INTERVIEW I

DATE: January 30, 1971

INTERVIEWEE: JOHN BARTLOW MARTIN

INTERVIEWER: PAIGE MULHOLLAN

PLACE: Mr. Martin's home,185 Maple Avenue, Highland Park, Illinois

Tape 1 of 1

PM: Okay, let's begin by identifying you, sir. You're John Bartlow Martin, and your official capacity during the Johnson Administration was as ambassador to the Dominican Republic for his first few months in office, after President Kennedy's assassination.

Then you came back as special presidential troubleshooter at the time the Dominican Republic erupted early in 1965.

M: That's right.

PM: And in addition, we mentioned a moment ago that you did work on the 1964 campaign. Let's back up a little bit before that, first. Did your career touch Lyndon Johnson's at any time of any consequence during the period before he was vice president in the 1950s or before?

M: Not really importantly. I was with Adlai Stevenson in his campaigns in 1952 and 1956, but I had relatively little contact with President Johnson at that time. I do recall once in 1956, in, I believe, August, going with Governor Stevenson on a series of regional meetings, pre-campaign meetings they were called, between the convention and the Labor Day opening of the 1956 campaign. And one of these, I believe, it was Albuquerque, and Mr. Johnson, Senator Johnson at that time, was there along with Sam Rayburn, who was speaker of the House.

And I sat in on a couple of meetings with them with Governor Stevenson. These were purely political meetings, of very little historical interest, I think. I did have the impression that the relationship between Stevenson and Johnson was a good one. I think that Stevenson was a little more warmly associated with Sam Rayburn than he was with Lyndon Johnson; that's the impression I retain; I may be mistaken. But there was a considerable understanding between Stevenson and Johnson. By this time Stevenson was beginning to think of himself as a professional politician; he thought of Johnson as one, and they had that as a basis for their understanding. I think it worked pretty well.

PM: Stevenson didn't believe that Johnson slighted him as far as campaigning in Texas?

M: No, I don't recall that at all. No. In 1952 our Texas problem was Governor [Allan] Shivers, as you recall.

PM: Right.

M: Johnson wasn't the problem, Shivers was the problem. Tidelands oil was one of the issues there. The main problem that created was that we didn't get any money out of Texas; you know, because of our tidelands position, we got almost nothing.

PM: Johnson may not have been the total power in Texas politics by then, but would be later

M: No, I don't mean he was. That's correct.

No, I don't retain any recollection that Stevenson thought that Johnson slighted him. Stevenson's problem with Johnson during the

the 1950s arose because of Johnson's leadership in the Senate. And insofar as it was a problem the problem was that Stevenson felt Johnson was not making the issues on which he would have to run in 1956, because as you recall, Johnson was supporting the Eisenhower policies and not criticizing President Eisenhower. I think, probably, it was the only thing Johnson could do, but Stevenson felt that he was not making the issues between 1952 and 1956.

PM: What about 1960? Did you go to Los Angeles?

M: No, I did not. No, the reason I didn't go to Los Angeles was that I was for Jack Kennedy, but I had a long, close association with Stevenson, and I was one of the people that was caught in that bind.

PM: There were a lot.

M: Yes, that's right. Jack Kennedy asked me in January or February to come with him full-time through the primaries, and I told him I couldn't do it unless I could get Stevenson to get out of consideration, you know. I went to Stevenson twice in the spring of 1960 and told him I thought he ought to take himself out, because I didn't think he could be nominated, and I was afraid if he was nominated, he might lose to Nixon, which, I think, would have been a personal disaster for Stevenson. As long as Stevenson didn't take himself out, I felt loyal to him, and felt that I couldn't help Kennedy, although I had told Kennedy early in the year that, the day after he was nominated, after the convention, I'd be with him. And I was with him, through the fall campaign, with Kennedy.

PM: Among your friends, the liberals who had supported Stevenson and who favored Kennedy, how much trouble was the Johnson nomination as vice president?

M: It bothered a lot of my friends a good deal. They felt that Kennedy was taking a right-wing southerner. It didn't bother me, because I didn't think it made much difference, frankly, and I understood that Kennedy wanted to carry Texas and he thought he needed Johnson to carry Texas. It was that simple, in a close election. That kind of thing doesn't bother me as it does some of my more doctrinaire friends in the liberal camp.

PM: Right. But as far as your campaigning, there was no hesitation on your part, or anything of this nature?

M: No. No. I, like many of the old Stevenson people, felt at the outset that Stevenson was superior to Kennedy. But I came to feel quite differently during the campaign. Working closely with Kennedy, I developed an enormous regard and affection for him, and respect for him, which I had not had in the spring. But I had very little to do with Johnson during that campaign. I was either travelling with Jack Kennedy, or I was travelling ahead of him doing editorial advance, so to speak, planning his speeches a few days ahead. And so I really didn't see the Vice President at that time.

PM: Let's skip chronologically a little bit forward here and then come back. By the campaign of 1964, then, you had resigned as ambassador to the Dominican Republic, early in the year?

M: That's right.

PM: How did you work in the 1964 effort for President Johnson?

M: Let's see, I don't remember just how it came about. I think it may have been Dick Goodwin asked me if I wanted to help out during the campaign, and I did. Let's see. Bill Moyers took me to the President in the late summer or early fall of 1964. And I remember it very well because the President said he wanted me very much to help him. I said I would, and we talked a little about issues, not much, just a few minutes. And then he said, "Well, all right, you write it, and I'll say it." And I did, and he did. As a matter of fact, President Johnson was the easiest candidate to work for, as far as a speech writer was concerned, that I ever had.

PM: In what way?

M: He would say what you wrote.

PM: And not depart from the script?

M: Yes, very little.

PM: That's interesting, because so many of his famous statements, not campaign speeches, necessarily, but other ones have been noted by speech writers as departures from his text--the "nervous nellies" and that business.

M: Yes.

PM: But you didn't have that trouble.

M: I didn't, in that campaign. For example, I remember the Salt Lake City speech which I wrote and he delivered it, I believe almost verbatim. He liked that speech--that's why I remember it, I guess--and had it re-broadcast a number of times. In this respect, he was

like Hubert Humphrey. Humphrey does the same thing; he'll deliver a speech the way you write it.

Neither Stevenson nor Kennedy did that. Stevenson used to rewrite speeches maddeningly, right up to delivery time, you know, and usually not improving them, or very often not improving them. Stevenson was a writer; he really was a writer, and he cared about writing and about what he said. He was very careful, and he was very difficult to work with. He hated speech writers.

PM: And Johnson didn't?

M: No, Johnson welcomed them. He was, as I say, very easy to work with. In that campaign, I did some editorial advance for him. I remember that sometime along in, I think, late September--we were hardly campaigning, if you recall. That was the year that we went out and dedicated dams, and signed treaties, and met with the President of Mexico, all this non-political campaigning.

I was getting really nervous about the Midwest. President Johnson had told me he thought the Midwest was the battleground in 1964, and we hadn't been doing anything for several weeks about it. So I came out here to Illinois and Indiana, and a couple of other states, and just did some legwork, some reporting, this sort of thing. And [I] turned in a memo to him telling him that people wanted to see him, and he had to get out and start whistle-stopping in the Midwest; that the issues out here were mainly economic issues; that nobody was very enthusiastic about the campaign, and that a lot of people were saying it was a choice between a crook and a kook, and Johnson had to

come out and convince them he was not a crook; and the best way to do that, I thought, was personal, whistle-stop campaigning. I put this in a memo to him. The only reason I bring this up is that it illustrates something about President Johnson. You could put that in a memo and give it to him, and not get fired or thrown out of the White House. I mean, he could take that kind of criticism, if you want to call it that. And right after that, he did do what I recommended. He came out to Peoria and some other towns and did a lot of bullhorn campaigning.

PM: And, of course, won the battleground, if that was the battleground.

M: That's right. He sure did. It worked, yes.

PM: Were you writing any speeches other than political speeches at that time? Had you been called on for any policy speeches during 1964?

M: No, not in 1964. I did later, but not in 1964.

PM: After you came back from 1965.

M: Yes, that's right.

Let's see. We were back in 1960 for a minute. I don't think that I had much contact with him at that time, in 1960. President Kennedy appointed me ambassador to the Dominican Republic and I went down there in March of 1962, I believe, and was there until, I believe, the coup against the [Juan D.] Bosch government in September of 1963.

PM: Did you get any feel of vice presidential influence on the administration during that period of time?

M: Yes, in this respect: Juan Bosch was elected president of the Dominican Republic in November or December of 1962, and inaugurated early in 1963. And Vice President Johnson led the American delegation to

his inaugural.

PM: Right.

