INTERVIEW I

DATE: July 13, 1970

INTERVIEWEE: ADAM YARMOLINSKY

INTERVIEWER: PAIGE MULHOLLAN

PLACE: Professor Yarmolinsky's office, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts

Tape 1 of 1

M: Let's just identify you at the first of the tape here, sir. You're Adam Yarmolinsky and your official positions were as special assistant to the secretary of defense--

Y: I was the special assistant to the secretary of defense from January, 1961 to February, 1964 when I became deputy director of the President's task force for the War on Poverty. I left that under unhappy circumstances in the end of August, beginning of September, 1964 [and] spent time from September to June more or less sitting in the White House doing nothing. Then I went down to the Dominican Republic as chief of the U.S. Emergency Relief Mission and came back and briefly resumed the special assistant post while I broke in a new man when Joe Califano went to the White House. I broke in John Cushman. Then I became principal deputy assistant secretary of defense for international security affairs--a mouth-filling title--from September, 1965 to September 1, 1966 when I left to come here to Harvard.

M: Right. That brings you up to date. Did you know Mr. Johnson at all prior to the time you entered government in 1961?

Y: No. No, my first contact with him was as special assistant, when I was special assistant, he was vice president. I had considerable, not extensive but considerable dealings with him during that period because a part of my responsibilities was the equal opportunity area and he was, of course, chairman of the Equal Opportunity--what was it called--committee. . . .

M: Commission.

Y: Commission. The Department of Defense was the most active agency, probably as active as all the other agencies put together, and I had general supervisory responsibility for the Department of Defense program. I didn't have line responsibility but I was in fact charged by the Secretary [Robert S. McNamara] with getting it put together and moving. I attended the meetings of the committee as the Defense Department representative and I used to do a lot of the telephone business with the then-Vice President.

M: He did take an active interest in that?

Y: Yes.

M: It wasn't just a title that [John F.] Kennedy assigned him?

Y: Oh, no. No, he took a very active interest and spent a lot of time on it.

M: Was he even then what the southerners would later consider a traitor to their cause?

Y: Oh, I'm sure. Oh, yes.

M: That was not something he developed after he became president?

Y: No, no, no. No question in my mind that he was vitally concerned.

M: Did he initiate action or simply approve things that you were suggesting from the Defense Department?

Y: Well, it seemed to me it was more a matter of discussing what ought to be done and how it was being done and where would we get new ideas. These were policy or atmospheric discussions, not as I recall discussions of specific actions. There was an executive officer of the committee.

M: You also had some responsibility for recruiting talent in the early days, didn't you?

Y: Yes. Yes, I did.

M: Did Johnson get into that at all?

Y: I don't recall any direct contact with him on the talent hunt. I remember it was always said that he was the person who was responsible for John Connally's appointment as secretary of the navy. On the other hand, my recollection is that somehow McNamara came across Connally's name or maybe we did, because Connally had held previous posts in the Department of Defense and we checked him out and he sounded like the kind of imaginative, vigorous executive we were looking for. I think we may even have suggested him to McNamara, because my special responsibility within the talent hunt became at one point the Department of Defense, probably because I know McNamara slightly. And then McNamara, as I recall, telephoned the President-elect and said he had this name and was interested in it and what did the President[-elect] think. The President[-elect] said, "Well, I just happen to have the Vice President[-elect] here

who knows him." So I think it may have come up that way, but I'm not positive.

M: The Johnson staff wasn't very active in soliciting people that were also friends?

Y: I don't know. I don't recall them in that role, but then my memory is probably rusty and I may well have heard from people and undoubtedly checked in with some of the Johnson people to get judgments. My concern was with finding the right man for the job. It was with talent, not the patronage problem. But I don't recall either from the Johnson people or from others--surprisingly--any conflict between them, the talent hunt objective and the patronage objective. In fact, I think there was some general consensus that we got fewer suggestions from the patronage side than we might even have hoped to have.

M: What about the normal operations of the Defense Department? Did Mr. Johnson take any interest in those when he was vice president? A lot of management changes were going on under Secretary McNamara.

Y: No, as I recall. Of course, he attended the NSC meetings which were not exactly decision-making forums. I did not, of course, I only had second-hand reports on them. But no, I would say he was not. He was an interested observer, but he was not involved.

M: You've been interested in that field and done some writing in it since you've been out. Did Mr. Johnson care anything, even when he became president, about management, administration?

Y: Well, he was very proud of the management job that his cabinet officer, Bob McNamara, was doing and appreciated its value both in terms of more effective operation of government and its political value as well.

M: But he didn't get interested in details of what was going on?

