dispute between areas or on a dispute from a functional bureau or with another agency or-- it's only in that way that it gets shaken up.

M: Sometimes the public view, at least during the Johnson Administration and on Viet Nam particularly, has been that anybody who dissented over here suddenly found themselves gone; the names [George] Ball and [Roger]

Hilsman and [Richard] Goodman and so on, who at one time or another couldn't support the Viet Nam policy-- seem to have been moved out. Has that then left a Department that is pretty well one-sided on this subject?

K: No, I think you would find still some differences of viewpoint on Viet Nam here. And they continue to come up. A lot of the dispute on Viet Nam has been dispute about past decisions that were made, and these never get me very excited. It might get you as an historian excited, but I get up in the morning and come down here-- I've got to face Viet Nam as it looks at 9:00 a.m. that morning with all the decisions, right or wrong, that have been made at any time in the past. And arguing or fighting about those doesn't make any sense. Where do you go from here is the only thing that makes any sense. Now, on <u>that</u> you'd find differences of viewpoint, differences of tactics, some differences, I think on judgment about the future, having made this investment how much more investment do you make;what our minimum U. S. position ought to be. You get differences of view in this, but when the problem is attacked that way by anybody in the department or anybody around the government you get differences; as you should have-- I don't think they're the sort that you're talking about.

M: But the sort that I'm talking about, the views regarding past decisions might determine in some ways your views about present decisions.

K: I suppose they might. If you keep refighting things. I don't-- I've never-- just as a sort of a philosophy of government, which is about all I can put in here-- one thing, I just don't think anybody working in the Executive Branch has the right to go around and publicly criticize

any decisions that are taken by his superiors; and he certainly doesn't have the right to go around and try to frustrate them at the operational level. And the great difficulty with the NSC mechanism we were talking about before is that it didn't have any impact on anybody at least in terms of my philosophy of running a Department. The people who are doing the operations, who are controlling the day-to-day events have to have a part in determining what that policy is or they will frustrate it.

M: At the operational level?

K: At the operational level. So you have to, and this has been one of the things about the SIG-IRG mechanism that has been good. The people within the Department all the way down the line have felt they were a part of the policy-decisions that were being made, and they were playing a role. You get much better, much loyaler carryingout of these if they feel they've had an imput into what the policy is. I think this is true even if their views of it are not accepted.

M: As long as they are willing to carry it out, they can dissent in the making of the decision--

K: Oh, sure. I think one of the great dangers any President has is that people don't level with him, don't tell him why they think he's being foolish about something. The Constitution doesn't require that the Executive Branch or that the Congress or that the Court act wisely. It simply puts the power to act there and they can constitutionally act as foolishly as they want to. The job of the people in the Executive Branch is to try to have the President act as wisely as he can act. In a sense, all this means is giving him your best advice· whether your advice is

good or bad, if you want him to act wise, you want him to take your advice, you want to be sure what your advice is, and you certainly want him to hear it. I think there's a tendency when you can see the President some times in meetings with him, any President, leaning one way, there's an awful tendency on the part of his own staff and on the part of other government officials to start being supportive of what he does rather than tell him they do not agree with him. After it's decided, obviously you may not agree with it but you carry it right out and you don't criticize. He's the guy that's elected--not you.

M: This might be a place where public dissent can play a positive role actually. There is a great number of academic dissenters-- have they had any impact on policy-making at all?

K: Oh I think they have, yes, I think they have.

M: Within the State Department, or on the part of the President?

K: I think both really. I think the President would deny it, but he's certainly been conscious of it.

M: They've certainly made him aware of it.

K: It's hard to believe that if you are aware of something it has no impact. I think you still try to make the-- you don't make the decisions because there's going to be a noise or a demonstration or even some criticism, but certainly you pay a lot of attention in looking to what they say in trying to get to what the root of this is, whether it's right or wrong. There's no way of knowing-- no way in government that I know-- to be absolutely certain that you're right about absolutely everything you do.

M: I think that might be what has frustrated some of the academic critics.

They feel like a great majority of informed opinion is contrary to policy, and they wonder why it can't be explained to intelligent, well-informed people so that the majority support it. How does the Department explain that?