M: And so during that two or three days, I was with the Vice President a good deal. And if I may just inject a personal recollection here: when people ask me about President Johnson, I always think of something that happened during that inaugural. My wife had been scheduled to go out with Mrs. Johnson to, I don't know, a baby clinic, or a hospital, or somewhere the next day. The night before that was to take place, our son Dan fell off his burro and broke his arm, and we had the Dominican doctor look at it and set it and cast it, and we weren't very satisfied with the results of that. So we arranged to have him taken out to the aircraft carrier, Boxer, that we had out offshore, for X-rays the next day. And coming back from a reception at the palace late that evening with Vice President Johnson, I told him that I was sorry that my wife wouldn't be able to go with Mrs. Johnson to the hospital the next day, because our boy had broken his arm, and I wanted to get it X-rayed on the Boxer. He instantly reacted and said, "Well, I'm going back to Washington tomorrow. Why don't you let me take the boy and his mother back there, and take him to Bethesda [Naval Hospital], and get his arm looked at." It was an automatic reaction. I mean, there was no political mileage in it for him at all. I was just a Kennedy ambassador, and there was nothing in this for Johnson. It was just a human reaction on his part. And we did that; my wife and son went back to Washington with him the next day, and they took him to Bethesda, and sure enough they found that the arm had been improperly

set by the Dominicans. He had a fracture across a growth center in his elbow, and if we hadn't had it fixed properly at that time, he would have had a short arm the rest of his life.

You know, I often criticize President Johnson and I listen to a lot of people who do, but I always have this in the forefront of my mind.

PM: Another side.

M: That's the other side.

PM: Different from the other kind. You know, the picture of his visitations of foreign countries has always been somewhat unfavorable, by both critics and even sometimes by admirers. Was there a lot of that in the Dominican visit?

M: He did us a lot of good in the Dominican Republic.

PM: He did?

M: Yes. On his visit. Quite apart from this episode with respect to my boy's arm, he did us a lot of political good in the Republic. I remember when we arrived--are you interested in this sort of detail?

PM: Sure. That's why we're doing this. This is the sort of detail that doesn't get written down anywhere else.

M: I remember when he arrived. He and [Romulo] Betancourt of Venezuela were scheduled to arrive almost simultaneously. We knew there was going to be an attempt to assassinate Betancourt either at the airport or on the way into town. At least, we had good reason to believe there would be. And the two planes were almost to arrive simultaneously; and in the air, Betancourt deferred to Johnson; so Johnson landed

first. This worried the hell out of me, because I was afraid he might get Betancourt's bullet, you know.

PM: Yes, right.

M: So we left the airport in the motorcade, and there were large crowds all the way into town on the autopista [expressway] from the airport. And all at once--I was in the, I don't know, second or third car, with the assistant secretary for Latin America, Ed Martin, I believe, at that time.

PM: They change so fast that it's hard to keep up.

M: That's right. I think it was still--yes, it was Ed Martin. And this motorcade stopped, and I realized the Vice President was out shaking hands in the crowd.

I told the Secret Service man who was in the front seat of my car, to stop him. He said, "I can't stop him. If you want him stopped, you'll have to stop him yourself." So I did. I went and fought my way through the crowd, and got close to him, close enough to say, "Mr. Vice President, you can't do this. It just isn't safe."

And he said, "Why can't I?" I said, "Well, I shouldn't say, but I advise strongly that you don't do it and that you get back in the car." He said, "But I want to shake hands with the people." I said, "Well, all right, I'll tell you what: you get back in your car, and stay there until after we get past Parque de Independencia and out on the boulevard, and then you can get out and shake hands again. Between here and the Parque de Independencia, stay in your car." He did. He took this advice.

PM: Had he been briefed that there was a suspected--

M: I don't think so. I think this was the first he'd heard of it. I didn't even tell him at that point that we thought there was going to be an attempt. I did tell him later. I apologized to him later and told him I acted in a somewhat peremptory way, but I had a reason. I wanted him to know I was worried about his safety. And he was a good soldier in this respect; staff men could tell him something, and if he said it in a way that it was clear he wanted to make it stick, why, the Vice President would take the advice. He did just what I told him to do, and after he got past the Parque, he got out and shook hands with a lot of people.

He did us a lot of good that way. This was all over the next morning's newspaper: how the friendly Vice President, you know, was shaking hands with people. He was campaigning, whistle-stopping. He helped the United States a great deal that way.

He did the same thing at the inaugural receptions and at the inauguration itself. There was an incident at the inauguration. We had to get him out of there. There was an attempt made to storm the grandstand where he and Betancourt were sitting. I think it was an anti-Betancourt move, but we got the Vice President out fast in the middle of the inauguration.

PM: But again he cooperated?

M: Oh, yes. We told him, "You've got to leave," and he left. He would take guidance on things like this. This isn't policy, of course.

PM: No, no. This is just day-to-day operations.

M: That's right, just operational guidance he would take, and with very good grace. He complained, while he was there, about his schedule; said it was too heavy; wanted me to cut it down. I did cut it down. I told him there were certain things he had to do, absolutely had to do, and he did everything I asked him to do. And I cut everything else out that wasn't essential. His schedule had been made too heavy.

PM: But none of the flamboyance associated with the charges of rebel yells in the Taj Mahal and this sort of thing?

M: No, no, not a bit.

PM: None of that at all.

M: No.

PM: We might as well pursue the Dominican thing on to its conclusion from that point. You, in your book,* to a certain extent, and certainly in the opposition press, had expressed at least some fear that maybe part of the American mission in the Dominican Republic gave a nod to the anti-Bosch coup, either the Military Assistance Advisory Group or some other area. You don't go into that very much, the reasons for your fears in that regard. Do you have more reservations than you've published in that sense?

M: No, I don't really. I don't really. Bosch believed while he was president that my military was undercutting him with his military. I discussed this with my military a number of times, and I don't believe it. I don't think it happened. My military men had reservations about Bosch, but I think they were good soldiers, and they were loyal, and obviously, it would have been an act of disloyalty to

* Overtaken By Events. Doubleday. 1966

undercut the president the United States was supporting. I don't think they did it. I really don't. I'd hate to believe it, and I don't have any reason to believe it, really. Because I did inquire.

PM: That was really my next question: did you inquire into the administration later about this--in Washington, I mean?

M: Yes, I believe I did, after the coup. You see, the coup against Bosch took place on September the 25th, 1963. I left a day or two after the coup, went to Washington; remained as ambassador, but in Washington.

PM: You didn't return to the Dominican Republic?

M: I never went back. The next time I went back, I believe, was during the civil war of 1965. I did not return. I stayed working on the question of recognition, and stayed on into the early part of 1964. During this period, I did make some inquiries in the government in Washington about the role of my military in the Dominican Republic before the Bosch coup. And Ralph Dungan always felt that this had happened..

PM: He was in the White House.

M: Ralph Dungan was on the White House staff, and he handled Latin America. Latin America was the only area, as I understand it, that Mac Bundy did not have charge of in the White House staff. Dungan had, early on, split off Latin America. Any Latin American ambassador, Dungan was the man you talked to in the White House, not Bundy, at that time. I'm talking about during President Kennedy's brief tenure. Dungan believed that my military had helped undercut Bosch. He and I talked about it. I talked to Ed Martin about it. I talked to some

people at the Pentagon about it, and other people in the department. I've never really been convinced that it happened.

PM: I'm glad to get that additional detail in, because I think that's going a little bit beyond the book.

Your position, I suppose, was untenable, really, as ambassador after the coup. You could not have continued under any circumstances, I guess.

M: I didn't want to, for one thing, you know. We had worked pretty hard to support [Juan] Bosch, and he hasn't been a very good president, but he was the only elected one we had.

PM: That sounds like something that a certain unnamed President of the United States might have said at a later time. (Laughter)

M: That's right. No, I didn't want to back, and I don't know whether I would have been as successful had I gone back. I don't know. I just didn't want to do it. And also during this time you have to recall that we were withholding recognition, trying to force a return to constitutionality.

President Kennedy was assassinated on November 22. Incidentally, this is something you may be interested in. It was said we had withheld recognition from September 25, when the coup took place, up to the assassination of President Kennedy on November 22. A few days before President Kennedy was assassinated, he was prepared to recognize the Dominican golpista [military coup] government. And we all thought it was the thing to do. However, when he was assassinated, we were afraid to have Johnson recognize the government because most reporters would regard

this as a turn to the right in American foreign policy. So we advised President Johnson to wait a little while. And finally, then, on December 15th, as I recalled the date, he did recognize the new government. What I'm trying to say is that the death of President Kennedy actually delayed recognition of the Dominican government by a week or two.

PM: Right.

M: Rather than the other way around, which is what is usually stated.