Y: No. No. Not to my knowledge.

M: Was it your contact with Mr. Johnson in his capacity as chairman of the Equal Opportunity Commission that lead you and him together in the anti-poverty task force in 1964?

Y: No. That wouldn't be fair to say. I was picked out by Sargent Shriver, who was given--in fact, I was sitting in the Cabinet Room attending a briefing conference for the President prior to a press conference. The press conference was going to be later that day. I was there for Defense, briefing him on various Defense issues. He kept interrupting the press conference to talk to somebody at the other end of the phone to persuade him to take a job and that turned out to be Shriver and he announced Shriver's appointment.

The next day Shriver called me and asked me if I could give him some spare-time help and that rapidly developed into more than spare time. Then he asked me to come over and be his deputy for the task force after several weeks. McNamara agreed to let me do it with the understanding that I would succeed as deputy director of the program, and it went through.

M: That understanding came from Shriver and not from Mr. Johnson?

Y: Well, I suppose we ought to get this on the record. It's all going to be sealed for years and years.

M: As long as you say.

Y: Well, I forget what I put on the other stuff that I did. Was it twenty years or thirty years?

M: Twenty years is what a great number of the people are deciding upon.

Y: I think twenty years is about right. I had felt that it would be a mistake to leave my post as the special assistant without having a definite post as deputy special assistant to the President, with Shriver being special assistant to the President for the war against poverty. That was arranged and the President agreed to it. Then later the day that he agreed to it he sent Bill Moyers over to tell me that he'd been thinking about it and he felt maybe it would be better if he didn't make me a deputy special assistant because he didn't want to put me on the White House payroll. But the message Moyers carried was that the day the bill was signed he would send my name to the Senate as deputy director. So I was satisfied with that.

M: So it did come from the President through Moyers in that case.

How was the task force then put together for membership?

Y: I'd have to say the membership in the task force was a sometime thing. There were people who were members in various degrees and some as to whom you couldn't really say whether they were members or not.

M: How were their names decided? Did you and Sargent Shriver do that?

Y: Well, Shriver picked many of them himself, and some I suggested. A number of people I brought in from the Pentagon on loan to work mostly on some of the technical-logistic aspects of it. My own special assistant Colonel John [T.] Carley did a lot of the logistic work for the Job Corps as I recall, and some others. And then we recruited people. Some were volunteers from outside government. We managed to run that whole task force operation for a budgeted figure of something like ten or twenty thousand dollars, which was absolutely incredible because it was all borrowed people and volunteered people and borrowed space and borrowed telephones and all the rest of it. We had to be particularly careful because there was a congressional rider--because of congressional resentment of the task force that President Kennedy had set up on the domestic volunteer corps, the thing that later became VISTA--that no money could be spent to develop such a proposal within the executive branch. So the work that was done on that--no money could be spent out of executive departmental appropriations. So I guess we had to be very careful that any work that was done on that part of the program was either done by volunteers or with White House funds.

M: But the President didn't have an active part in selecting the members so far as you know?

Y: No. No. No, he didn't suggest any members. We brought in a lot of people as consultants and advisers, whose names have been more prominently displayed in the histories of the task force, who in

fact played I would say considerable lesser roles, primarily because--oh, people like Michael Harrington and Paul Jacobs, a number of others--[they] didn't think programmatically. They were very good at giving us a start and saying, "Here are the dimensions of the problem," but they weren't the kind of people who had experience putting together a government program. Therefore it was others less famous perhaps who did play the essential roles.

M: Did Johnson play any role in the work of the task force after it was put together? That is, did he take an active interest in how it was progressing or what it was doing?

Y: Well, we reported to him, Shriver and I did, I guess primarily through Moyers, who was the staff man and who was responsible. Occasionally we would get word that this or that aspect of it he had some view on subsequently. But no. Of course, there were a lot of legislative problems and we counseled every day with Larry O'Brien and his staff, worked very closely with the White House staff on getting the bill through. But the President himself--there were occasions when we asked him to telephone people, I really can't remember specifically who they were, leading members of Congress. But otherwise no, I would say--well, I should qualify that. When we had the proposal for legislation in form to present as a proposal, Shriver presented it at a cabinet meeting which I attended as an observer. The President naturally expressed his view and supported certain parts and did not favor other parts that were proposed, particularly the proposal for a public employment

program to be supported by an increased tobacco tax, I think. He felt that they couldn't ask for a new tax at the same time he was asking for a reduction in taxes. That was dropped out.

M: The analysts later said that the proposal as it came forward really consisted of one new idea, community action, and a lot of others that had been around in one form or another. Is that accurate?

