Austin, Texas
January 13, 1975

A modest note to future archivists, historians and other scholars:

The research scholar may have some problem in ascertaining the roles of individuals when confronting the mass of documentary materials such as that in the LBJ Library. During my eight years as Secretary of State more than 2,100,000 cables went out of the Department with my name signed to them. In addition, there were tens of thousands of memoranda within the Department and large numbers of communications from the State Department to the White House. On every working day throughout the year almost a thousand cables went out of the Department of State. On a normal day, the Secretary of State would see personally perhaps 6-8 of these cables before they went out; the President might have seen one or two. Of course a Secretary of State is responsible for everything which went out of the Department of State during his tenure -- and I don't wish to evade that responsibility.

There was one simple device which I used to indicate what I had approved and what I had simply read for information and "noted." When I read a document on which I was not making a decision, I would use the initials "DR" with a horizontal line drawn through them. This distinction is not infallible because there may have been an occasional exception. But it was a general practice and would cover more than 95% of the documentation. Perhaps it should be noted that any approval of outgoing telegrams was given on the original green sheet which went to the Code Room; therefore, the pink copies which were distributed around government might or might not show the distinction mentioned above.

Further, communications to the President from me were always seen and signed by me personally. For example, I always saw and signed the daily report of miscellaneous items which went over to the President for his "evening reading." The only exception to this rule had to do with purely formal documents which were recognized as formalities both in the State Department and in the White House. An example would be a forwarding of a request from a foreign government for an agreement accepting the foreign government's nomination of an ambassador to Washington. Not once in the history of the United States have we refused to receive an ambassador nominated by another country. This sort of thing, therefore, was handled purely routinely and did not carry my own signature; whether the return document from the White House was

signed personally by the President, I am not sure that I know -- but it is of no importance.

In addition, it was my practice never to dictate memoranda of conversations between myself and President Kennedy or President Johnson. I did not keep an office diary like a Harold Ickes or a James Forrestal. My view was that a President was entitled to have a completely private conversation with his Secretary of State if he wished to and that if he wanted a record of it, it would be his choice. I would, of course, translate my conversations with the President into instructions to my colleagues in the Department. In doing so, I did not always tell my colleagues that these instructions derived directly from the President because I felt it was my role to stand as a buffer between the President and the bureaucracy with respect to matters of considerable controversy. I make this notation for the record because future research scholars may spend time looking for memoranda of conversation between me and my Presidents, which are simply not there.

Finally, I had no mechanical means in my office at any time to record telephone conversations or other conversations in my office. When I first became Secretary of State I was unaware that the practice had developed that the principal secretary to the Secretary of State would often remain on the telephone to take notes on conversations between the Secretary of State and the President. When I discovered this practice, I asked that it be discontinued and I had a telephone in my own office connected with the White House which could not be listened to by anyone in my outer office. Again, my attitude was based upon my feeling that a President is entitled to privacy if he wants it. It is possible that State Department files will show a few of these telephone notes which were circulated to a few officers in the Department who were involved in the particular question. If the research scholar finds that this type of notation suddenly dried up, it was based upon my own decision to discontinue the practice.

The notes of the Tuesday luncheon meetings with President Johnson will be of special importance on certain subjects such as Vietnam. These notes were made -- to the extent that they were made -- by a member of the President's staff, such as Walt Rostow, Tom Johnson, or someone else. Those notes were not circulated to the other participants for checking before going into the record, but I have no reason to think that they are not very accurate indeed.

Signed Dean Rusk

INTERVIEW I

INTERVIEWEE: DEAN RUSK

INTERVIEWER: PAIGE E. MULHOLLAN

Date: July 28, 1969

Tape 1 of 1

M: All right, sir, if we should be interrupted by anything, I can turn this off without any difficulty and can do so with ease. Let's get your identification, which takes very little time, on the beginning of the tape. You're Secretary of State Dean Rusk, and you served in that office longer than any other man except Cordell Hull; from the beginning of the John Kennedy Administration through the end in 1969 of the Lyndon Johnson Administration.

R: That is correct.

M: Suppose we begin, as you suggested, sir, by just a general question--the type of man that you found President Lyndon Johnson to be.

R: Well, Lyndon Johnson was a powerful personality and a very complex one. I won't go into those general attributes which are well-known to the public, but rather reflect upon some of the qualities which struck me as one of his close associates.

To begin with, he had an all-consuming commitment to his job as President. He had become President through the great tragedy of the assassination of John F. Kennedy, and it was as though he felt that since he had not been the first choice for President, he was going to do everything that he possibly could to be a good President and to be a great President.

He was a severe task-master, in the first instance for himself. He never spared himself, and his colleagues were anxious from time to time about whether he might draw upon himself another heart attack. He worked late at night, he worked early mornings, he took his evening reading to his bedside with him, and that kept him up frequently most of the time until one or two o'clock in the night. He would wake up at four or five o'clock in the morning and call the Operations Room of the Department or the White House to see how things were going in Viet Nam.

We repeatedly tried to get him to take time away from his desk or from his job, and relax and get some refreshment, but we were relatively unsuccessful in doing so. Even when he was at the ranch the telephone was busy and he had staff present to keep in touch with what was going on. In other words he fully committed himself to his job.

He placed a great emphasis upon performance rather than words. I remember during the first week of his Presidency he called me on the phone one day and asked me what was being done under the Alliance for Progress. I gave him a rather general summary in State Department language, and he said very impatiently, "I don't mean all that. I mean what are we doing--what are we actually doing? Send me a list of the actual actions that we're taking under the Alliance for Progress and what actions the Latin Americans themselves are taking." And the historian will notice that when Lyndon Johnson became President the actual commitments of funds and of action under the Alliance for Progress went up very rapidly because he was interested in getting the job done.

When India found itself in difficulty about its food problem, it was perfectly apparent that the United States would not be able simply to make up India's deficiencies and that India would have to go through a revolution in its own agriculture if it were to feed itself. Lyndon Johnson assigned Secretary of Agriculture [Orville] Freeman the task of requiring India to take major new steps in the agricultural field as a condition for any substantial food assistance from the United States. Now, he followed that very carefully and was concerned about the performance of India in its own behalf. He took the view that the President of the United States could not be more concerned about feeding Indians than the Prime Minister of India, and unless the Prime Minister and the Cabinet in India took the steps necessary to feed their own people, there was nothing the United States could do about it.

He was impatient with delay. One good example comes from the procedure by which we appoint Ambassadors. When we make a decision to send Mr. X to a particular post, it is then necessary to ask the host government for what is called an agrement, to receive the Ambassador. Normally, these agrements take about ten days to two weeks because they go through certain procedures in other governments. Our own normal procedure requires about a week because it has to go through the State Department and go to the President. But President Johnson soon developed the habit of wanting

immediate agrement for any man that he had named, and asked our Ambassadors abroad to go to the host government to get oral agrements in order that the announcement could be made immediately and the name go to the Senate without any delay. Now, part of this was his desire to avoid leaks to the press during the period when the agrement was being expected, but it was just a small example of a habit he had of wanting to go ahead just as soon as the decision was made. Sometimes that crowded his colleagues and crowded other governments.

Lyndon Johnson was a man of high intelligence. I never sat in a session with him about even the most complex and technical matters when I had any impression that he was failing to grasp all that was involved and was missing the key issues that were before him. That high intelligence was concealed--at least as far as some snobbish Eastern intellectuals were concerned--by a Southern accent and his Southern mannerisms, but he was a man of great intellectual capacity and had an ability to understand the issues that were in front of him clearly and in great depth.