PM: What you're saying really is, if you can apply foreign affairs to the domestic slogans, Johnson's "let us continue" really was an honest thing, as far as policy was concerned.

M: Yes. That's right.

PM: You didn't notice any change in a little bit longer view?

M: Yes, later I did.

PM: I see.

M: Yes, particularly with respect to Latin Americans, which is what I know the most about. I think the appointment of Tom Mann was a turn to the right--the appointment by Johnson of Tom Mann as assistant secretary for Latin America.

PM: Did it indicate a philosophical belief on Johnson's part to make that appointment, in your view? Or was it because Tom Mann was recommended as a good man and whatnot that he was [appointed]?

M: I have neverknown why Johnson appointed him. Tom Mann's a Texan, isn't he?

PM: Yes, but they didn't know each other in Texas.

M: They didn't. You see, I didn't know that; that's why I asked you.

PM: Tom Mann was a career foreign service type, I think.

M: That's right.

PM: And I don't believe Johnson knew him before the appointment.

M: Tom Mann was a right-wing fellow. He had a Texas attitude toward Latin America, the Tex-Mex attitude, the paternalistic, "Oh, they're all just a bunch of little kids. They have their little revolutions, but they don't mean much." You know, this sort of an attitude. This was Tom Mann's attitude. In fact, he said at the time that the civil war broke out, "We thought it was just another revolution." You see?

PM: That's a considerable comment, right there, on the whole thing.

M: It is, I think. And it illustrates Mann's caste of mind. I don't know why Johnson appointed him. I think I had left by then; I had resigned and gone to Connecticut by the time Mann was appointed. Because when I resigned, I resigned to Ed Martin, who was still assistant secretary at that time.* My own view of this is that the Dominican problem resulted, basically, from the appointment of Tom Mann as assistant secretary. Because that brought about the appointment of Ambassador Bennett, Tapley Bennett, to the Dominican Republic. And I think that in turn helped bring about the civil war.

PM: Well, you make the point rather clearly that it was not anything that happened--you know, that our policy of intervention in April of 1965 was not the error. It was the eighteen months that preceeded it and made it necessary that was the error.

* Actually, I believe that although I did agree with Martin to resign, Mann replaced him as Assistant Secretary in December before my resignation became effective. JBM, 6/21/78

M: Yes

PM: Why, in your view, would the Johnson Administration allow that kind of error to be made? They had the experience of Latin American difficulties in the Kennedy Administration to go by, certainly. Was it just inattention?

M: I think it was just absent-mindedness, inattention. You know, we were involved in Vietnam by then. If you'll recall, in early part of 1965 were the first airstrikes and the first introduction of ground combat troops. Vietnam was getting a great deal of attention in the spring of 1965. The Dominican civil war broke out, I believe, at the end of April. And between the first of January and the end of April, we were getting deeply into Vietnam.

PM: Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

M: And I just think that everybody quit paying any attention to what was happening in Latin America. They still aren't paying any.

PM: So it wasn't a conscious following of a wrong policy.

M: No, I don't think so.*

PM: It was just a problem of no policy.

M: That's what I meant. Bennett had absolutely no connections with the left down there, the Boschistas, which is always a mistake. The ambassador should always be in touch, not only with the regime in power, but with the opposition to the regime. He's not doing his job if he's not. And Bennett had no personal ties, and nobody in his embassy had any ties, to the Boschistas. This is a terrible mistake. At the same time, Bennett was a career officer, and of course they

* I would add that Mann was out of sympathy with the Alliance for Progress, and that Johnson to some extent was too.
JBM, 6/21/78

try to avoid intervention of any kind in the host countries' affairs--quite differently from a political ambassador such as I was. I don't think, in a country of that kind, that the United States can stand aside, you see, and Bennett did stand aside.

PM: That was the error.

M: That was the problem; that is the mistake that was made. It was overdoing a policy of non-intervention. (Laughter)

PM: That doesn't sound much like a left position!

M: I know. But this is the way I see it, you know.

PM: You argue that what it led to was a civil war, which, at least, did pose a danger of a Cuban-style takeover . . .

M: Yes.

PM: . . . by the Communists; and that Caamano Deno, for example, was a potential Castro-type, at least, leader. Why did so many other observers not see it that way?

M: You're thinking more in the vein I suppose of Tad Szulc--

PM: Theodore Draper.

M: And Draper, and Homer Bigart, and Dan Kurzman of the Washington Post.

Well, first of all, I think they are honest reporters. I think they wrote what they believed. You know, I have no suspicion otherwise at all. I think what happened here was that at Bennett's first press conference after the war began--Bennett had been in the United States, and he came back on Tuesday.

PM: Tuesday, right.

M: I think the rebellion broke out Friday. He came back Tuesday.

PM: Right.

M: I'm real rusty on these. I mean, I haven't looked this up.

PM: I've read your book[Overtaken By Events] more recently than you have!

M: So I may be off a day or two on the things I say, but I'll do my best: Bennett came back and held a press conference. And he retailed stories that had been wholesaled to him by the military at San Isidro, the loyalist military, about beheadings and things of that sort. He made one mistake in his press conference. He did not say, "I don't know these things myself. This is what I am told by San Isidro. Go and check them yourself." He didn't do that. He told these things as fact. Reporters began checking and found out they weren't true. There was one man who had been a bodyguard of President Bosch, a colonel, I can't remember his name* I believe Bennett said he had been beheaded, certainly, he had been killed. Reporters found him in a hospital with a flesh wound, you see. From there on, the reporters didn't trust Bennett. They thought he had lied to them. And Bennett didn't intentionally lie to them. He himself was misled by the San Isidro military, and he was terribly upset by the whole thing. He didn't, I don't think, conduct himself terribly well with the press. He didn't lie deliberately to them, but they thought he did. From then on, they didn't trust him, and they didn't believe the United States' line. They didn't believe anything we said.

The other thing that happened was that the CIA prepared, and the embassy released, a list of leaders of the rebels. Some of them

* Colonel Calderón

were in the hospital; some of them were out of the country; one or two of them were dead. It was terrible, just sloppy work by the CIA. And this was the second thing that helped destroy the credibility of the United States Embassy in the Dominican Republic during the civil war. This is why Tad Szulc and the rest of them went off in the direction they went. They didn't believe anything we said from then on.

PM: This is, I guess, somewhat aside to that, but I think it is an interesting point that goes into the Vietnam thing and in the Dominican Republic. What did your liberal friends [think], or how did they treat you for not joining in the conventional wisdom afterwards?

M: Well, personally, they were very kind to me. I didn't lose friends, if that's what you mean. I mean people like Arthur Schlesinger, Dick Rovere [Richard H. Rovere of The New Yorker] who were good friends of mine then, and still are good friends of mine. I think that they thought that I was taken in by the Johnson Administration. And they forgave me, because they thought I was okay otherwise! (Laughter)

PM: So one sin's all right! (Laughter)

M: This has never been put into words, but this is the feeling that I have about it.

PM: You apparently believe that President Johnson erred from the very beginning by not explaining our actions more forthrightly and consistently than he did.

M: I do.

PM: Do you have any feeling as to why he made that error?

M: No, because I was in the Dominican Republic, and he was in the White House. I don't know what was going on. I don't know why the President did what he did. As I said in the book, I think what we did down there was a good deal better than what we said. If we'd said it better, we would have been in a lot less trouble. I do know this: the President was running the Dominican intervention like a desk officer in the State Department. I mean, I talked to him at least once a day, and sometimes I talked to him three times a day.

PM: As you might a desk officer.

M: Yes, that's right. You know, the president ordinarily withholds himself a little bit. But this president did not. He was in that Dominican thing. He told me to call him any time of the day or night. I believe once I called him about three in the morning, after I had talked to Bosch in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

He ran it the way he runs everything, I gather: in an intensely personal way, with total attention to detail, and he doesn't stand back. I think that might account for his intemperate utterances on the television. He lost his perspective on the thing.

PM: You were called in, as you relate clearly, on the 29th by Moyers. The contact was [Bill] Moyers originally.

M: I believe that there were several calls to me from Washington on Thursday. Was it Thursday?

PM: I believe Thursday was the 29th, so that's right.

M: I'm not sure. As I recall it, the first call came from Moyers late in

the afternoon. And I believe I talked to him again that evening, and then late that night, George Ball called me and wanted me to come down to Washington right away. He arranged to have a plane come up to Connecticut to pick me up. And I did.

PM: Was that your first contact with the events that had started the preceding Friday? You hadn't been in any discussions up to that time?