K: Oh, I think as far as Viet Nam is concerned-- I just think we haven't had a very good, really public information policy; that we've been caught in a good many things in the past-- caught in the sense that going too flat with predictions that then did not turn out to be true, so when you make them again you get caught with it-- with the old ones. I think progress has often been exaggerated when really it <u>was</u> progress and people were pleased about it and it may have been said sincerely, but when it was viewed against what the total problem was, it wasn't that good. There has been an optimism on the time frame in Viet Nam that I think was never justified, and so I think that this has really been what has hurt. And also some of the inhibitions that you have-- you may think what the South Vietnamese government is doing is just incredibly foolish and stupid and corrupt, or anything you want to say about it. Obviously you can't say that publicly, so you have to be terribly bland, and then people don't realize why you can't say this and they think you're just lying to them or you're being stupid or something of that kind.

M: You've run into that, at least on one occasion-- pressure from your friends, I believe, up at one of the coastal places. On one occasion your wife was quoted as saying that if they knew what you were doing, they wouldn't criticize that. What did she mean by that?

K: All she knew was that I was spending a great deal of time on Viet Nam. We had what I think is the only secret I know in government. Every Thursday afternoon there was a meeting here at 5:30 in my office in which-- we called it the non-group--

M: The non-group?

K: And I had said there would be nothing coordinated, no papers, nobody would ever be quoted on anything he said in here outside this room; but it was to explore problems in Viet Nam and things we might do and what ideas people had. I had a group in which-- Walt Rostow has been here, used to be Cy Vance, and John MacNaughton, now it's Paul Nitze and Paul Warnke, Dick Helms-- I think I mentioned General Wheeler, Bill Bundy, Averell Harriman, and we'd spend one hour of trying to get ideas about Viet Nam and having very frank discussions and then nothing that is said in the room ever goes outside of it. But it has served to get some ideas about things that might be good, and I think that's probably the sort of thing that she was mentioning. Nothing has ever leaked out of that meeting, not even the existence of the group.

M: That's the way to have it. Would you say that your advice on Viet Nam has been consistently one direction or another insofar as our commitments and tactics are concerned?

K: No, I think I've generally been more pessimistic about Viet Nam than some of my colleagues in the government, certainly much more pessimistic than Walt Rostow has continuously been. I think I've tended to be skeptical of military reports-- I don't mean skeptical of the number killed or that sort of thing. Probably even that you can be skeptical of because you know it's only an estimate, but it is not necessarily an estimate that's always high, but it may be wrong.

M: An estimate is an estimate.

K: It's the best they can do and I don't question that. I think I've been skeptical about the effectiveness of the bombing throughout. It did not seem to me that it was winning the war for us particularly, and this did

not mean that you should just give it up for nothing. I just was always a little dubious. Having bombed myself, I was always a little bit skeptical as to whether every bomb went on target with quite the same precision that gets claimed for it.

M: A lot of bombardiers admit that.

K: I think in that I've tended to be skeptical. It hasn't been really doubting of the Viet Nam policy-- I think I've doubted that things were always going as well as we thought.

M: Has this affected your relations with the President in any way?

K: I don't think so.

M: He has let you be skeptical?

K: Yes. I feel so very strongly that a President wants an honest view-- he doesn't have to accept it. I've never given President Johnson anything else. Now he may not want to hear-- he may prefer to hear a view that's much more optimistic about what's going on, but I think he would agree that you're not doing your job-- if you don't feel that way-- you're not doing your job if you don't tell him. And so I don't think it's affected-- I did the same thing in the Department of Justice. I don't think he always liked to hear what I had to say there, either.

M: You showed me last time how you decreased in estimation with your various appointments. Do you think you would have the same level on leaving-- ? [Reference to language used on Katzenbach's various official appointments]

K: Well, I certainly hope that President Johnson would say of me that I've never been cowed into not giving him advice of what I felt on any occasion. I don't give them. I made an absolute point in this department that I do not give my advice to the President unless he asks for my advice. I expressed my viewpoint to the Secretary, and if the President calls me

or wants me, or the Secretary is away or something, that fact is promptly reported to the Secretary along with what was said. Because you can't have two Secretaries of State, and although the President is entitled to go get advice where he wants it, I'm not sure that I'm entitled to volunteer it to anybody but the Secretary. It would be a very rare occasion when I would do the opposite.

M: That's then one of the criticisms of the National Security Operation in the White House, I guess. It has volunteered advice on its own and thus acted as a second Secretary of State?

K: Yes, I think that's-- I know that to be true. At the same time Walt would not differ one iota in his philosophy of it from what I would do, although it seems to differ in practice. And I think Walt would say that--would state that he never volunteers advice without first checking it out here. And I believe that he believes that to be true.

M: But in practice, as you said while ago--?

K: You see, in government, contact with the President of the United States is a fantastically important source of power.

M: I've noticed that.