I found him extraordinarily well-informed about foreign affairs. I think his experience as Majority Leader during the Eisenhower Administration brought him into daily contact with the principal issues of foreign affairs over that period of time. While Vice President he followed foreign affairs very closely and traveled to foreign countries a great deal. He sat with us in the National Security Council and sat with us in the Cabinet, and I had many informal talks with him while he was Vice President about what was going on in the Department of State. So he came into the office well-informed about most of the key issues of foreign policy. He never represented himself to be an expert on foreign policy, but as President he knew that this was a major preoccupation of his and he kept closely in touch with it at all stages.

He was a man with great persuasive ability. I've seen him in meetings with businessmen and labor leaders and Senators and Congressmen and in the Cabinet and in discussions with foreign dignitaries; and he had a knack for persuasion. When he made a decision, he had generally thought about it in great detail, and he was well abreast of it, and had mobilized in his own mind the reasons why he wanted to do one thing rather than another. That put him in a position to talk persuasively about his decisions with anyone with whom he was in contact. President Johnson gave his loyalty to his colleagues and expected their loyalty in return. He didn't spend any time cutting up one colleague

in the presence of another. He supported his colleagues and joined with them when they were subject to attack from the outside. He, however, expected the same kind of loyalty in return, and I know that there were times when he became very upset when he would hear through the press or through Georgetown gossip that one or another colleague was undermining him by remarks made at cocktail parties or in off-the record conversations with members of the press. He resented those who tried to build up a record at his expense.

Once in awhile an Ambassador abroad or some senior colleague in government would write in memoranda disagreeing with particular policies. The President was not willing to engage in correspondence with such individuals. He expected members of his Administration to follow his decisions when they were made. He was willing to listen to anything they had to say before the decision was made, but he expected them to comply with a decision when it had been reached. And he, therefore, was always impatient with those who were trying to build on the record a record of dissent.

Lyndon Johnson had deep feelings about his objectives. His objectives were large and bold. He didn't think in small terms. He thought in the most far reaching terms. When you think about his attitude on civil rights and on poverty, or his passion for peace, one got the impression that these were matters that came not just out of his mind but out of his heart and soul. His glandular reactions were very strong in behalf of his program, and it was very marked in his personal conversation how strong he felt about some of the things he was trying to achieve.

Lyndon Johnson had an instinctive way of putting himself in the other fellow's shoes. As a matter of fact when an issue came up, his first habit was to try to figure out what was in the other fellow's mind, what his motivations were, what his own problems were, what his situation was, what freedom of action the other fellow may have. Now, he was constantly groping to try to understand a man like Kosygin, or a woman like the Prime Minister of India. He was trying to find out where our own policy came into conflict with the policy of others, and one of the ways to do that is to try to figure out just what really lies behind the policy of the other fellow. He spent a great deal of time thinking about what kind of a man Kosygin was, what pressures were upon him, and how he looked at the world, how that would fit into the possibility of any agreement between ourselves and the Soviet Union. When

Lyndon Johnson talked to businessmen, he reflected a deep understanding of the problem of the businessman; and when he talked to labor, the same thing would be true. He had an extraordinary way, perhaps derived from his experience in the Senate, of putting himself in the other fellow's shoes.

One interesting aspect of President Johnson's tenure of office was a certain code of conduct which he felt in relation to other political leaders. He never, for example, would allow any of his colleagues to criticize President de Gaulle as an individual. He suppressed all temptations to attack de Gaulle personally, and you won't find in the public record anywhere personal attacks by President Johnson on men like Kosygin, or Mao Tse-tung or Ho Chi Minh. He did not believe that political leaders should attack each other personally. He also felt that political leaders should not cause each other unnecessary problems. I remember on one occasion Sir Alec Douglas Home, the Prime Minister of Great Britain, was visiting in the White House. And on the way out of the meeting, Sir Alec met the press at the door of the White House and was drawn into a discussion of British trade with Cuba. Well, that caused President Johnson some resentment because he felt that if Sir Alec wanted to talk about trade with Cuba, he ought to talk about it in the House of Commons back home and not talk about it on the front steps of the White House.

M: This was the buses for Cuba--?

R: That was the buses for Cuba issue. He felt that it would have been more considerate for Sir Alec not to cause Lyndon Johnson any problems here in this country by what he said on Lyndon Johnson's own doorstep, but do it under other circumstances. Now, that was just a part of his code of conduct in relation to other political leaders.

President Johnson was always considerate of his Cabinet officers. I think he felt that they were the ones who shared with him the public responsibility and the Constitutional and statutory responsibilities of office. It was the Cabinet officers who had to appear most often before the Congress to defend a program. It was the Cabinet officers who met the press and helped to carry the public explanation of policy, and who had to share the ultimate responsibility. So President Johnson always tried to protect the position of his Cabinet officers. He didn't undercut them by going behind them into the depths of their respective departments and giving instructions to subordinates without the knowledge of the Cabinet officer.

He typically operated through the Cabinet officer himself. He was prepared to delegate responsibility.

In the Department of State, we sent out something like a thousand cables a day, and I suppose President Johnson might have averaged seeing one or two of those cables every day. He wanted to be kept informed about what was happening, and he preferred not to read about important matters in the press before he had heard about it from his Cabinet officer. So every day we would send over a memorandum of principal developments in the Department of State which was a part of his evening reading, and those memoranda are on the record and can be consulted to see how intimately he was kept informed about what was going on.

But he was not jealous of his Cabinet colleagues. He spent no time in trying to diminish their stature in any way. He took the view that a strong Cabinet officer meant a stronger Administration, and that a successful Cabinet officer was a part of a successful Presidency. So he was always very considerate in dealing with his principal colleagues.

He was impatient about the inability or the unwillingness of senior colleagues to agree among themselves. He disliked the role of refereeing among senior colleagues, and that wasn't because he hesitated to make a decision. He was always prepared to make a decision, but I think he wanted his colleagues to try to do everything they possibly could to find out what is best for the United States. He wanted his senior colleagues to try to come to conclusions which they would reach if they themselves were President. The President himself cannot escape the responsibility of decisions, and it was necessary therefore for the Secretary of State, or the Secretary of Defense, or the Secretary of Commerce, or any of the others, to put themselves in his shoes and try to come to a conclusion of a sort that the President should make, and not just put up their own specialized points of view.

I would like to record that the Secretary of Defense and I, Mr. [Robert S.] McNamara, almost never went to the President with a divided opinion. We took it upon ourselves to make a special effort to reach a common conclusion, and that didn't mean that President Johnson would always accept our common conclusion. He had views of his own, but he wanted to have the best effort of his colleagues invested in the problem before the President himself came to a final result.

I would add that Lyndon Johnson was a man of great personal kindness and consideration. He was ready with a word of encouragement and a word of appreciation and thoughtfulness in regard to one's personal situations and personal circumstance, and matters of illness or weariness or developments in the family always found him to be a personal friend of his senior colleagues. That was a very marked characteristic of his.

M: As you notice in scanning down my list here, you've anticipated a good number of the things that I wanted to be certain to get on this record. Did you know Mr. Johnson at all in your earlier diplomatic career, when he was a young Senator in the late 1940's and you were already a senior official in the State Department?

R: I had met him, but I can't say that I really knew him, in any serious meaning of the word, until he became Vice President.

M: You mentioned that you thought he had paid close attention to issues, at least during the Eisenhower years, in foreign policy. Do you know that he was particularly close, say, to Secretary Dulles or any of the other officials in the foreign policy community?