M: Not with the government. I had been called by I believe it was the Washington Post. An editorial writer there called me sometime between the beginning of the insurrection and the Thursday calls from the White House. And at that time, I believe I told the Post man that I couldn't make head or tails out of it from the newspapers. I didn't understand what the hell was going on, or why we had troops there, or what we were doing. I said that if we wanted to really just protect the lives of American citizens, it seemed to me that the thing to do would be to take them out of the country and get our troops out. But that isn't what we were doing. So I didn't understand what was going on. This was, as I say, before I talked to anybody in the government.

PM: Right. When you went down there that first morning, did you visit with Mr. Johnson personally?

M: Yes, I did.

PM: Alone, or in a group?

M: No, it was in a meeting in the Cabinet Room [in a group].

Let's see, the plane came to Connecticut about daylight, and I got down to Washington around seven or eight in the morning and spent an hour or so in Mac Bundy's office with the State Department and the

CIA people who were briefing me on what the hell was going on. Then I went to a meeting with the President. Secretary Rusk was there; George Ball was there; Secretary McNamara was there; General Wheeler was there; Mac Bundy was there.

PM: First time!

M: I was there. I think there were other people there, but I'm not [sure]. I think Jack Vaughn was there; I think he was assistant secretary at that time.

PM: He was. Yes.

M: There may have been others at the meeting. I'm sure of the ones I mentioned. And this is where the pressure came, from that meeting, pressure on me and on everybody involved. It came from the President. I don't remember how much of this has been overtaken by events.

PM: I don't think that too much detail of the meeting. You mentioned the meeting, but--

M: I'll just make a few recollections. I don't know if they're worth anything or not.

At this point, the airborne was going into the Dominican Republic. They had started during the hours before dawn on this day. They were still landing. Nobody was really sure what the hell they were going to do, you know, when they got there.

PM: Just get on the ground.

M: And that was what the meeting was about, you see. And at one point, Secretary Rusk said to the President, "Mr. President, it's a very serious matter to send . . ." I don't remember his words. The gist

of it was that it was a serious matter to start shooting up a capital city with American troops. And I said, "That's the last thing we want to have happen, Mr. President." And he said, "No, it isn't. The last thing we want to have happen is a communist takeover in that country."

PM: That shows his priorities pretty clearly right there, all right.

M: Right. And he turned to McNamara and Wheeler and said, "What would we have to have to take that island?" Apparently not realizing that there were two countries on that island! Because we were only really concerned with one! And they conferred briefly, and said, I believe, that it would take two divisions. Then we went on talking. And the President wanted me to go down there and try to establish contact with the rebels. This was why I was sent, because Bennett didn't know the rebels, the Boschistas,and I did. He wanted me to establish contact with them and try to help get a cease-fire.

PM: That was fairly clear; you had fairly clear instructions as to what you were to do?

M: Fairly clear. I'm probably making them sound a little more clear than they really were that day. They became [more so]; you know, things firm up in your mind. That morning wasn't quite that clear. It was to go down and do what I could. I think, really, one of the main reasons I was sent was to try to re-establish credibility of the administration with liberal journalists like Tad Szulc and Dan

Kurzman whom I had known for a long time before and who had a good deal of regard for me, I think. That's really one of the main reasons the President sent me down. It was a political move, domestic politics.

PM: Was there sort of a crisis atmosphere that morning?

M: Yes, sir.

PM: Panic? Panic-type atmosphere?

M: Yes, there was. I'll illustrate it this way. After the meeting broke up, and we agreed that if I was going, I'd better go in a hurry. Mac Bundy and I left the meeting before the meeting adjourned, I believe, to get me some money, and to get me an airplane, you know, get me an assistant to take with me. Harry Shlaudeman.

I remember, as we left the Cabinet Room, I asked Bundy, "How much time do you think we've got before they start shooting, taking the place, you know?" And he said, "You might have forty-eight hours, but I doubt it." So it was pretty clear that unless something was done pretty quickly, the United States was going to intervene militarily, all out.

PM: They were thinking of military alternatives at that meeting.

M: Only.

PM: Only?

M: Yes, really, well, and propaganda, publicity, and public relations. The President was upset by the press he was getting.

PM: Already, by then.

M: Already. Yes. From the liberals.

PM: Right.

M: The heat came from this crisis atmosphere, this feeling that if we don't do something within forty-eight hours we're going to shoot the place up. Presumably, that would lead to an occupation such as the one we undertook in 1916. This is what I was afraid of. And the thing in my mind, my purpose in going down there was to prevent a hell of a lot of Dominicans getting killed by United States troops. Because this seemed to me, clearly, to be the way the government was heading, the way our government was heading.

PM: I'm interested in the President in that kind of situation. I've just been reading, coming up here on the train, David Halberstam's article on McNamara in this current issue of Harper's.

M: Oh, is that right?

PM: And he makes the President, in meetings where there is a crisis going on, extremely peremptory, and extremely profane, couching all of his instructions and comments in sort of Texas profanity. Is this accurate in your experience?

M: I've heard Johnson be profane and vulgar. I don't recall that he was that morning.

PM: Certainly not constant in that regard?

M: No, I wouldn't think so; no more than President Kennedy, who was also very outspoken and profane in his usage. No, I don't recall that he was profane that morning. No, I recall that he was excited. I recall that he was quite tense and obviously deeply worried about what was going on. He was also quite firm, very firm, in his cutting me

off with, "That's not the worst thing that could happen." And he seemed to me to be determined to prevent a communist takeover in the Dominican Republic at, really, any cost, including full-scale Vietnam-type military intervention.

PM: Which of course was what the liberals thought he was going to do.

M: That's right, that's what they thought he was going to do. And they were right.

There was one other thing, let's see, it crossed my mind a minute ago. Something about Bundy.

PM: Bundy, not excited as the rest?

M: Oh, no. I remember. I said to Bundy, after we were out of the Cabinet meeting, "What if I go down there and find out that this is not a communist movement? What do I do then?" And Bundy said, "Well, I think it's 99 per cent sure that you won't find that." I said, "All right, but what if I do?" And he and I worked out an elaborate code so I could send him a cable indicating to him the degree of communist involvement. We never used it. Because once I got down there and began talking to people, it became clear to me that the rebellion had been taken over by communists and other left extremists who may not have been card-carrying members of the Communist Party, but who were committed to violent revolution and would have ended up with a Castro-style government if they had succeeded.

PM: The people killed would have been just as dead.

M: That's right. Yes. I became convinced of this pretty quickly after a

day or two there.

PM: Bundy was willing to believe that it was possible?

M: Yes, it was remotely possible. Yes.

PM: You were widely thought to be sent down, partly, to undermine Tapley Bennett's authority there. Did you get the impression that the embassy there suspected you of being there for that purpose?

M: No, I don't think so. I had had a similar experience once before in 1960. After Trujillo was killed, Kennedy sent me to the Dominican Republic. And the then-chargé thought that I was undermining his position and made things difficult for me. And so this time in 1965, before I left Washington, I called George Ball and told him I wanted him to cable an instruction to Ambassador Bennett, telling him just exactly what I was going to do and making it clear that this was the intent of the President and the State Department. And I dictated the instruction to Ball--he or his secretary--and they sent it. And so Bennett was under clear instructions before I arrived.

PM: Just paved the way.

M: Yes, that's right. You know, he and I didn't have any real--Bennett and I had some disagreements; well, he, for example, was more in favor of all-out military intervention than I was. After we got a cease-fire, he wanted me to sign a cable with him saying the cease-fire was not working, and I wouldn't sign it, because I didn't believe it. We had disagreements of that kind, but not in the direction that you're suggesting.

PM: You're very hard on Bennett in the book . . .

M: I'm afraid I am.

PM: . . . because of his actions particularly at that crucial conference on the Tuesday before you went down.

M: To my mind, that's what put the President in the middle. That's why we had to send the troops.

PM: Why was that error made? Did Bennett just panic?

M: Yes.

PM: Did he do it on his own authority?

M: Yes, he didn't ask for instructions.

PM: I see.

M: He just did it. You have to [know] Bennett. Do you know Bennett?

PM: No, I haven't talked to him.

M: Yes.

PM: He was out of the country when we were in Washington.

M: Is he here now?

PM: I think he may be back, and we're trying to schedule him.

M: I think you should. Bennett is a career officer. This was his first embassy, he'd been working all his life, really, to get an embassy; he got this one. Bennett is a fellow that is a typical career officer of a certain sort, the kind that wants to stay out of political affairs in the country he's accredited to, the kind that enjoys receptions, dinner parties, cocktail parties, the formal protocol aspects of representation, you see. He had this nice little country, and it's a lovely place to be. And

everything was going along fine, when all these nasty rebels made a lot of trouble for him, you see, with their damned street fighting. This was really Bennett's attitude. "Here you've come in and screwed up my country." You see? He felt that way.