Y: Yes, this was an eclectic process, putting together a lot of things that--some of them had died in committee, like the domestic service corps, later the Job Corps. Oh, I'm sorry, I'm confusing Job Corps and VISTA. The Job Corps had died in committee and VISTA hadn't even got to committee. Both of them were resurrected. So it was a lot of ideas that had been floating around, but this was the package that somehow managed to put together the relevant constituencies sufficient to put it across. That plus Shriver's energy and tremendous effectiveness on the Hill. I've written about this as--I take it you've had a chance to read in this literature. I've done some writing on it.

M: Was there somebody that particularly pushed for community action as the nucleus of the program?

Y: The original proposal--again, this is all laid out I think most effectively in the book--oh, dear, who's book is it?

M: [James L.] Sundquist?

Y: No. Well, it's in Sundquist [<u>On Fighting Poverty: Perspectives From Experience</u>] but I think it's even more clearly in that economist--I have the book here. Do you know?

M: I can't. . . .

Y: Let me just look in the bookcase. [Sar A.] Levitan [The Great Society's Poor Law: A New Approach to Poverty].

M: I've not read that. I mean to.

Y: Well, you'll find it very clearly laid out in there. At any rate, the task force that President Kennedy had set up, which was in effect Walter Heller and Kermit Gordon and their staff, the Council of Economic Advisers' staff, was proposing an all community action program. It was to be all community action, half a billion dollars of community action. It was presented to Shriver and me and others at the first session we had after Shriver was appointed that Sunday night. Shriver's immediate reaction, and I guess mine, was that this just wouldn't fly, that you couldn't make a whole program out of community action because you wouldn't get results soon enough, clearly enough, to be able to carry it forward in the successive years and get appropriations the second year. You needed to put in other elements in the picture. It was then that we began to reach out for these other elements. So there was no question in our minds but that community action was a good idea, and you're familiar with the parentage of community action starting with Paul Ylvisaker and the grey areas and the President's Committee on Juvenile Delinquency and all that. We had Dick Boone as a very articulate member of the task force, a junior member, but still very articulate.

I remember I've told this story I guess in writing on various occasions, that the first big meeting was the one that Shriver chaired and the second one that I chaired. I think it was the one that Shriver chaired with a lot of outside advisers the Tuesday or so after the Saturday that he was appointed. Dick Boone kept bringing up the idea of maximum feasible participation. Whether he used those words then I don't recall. I said to Dick, "You've brought that idea up several times," and he said, "Yes, I have. How many more times do I have to bring it up before it gets into the program?" and I said, "Oh, two or three." He did and it did.

M: That's right. To reiterate, the words got used relatively soon thereafter.

Y: Yes.

M: Was it made clear when the task force was formed that the work had to be completed and a program put in in time for the 1964 elections?

Y: No. It wasn't--I don't mean to say that this existed outside of the framework of politics, but we weren't really talking--I think all of us took for granted that it would not be a debit in the 1964 elections, but we were really thinking programmatically and we felt what we were committed to was to get legislation out of that session of Congress and to get a program going.

M: I was thinking in terms of some of the analysts' speculation that the bill that finally was produced was--well, I've seen the words hasty and jerrybuilt and this type of thing.

Y: No, I don't feel that those charges are at all justified. One of the moves to kill the proposal, or at least to delay it, was the usual proposal, "Let's study it more, " you know. This was a Republican proposal and one of the alternative bills they introduced would be for a study commission. I think we all felt that, politics completely to one side, we knew enough to mount a program which we could reasonably expect would have some useful effect, and in a year we wouldn't know that much more. The way to begin was to begin, and that was a typical Kennedy as well as Johnson approach. And I don't think it was hasty. We could have studied it for five years, and would we have come up with a better program? Well, I don't know. My own view is that the troubles of the program were very largely due not to misconception or internal conflicts or inconsistencies of conception. Although there were some, of course. But much more so to the fact that it suffered from level funding. So that every year you had the problem of do you cut off people who have just made it and just getting their program started or do you frustrate people who are just getting their program together and about to come in for new money? If you don't have enough money to keep expanding, particularly in community action, you're going to create more resentment and frustration than anything else. I'm afraid that's to a large degree what happened.

M: You were generally considered to be the principal author of the actual bill. Is that accurate?