M: Well, as Majority Leader for six of those years during the Eisenhower Administration, it was necessary for him to be in close touch with the Administration because of the vast amount of legislation affecting foreign policy, The President doesn't have a dime and doesn't have a man that isn't provided by the Congress, so almost all elements of foreign policy come before the Congress in one way or another.

The Majority Leader, in managing the legislative program with the Congress, must necessarily be familiar with the details of most of that legislation, because it would be his responsibility to see that it is enacted into law. So I think his experience as Majority Leader was invaluable to him in making him entirely familiar with foreign affairs problems.

Now, some subjects were matters of special interest to him. For example, as a Senator he was a leader in the Space Program, and went to the United Nations to deliver a speech, at Eisenhower's request, on the space effort itself.

M: You said that in the Kennedy Administration he <u>was</u>

definitely included in the meetings of importance. In your opinion he was not left outside when a matter of critical importance was being discussed?

R: That's right. He was always present at meetings of the National Security Council and meetings of the Cabinet. But more particularly he did a good deal of traveling while he was Vice President. On each one of those travels, he would come in for extensive briefings on the problems affecting the countries that he was visiting and would get briefed on the policy so that he was able to talk business with his hosts. So he had as Vice President a pretty good indoctrination into foreign policy and knew what President Kennedy was trying to accomplish in foreign policy.

M: These trips that he took, at least according to some members of the press, were not spectacular successes. I take it you don't agree with that assessment?

R: No. He did not undertake protracted negotiations on any of these visits. They were good-will visits for the most part, or he attended an inauguration or something of that sort. His job was not to inject himself into protracted negotiations over particular points at issue, but general discussion of relationships between our country and any other country. He always reported back in some detail when he returned and gave the President and the Secretary of State his impressions of his visits and of the people that he had seen during his visit. I don't know on what basis anyone would say these trips were not successful. I suppose that would come from people who thought that his mission was more than it actually turned out to be.

M: I think primarily it's the syndrome that makes importance out of an alleged rebel yell in the Taj Mahal, and this type of thing.

R: Well, I think it's fair to Lyndon Johnson to point out that while he was Vice President, there were those around Kennedy and in the press who were prone to needle him. Now he conducted himself with great dignity under that kind of needling and did not respond to it, but it's always fair game to make fun of a Vice President.

M: As the current one is demonstrating.

R: He had his share of that when he was Vice President. I was always very struck with the extraordinary fact that this man of enormous energy and great drive acted as Vice President

with such restraint and such consideration for the position of the President. He put himself under great personal self-discipline and acted like a Vice President, even though all of his instincts were to get out and take the leadership and to move and to drive and to lead; and so his performance there was a performance of great self-restraint.

M: I understand that you assigned, fairly early in your service as Secretary of State, a regular liaison Foreign Service Officer to the Vice President's office. Whose initiative was that? Was that yours or his?

R: The original idea was mine, but he embraced it. I'm not sure whether this was done with other Vice Presidents or not, but we had a Foreign Service officer assigned to him as personal staff.

M: Was that Lee Stull?

R: I think he was one of them. I don't have the names at the tip of my tongue, but the function of this Foreign Service Officer was to keep the Vice President fully informed about what was going on. He got the daily intelligence information. He got the daily wrapup of activities in the Department of State, and he was always available to the Vice President for information. When the Vice President himself had a particular question that he wanted to ask, that officer could always come to the Department and dig out the answer for him, but the purpose of the arrangement was to be sure that the Vice President was constantly informed about what was going on in foreign policy.

M: And did Mr. Johnson, when he was Vice President, utilize this liaison officer fully--take advantage of him?

R: Yes, I think so. I think he was a very busy man, and of course this man was available to him for his trips and helped to prepare him for his trips.

M: At the time that President Kennedy was assassinated, you were in an airplane flying to the Far East and had to turn around, so you were not in Washington when Mr. Johnson returned as President. How soon did you have your first conversation with him, and can you describe the circumstances and content of that conversation?

R: I saw him, I think the next day--the first morning of my return, in the Executive Office Building, in his office over there. I went in and told him that I, of course, expected

him to have his own Secretary of State, and that I was prepared to put in my resignation. He, on the other hand, asked me to remain in office, and I could do nothing but agree to do so under those circumstances because the burdens he faced were so great that if he really wanted someone to be there to help out under that circumstance of tragedy, there was no choice but to go ahead and do what he wanted you to do.

M: Were there certain problems in the foreign policy area that seemed to be uppermost in his mind at that time, or that bothered him particularly?

R: We didn't get into those in that first session. It was just a case of my offering to make room for a man of his own choice and his indicating that I was the man of his choice.

M: So he didn't have any, what you might call in diplomatic terms, "instructions" in that sense?

R: No, no special ones at that time.

M: As your relationship developed with him personally, how did it grow to compare with what you had experienced with his predecessor? Were you closer or more distant--in what ways?

R: I was somewhat closer in personal terms with Lyndon Johnson than I was with John F. Kennedy, I was very close to John F. Kennedy, but only on an official basis. That is, we were never on first-name terms with each other, for example, under the Kennedy Administration. Mrs. Jacqueline Kennedy once told me that I was the only member of the Cabinet that the President called "Mr. Secretary." So, although I saw a great deal of President Kennedy, I was not an intimate of President Kennedy's. We had a certain arms-length relationship partly because of the Viet Nam war and partly because of the difference of personalities. President Johnson and I got to be much closer personally, and the official relationship was reenforced by a personal friendship.

M: Was that a consistent thing? The point has been made that President Johnson had periods of "highs" on certain individuals and "lows" on the same individuals--that his favor and his disfavor sort of varied over time. Was that your experience?

R: I couldn't detect that in my own case. We were so much involved with each other, again, partly because of the Viet

Nam war; and we saw each other very frequently and were on the phone with each other even more frequently. We were in the same foxhole and as neighbors in a foxhole, you get to know each other pretty well. I didn't detect any ups and downs as far as our personal relations was concerned, although we both had ups and downs as far as policy matters were concerned.

M: So you might differ on policy, but still it didn't affect your personal working relationship?

R: Well, I don't mean that we were differing on policy. We never wrestled on the rug with each other or anything of that sort, but the two of us together would have our ups and downs as events in the world transpired.

M: When they got particularly tough, and particularly in connection with Viet Nam, and you seemed to be taking perhaps a lot of the Administration's fire, did Mr. Johnson ever indicate that he understood that you were performing this duty and that he sympathized with that and gave due appreciation?

R: Well, my attitude was always that of President Johnson himself. I never let any blue sky show between his point of view and my point of view, so that to the extent that I was taking fire, I was taking fire for his policy. He fully understood that and we have never had any problems as far as that was concerned. He always gave me loyal support, full support, and I did the same for him.

M: Was accessibility to the President better under Mr. Johnson, or different than it was under Mr. Kennedy?

R: There was no particular difference on that. I saw President Johnson a great deal more than I saw President Kennedy. Again, the Viet Nam situation made that inevitable.

M: Your position as a Kennedy appointee who did stay on throughout the Johnson years--did that cause any suspicion in the early part of the Johnson Presidency--the fact that you were really another President's Secretary of State?

R: I don't think so. I never had any evidence of that as far as President Johnson was concerned, because he kept on a great many of the Kennedy appointees. He took over the Kennedy Cabinet and made relatively few changes until a good deal of time had elapsed. He took over some of the Kennedy personal staff. He did not come in with a team of his own.

As a Senator, he had been more or less a lone operator. He had not built up around him a large group of people who could make up an administration, so that in his search for people to work with him he naturally turned to a good many of those with whom he had worked as Vice President and kept most of the Kennedy appointees that he found when he became President.