He was home; he was visiting his mother in Georgia when the rebellion broke out. And he couldn't get back into the Dominican Republic for two or three days, and he was just going crazy. And when he did get back, here all this bunch of unkempt people came marching into the embassy and wanted him to bail them out of trouble. He read them the riot act, and said, "You got yourselves in this mess; you figure it out. I'm not going to help you." Because at that point, you see, the government seemed to be winning the war.

PM: Right.

M: Bennett was relying on that. Well, a day or two later, they weren't winning the war, and Bennett had to call in the Marines.

PM: And by that time, the nature of the revolution had changed from a--

M: That's what changed it, you see. Because all the Bosch civilians, after Bennett turned them down, went into asylum.

PM: After Bennett turned them down.

M: After Bennett turned them down. That's why they went into asylum; he wouldn't help bail them out. Once they were gone, you see, the military men didn't take asylum, because it isn't respected in the Dominican Republic for a military man. They'll go into an embassy, and drag him out and kill him, if he's military.

PM: But the civilians can?

M: Civilians, they respect the right of asylum; the military, they don't. So the military men had no choice, but to go back to the street and fight, you see? They had no political leadership or guidance from the Bosch people; they were all in asylum. And this is the vacuum that the communists filled.

PM: I see.

M: You see?

PM: So this is why the Tuesday thing was so crucial.

M: That's the point. This is what handed the revolution over to the communists. Bennett should, in my view, have kept them talking. As long as they're talking, they're not shooting. And all he would have had to have done would have been to bring them together with somebody from the government and have them sit down in somebody's neutral office, and try to work out a settlement, which we've done before, there and elsewhere.

I did this when I was down there, I got the parties together and got them to agree on certain things. It wouldn't have been hard, because both sides, at that point, wanted to stop it.

PM: When you got down there, you apparently believed that Imbert was the strongest reed to rely on in trying to bring this [about]. Was this your personal judgment, or had you received instructions in this regard?

M: This was my doing. I'm responsible for the Imbert [General Antonio Imbert Barreras] government entirely. It was my idea to set him up.

PM: Well, did you get any feedback from Washington at the time you were engaged in trying to set that up?

M: Yes. I told them right away that I was doing it, you know, and they encouraged it. You see, the reason for the Imbert government was that I felt that we needed a third force. As things stood at that point, it was the United States military versus the rebels. I wanted a third force in between that would fight the rebels. I didn't want us to fight the rebels. I wanted some Dominican to fight the rebels. And Imbert was the guy; he was the only one with any guts, the only one with any troops.

PM: And our government, or the White House, didn't discourage you from that?

M: No, they encouraged me.

PM: They encouraged you.

M: Yes, yes. This met with their approval. I talked to the President about it on the phone, and we sent cables on it. And, as a matter of fact, Tony Solomon came down, he was then assistant secretary for economic affairs.

PM: Economic affairs, right.

M: [He] brought a hell of a bundle of money down to meet the payroll of the Imbert government. I remember going into the back room of the embassy one night, and there were a lot of girls counting stacks of hundred dollar bills.

PM: Solomon actually brought the cash?

M: I believe Solomon brought it. I know he arrived, and so did the

cash, on the same day. You see, the rebels had the bank.

PM: Right. (Laughter) It used to be the customs house they fought over.

M: That's right. Well, they had the customs house, the electricidad, the bank . . . You know, the palace was on neutral ground. Anyway, we had to have cash to pay Imbert's government, and we brought it in.

PM: That was Solomon's purpose. He was not involved in policy things. He was just an economic affairs man.

M: A bag man. When I saw a cable saying Assistant Secretary Solomon's coming down, I said, "What in the hell for? We don't need an economist right now. Everybody's shooting."

PM: Not right now! A Mekong Delta project for the Dominican Republic at that point.

M: And then I saw all this money in the back room, and I concluded that's what Solomon came down for. And I know that a few days later Imbert had a problem about money. I guess Solomon had come out to Imbert's house and talked to him.

PM: So we were cooperative. Why then, within what, ten days or so, was the government in Washington willing to drop Imbert?

M: I don't understand it; I never have.

PM: You've never asked, or been told why that was?

M: No. That was when Bundy arrived. The first I knew about this was that my assistant, Harry Shlaudeman, suddenly disappeared. I didn't know where in the hell he'd gone. Well, what he'd done was go to

Puerto Rico to meet Bundy and Mann and the others that came down on the second wave [of negotiations, I being the first].

PM: Ball and [Cyrus] Vance?

M: Yes, Vance came with them. Ball did not. Vaughn came. And at this point, they tried the opening to the left; they tried to negotiate with the former Bosch minister of agriculture.

PM: Guzman?

M: Yes, Antonio Guzman. And get him to make a deal, and put him into the palace in place of Imbert. And I didn't think this would work, because I didn't think that Guzman represented anything; I didn't think he could deliver on any promises he made; the rebels wouldn't follow him, in my opinion. This turned out to be the case. But for some reason--I'll tell you what I think; I don't know this at all. I think the reason that the President decided to dump Imbert is I think that Imbert was being criticized in the United States as another Trujillo, a kind of gangster, an assassin, and a rightist. I think the President was afraid that this would hurt him politically in the United States, and that's why he moved to the Guzman gambit. I <u>think</u>. Now this is entirely speculation on my part.

PM: Of course, it was also speculation that the White House pulled the rug out from under the Guzman gambit, at a later point. Is that accurate?

M: I don't know about that, because after the Guzman opening began, I pretty much got out of the thing. And I went back a few days later.

PM: Yes, you would not have been there for the last part of the thing.

M: My effective participation ended when they decided to pull the rug out from under Imbert.

PM: How did he [Imbert] react to that, as far as you were concerned?

M: I wanted to tell him, and Tom Mann told me I shouldn't, that he'd go tell him. And he did. And he later said, "It's a good thing you didn't go, because Imbert's wife wants to kill you, and still does." She was a remarkable woman. That could be true. I liked her very much. She was a very forceful woman, and she thought that I'd double-crossed Tony, and she was going to kill me. I saw her a few years later, and she seemed to have forgiven me. She's dead now, she was killed in an airplane crash last year. But I saw Tony after that. Yes, I did, during that same period in Santo Domingo in 1965, away from his wife and told him I was sorry; that I hadn't done this; this had been done in Washington, I didn't know by whom. And I regretted it, but there wasn't anything that I could do about it. And he understood.

PM: He's a politician.

M: He's a politician. He's a realist.

PM: Right. What about that mission? When it did get there, although you didn't stay for its conclusion, there's a good deal of speculation as to tension or dissension within it, between, oh, they usually line it up: Vance and Bundy, on one side; and Tom Mann, on the other. Is that accurate?

M: I don't know. I really don't know.

PM: It didn't show to somebody who wasn't . . . ?

M: No, it didn't. The last effective thing or one of the [last]--Now, I may be wrong on that chronology. What I was thinking of was the doctrine of interposition. This was when we couldn't figure out what the hell to do. This was after Bundy and Vance were there, they were already there, and Tom Mann and everybody. We couldn't figure out what to do. The Imbert thing didn't seem to be working terribly well. It wasn't picking up any political momentum anyway, but his troops were moving, sweeping clean the north part of town around the cemetery. And we didn't know what we were going to do when Imbert and the rebels confronted each other across the line of communication, the LOC. And so Harry Schlaudeman and I cooked up the idea then of interposing our troops. We would open this corridor, the LOC, and we would put our troops in there, and we would just sit there and not let the two opposing Dominican factions get at each other. I proposed this, and Bundy, and Mann, and Vance, and Ambassador Bennett agreed. And then I wrote a cable proposing it to the department and the White House, and they approved. This is what we did. At that time, there was a lot of pressure from the American military to clean out the rebels. There was an admiral who was overall in command, and he outranked--what was the name of that general? Bruce--

PM: Bruce Palmer?

M: Yes, I think that's right, Bruce Palmer. And the admiral felt that our position was militarily untenable. If you look at a map, you

can see that he's right. We had this ridiculous long line of communication, you know, and we held the Hotel Embajador, but it was very vulnerable to attack. And we had a bad military position. His solution to this was to just attack the Ciudad Nueva, which was the rebel stronghold, and clear them out. And of course, my purpose was to prevent this from happening. The thing we cooked up to prevent it from happening was this interposition idea, putting the troops between the opposing Dominican forces. This was accepted, and it was done; and it did help stop the damn war.

PM: We've kind of skipped by your visit to Puerto Rico and seeing Bosch. Is there anything beyond what's in the book regarding that visit, that might be of consequence, particularly in connection with what Mr. Johnson wanted you to do by going to see Bosch? You did go on on his instructions?

M: Yes, I did.

PM: What did he tell you to go see Bosch about?

M: I think the book's more accurate than my memory on this. I really do.