K: So that in this sense his staff gains power merely by personal contact which makes it much more important for him to be sure he's having personal contact with his other officials. He has had a good deal with Rusk and McNamara and Clifford in Defense; much less, really, with the other officials of government.

M: On specific policy matters, I expect that one of the things that's going to be most investigated in the future that most needs clearing up is the whole big subject of peace feelers. Recently a couple of books have come

out detailing an opposition nongovernment view. You've probably been familiar with Ashmore-Baggs and Kraslow-Loory. [Harry S. Ashmore and William C. Baggs, Mission to Hanoi (New York: 1968); David Kraslow and Stuart H. Loory, The Secret Search for Peace in Vietnam (New York: 1968)]. Can you clear some of this up? What about Marigold, for example, which was in process when you got here apparently?

K: Oh, I think it's hard to-- in general, the account on Marigold in Kraslow and Loory's book is accurate. Not all the details are there, but I think generally it's accurate. I think the most difficult part of that was-- I was responsible for that-- Rusk was away during at least the crucial time of that. I felt really pretty strongly that it was a phony--

M: That is, the channel was a phony?

K: Yes. Also I thought as I have on other occasions that however strongly you feel that, you've got to pursue it until you can demonstrate-- you can't just say, "This is a phony, so I'm not going to have anything to do with it." We did have the bombing, we did have a warning about it, then it did occur again, and they said they'd broken off-- in that sense I think it was badly handled, certainly from the point of view in people's confidence. I frankly don't believe that the fact of the bombing would have permanently ended this. I think it was used as an excuse. It's just a matter of judgment. I think we would have been better off if we had not done it the second time.

M: It could have been stopped presumably.

K: It could have been stopped, though there would have been some danger of leaks if it were but it could have been stopped. All you were doing is saying please lay off Haiphong and Hanoi and major attacks for a few days.

M: Which militarily would have--

K: Militarily would have had no significance though that might have resulted in some questions and so forth. It would not have been easy to do, but I think it could have been done.

M: Is one of the problems in that type of thing the number of people that can be informed of what's going on so that you can coordinate the military and the diplomatic--

K: Yes, that's a big problem. All Presidents have had problems with leaks. They don't like them, get angry about them, and they tend to blame them on the State Department even when they're clearly not from the State Department. I made a list of-- with respect to the Paris negotiations-- of what I thought was an absolute minimum number of people that had to have access to this information in order to make the government run. And without counting code clerks or secretaries, you got to a list of about sixty people.

M: Sixty?

K: I think that if the President had known this, he would have fired me. I don't think to this moment he has any idea that that many people were reading the traffic, and I suspect that that sixty was really a hundred because--

M: And this was more than what had been involved in some of the earlier efforts?

K: Oh I think everybody had this much-- Actually my own theory is that you don't get a leak this way; that you get a leak because people know there is something going on and they suddenly have been excluded from it.

M: And think they should be--

K: And think they ought to be in on it.

M: I see.

K: But you can just start counting them up and it just runs to that. I'm not even including foreign people. Whether you include any of your allies or not. My own feeling is that we ran that without a leak throughout that whole period of time with all these people knowing it.

M: And that lasted several months?

K: That lasted several months. I don't think they do on this kind of an issue. And to run it without telling your principal people who are working on Viet Nam is to cut yourself off. Can you imagine doing this without half a dozen people in the CIA knowing about it? I mean, they <u>have</u> to know about it. If you want any analysis done of other sources of intelligence, then they've got to know what we're doing. You can't run it any other way.

M: They're not any good to you in their function if they don't know about it.

K: That's right.

M: What about the Ashmore-Baggs thing in early 1967? Was that any better that the previous one?

K: No, the great danger with Ashmore-Baggs-- one danger was that Ashmore just talks, talks, talks. Baggs was more responsible. They wanted to go, and we didn't really want to use them. These would not be our choices. And the great difficulty of this is, with a private person is, really how responsible and how responsive they are to the guidance that you give them. Now Baggs and Ashmore obviously had all kinds of ideas of their own as to how peace ought to be gotten, and we ran into the great danger on this of, if they were saying anything for us, everything Harry Ashmore thought would be assumed by Hanoi to be U. S.

policy, so you really get a lot of wrong signals on this. If you contrast that with Henry Kissinger's mission in Paris, the degree of professionalism just totally differed. Henry put forward as his own a number of ideas. Ever idea that he put forward as his own was something that we had cleared here and was in fact United States' policy.

M: With /Herbert/ Marcovich and /Raymond/ Aubrac, which was a little later.