M: Do you think on the other side of that coin that some of the bitterness of criticism directed at you might be attributable to the fact that some of those making that criticism had been Kennedy people who left and ended up on the other side of policy issues, particularly Viet Nam?

R: Well, some of the people around Kennedy were espousing policies that Kennedy himself did not accept.

M: You mean before the assassination?

R: Before the assassination. After Kennedy died, then they tended to associate their own points of view with President Kennedy. They tried to capture President Kennedy for their own point of view after the assassination. John F. Kennedy was a man who had to make some very hard decisions, and he overrode the advice of a good many of the more frivolous people around him.

M: This is, perhaps, not directly on President Johnson, but I think it's relevant to the Administration and important. How bad do you think that this type of Kennedy supporter that you were just talking about hurt President Johnson in the early part of his Administration? Did this kind of opposition get him off to a very bad start in some ways?

R: I think there was one point that I regretted very much because I thought and felt that it was false, [and] that is the idea that somehow President Johnson acted with anything short of full consideration and sympathy for the members of the family at the time of the assassination. I had occasion, as Secretary of State, to have to make a good many of the arrangements about the funeral and about the transition of power, and every time I talked to President Johnson about whether we should do this or whether we should do that his customary answer would be, "Whatever the family wants." He acted with great consideration there, and some of the picayune gossip that somehow put him in a false position to me is just not right. I never saw any of that, and I was in a position to see what his attitude was in the matters that counted.

M: Particularly the story of the personal blow-up that Mr. Johnson allegedly had at Robert Kennedy at the first Cabinet meeting. Do you think that's false?

R: I don't remember or recollect a Cabinet meeting of that sort at all, It just didn't strike any recollections in my mind at all. I have great skepticism about any such reports.

M: Did you ever get drawn in in any way to what the press called the "Bobby problem?" Did Mr. Johnson ever confide in you his difficulties with Senator Robert Kennedy?

R: To some degree, but I had had my own Bobby problems when I was Secretary of State under President Kennedy. Bobby Kennedy was a very energetic fellow and liked to dabble in matters affecting other departments of government outside the Department of Justice, and had ideas of his own that sometimes were good and sometimes were bad. When his ideas were bad it took a good deal of doing to get him out of them. But I was never in the middle of any particular controversy between Lyndon Johnson and Robert Kennedy.

M: One of the things we pick up most consistently is the importance that Mrs. Johnson played in the Johnson Administration and with Lyndon Johnson personally. Do you have any strong impressions of Mrs. Johnson and her role?

R: Well, she was a very great lady and will go down as one of our very finest First Ladies. I have no doubt that she had an important influence on Lyndon Johnson. She was a great source of strength to him. She was always a hard worker and threw herself fully into the requirements of her job. She was indefatigable, was always available to be helpful to people. She had been when she was the Vice President's Lady.

M: I was going to say--didn't she and Mrs. Rusk establish sort of a working relationship on some projects that early?

R: Well, Mrs. Rusk's duties brought her into close contact with Mrs. Johnson when Mr. Johnson was Vice President. There developed a great esteem, at least as far as Mrs. Rusk was concerned, of Mrs. Johnson. Then that continued and was reinforced when Mrs. Johnson was First Lady. The burdens that fall upon the wife of the President are very heavy, and Mrs. Johnson carried them out literally to the Queen's taste.

M: Good phrase. Did she get interested in substantive matters

at all, or just as a sort of moral support?

R: I never had any impression that Mrs. Johnson was interfering in foreign policy questions that she would inject herself into them. Now, what might have occurred in personal conversations the two of them might have had, I just don't know. But I never had the slightest indication that she was injecting herself into foreign policy questions. She was always extraordinarily helpful and when foreign visitors came to Washington, she was a good hostess to visiting VIP's. She was always a very agreeable guest when the President and she went on trips abroad. But she stayed pretty much out of the substance of matters as far as I could tell.

M: In line with that, you made a few comments in the opening answer you gave that might be worth exploring a little bit more--the subject of Lyndon Johnson as a personal diplomat--in [your] opinion as a professional in that field. A lot was made about Mr. Johnson's style, and so on, perhaps offending the dignified foreign statesman--do you think that's an exaggeration again on the part of the critics?

R: I think that's an exaggeration and is a part of that kind of press gossip that the press can't live without. I always found him very effective in his dealings with foreign leaders.

M: That would apply to such instances as the famous confrontation with the Pakistani [Zulficar Ali] Bhutto, and you mentioned the one with Home?

R: Oh, President Johnson didn't give away American policy when he was talking with people with whom we have important differences. Bhutto was a very unreliable man, and we knew him to be an unreliable man. He was out to do the United States no good, so President Johnson wouldn't bow and scrape before people like that. In his discussions with Kosygin, he was very frank. They were brutally frank with each other. Nevertheless, President Johnson could put the case of the United States as effectively as I've ever heard it put with whatever audience he was dealing with in terms of foreign dignitaries.

M: And he did his homework, in the sense that he mastered the detail necessary on the subject? I think you made reference to this.

R: Yes. He followed foreign policy matters so intimately

through the years that it was not a case of just getting him specially briefed up as though he had never heard of problems when he was dealing with a foreigner. He had special briefings prepared for him for each visit, of course--each visit that he made abroad--but they were briefings about matters with which he was already generally familiar.

M: So he didn't have to start from scratch, as it were, to master them?

R: That's right.

M: Did he have any particular successes? Did he establish particular rapport with any foreign leaders as far as you understood?

R: Well, I think one striking example was his relation with the President of Mexico. President Johnson took the view that this hemisphere is our home; this is where we live; these are our neighbors. If we can't get along with our neighbors, with whom can we get along? He set out to make a major effort to improve our relations with Mexico, and, in fact, our relations with Mexico during Lyndon Johnson's Presidency became better than they've ever been in our history. This included a warm and close personal relationship with the President of Mexico, and that was a notable example of what you're asking about. He did an especially good job in that relationship.

But, in general, he tried to treat other political leaders with consideration and courtesy and understanding and at the same time uphold American interests.

M: I was going to ask--on the other side, were there any world leaders with whom he simply didn't get along? The names that come to mind, of course, without any thought, are U Thant and later on Harold Wilson.

R: Well, it's true that he and U Thant were not soulmates, and that they had important differences. This was partly because President Johnson found U Thant to be unreliable. This always offended President Johnson when he found that other leaders were trying to take advantage of him, or to betray confidences, or to take unfair advantage in one situation or another. President Johnson always had difficulties with Prime Ministers of India, but that was partly because the Indians looked upon their relations with the United States as a one-way street--that we were supposed

to do a great deal for India and India was not prepared to do anything for the United States.

In general the President got along very well with foreign leaders. This was strikingly brought out during the Punta del Este summit meeting of the Presidents of the hemisphere. That was a great success in terms of President Johnson's own personal relationship with other political leaders in the Western Hemisphere. That showed the warmth of his attitude toward Latin America. He invested a great deal of effort in that meeting and went to particular pains to establish a personal relationship with all the Presidents and succeeded dramatically.

M: He managed to treat, say, the Presidents of small, relatively insignificant, countries with the same regard that he would treat, say, the President of a major South American country?

R: That's correct. He was always very considerate and thoughtful about the way he treated representatives of small countries.

M: Would this apply even to one who was, maybe, giving him a little trouble, as in the case of Punta del Este, wasn't it Arossmena of Ecuador?

R: President Johnson was very frank with him. He was considerate, but he was very frank. There were no punches pulled in their discussions. It was a good transaction.