Y: Well, it is not accurate in a literal sense, because the bill was drafted by the Office of Legal Counsel in the Department of Justice under the supervision of Norbert Schlei, S-C-H-L-E-I, who was the assistant attorney general with that responsibility. But I suppose that if you think of producers and consumers, I was the principal customer for Mr. Schlei and we dealt in substantive issues. Shriver was up on the Hill twelve hours a day and I was minding the store at the other end of the avenue. My responsibilities were first to get the bill put together in accordance with his ideas, but questions of detail I had to resolve and I did resolve, and major departmental interagency quarrels, disagreements, and then to get the organization put together.

M: How serious was that interdepartmental quarreling? Did it ever get to the President, for example?

Y: No. Oh, no.

M: All solved below his level?

Y: Yes. Yes. There was a lot of it. Inevitably there was a lot of it, because here was an agency which under the law was to be given, and indeed in the executive order I guess or message designating Shriver as special assistant, was given authority over existing government departments and agencies. That always creates frictions.

M: Once the bill was prepared and Mr. Johnson submitted it to Congress, did the responsibilities of the task force continue on then during the legislative fight?

Y: Oh, yes, if anything we were working harder, because then we had the job of getting the bill through--which was the thing [in] which Shriver really showed such extraordinary achievement, skill, imagination and energy--and the job of putting together the organization so that it would be ready to go once the bill was passed. Identifying the people and settling all these troublesome questions of how many supergrade authorizations would the agency have. How would they be divided among the various proposed bureaus within the office? Those were all questions that I had to cope with. So I would say we were working harder at the end than we were perhaps even at the beginning.

M: How important was White House lobbying, which was credited at that time with being so effective in Congress?

Y: Well, what was terribly effective was to have the master strategist Larry O'Brien and his staff working in daily, hourly cooperation with us. But I think the most important thing of all was Shriver. It was his idea to make it the--who was the principal Senate sponsor? I can't remember now.

M: House, I remember was Landrum.

Y: The principal House sponsor was [Phil M.] Landrum and to have Landrum of Landrum-Griffin fame coming in with an anti-poverty bill, and then of course you have all the liberals you wanted. It was that kind of thing that Shriver really carried off.

M: How in the world did he get Landrum to sponsor that?

Y: Well, he just did. That's one of Shriver's great. . . .

M: What about at the times during the legislative consideration that it became necessary to modify the bill substantially, as for example, in the state veto, governors' veto problem. Did that come back to you?

Y: Oh, yes, I was at the heart of all of those because I did or supervised--I think--really all of the critical redrafting. I made up the phrase "non-curricular education." That was one of the really tough issues, although it was not close to the heart of the problem at all. But it was the one that gave us a great deal of trouble and we resolved it with some language in the committee report which I drafted which said that funds could be used in private schools, which is to say parochial schools, for non-curricular education.

M: Whatever that is. Did Mr. Johnson get involved in any of this?

Y: No. Well, I don't want to say he didn't--I don't recall that he was. I don't think he was directly involved. But whenever we had one of those issues, why, Norb Schlei and I would be working over the language and Shriver would be negotiating with the principal parties and I participated in a good deal of the negotiations with key congressmen and senators. But you see, the issue that lead to the non-curricular education language was as between some of the key members of the Rules Committee. Well, particularly it was--oh, dear, I can't think of his name now, a New York congressman.

M: [Emanuel] Celler?

Y: No.

M: He's not on the Rules Committee.

Y: A Catholic.

M: Yes. [William F.] Ryan?

Y: No, it's a three syllable--well, it doesn't matter. At any rate, he through his New York colleague [Hugh L.] Carey got quite concerned about--Carey described this as a grits and greens bill. It was just for the southerners. It wasn't enough for the big city poor, and he was thinking of the parochial school kids. That's a relatively minor problem as whole totals go. We don't think about it nowadays as a big poverty program problem, but it was terribly important then and we had to find a way to resolve it and we had all kinds of people beating on us.

We had the issue of what proportion of the Job Corps centers should be conservation centers. That was terribly important because we needed the conservation lobby and that was negotiated out very delicately. Of course, the governors' veto was a--

M: Did you all decide that the bill wouldn't pass without accepting that or did you decide that it wasn't critical [inaudible]?

Y: Well, I think it's fair to say--it sounds self-serving, it is self-serving, but I still believe it--that there wasn't any issue that we thought was critical that we yielded on, a substantive issue.

M: Did Mr. Johnson call personally congressmen and senators during the course of this, to your knowledge?