K: Yes, which can be made to work and can be useful. Because it's a deniable contact. They're in a position to deny anything we're in a position to deny that Kissinger was in any sense speaking for the United States, and it can be useful in terms of exploration.

M: Now, is this the initiative that did ultimately lead to the Paris talks, beginning this year?

K: No, I don't think so, although I think it probably played a role That was where the San Antonio formula originated, but then became public later on. But that was not the initiative that led to these--

M: Was this a formal diplomatic initiative that <u>did</u> lead to them, finally? How did that come about? This was after the /Nguyen Duy/ Trinh announcement of what-- December 4th or something, 1967?

K: Yes, it really came about with absolutely no prior understandings. It really came about quite honestly as the result of the President's March 31st speech. Although I thought there were some signals from them-- some indications from them-- it was my prediction that stopping only down to the 20th or 19th parallel would not be enough. And I did not expect them to respond as they did.

M: But they did immediately after the 31st speech?

K: Yes. Of course I made that judgment without the benefit of the last paragraph of that speech.

M: Right.

K: Which may had had something to do with it.

M: It undoubtedly could have had something to do with it. What about the difficulties, I think, in February of 1967 when Robert Kennedy got into the peacemaking act and came back? You are, I guess, one of the two outside observers to that episode. I wonder if you can clear that up for me.

K: That was a perfectly ridiculous episode. The truth of it is that President Johnson thought, with perfectly good reason--

[interruption]

In many ways this was absolutely ridiculous, because what happened was that the President thought with quite good reason to think it, that Bob Kennedy was getting involved in some kind of peace feeler and getting it public to do this in order to embarrass President Johnson. Senator Kennedy knew that he had not done this in fact, and therefore could not figure out what President Johnson was trying to do to him by accusing him of doing things that he knew he had not done. So there was complete misunderstanding on this. What had happened was when Senator Kennedy was in Paris, he had gone and talked with [Etienne] Manac'h who was their expert on Viet Nam and Manac'h had said various things, none of which impressed Senator Kennedy very much. With him at that time had gone an Embassy officer who was more impressed than Senator Kennedy or than any of us were with something that Manac'h had said, and partially I guess impressed with it because he didn't know as much as people

back here knew. He had sent a cable back here saying that he thought that Senator Kennedy had been given a peace-feeler. He had spoken about it with Senator Kennedy. Senator Kennedy said, "Oh, I don't think there was anything of that kind, but you know more about it than I do, so go ahead and report it any way you want to."

That came back in a telegram that got extremely wide distribution in the government. It was so unimportant that I did not even know the existence of the telegram and had an awful time finding it, because I kept looking in the NODIS series messages and this was one that simply must have gone to 300-400 people. One of these people sees this and gives it to the press, and the press makes a big story out of Kennedy peace-feelers. President Johnson assumes that this is something Kennedy himself has leaked, or that somebody in the State Department has leaked for Senator Kennedy's benefit. And so you get all this great, big bru-ha-ha out of total innocence on Senator Kennedy's part, in my judgment, and totally good reason on the part of the President to be suspicious as to what Senator Kennedy was doing; all of which caused by that silly set of circumstances.

What about the famous meeting on February 6. You were one of the two objective advisers apparently.

Well, it wasn't a very pleasant meeting because there was by this time the suspicion of President Johnson as to what Senator Kennedy was trying to do to him and Senator Kennedy as to what President Johnson was trying to do to him was fairly acute. And the President was quite harsh in terms of things that he said to Senator Kennedy. Senator Kennedy really didn't

understand it, and I've forgotten the details of it, but it ended up that way with his saying that he didn't think he had had any peace-feeler, which he did. But he was quite angry; both men, though they didn't raise their voices, were quite angry.

M: Were you on other occasions sort of a link between Senator Kennedy and the President because of your past friendship with Senator Kennedy?

K: Not very much, really, no. I think the personalities of the two men were so in conflict in a way that it was really impossible--

M: The feud was real then.

K: I don't think either one wanted to think of it as a feud, and certainly President Johnson made lots of gestures to the Kennedy family and to Bob Kennedy. Bob knew this. I think he in a way wanted to respond. I just don't think he liked President Johnson. Their style was very different; their personalities very different; and I think they just tended to rub each other the wrong way.

M: What role did Kennedy staff people who had by that time mostly left the government play in this?

K: Oh, I think they played quite a bit of a role in this in terms of sort of egging people on sometimes in their public statements and so forth. I don't really know.

M: This is a pretty good breaking place if you have to go to a meeting; why don't we break right there?

End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview II

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