PM: Well, you mention several phone calls without much specific indication of what passed back and forth.

M: I remember talking to the President in the evening from the embassy in Santo Domingo, and I remember his [comments]. Bosch had been trying to get hold of me, and had gotten hold of me, and wanted me to go see him. And I asked the President if he wanted me to go see him,

and he said he did. The President did not rule out re-installing Bosch as president of the Dominican Republic at that point. He didn't rule it out. He didn't say he'd go for it, he just didn't [rule it out]. He said, "Everything is open. All the options are open. Just go explore everything and see what you can get." So this is what I did. And it was after talking to Bosch very late that night that I called the President, and told him what Bosch had said, and told him I was going to meet him again the next morning. And the next morning, Abe Fortas called me.

PM: That's an interesting episode.

M: I think he was with Johnson when he called.

PM: Oh, you do?

M: I think he was. I don't know. I didn't talk to the President, but I think they were together.

And he had this series of things he wanted Bosch to say in a statement. I believe that he and Johnson had cooked up these things. The main thing, of course, they wanted him to say that the United States had saved the country from a communist takeover. They wanted him to put his seal of approval on American intervention. I told Fortas I didn't think there was a chance in the world that he'd do this. Fortas said, "Well, try it anyway. The President wants you to try it." So I did, and of course, Bosch just laughed. He wouldn't have any part of this. I knew he wouldn't. But I put it to him very strongly. It didn't do any good. Bosch isn't stupid. He's a lot of things, but he isn't stupid.

PM: Right. He's a politician, too.

M: Yes. He's bitterly anti-American now, bitterly anti-Martin now, I gather. Just this last fall, he issued a lot of manifestos to the Dominican newspapers, denouncing me and the United States. I don't know why.

PM: Was that the only contact you had with Mr. Fortas?

M: I don't remember.

PM: But he did have a significant, regular role, apparently.

M: Yes, I remember not being surprised when he called me, you see. It's possible that Abe Fortas was at that first meeting in the White House that I described, the first day I was there. I'm not sure. He and Clark Clifford were very close to the President all along, and during the 1964 campaign, I had met regularly with Fortas and Clifford on campaign strategy, and speeches, [et cetera].

PM: So he knew you, and you knew him, at the time this occurred?

M: Oh, yes, I'd known both of them for several years.

PM: Once Bosch refused to make this kind of statement that they had asked, he was out.

M: That was the end of the Bosch gambit. It may have been not long after that that they opened the Guzman gambit. I'm not sure of the chronology of it. I think that's in the book.

PM: Then you went back, leaving that mission of Bundy, Vance, Vaughn, Mann down there.

M: Mann and I went back together, leaving Bundy, Vance, and I guess, I'm not sure about Vaughn. I have a feeling Vaughn left before I did.

PM: I think he did.

M: And I know Tom Mann and I left on the same plane. And that was the end of my involvement, really.

PM: You have in the book you had some conversations with Secretary Rusk and others when you returned to Washington. Did you talk to the President then, when you returned to Washington?

M: Well, I remember we returned late at night, and went right to the State Department, Secretary Rusk had been sleeping on his couch, and was waiting for us. And we had a very brief conversation, didn't amount to anything. I'm sure I saw the President within the next day or two, but I just don't have an independent recollection of it. I just can't believe I wouldn't be seeing him.

PM: What I was really driving at is--particularly since you went back with Tom Mann--the liberal press has always speculated that what happened was that Mann went down to the Dominican Republic, and then went back to Washington and pretty well undercut Bundy and Vance in their efforts to bring about an opening to the left.

M: It's possible, but I don't know anything about it firsthand.

PM: You were not involved in that.

M: No, I wasn't. No, I had sort of been burned up by then, you know, in the Imbert gambit. And I had accomplished a couple of things I'd gone down there for. I'd helped get a cease-fire, and I had, up to that point, prevented any massacre of the Dominicans by the Americans. And I was finished. And I'd been burned in the Imbert mess. I do recall that during this same period, after I--

of course, I talked to the President, because Bill Moyers said the President had to make a speech, I believe at Baylor.

PM: May 28.

M: Is that what it was? And Moyers said, "What do you think the President ought to be saying these days about Latin America?" And I told him. He said, "Why don't you write the speech for Baylor?" And I did, and talked to the President about it, and he delivered it the way I wrote it. That was my speech.

PM: It was speculated that it was. So what he said accorded with your views at that time.

M: Yes, it was what I thought the President ought to say. And I had a completely free hand. I mean, Moyers put it to me just the way I've described: "Write whatever you think the President ought to be saying." And I did. And he delivered it, and, as I recall, he delivered it almost the way I wrote it.

PM: That's interesting. Because, earlier on, you said that you thought that ultimately the Johnson Administration had turned general Latin American policy away from the line that Kennedy had pursued. Yet he delivers your speech as you write it in 1965. In what general ways had it changed away, by then, from the Kennedy view?

M: Well, it was not only that it changed then, but it also changed after that. I think, really, Vietnam probably poisoned this as much as anything else did. We just stopped paying any attention to Latin America. Latin America, itself, began to turn right. There were a series of military coups, you know, and when I was

down there in early 1960s, Latin America was turning left. Trujillo was almost the last of the old dictators, except for [General Alfredo] Stroessner in Paraguay. And we were sending New Frontier ambassadors down there, people like Jim Loeb and myself. And there were others.

PM: One of those got appointed assistant secretary by Johnson, [Lincoln] Gordon.

M: Yes, Linc Gordon did, didn't he?

PM: The same people seem to be doing the things. It's very curious.

M: Well, I don't know.

PM: I'm not arguing with you, I'm just, you know, trying to--

M: I see the problem there. Yes. I've always had the feeling that the policy turned right under Johnson, and maybe that's unjust to Johnson.

PM: There were a couple of the generals--

M: We stopped spending as much money in Latin America.

PM: That's true, no question about that.

M: The President didn't pay as much attention to Latin America as Kennedy had. Now, if you re-read the Kennedy speeches and look through his public papers, there's a hell of a lot on Latin America. He really has a great deal, relatively. Johnson paid much less attention to it. Johnson had Tom Mann as assistant secretary, later as under secretary. As I recall, Mann also ran the Alliance for Progress funds when he was assistant secretary. It had formerly been under [Teodoro] Moscoso and AID; and I believe Johnson took that away from AID and gave it to Mann.

PM: It became one job; the coordinator for the Alliance and the assistant secretary were the same man.

M: He had three jobs: he had Ted Moscoso's job, he had Ed Martin's job, and he had [Ralph] Dungan's job.

PM: That's right; that's right.

M: Tom Mann had three jobs subsumed under one.

PM: Dungan left him at the end of 1964, after the campaign. He apparently had lost a lot of influence on Latin America even before then. That was just the impression that you get.

M: Yes, yes. I retain the impression that we turned right in Latin America; I guess I have a hard time proving it. I would explain it by mentioning Vietnam, I think. We just got distracted. I remember going around making speeches for a year or so after the Dominican intervention, pleading for equal time for Latin America, and saying we were spending too damned much time on Vietnam and Southeast Asia and we were in danger of losing our own back yard. I still think it was true.

PM: And it got worse after that.

M: It did. Under Nixon, it's gotten still worse.

PM: What was the White House reaction, if any, to your book?

M: I don't think there was any.

PM: You didn't hear from them?

M: I don't think so. I sent the President a copy. I probably got a note from Johnson, just perfunctory, no substantive comments.

PM: But no call or note?

M: No, no telephone call and no substantive letter.

PM: It was that summer after you had returned that Adlai Stevenson died.

I'd like to talk some about your knowledge of Stevenson during those last few months and what he thought about the Johnson presidency, and Vietnam, and what have you. A very confused story.

M: Yes.

PM: I assume you'll write your work on Stevenson getting involved here, but I'd like to get your impressions of it.

M: Yes. I saw Stevenson right after I came back from the Dominican Republic in the spring of 1965, after the civil war. All our troops were still there. I had lunch with Stevenson, at his request, at Kay Graham's house in Washington. Afterward, we went swimming and ate lunch, and after that, he and I talked for about an hour. He wanted to know what the hell we were doing in the Dominican Republic. It was bothering him, as much probably as anything that happened during his tenure at the U.N. He couldn't understand it; didn't know why we'd sent troops and so forth. And I explained it to him as best I could, and he accepted the explanation, and said he didn't like it. Of course, nobody likes intervention, for God's sake. Nobody, least of all Johnson, wants to send troops somewhere. Stevenson didn't like it, but he understood after I'd talked to him. He agreed with me that it appeared to be inevitable, and the President had had no choice but to send the troops. And I think he felt a good deal better after talking to me, I believe because he understood why we'd gone in, and what we had done, and why we had done it.