Y: I believe he did. I have literally forgotten. I mean, I can't recollect, but my general impressionistic recollection is that he

did and that he was as helpful as we wanted him to be, but that wasn't our primary reliance. And a lot of these--the governors' veto issue we argued out. I don't think we gave ground on anything that we thought was really critical, although we were worried all the time about having enough votes. We'd have a session every day towards the end and count the yeses and the noes and the uncertains. We'd get up to a hundred and eighty-five, a hundred and ninety. "What do you need?" "What do you need?" You figured for safety's sake you needed about two-ten. We didn't quite--we thought well, we're sort of over the edge, we weren't sure. It turned out eventually we did much better than we had thought, although there was one point where the opponents almost maneuvered us into defeat, a parliamentary maneuver with some kind of a--I forget whether it was a teller vote or what on some procedural issue which would have tabled it. We managed to round up enough people to get it.

M: When did you become aware that your sacrifice was going to be the price of support for a certain bloc?

Y: Well, I wasn't aware of it until it happened. I knew that--I was dimly aware that there was some problem with some of the southern congressmen. I had been the object of attack by the famous General Edwin Walker a couple of years before. I knew that some of the southern congressmen felt I was the architect of more intensive integration policy in the Defense Department, although I think I would be exaggerating my role to say that I was the architect. I was the fellow that was given a job to do by the Secretary, and

in fact it wasn't really done effectively until a year or more after I left, and the person who really should get the credit for it, more than anybody else, other than the Secretary and Cy Vance, is probably Alfred Fitt, F-I-T-T.

M: Yes, we've interviewed him.

Y: Yes. But they had picked on me and they had gotten all kinds of stuff. Of course, I was persona non grata in various circles because I had done case studies on personnel security back in 1955, although it was quite all right with the people that I worked with in the FBI and the government. But this thing kind of blew up apparently. I was not told about it, I'm sure, out of consideration. Sargent Shriver and Wilson McCarthy, who was the legislative liaison fellow, indicated to me what was going on. I suppose it was going on for about a week, and then it blew up.

M: Was there some specific southern congressman, [L. Mendel] Rivers or [Harold D.] Cooley or somebody else?

Y: No, I'm told that it was primarily the North Carolina delegation and that it was organized by a man now dead, I can't remember, a congressman from North Carolina who was the leading man on the sugar bloc. Who would that be?

M: I can't call his name at all. I can't think of anybody who died recently.

Y: No, he died two or three years ago.

M: Cooley's gone too, of course, now as far as the Congress is concerned. A lot of them are gone that were there then.

Y: No. Maybe he was defeated; maybe he didn't die. It may have been Cooley. In fact, I think perhaps it was.

M: He was chairman of the Agriculture Committee.

Y: Yes, I think maybe it was Cooley, yes. Why didn't I. . . ? At any rate, none of these people were people I had ever met. They didn't know me; I was a name.

M: That's the easiest kind to hate, the kind that you don't know.

Is the story [correct] that was reprinted so widely after the event occurred, that Shriver called Mr. Johnson and got specific approval to assure them that you would not be deputy director after it?

M: I have no way of knowing. I was not present and I have not heard the story from either of the principals. I remember Shriver coming back at the end of the day that day, coming into the office and saying to me, "Well, we've just thrown you to the wolves, and this is the worst day in my life." Things kind of degenerated into, what do we do then and now, and where can we put him, and we have to find the right place for him. That kind of petered out and the President, I gather, got mad. Why he got mad, whether he was mad at me or at Shriver, at. . . .

M: Circumstances.

Y: I'm not the best evidence of that.

M: He never talked to you?

Y: He never talked to me. I have not had a conversation with Lyndon B. Johnson since the week before that happened. At public gatherings

where we have been in the same room I have made some effort not to encounter him and he has made no effort to right the situation.

M: He did later, according to the accounts, more or less deny the role that you had played. It's one of his problems in the early credibility gap things. You never received an explanation of that?

Y: No. No, no, I never did.

M: You did, however, participate in the signing ceremony and receive a pen. Did he have anything to do with inviting you there?

Y: No. No. I was very much of two minds as to whether I ought to go, and I did go and I did see him.

M: Were any promises made about future positions at the time?

Y: Oh, yes. Yes. Although they were not made by him; they were made by others on his behalf.

M: By others very close, Moyers?

Y: Yes. Well, Shriver primarily.

M: Did they have specific positions in mind?

Y: No. Although the issue finally, as I recall after almost a year, boiled down to, well, the President would send my name up for the general counsel post in the Department of Defense, which was the post that presumably I had been the principal candidate for all along and would eventually have gotten into if I hadn't gone to the poverty program. Then it was decided that that wouldn't work, couldn't work, and he was not willing to put my name up. He refused specifically to send my name up--I was told, again, I have this secondhand--for other posts for which I might have been nominated

and confirmed--again I was told--because he was primarily angry at the Evans and Novak article, which came out at just the critical time. It didn't help the situation. This gets into the realm of speculation.