M: Did President Johnson change in any way the White House organization for national security affairs as compared with President Kennedy's national security operation in the White House?

R: The principal change that President Johnson brought about was the institution of what came to be known as the "Tuesday Lunch." There was in effect, an inner War Cabinet made up of the President and the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Defense, usually the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the personal Assistant for National Security Affairs--first it would be McGeorge Bundy and then Walt Rostow--and with one or another staff officer along to take notes?

M: You didn't mention the Director of the CIA?

R: The director of the CIA was frequently there, yes. In the

first place, President Johnson discovered that, at least, that group knew how to keep their mouths shut, whereas in a large meeting of the Cabinet or a large meeting of the National Security Council the chances for leaks to the outside were always present. He knew that he could talk in the most intimate way, the most provisional or tentative way, at that Tuesday Luncheon without having things leak out to the press. We transacted an enormous amount of business at that Tuesday Luncheon. Each one had its own agenda.

M: Who prepared the agenda?

R: Walt Rostow or McGeorge Bundy. There would be anywhere from two to ten items listed for discussion. We would bring to the meeting any particular papers we needed, or we would bring to it our own recommendations. We'd have a full discussion, and it was in a relaxed fashion. We could debate with each other, we could expose different points of view, we could look at all the alternatives, we could talk about the attitude of other personalities and individuals such as Senators or leading Congressmen. It was a most valuable institution and made a great difference to the ease of working relationships among those who were carrying the top responsibility.

M: Were decisions generally made at that meeting, or just the discussion sort of carried on and then decisions arrived at a later time?

R: No, many decisions were made. The Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, say Walt Rostow, would take notes on the decisions and then assist when we went back to our Departments, in giving effect to the decisions. He would de-brief one or two of my colleagues on what was decided at the Tuesday Luncheon, and I would give my own instructions. Each one of us took notes on decisions made on matters for which we were responsible and went back to our Departments and put them into effect. This made it possible to deal with a great many questions orally rather than with elaborate papers, and to do so on the basis of full discussion of all the alternatives. I found that a most useful session. We transacted a lot of business there.

M: You didn't find that it caused difficulties in understanding as to what had been decided. I mean, your notes didn't differ from, say Walt Rostow's or Secretary McNamara's?

R: Well, we would frequently compare notes afterwards and if there were any differences of view as to what had actually

been decided, we'd always take it up with the President for clarification. But that seldom occurred because usually it would be quite clear at the table itself as to what was being decided.

M: Do you know how detailed the records of those meetings were? You said there was somebody present to take notes.

R: I think at the beginning the records were rather flimsy, and then the President realized that it would be extremely valuable to have a fairly full record of the Tuesday Luncheons, and he had Tom Johnson or somebody else present to take notes. And then Walt Rostow would also take notes, so the record became fuller as the Luncheons proceeded.

M: How did that organization--that institution, as it were--compare to President Kennedy's Ex-com?

R: Well, the Ex-com was a highly specialized ad hoc body to deal with one particular crisis.

M: It operated only in the Cuban--?

R: Only in the Cuban missile crisis.

M: There was not a regular smaller-than-the-NSC group under Kennedy?

R: No. President Kennedy frequently would meet with, say, Bob McNamara and myself on a particular matter. Secretary McNamara and I did not like, ourselves, to get into much discussion in the National Security Council or in Cabinet meetings with so many people sitting around the room. Most often we would see President Kennedy either just before or just after such a meeting where the real decision would be taken, so that the discussion in the National Security Council would be more restrictive and would not lend itself to leaks and to distortions by people sitting around the room.

M: Having this ongoing thing, the Tuesday Lunch then, did that mean that President Johnson pretty well downgraded or ignored the NSC as a formal group?

R: He had occasional meetings of the National Security Council, but the National Security Council doesn't really lend itself to the kind of full and free debate and discussion that is required for important decisions. In the first place there are too many people present. There are fifteen to twenty

people sitting around the room, and it's not good for a President and a Cabinet officer to debate each other in the presence of other people. There ought not to be any blue sky showing between the President and a Cabinet officer. If they engage in a debate before witnesses, then there's always the danger of its being leaked that somehow a Cabinet officer took another point of view whereas after a decision has been made, it is incumbent upon a Cabinet officer to support the decision made by the President regardless of what his own personal point of view had been in the course of making the decision. So, from that point of view, to me it is important that such differences be discussed very privately with the President and not in situations where leaks could occur.

M: What was President Johnson's use of the White House operation--the Bundy shop, first, and then the Rostow--was it de-emphasized as compared to Kennedy's use of it?

R: No. That function is indispensable to a President partly because there's such a mass of business that it is important to have, right at the President's elbow, some staff who can help manage the flow of papers. Every day the Department of State would send over to the White House at least a half a dozen papers requiring the President's decision or requiring his attention. Now, the Secretary of State can't spend all of his time running back and forth between his office and the White House to deal with this paperwork himself with the President, so these would go over to Walt Rostow. Walt Rostow would then arrange a time to get in to see the President and put them before him or put them in his evening reading and get a notation back as to the President's wishes in the matter. So that in the first instance, just the management of business required that there be a staff of that sort.

Then each President has his own way of expressing himself and his own way of operating. It is almost impossible for another Department to produce finished products for the President in terms of statements, speeches, official communications in the President's own name; so that the staff there would be very useful in redrafting messages and speeches and statements and in helping the President prepare himself for press conferences and things of that sort.

Now, where such a staff could cause trouble would be in coming between the President and a Cabinet officer without the Cabinet officer's knowledge. Walt Rostow and Mac Bundy

were very good about that. If they had any thoughts that they wanted to inject into a policy discussion and they wanted to put them before the President, they would also inform the Cabinet officer so that the Cabinet officer would have a chance to comment on those proposals from his own point of view. President Johnson was very good about not allowing his own personal staff to come between him and a Cabinet officer. In that respect he was somewhat different from President Kennedy who would let that happen from time to time.

M: You didn't get the impression maybe that the Bundy-Rostow subordinates were going around you on certain occasions? You said that Mr. Johnson was very good about not going around you, but what about the people at maybe the second level in the White House national security operation?

R: No, because those fellows were usually drawn into discussions. You'd have a man there working on financial matters, and we'd bring him in when monetary questions were up. Another man would be working on Viet Nam; we'd bring him into the Vietnamese discussions. They usually were parts of the various task forces that were working on individual subjects, so that their views were pretty well known to the rest of us at all times anyhow because they were working parts of the machinery of policy formulation.

M: And they didn't try to predetermine the State Department's viewpoint by disclosing a White House viewpoint or anything of this nature?

R: Well, when one talks about a White House viewpoint, one has to be clear about whether one is talking about the President, or somebody else. My view always was that unless the President himself was speaking, I was the White House. When somebody would call, as occasionally happened at a staff level, and say to one of the members of my own staff, "The White House wants this" or, "The White House wants that," I would always want to know whether that meant that the President wanted it because no one speaks for the President except the President--unless it be the Secretary of State on foreign policy matters.

M: So you don't think your subordinates had any trouble distinguishing what was the view of the President?

R: I don't think so.

M: Do you think that the staff over there ever acted--?

R: No, let it be said that they had some extraordinarily competent people on that staff over there, and that you were glad to get their help most of the time, because they had ideas to contribute and they had judgments to contribute. So there was a pretty good working relationship between the national security staff and the Departments of State and Defense.

M: Then you don't think that they ever acted to, say, block out the views of the Department to the President in any way?

R: No, I'm sure that didn't happen.

M: Did the operation over there change substantially as between McGeorge Bundy and Walt Rostow?