PM: Had he been pretty well ignored by the administration in making such an explanation up until then?

M: What they had done was send him instructions. I read the cables. And they sent him instructions on what to say in the Security Council. Was it the Security Council or the General Assembly? I can't remember.

PM: One or the other is where he got caught.

M: Or Committee One. I can't remember. Anyway, they instructed him on what to say at the U.N.. But nobody sat down with him, as I did, and explained what the hell was going on. And of course, since we had been associated for so many years here in Illinois in Stevenson's presidential campaigns, he accepted an explanation from me in a way he might not have from somebody he knew less well.

PM: Yes. But it says something about the position he occupied in the administration that nobody tried to explain it to him.

M: Yes. That's right.

PM: Did you see Stevenson--?

M: At least, he said nobody had tried. Now, Stevenson was a great dissembler. And I wouldn't take that statement of his as definitive. You know, I'd want to be sure that somebody like Tom Mann or Mac Bundy hadn't gone up to New York and sat down with Stevenson and explained it. Stevenson was a great grumbler, and he liked to say, "Oh, this is a terrible burden. I don't know how I'm going to survive this. Oh, good God, what are we going to do? Why doesn't anybody ever tell me anything?" This was just a pattern of living

with Stevenson.

PM: He also frequently said, from what I gather, that he was going to resign.

M: Yes.

PM: Which is relevant to the Sevareid piece.

M: He started talking about resigning almost from the day he took the job.

PM: So his comments to Sevareid in Europe are not indicative of any change at all .

M: No. Sevareid didn't know Stevenson as well as he thought he knew him. He had, as I recall--didn't he have dinner with Stevenson in Paris?

PM: Right. Yes.

M: He and a television correspondent whose name I forget.* And I'm sure that Sevareid reported precisely what Stevenson said. What Sevareid didn't understand was that Stevenson always talked this way. You know, he talked this way when he was running for president. "Why am I doing this? Good God! Running all over the country, exhausting myself, yammering a lot of nonsense. Nobody listens," and so on. He loved it all the time he was complaining. Stevenson was that way. And he constantly complained at the U.N., to everybody. He said it was a terrible job, he never should have taken this job, he was going to resign tomorrow, don't agree with the policy, don't have any influence, and so on. But he loved it. This is Stevenson's

*This confuses two occasions, In Paris, David Schoenbrun, a TV correspondent, attended a dinner where AES was a guest. In London a little later, Sevareid saw AES at the U.S. Embassy. On both occasions, AES complained about his lot. To verify, see my Life of Adlai E. Stevenson Vol.2, Adlai Stevenson and the World (Doubleday, 1977)

way. Sevareid didn't know him well enough to know that this is just his way of talking.

Actually, before Stevenson died, Barbara Ward, at his request, drafted a letter to, I believe, Paul Goodman, defining the administration's policy in Vietnam. Goodman and some other liberals had urged Stevenson to--

PM: Who drafted the letter?

M: Barbara Ward wrote the draft; Stevenson rewrote it. I've got it. And this was just a week or so before he died. The letter was never mailed. It was still in the drafting stage.

PM: When Stevenson died?

M: When he died.

PM: Yes.

M: It was never mailed. But it was a very cogent defense of the administration's policy in Vietnam.

PM: Which, again, doesn't square with the Sevareid piece much at all.

M: No. It doesn't.

PM: You also have occasion, I'm sure, to maybe have some insight--again, with a person who is now not living--into the difficulty that Robert Kennedy had with Johnson. This is a kind of mysterious area. Do you know anything about the origination of that or the effects it had after the assassination of President Kennedy?

M: I don't know things firsthand. That is, I was not present when they were talking to each other.

PM: Yes.

M: Most of what I know is what Bob Kennedy told me. I think this is probably in the Kennedy tapes in the oral history project.

PM: Yes, well, there's no reason to repeat it if it is there.

M: I think it is. I can just tell you in general. They despised each other, Bob Kennedy and Johnson, and I don't know where it started. I think probably during the President Kennedy's tenure as president. President Kennedy and Bob Kennedy didn't pay a hell of a lot of attention to Johnson as far as I can make out, although I was in the Dominican Republic during this period.

PM: Yes, you couldn't see it down there.

M: So I don't really know, but this is the impression I have. And Johnson resented this. He's, you know, a proud man, a vain man, a serious man. And I think he felt he wasn't being used very well.

After President Kennedy was assassinated, I think the day after, or the day, Johnson did some things that antagonized Bob Kennedy, I think, probably, forever. He certainly moved into President Kennedy's office in a way that Bob resented bitterly.

PM: It was this kind of thing. It was not philosophical policy?

M: It was that. It wasn't policy. No, it wasn't policy or anything. And Bob thought that Johnson was somebody that you absolutely never could trust. He'd lie all the time. You couldn't believe a thing he said. I don't know how Jack Kennedy felt about him. But I know how Bob [felt]. Bob was very bitter.

PM: How bad did the bitterness of the ex-Kennedy people--many of them were good friends of yours--hurt the Johnson presidency? The Georgetown dinner circuit and this type of thing.

M: Well, they didn't help that much, I know. But when you say "hurt the Johnson presidency" . . .

PM: Well, is that what, say, poisoned the press, for example? Many of the members of the press were in that group, as a matter of fact.

M: Yes, I suppose that's so. I suppose that you're right.

Certainly those of us who had been with President Kennedy didn't enjoy being in Washington under President Johnson. It just wasn't the same. And, of course, the war poisoned everything. The Dominican intervention poisoned things, too.

PM: It actually came first.

M: Yes.

PM: In the sense of poisoning.

M: That's right. That was the first . . .

PM: Fulbright, for example broke on the Dominican Republic.

M: Yes. That's right. He did. Yes. Fulbright and I had some correspondence, and tried to arrange appointments, but I just fought shy of it. I was in an ambiguous position, somewhat, and I didn't really want to talk to him. I didn't talk to Fulbright about the Dominican intervention, though he wanted to.

PM: Are there any areas that we haven't talked about that you had contact with Mr. Johnson or knowledge of any of the policies that

you'd like to add here. I don't want to cut you off or make you feel as if . . .

M: Let me think about it a minute.

PM: Okay.

M: On the relationship between Kennedy and President Johnson, I'd rather rely on the Kennedy Library tapes than on my own recollection.

PM: Well, there's no reason to duplicate it.

M: No, that's right.

PM: You know, I haven't asked you anything about your ambassadorship because that took place under Kennedy, by and large.

M: Yes. That's right.

M: Yes. That's in their tape, too, my ambassadorship.

I was with Bob Kennedy during the spring primary in 1968.

PM: 1968?

M: Yes. I was, particularly in Indiana and California. I'm from Indiana originally, and I sort of called the shots in the Indiana campaign. At that time, of course, we weren't talking very much about Johnson. We were just trying to win.

PM: [You were] talking about [Eugene] McCarthy. The Johnson loyalists, who by that time were, by the Indiana time, not even involved in primaries or the campaign at all, did they intentionally obstruct the Kennedy campaign on behalf of McCarthy, or did they just stay out of it entirely?

M: Let me see. I do remember something about that.

PM: In Indiana, wasn't the governor sort of a stand-in for [inaudible]?

M: The governor was a stand-in for Johnson's surrogate, however you want to put it, [a stand-in for Humphrey].

PM: Right.

M: It was a three-cornered race. I don't remember anything more than that about the Indiana primary. I believe I remember hearing that in the Nebraska primary, a lot of money went into the McCarthy campaign. McCarthy did run in Nebraska, did he not?

PM: Yes.

M: What I'm trying to remember is where I was told that money came from. I don't remember whether it was said to have come from Johnson to help McCarthy, or to have come from the Teamsters to help McCarthy. And I can't remember, honestly.

PM: Well, of course, the Teamsters would be Johnson loyalists.

M: Well, they were anti-Kennedy.

PM: Yes. Anti-Kennedy.

M: You know, I mean because of the Hoffa case.

PM: Certainly. Right, right.

M: I remember the Humphrey "politics of joy" speech, you know, when he announced his candidacy.

PM: Yes, right.

M: That was during the Indiana primary, and I remember I picked it up right away, and Bob started using it, saying this is not the "politics of joy."

PM: Humphrey may even have gone to Indiana during that primary, didn't he?

M: You know, I don't remember.

PM: I have the impression that somebody described a meeting to me at--what's the political capital of Indiana--French Lick where the Democrats always meet.

M: Yes. That's the Democratic resort.

PM: I have a vague recollection of hearing of Humphrey being there during that period.

M: Was he?

PM: But I could be wrong.

M: I don't remember. I really am sorry. I don't remember.*

PM: What about the convention?

M: In 1968?

PM: Were you in Chicago? You were here, I'm sure.