M: You're right. Then also in the realm of speculation is the number of votes that were affected by sacrificing you. You indicated a while ago on the head counts, right at the last minute, you weren't sure you had enough. The head counts were just bad?

Y: Well, I don't say they were bad, but you know about pollsters. It ended up with a lot more people getting on the bandwagon perhaps than had been anticipated. No, I wouldn't say the head counts were bad. I mean, they were technically perfectly [acceptable].

M: But it was possible at the time you were sacrificed to believe that your sacrifice would be decisive in this?

Y: Yes. Well, I don't know that it would be decisive, but that things were sufficiently close so we better do everything that we can. I was obviously disqualified from making a judgment, either tactical or moral.

M: Right. You, then after that time, according to the same Evans and Novak [article], participated in the so-called anti-campaign of 1964. Is that accurate?

Y: Yes. Yes. We'd better keep that under lock and key, because I'm not sure we didn't bend the Hatch Act a little, but I guess the statute of limitations runs at some point.

M: How did you get involved in that almost immediately after you had been sacrificed?

Y: Well, I was sacrificed, but when I left the task force I moved into a White House office, actually an Executive Office Building office in the White House section of the EOB. Moyers asked me to work with Mike Feldman on that task, along with representatives of various departments, and I did. Then after the election I worked a little bit with Moyers on putting together the 1965-1966 legislative program.

M: That anti-campaign specifically--

Y: The so-called five o'clock club.

M: The five o'clock club, right. Specifically, what kinds of duties did the people who ran the White House undertake?

Y: Well, mostly we used such staff as was available to us to run down material to counter what we regarded as untruths or distortions by the opposition candidate, and to make them available and timely.

M: The campaign of dirty tricks, as I've also heard it referred to occasionally.

Y: Well, I think that's a little unfair. I don't think anything we did would be properly described as dirty tricks. It was the negative aspect of the campaign. It was an effort to point out where the other side was wrong, but I don't think that falls in. . . . We weren't responsible for some of the more light-hearted aspects of this, Dick Tuck's infiltrating Democratic representatives on the Goldwater campaign train and putting out a campaign mimeograph

newspaper on the train, that kind of thing. I think some of those were associated with our enterprise in either the public or the press. But Dick Tuck was an independent operator and a very good one.

M: You weren't responsible for--what was it?--the famous little girl that picked petals off the daisy in front of the hydrogen bomb?

Y: No. No. We were not involved in that at all. That was the ad agency. No, we were strictly facts and figures people.

M: Did Mr. Johnson take a direct, personal interest in what you were doing?

Y: Yes, through Mike Feldman.

M: But again, you didn't get personally involved in it?

Y: No, no. I did not.

M: Then after the end of 1964, you said you stayed in the White House through early 1965.

Y: Yes. I stayed there until May 15, when I went to the Dominican Republic.

M: How did you get that job, going down there?

Y: McNamara. He asked me to go.

M: Again, through the Defense Department.

Y: Well, yes. McNamara personally asked me if I would do it. I was rather reluctant because I felt that the Dominican action was a mistake. He said, "Well, okay. All the more reason it needs to be cleaned up. If you get down there and find that your conscience doesn't permit you to stay, why turn around and come back. Meanwhile,

take any reserves as you need from the department." I couldn't say no, so I went. And I'm glad I did.

M: You had no policy-advising role though, you were simply undertaking a specific problem.

Y: Well, that was my assignment, but as events developed I was because I was one of the people on the island who was not reporting to the Ambassador [W. Tapley Bennett] but directly to the White House.

M: To the White House or the Defense Department?

Y: To the White House. I went down with Tony Solomon. The understanding was that Tony would stay a week and then turn the task force over to me, which he did. Our job was--call it mechanical--an administrative job of making sure there was no starvation, or at least no more starvation than there was in normal times I think. But because the team of Mac Bundy and Cy Vance came down, because I was one of the few people that was available to them, so to speak, who was not a member of the embassy staff, I worked closely with Bundy and Vance.

M: But not with [Thomas] Mann, who was also on that team?

Y: Mann was gone--

M: Gone by then.

Y: --by the time I got there.

M: Okay. Yes, he stayed a very short time.

Y: Yes. I had the job of seeing to it that the junta was in a form that they did not have access to the treasury because we had put a squad of men around the treasury building. We heard they were going to clean out the supply of currency that was available there

and start inflation and what not. I also had the job of organizing the monthly or semi-monthly payment of wages to all the government employees and the soldiers and the day workers. Probably for the first and perhaps the last time in Dominican history we paid the laborers before we paid the soldiers.