R: No, I didn't detect any particular change. McGeorge Bundy was a somewhat more skillful draftsman than Walt Rostow. Walt Rostow, at the beginning anyhow was a little prolific in his words, was not as succinct as McGeorge Bundy. But Walt Rostow improved greatly in that respect and got to be a very efficient special assistant in all respects.

M: What about the rest of the White House staff under Mr. Johnson, the staff that wasn't associated specifically with national security affairs? What brings this to mind is a recent article relative to Viet Nam by Norman Cousins [Look, July 29, 1969] in which he mentions his contacts being [Bill] Moyers and [Jack] Valenti, who were hardly NSC-type staff men. Did they meddle--the non-national security staff?

R: That would usually come about in speech-writing. We always had a chance to look at the drafts of speeches and make suggestions on them and look at final drafts and check anything there that ought not to be said or make suggestions about what ought to be said.

Moyers was occasionally at the Tuesday luncheons and took part in the discussion along with everybody else, but I didn't get any sense of interference. They handled themselves with correctness, I think.

M: You have mentioned several times and more or less anticipated this line of questioning--the relationship between your Department of State and the other departments, particularly the Department of Defense. Frequently the critics make the point that Defense was taking over initiatives in foreign policy, and so on. Do you think this

was both exaggerated and done basically on your agreement with Secretary McNamara which you said you frequently reached?

R: When Secretary McNamara and I took office under President Kennedy, we met with each other and I said to him that the safety of the American people is a primary object of foreign policy; therefore, I, myself, as Secretary of State, would be interested in national security. He said to me that the primary mission of the Department of Defense was to support the foreign policy of the United States, and we agreed that we would do everything that we could to establish close working-relationships between our two Departments. For example, we encouraged contacts at all levels between our Departments--between the majors and the desk officers, and the lieutenant colonels and the office directors, and people like that. I am proud of the fact that during the Kennedy-Johnson years an inquisitive and suspicious press was not able to generate any impressions of feud between the Department of State and the Department of Defense. This is because the two Secretaries insisted that it be that way, and that there not be running feuds.

Another factor that made a difference was that the State Department now has over three hundred officers who are graduates of the war colleges, and the Defense Department has at least that many officers who graduated from various training programs in the Department of State, so that there is a broadening of the understanding of the other fellow's problems.

M: On both sides.

R: That doesn't mean that you come to automatic agreement on every question, but you at least understand better than was true in the early days what the other fellow's problem was.

M: Did your agreement in regard to that particular problem with Defense extend similarly over into Mr. [Clark] Clifford's tenure? The press did try to promote a feud there, I think, toward the end.

R: Well, that came about at the very end when some of the civilians in the Defense Department tried to stir up a campaign against decisions taken by President Johnson, and that was primarily responsible for that flurry of press speculation at the very end there. So it did not work quite as well under Clark Clifford as it had worked under Robert McNamara.

M: What about Mr. Johnson's fairly well-known habit of consulting people outside government? Did that ever cause trouble for those of you he charged with the responsibility of major decisions?

R: No President should restrict himself in terms of ideas or sources of advice. A President ought to be free to consult anybody that he wants to outside the Department--his chauffeur, anybody at all, Congressmen, Senators. All Presidents are going to do that, and it's a part of the means by which a President can try to cover every point and be sure that something is not being overlooked that he ought to have in his mind. Now, that is a part of the President's own mind, and that is something that I think is entirely appropriate and never caused any special problems because these matters had to be dealt with on their merits, and people in government have no particular monopoly of ideas.

M: Of course, those people are not reading the traffic in foreign affairs--

R: Well, they may have good ideas even though they don't read the traffic. I never had any problems about that myself.

M: What about the administration of the State Department? Was President Johnson interested at all in that aspect of your job?

R: Not in detail. He delegated that responsibility; and I, in turn, delegated that largely to the Under Secretary and the Deputy Under Secretary for Administration. The President was, of course, very much interested in Presidential appointees, and we had up to two hundred Presidential appointments in the Department of State if you include all the Ambassadors. But he did not try to tell the Department of State how to run itself any more than he did other Departments.

M: Was the chief initiative as far as administration the SIG-IRG initiative of '69?

R: No, that was not primarily on administrative questions. The SIG-IRG organization was for the consideration of policy matters.

M: And for interdepartmental coordination. Was that President Johnson's initiative or yours?

R: I think it came up from a study that Mr. [Nicholas]

Katzenbach had done about how we might improve the machinery. As a matter of fact, we never gave that a full tryout because it was getting a slow start by the time the Administration came to an end.

M: But Mr. Johnson didn't take any direct interest in that mechanical-type thing?

R: No, he was interested in the final product, but he did not inject himself into the process.

M: You mentioned ambassadorial appointments and, of course, other appointments as well--of Assistant Secretaries and others that are Presidential.Did Mr. Johnson pay what you thought was due weight to your recommendations on those matters, or sometimes go around you for his own political needs?

R: It depends on what you mean by due weightAfter all, these are Presidential appointments, and they're not appointments of the Secretary of State.My general habit was to recommend professional officers as frequently as possible because, in the first place, I myself had no coterie of friends or people that I had wanted to bring into government with me, or anything of that sort.President Johnson would take most of those. He had about seventy percent career Ambassadors during his Presidency, but he also had other people that he wanted to put into ambassadorial posts for political or other reasons.I understood that myself and expected that some of my recommendations would not be accepted and that names that I would not myself have put forward would in fact have been appointed, but that's par for the course. That's going to happen with any Administration, any Secretary of State.

M: And that applies as well to the Assistant Secretaryships and things within the Department as well as to ambassadors?

R: Not so much to Assistant Secretaryships where the President was much more inclined to take the recommendation of the Secretary of State, and that would be true with the other departments as well. He tended to give the Cabinet officers an extra amount of weight in determining who their own colleagues would be.

M: Did that viewpoint of yours that career people perhaps should be moved into ambassadorial positions have any effect on Mr. Johnson? Did he have a strong bias for or against the professional service that he ever indicated to you?

R: Well, he always had a little reservation because he knew that a professional officer would not be a Lyndon Johnson man in the strict sense of the term--in the sense of personal commitment--because a professional officer is not supposed to be personally committed to a particular Administration in a political sense. The President was impatient, for example, because he did not believe that some of our Ambassadors in Latin America were putting forth Lyndon B. Johnson as the President of the United States--were still working in the general atmosphere of the Kennedy Administration. An Ambassador is the alter-ego of the President. He's the President's personal representative to a foreign country, and the President felt that an Ambassador--and I agree with him on this--that an Ambassador should, in the first instance, be the best representative of the man who is the President of the United States that he can possibly be. I once talked to the head of the British Civil Service, and I complimented him on the way in which the British Civil Service seemed to stay outside of politics. He said, "Oh, no, you've got it wrong. The British Civil Service gives its full support to one administration at a time."

M: There's a difference between that and being out of politics.

R: That's right, so there were times when President Johnson, as any President, would become impatient with particular Ambassadors on points of that sort.

M: But he didn't let it color his view toward the professional service?

R: No, I don't think so. Any new President comes in with a certain arms-length attitude toward the Foreign Service, but the more he stays in office the more he realizes that this is a great professional service with a lot of talent in it, and he gets to be more respectful of the Foreign Service as he goes along.

M: The press consensus grew to be that under you and under President Johnson the role of planning in the State Department was de-emphasized substantially. Do you think that is true, and if so was it your initiative or his that caused that change?

R: Quite the contrary. My view is that every policy officer is a planner. Every desk officer, every policy officer up and down the line should be thinking in longer range terms about his job and what the future holds. Everybody should plan.