M: I was at the convention in 1968.

PM: How much Johnson presence was there there?

M: It was overwhelming, really.

PM: He did, in fact, run the convention?

M: Yes. That's the impression I have, yes. There were a few of us dissidents. But Johnson had control.

PM: So the idea of his not being involved in it, hands off, is not true?

M: I don't believe a word of that. No.

PM: Was there ever any fear or belief on the part of very many people that Johnson himself might be trying to manipulate the convention so as to get renominated in spite of himself?

* I feel almost certain Humphrey did not go into Indiana during the primary. JBM, 6/21/78

M: I didn't think so. There was talk of that at the time of the convention. I didn't think that that was what he was doing. I thought what he was trying to do was get a plank that would justify his Vietnam policy and get his candidate, Humphrey, nominated, on the theory that Humphrey would not break with him during the campaign.

PM: You didn't work for Humphrey, did you?

M: Yes, I did.

PM: You did. What kind of help, if any, or hindrance, did the President give Humphrey during the campaign?

M: I think he hurt him very badly. I joined Humphrey, I believe, on the 29th of September. I had made up my mind after Bob Kennedy was killed that I was going to get out of politics and never work for another candidate. During September, I got a lot of pressure from Humphrey, from George Ball, and other people on Humphrey's staff, Orville Freeman, to come and help write speeches, because they didn't have any speech writers, you know. So I went there, I think, the 29th of September. And from then on I wrote most of his speeches, the major ones. Ted Van Dyk and I did. I travelled with[Humphrey]. I was out in California at one point durinng October preparing for Humphrey's trip there, and talked one night with Ted Sorensen's brother. What's his name? Tom?

PM: I can't call it. I know.

M: I think it was Tom, Sorensen's brother. We decided that we were going to lose this election unless we broke with the President on

Vietnam. And we thought the way to do it was to attack [Nguyen Cao] Ky and [Nguyen Van] Thieu. And so I took a midnight plane out of San Francisco and went to Connecticut to meet Humphrey. He was campaigning in Hartford. I went to the Hartford airport, and I spent most of the day trying to catch his motorcade. Finally got the chance to talk to him at the end of the day. We were flying from Connecticut to New York, where he was going to speak in Madison Square Garden. That'll tie the day down for you, if you want it.

PM: Right.

M: I'm not sure what the date was. But it was the day that he spoke in Madison Square Garden in the evening. On the plane to New York, I got to Humphrey's side in the back of the plane, and told him that I thought that he had to get hold of the President, and tell the President that he was going to have to renounce Ky and Thieu, and run against them, and, to that extent, break with the President on Vietnam. And [I told him] I thought it was his only chance and I also thought it was right. And he said he'd do it. So that night at Madison Square Garden, Ted Van Dyk telephoned I don't know whom, somebody on the Johnson staff, and arranged an appointment with Johnson for the next day at, I believe, noon, in Washington in the White House.

We stayed that night in New York after the Garden speech, and I talked again to Humphrey, late that night, very late, about what he ought to say to the President. I may have written

some of this out at the time and given him a talking paper. I'm not sure whether I did or not, or whether I just talked to him. He agreed. He was going to do it. He was going to march in on the President and tell him, "I'm sorry, Mr. President. I can't support your policy in Vietnam all out any longer. I can't carry this load."

So the next day we flew early to Washington. And Humphrey had a speech scheduled in, I believe, Virginia in the morning. I believe it was a Sunday morning. I slept late that morning, I guess.* I went over to the EOB in the early afternoon to see Ted Van Dyk [and] find out how this [Humphrey's] appointment [with LBJ] had gone. And then Van Dyk said, "There wasn't any appointment." What had happened was that Humphrey, after his speech in Virginia, had gone straight to the White House. Meanwhile, while Humphrey was speaking, somebody on the Johnson staff called Van Dyk and said that it had been leaked to the press that Humphrey was going to see Johnson today and that they were going to talk about Vietnam; and since it's been leaked to the press, the President is going to cancel the appointment. Van Dyk told him that he couldn't get hold of Humphrey. So Humphrey did appear at the White House for his twelve o'clock appointment and was met by some Johnson staffer. Sticks in my mind his name was Jones. I don't believe I know him.

PM: Yes. That would have been Jim Jones, who was by then appointment secretary.

M: Was he? All right. All right. I don't know him.

PM: Now in Oklahoma politics.

* Upon arrival in Washington, while Humphrey went off to speak in Virginia, I went to a hotel to sleep.

JBM, 6/21/78

M: This is all secondhand. This is what I heard from Van Dyk. And Van Dyk said that when Humphrey appeared at the White House, Jones told him that the President had to cancel the appointment and had gone to, I don't know, Camp David or some place.

PM: Right.

M: And, "How about Monday?" And Humphrey said, "Tell the President he can stick it up his ass." And as far as I know, that's the last contact between the two of them [at that time]. I believe this was just about a week before the election. I think we headed west at this point. I think we went out to Houston and Los Angeles.

PM: Would this have been before the Salt Lake City speech?

M: Humphrey's Salt Lake City speech?

PM: Yes.

M: I don't remember.*

PM: We were working out of the EOB by then, and I distinctly remember a lot of telephone operations, this kind of political activity, in the White House, for Humphrey, still at that time. But, apparently, the Vice President and his party didn't think it was what it should be.

M: No. We didn't. No, we thought Johnson was hurting us. We thought he was killing us, mainly on account of Vietnam and his insistence that Vice President Humphrey support his policy. And, as I recall, on that trip west, Humphrey did attack Ky and Thieu. Is that right?

PM: He did in Salt Lake City. [? JBM] That's the first time I recall.

*No--long after. Salt Lake City speech on Vietnam was about Sept. 28 or 29. This was only one week before election. Or were there two Salt Lake City speeches?

JBM, 6/21/78

M: Was it Salt Lake? You'll have to get the chronology straight.

PM: October some time.

M: I don't remember.

PM: The 3rd, or the 8th, or something like that.

M: This was in October when it happened. My recollection is this all, the incident I described, happened about a week or ten days before the election itself. Now I may be wrong on that.*

PM: Did stopping the bombing just come too late for Humphrey?

M: Yes. We thought so.

PM: Was there a thought that the President might have been able to do this earlier and helped Humphrey and chose not to do so?

M: Yes.

PM: We thought of an entirely new subject here. We keep thinking of entirely new subjects .

M: That's right. I wrote a memo on the 1968 campaign which would be more accurate than my present recollection.* If you're interested, I can try to dig it up.

PM: If you could, we'd attach it to this transcript.

M: Yes.

PM: And make it a part of the permanent record. Of course, this will come back to you in written form, anyway. And you can add to it a memo of any kind which you choose to.

M: Yes.

PM: Okay. Think that covers all the subjects?

M: There's one thing that does come to my mind. I saw Johnson right

* I think I'm not wrong--it was Sunday ten days before Election Day (from memory). My 1968 HHH campaign memos are now with my other papers at the Library of Congress.

JBM, 6/21/78

after John F. Kennedy was assassinated. Johnson came to the State Department to speak to the department. And after that, he and Rusk, and several other ambassadors, and I, we were gathered in Rusk's office for a little while. At that time, I was very impressed with Johnson. It seemed to me that he was kind of a Lincolnesque figure. I had very high hopes for his administration. I was very impressed with him. He seemed humble. He talked to Rusk and the ambassadors about helping him, and he had this terrible burden, and would need all the help he could get.

The reason I mention this is that Stevenson went to call on Johnson during this period--it was right after the funeral--and intended to stay just a few minutes. And Johnson kept him for, I don't know, several hours, a long time, and told him, "You should be sitting where I'm sitting. I want your help." And then went on, and on, and on. And Stevenson left feeling that his whole relationship with the White House was going to be much better under Johnson than it ever had been under Kennedy. Stevenson and Kennedy had a poor relationship, and Stevenson was never comfortable or happy in the U.N. while Kennedy was president. He thought this was all going to change now. I think Johnson sort of took him in and made him believe this. And he knew Stevenson well, and he knew how to flatter him with attention, you know, just by a phone call, or something like that.

After a while, though, Stevenson began to realize that this

wasn't working out any better than it had worked out with Kennedy and, in fact, his influence on the policy was probably less under Johnson than it was under Kennedy. Because Rusk's influence increased under Johnson, and Rusk became the policymaker. Under Kennedy, Kennedy had been the policymaker, and Rusk and Stevenson had sort of been co-equal advisors, not quite co-equal, there's only one secretary of State, but you see what I mean.

PM: I know what you mean. Right. That's an interesting episode. Okay. I'll cut it off if you think we've exhausted the topics.

M: I think so. Yes.

PM: Good.

[End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview I]

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