M: I'm sure it's the first time. I hope it's not the last. Did you have anything to do with the Bundy-Vance negotiations in trying to put together a coalition?

Y: No, although we talked a lot.

M: The general consensus of press speculation was that they thought they had one put together that perhaps the White House torpedoed.

Y: No, I don't really think that that's--and again, we're off in the realm of speculation. I wasn't there, but I think the reason that that particular thing fell apart was that it was pointed out that the way it was developing this would be something that we were forcing on the Dominicans, and therefore whoever came in would have two strikes against him because he was the Americans' man. I think that was certainly perfectly reasonable.

M: You indicated a minute ago that when you went down there you were not in sympathy with the general policy that we had undertaken there.

Y: I have always continued to believe that it was a grave error for us to do what we did. But I think that we managed to make a pretty nice recovery.

M: Nothing that you saw once you got there changed your mind or convinced you otherwise?

Y: No. No.

M: The alleged communist participation wasn't as obvious as the administration tried to make it?

Y: It wasn't, it wasn't. I just think we lost more in the cold war, in the struggle to maintain American credibility in Latin America by doing what we did than we would have if we had let events take their course. Now I think that the Dominican Republic is probably better off than it would have been if we had let events take their course. Not that I believe you would necessarily or even probably have had a communist regime. I think probably what you would have had is another maybe [Juan] Bosch regime, which wouldn't have made it, and then you would have had another coup and a right wing. But you would have had--I think--a tremendous bloodbath.

M: You would have had?

Y: Oh, I think so. Which we prevented by putting our troops between the two contending forces. I remember one morning at breakfast Mac Bundy said, "Well, they're going to run out of war today. They're both going to come up against the Americans and they're not going to shoot at Americans." So I think we saved a lot of lives. But I think the costs for the country and for our position in the world was too great.

M: You came back then in the summer of 1965.

Y: Yes, I came back in mid-June. Then for a time I was told that I was going to go to the White House as a special assistant, which was an odd development.

M: Yes, that would have been.

Y: But it was apparent then that the situation changed and Joe Califano went over, and I was asked to come back--because he went over in a hurry--to break in his successor. He had succeeded in my job as the special assistant. I came back and supervised that office. Then at that time it was understood that I would become principal deputy in ISA. It was also understood that I would do this for a year and I would then go to Harvard. This was all kind of a package. It was on the basis that I would not receive a presidential appointment and the hell with it.

M: Later on at least, if not by then, ISA became sort of a center of dissent on Vietnam policy. Had it already become that when you went there?

Y: No, I think that would not be a fair statement. ISA became a center of dissent I would say after McNamara left. Well, that's unfair. It's very hard to describe. Everybody was unhappy with the Vietnam situation and [John T.] McNaughton was a very realistic, pessimistic--he had been working closely with McNamara on Vietnam. I was on the fringes of the Vietnam thing. By and large the year I was there McNaughton's primary responsibility was Vietnam. He was almost a special assistant to the secretary for Vietnam and my primary responsibility was the rest of the world. I don't mean to say that I wasn't involved and had my share of blame, guilt and all the rest of it. But I was not working primarily on Vietnam. I was working primarily on NATO matters, on internal organization

problems, particularly relating to military assistance, and on the regular flow of things like do we send the next naval mission on an exercise that takes them through a body of water that the Soviets say is national and we say is international, fifty million things like that.

But I think those of us who were concerned with Vietnam--it was held very closely because it was such a mess. I don't mean we were trying to conceal from people, but it was regarded as such a terribly difficult and easily--it would be so easy to make it worse. McNaughton had a very strong sense of keeping things close to the chest. So that he and I were the only people really who saw an awful lot of the traffic within ISA or at that level of Defense. Everybody felt it was a messy situation and how in the hell do we get out.

M: But they were pretty well of the opinion that we ought to be trying to get out?

Y: Yes, but I think. . . . It's awfully hard to reconstruct. I made a speech and debated Benjamin Spock in the summer of 1965, just as I was going to the job. I think the burden of my song was whether we should have gotten involved or not. There was some justification for it. We can't just pull out. I may, by hindsight, be making my speech more dovish than it was at the time. I did have things to say about Viet Cong terrorists and so forth which maybe today I would think were somewhat imbalanced. True, but not the whole truth.

M: Were you sent out to debate Spock by somebody?

Y: I don't know how it happened, but I got the assignment.

M: Nobody objected to you doing this type of thing.