I did not believe that you should concentrate planning just in something called the Policy Planning Staff. I considered myself a planner, and I expected every junior officer in the Department to be a planner as far as his own job was concerned. You can't separate plans and operations in any distinct sense because everything you do has to do with your future plans, and everything you do ought to be done in relation to what outcome you want in the long run. Now, there is a limit beyond which you can do planning in the long range sense because you can't see that far ahead. The unexpected is always interjecting itself, and the situation that you might look upon today will be quite different a year from now or two years from now; and your plans, if they become too hard and solidified, will be irrelevant. So this is a process and not something that can be put into one basket named planning but it's something that everybody has to be involved with.

M: The tenure that you served saw two major reorganizations of functions sort of loosely under the State Department--AID and the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency. Did Mr. Johnson use those agencies as parts and arms of the State Department as they were set up, or did he deal with them independently?

R: Both these agencies took their policy guidance from the Secretary of State. They're set up that way, and although President Johnson would deal directly on occasion with the Administrator of AID and on occasion with the Director of the Disarmament Agency, the policies involved were handled as though these agencies were parts of the Department of State.

M: That didn't cause any trouble? The organization of those was satisfactory as far as you were concerned?

R: That's right. There was no problem on that.

M: Some of this on decision-making you've anticipated, but some not. When you talked awhile ago about yourself and Mr. McNamara, for example, coordinating your decision before you sent it to the President, the implication could be drawn from that, I suppose, that Mr. Johnson didn't get a chance to hear all sides. I take it you'd think that was unfair--

R: No. Secretary McNamara and I accepted the responsibility for exposing to the President the alternatives and the different points of view. If the other points of view were not sufficiently put forward, the President would on

occasion appoint a devil's advocate for the purpose of presenting another point of view.

M: Specifically as a Devil's Advocate?

R: Yes. He used George Ball in that connection, for example, on a number of occasions; there were times when he would actually organize a little debate in front of himself with staff officers taking part. He would assign a staff officer the task of presenting a particular point of view and another staff officer the task of presenting another point of view, and he'd have a little debate in front of himself.

M: And everybody knew that they had been assigned that job?

R: That's right.

M: So that if someone was playing the Devil's Advocate contrary to his own inclinations, that would be a known situation?

R: Oh, the President never, never objected to people putting forward views that were contrary to his own inclinations in the course of making a decision. He wanted all points of view brought forward, and any wise person who was dealing with policy matters would insist upon that in any event. We used to do that at the Department of State. After the decision was made, the President expected his colleagues to support the decision.

M: How did you personally render your advice to the President? You mentioned in connection with Kennedy that sometimes you'd stop prior to the NSC meeting and render your advice because you didn't want to expose it. Did you do the same thing with Mr. Johnson?

R: I saw President Johnson usually several times a week, certainly at the Tuesday Lunch and then many other times during the course of the week. And we were on the phone with each other. There were many ways in which we could do it. We could do it by paper, by sending over memoranda; we could do it on the telephone; we could do it in personal conversation. So there was a constant flow of thoughts back and forth between the two of us on a wide range of questions.

M: But privately, invariably?

R: Privately, except in the case of papers. There would be others who would know about the papers.

M: But you never felt that you had trouble getting your advice to him in some way that didn't expose any differences that you might have to others?

R: No. The President would frequently want to be sure that when a paper came over, it was my paper. Sometimes you'd send over a paper, say, from Mr. Ben Read, who was the head of the Secretariat in the Department of State, to Mr. McGeorge Bundy or to Mr. Walt Rostow. On the face of it it would not show whether or not I personally had seen the paper and had concurred in it. He rather took the view that if it's anything that's worth the attention of the President, it is worth the attention of the Secretary of State. So once in awhile he would send a question back as to whether I had myself seen the paper, and whether it was my paper or whether it was just a staff paper. But the channels of communication were wide open, and they were used a great deal and in a variety of ways.

M: Were important decisions--it's awfully hard to escape from using Viet Nam as an example sometimes, although that's not the subject today--decisions such as, for example, to begin the bombing of the north--would a decision like that be taken in very explicit and in very clear terms, or were they sort of slipped into as sort of reactions to events?

R: No, any major decision of that sort would be taken in the most solemn fashion.

M: And very clearly and definitely?

R: That's right. Never any ambiguity about starting the bombing, or stopping the bombing, or bombing pauses, or negotiating moves. You see, as far as Viet Nam is concerned. President Johnson was his own desk officer. He was actually the Commander-in-Chief. This was a great preoccupation with him so that every detail of the Viet Nam matter was a matter of information to the President, and the decisions on Viet Nam were taken by the President.

M: The reason I pursue that is because there have been criticisms that the practice of keeping one's options open sometimes led to what amounted to vacillations in the sense that no clear, firm decision was really ever taken in some instances. But you disagree with this?

R: Well, if no decisions were taken, that meant that nothing would be done, and doing nothing is itself an important decision. There were times when we would take another week

or ten days before we would take a particular action because we wanted to think it over more and feel out the situation a bit more, but this was not an accidental lack of clarity. It was a deliberate decision to postpone.

M: Which, as you say, is a decision in itself.

R: Yes.

M: What role did the President play, or did Mr. Johnson play, in a time of absolute crisis, say, like the June war of 1967, for example. Did he stay in more-or-less constant communication with you, for example, during that period--on the spot, personal interest?

R: Yes. At moments of great crisis, the President would put an enormous amount of time in on the crisis itself. This would be true whether it was the June War between Israel and their Arab neighbors, or the Soviet move into Czechoslovakia, or any major new move as far as Viet Nam was concerned, The President would give whatever time was necessary.

M: He more or less manned the operation room himself?

R: That's in effect exactly what would happen.

M: So you didn't have trouble finding him or getting to him in moments of crisis?

R: Dean Acheson once said that in a relation between a President and a Secretary of State it is important that both understand which is President. Now, President Johnson never had any doubt about who was President, nor did I.

M: That makes for a pretty good working relationship in all kinds of areas.

The press was very fond, and analysts of various kinds were very fond, of dividing Mr. Johnson's advisers into clearly labeled groups--the most famous being "hawks" and "doves." During your tenure in the Department of State, is it true that various departments--State, Defense, or others--fall into clearly definable postures over a period of time that can be talked about in a labeled way like that?

R: Not really. In general, I think the attitude of the Joint Chiefs of Staff can be more or less predictable from a point of view of solely military analysis, but that would not be true of the Defense Department as such, including the

Secretary of Defense. Now, one of the reasons why people get branded is that they're speaking to different audiences. Secretary McNamara was talking to the Armed Services Committees. Therefore, he, in trying to defend the moderate and middle position of the Administration, sounded like a dove; whereas I was talking to the Foreign Relations Committee where, in defending the moderate, middle position, I sounded like a hawk. It depends upon your audience as to how it appears to be.

M: That's a distinction I haven't ever heard before, and sounds like a very valid one.

R: McNamara and I would probably be saying exactly the same thing, but because of the difference in the audience it sounded different.

M: And would be written up differently.

R: And would be written up differently.

M: I think it's Moyers who has been quoted as saying that by the end of 1965 the government was more or less bitterly divided over the Viet Nam policy.Did you think that was true?

R: No, I didn't find that to be the case.

M: Did it ever get that way?

R: Not so far as I know. We came close to that during the Clifford period--at the very end of the Clifford period--but that never manifested itself in clear recommendations from Clark Clifford that we pursue a radically different course. This was just a case of growing ulcers and worrying about it, not really coming forward with specific proposals. Plus Clifford, for example, as Secretary of Defense, did not make the proposal that he made just recently in his Foreign Affairs article. [July, 1969]

M: Was it possible to make such proposals? Could those who dissented from a policy after it was made get more than a pro forma hearing? You said they could send a memo up but couldn't get any conversation.How, then, do you get a policy change under those circumstances?

R: It's always possible to put in a proposal to change what we are doing, but there were times when the President would simply look around the room and say, "Now, gentlemen, I'm

not going to do this so just don't fret me about this, because I'm not going to do it."That would put an end to that kind of discussion for awhile.

M: So that would close out, at least for the time, any change, but it would have been preceded by consideration.

R: That's right. I never felt that I was inhibited in any way from going to the President and making to him any proposal that I had on my mind.

M: That's fairly clear. Why do you think that Mr. Johnson never either agreed to, or allowed his subordinates such as yourself, to really go out and sell the Viet Nam policy?

R: Oh, I don't think that he imposed limitations on us in that regard. I made more speeches than any Secretary of State.

M: At his instructions?

R: Well, with his knowledge and consent. I did a good deal of that on my own. What we did not do was to take steps to create a war psychology in the United States.

M: I guess that's what I meant.

R: Now, that was an important decision. It was not made all at once, but it was a matter that we talked about on a number of occasions. We did not lay on big military parades. We did not put on big bond drives or [have] movie actors going around the country whooping up war-fever, and things of that sort.

The reason we didn't was because there's too much power in the world to let the American people become too mad. Public opinion could get out of hand if you went too far down that trail, and with nuclear weapons lying around it's better not to have that happen.

One of the important things to reflect upon, as far as Viet Nam is concerned, is that we were trying to do a kind of police job to fend off this aggression against South Viet Nam, but to do it calmly and, in effect, in cold blood. Our objective was peace. It was not to let the situation go down the chute--the chute into a larger war. Some day we'll have to evaluate whether that decision was right.

M: But it was a clear-cut decision not to take this kind of action?

R: That's right.

M: And Mr. Johnson participated?

R: That's right.

M: That was what I meant by selling, I guess.

R: We did not go out to whip up the anger of the American people over Viet Nam. In retrospect that needs examination. It might be that we should have done more of that than we did, but we deliberately did not do that.

M: Once the dissenters became vocal and fairly numerous, you acted frequently as the Administration spokesman to them. Did you find that you could reach them at all--that they'd listen, even?

R: Well, some would; some would not. Some people had the view that somehow the United States unilaterally could make peace in Viet Nam, regardless of what Hanoi did. That on the face of it is an absurdity, but it's not apparent as an absurdity to some critics. We never really were able to get North Viet Nam seriously interested in sitting down and making peace in that situation, and the present Administration has not yet been able to do that either. But we had very little pressure during the Johnson Administration to withdraw from Viet Nam, regardless of the consequences. We can get into this later in discussing Viet Nam.

M: Did the dissenters have the knowledge to be responsible; or did they act frequently out of simply not having the classified material available to them that might have changed their minds?

R: Well, a good deal of it was wishful thinking, hoping that somehow the problem would just go away if we got out of it--that maybe Laos and Viet Nam and Cambodia and Thailand would survive whether we did anything about it or not; that Ho Chi Minh was just a good old Nationalist and that all he was wanting to do was to set up a kind of Yugoslavia out there, free from China, and free from the Soviet Union. A lot of wishful thinking of that sort that entered into some people's consideration of the matter.

M: It was not a matter of you having possession of certain secret information that led you to one conclusion and the dissenters not having it?

R: No. The basic facts on which opinion could be formed were well-known to the public, and there were very few secrets that had any direct bearing on the major decisions affecting the war.

Let's bear in mind that there are some specifically organized groups who are committed to opposing what we are doing in Viet Nam. The Communists are very active, working through innocent organizations.The confirmed pacifists like the Quakers, for whom I have the highest regard, are going to oppose something like Viet Nam, just as they opposed the war in Korea, and just as they've opposed other things. So some of this is highly organized.

Then as the war dragged on, and it was a slow-bleed, there was no clear indication that the war was going to come to a finite conclusion. So some people just got weary of the war and wanted to bring it to an end and to bring the casualties to an end, and that led them to embrace points of view that in calmer moments they would not have embraced.

M: Did the press contribute, you think, importantly to this wishful thinking atmosphere, or this irresponsibility of viewpoint?

R: Some elements in the press, the New York Times, for example. I sent the New York Times a copy of the editorial which they had written at the time of the conclusion of the SEATO Treaty. On that occasion they said that the SEATO Treaty was a great diplomatic triumph for President Eisenhower and Secretary of State Dulles. I got back a tortured thirty-page memorandum from them trying to explain that what they were saying in 1967 and '68 was consistent with what they had said back when the SEATO Treaty was formed.

M: But you think there was a real element in the Eastern press that was particularly critical in this regard? Was it partly the Eastern press's disillusion with Johnsonian style that led them. This is kind of confused in my own mind here, what I'm trying to ask--

R: I think some of it was just confusion among the editorial boards of some of the newspapers. I think it was confusion in the New York Times, for example. They never laid out clearly what their major premises were. Now, Senator [Wayne] Morse would get up on the Senate floor and say that Southeast Asia is not worth the life of a single American soldier.

M: That's clear enough.

R: I disagreed with him, but I respected his saying that because then you would know how to read other things that he was saying about Viet Nam. The New York Times would never lay out clearly its major premises about Viet Nam. It didn't say that it wanted to withdraw regardless of the consequences, but intermediate steps which it would support were simply steps in that direction.

M: Favoring policies without consideration of outcome?

R: That's right.

M: One other matter that is in this general area of organization and administration and personal relations is in regard to messages. You've said a couple of things about this--that the White House staff perhaps prepared the wording usually. Did the Department have its say in major foreign policy addresses adequately?

R: Yes, I think so. This is one job that the Department of State is not very good at. We have very poor speechwriters in the Department of State. I asked the Inspection Corps once in their visits around the world inspecting our Embassies abroad to keep their eyes and ears open for articulate people--people that knew how to express themselves orally or in writing--in order to try to get more help in this regard, but we never succeeded. I only had mediocre success in getting real help in writing my own speeches so a good deal of the burden fell on people like Harry McPherson over in the White House in actually drafting final texts. That, to a degree, is going to be inevitable anyhow because someone who is at the right hand of the President can have a chance to slip in and talk to the President about various ideas and methods and ways of saying things, and sort of draw the President into the actual preparation of draft speeches. Had we had greater competence in the Department of State, the President would have been glad to absorb as much as we could have produced for him in that regard, but we just weren't very good at it.

M: Were there particular speeches on foreign policy matters that are well-known in which the State Department had a specifically important initiative, in either causing the speech, or that you were responsible for the nature of the viewpoint in it? I'm thinking of things like the U.N. speech in late 1963, or the State of the Union in 1964, or Johns Hopkins, or [the] San Antonio formula--?

R: We would always put raw material into such speeches. Of course there were a number of occasions where we would recommend that the President appear and make a speech, such as at the U.N. We would send over, frequently, statements to be used in press conferences or to be used as White House releases--statements on particular subjects--and many of those were used as we sent them over with only minor modification. But, generally speaking, President Johnson's speeches were determined by his own judgment as to where he wanted to go, and with whom he wanted to meet, and when he wanted to go, and generally what he wanted to talk about.

M: This exhausts the categories that I knew enough to include in this general subject category. Do you know of others that we haven't talked about? I don't want to cut you off on this general area of consideration.

R: No.

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