Y: Oh, no. No, no. It was assumed that we do a certain amount of this sort of thing. I was perfectly willing to do it. I think the invitation came directly to me, as normally speaking invitations did in those days. But the effort within the department in effect to bring to bear all the facts and information, this sort of turned things around. That was a 1967 or 1968 effort. At the time I think everybody was going along.

(Interruption)

Then I think at that time it was just sort of a running sore. One of my responsibilities, which was a Vietnam responsibility, was to review the B-52 bombing plans. I was to make sure that none of the B-52 missions were going to hit any occupied places, civilian-occupied places. I'd pour over the map and say, "What's that little square?" and the colonel would say, "They say there's nobody living there any more." I'd say, "How do you know?" all that kind of thing. John and I would work over his trip memoranda and gloomy predictions about where we'd be a year from now.

M: That gloomy prediction now, was that contrary to what the Defense Intelligence Agency was saying at the same time or was there a consensus?

Y: Well, I don't suppose the Defense Intelligence Agency--the kind of gloomy predictions that we made--John made really and that I'm sure

McNamara concurred in, I mean these were his memoranda, too--were not the official line. The official line was always more optimistic. Now McNamara, for instance when he came back and said we'll be out by 1965, he was saying well, we'll either be out because we'll have won or we'll be out because we'll have quit. This was the only way he could get Max Taylor to go along and have a joint statement that was capable of two interpretations. But he didn't quite--the public didn't read it that way.

M: These were getting through to the President? You say you didn't talk to him, but are you relatively certain that the President was getting the true sense of pessimism?

Y: Oh, I'm sure. I'm sure he was. Why am I sure? I am sure. (Interruption)

M: You have been talking about your activities in ISA.

Y: Yes, and about the role of dissent, ISA as the center of dissent. So it wasn't that it was the center of dissent then, it was trying to make the best of a bad situation and hoping--I think it's fair to say--that those who were concerned, the principal civilians, McNaughton, myself, Dick Cushman--what's the matter with me? Names. It isn't Dick. It's John Cushman's brother, who was. . . .

M: It's checkable from the organization manual.

Y: Yes. I see his face clearly before me. He was our deputy for Southeast Asia working on Vietnam and then Mort Halperin was doing a lot, too. We were all feeling that, well--I <u>think</u> we were feeling at the time, I know I had felt the bombing was a mistake from the

start, bombing of the north, and I continued to feel that way, and that McNamara would persuade the President on that at some point and that he probably felt that way, although I did not discuss it. It was one of the few issues that I never discussed with McNamara. (Interruption)

M: You had said you didn't discuss your opposition to the bombing with McNamara. Why?

Y: I used to write him sometimes on what I thought were very important issues. I would give him handwritten memorandum, no copies. I mean, I didn't keep a copy, one original. I did on this issue I think when I was still in the White House, in the spring of 1965 I guess. This was the only piece of paper of that kind that I ever sent him that he didn't respond to, and I think he didn't respond to because he just didn't want to talk about it.

M: So you didn't pursue it any further than that? Is it possible that he didn't know the degree of opposition that existed among the principal civilians in the Defense Department?

Y: I don't think so. In any event, that would not have been a matter of concern to him. I'm overstating it a little, but he operated on the principle that when you delegate, you delegate completely, and when you review, you review without prejudice. I remember when he gave you jurisdiction, you had it. When he reviewed what you'd done, the fact that you thought it ought to go one particular way was of not very much weight, if he had decided that he was going to review this particular issue. I remember once urging some course of action

on him and saying that it's not just how I feel--this was not a Vietnam issue, that I recall--but Charlie Hitch and Harold Brown [and] somebody else feel the same way. He said, "Well, it doesn't matter, if you think it's important." In other words, you don't make points by adding up weight of my advisers. The fact that you want to raise it with me as an option, we take it from there impartially.

(Interruption)

M: I'll let you get back to the things that are pressing in on you, obviously. You indicated that when you went to ISA it was sort of a package that you would go to Harvard after about a year. Does that mean that your resignation was not then a matter of substance? You had planned to leave and it was not policy?

Y: Yes, that's right. That's right. I had planned from the beginning to leave and had accepted the post at Harvard.

M: So there was nothing that happened in that year that led you to leave.

Y: No, no.

M: You were pretty close to Mr. McNamara for a long time. Do you know anything about his relations with Mr. Johnson that lead to their difficulties in the latter part of 1967?

Y: Well, no, really. No. No, I don't.

M: It was another subject about which you didn't discuss with Mr. McNamara?

Y: No, really not.

M: What about the same question I suppose of Robert Kennedy? You were associated with Robert Kennedy a great deal.

Y: Yes.

M: What about his relations with Mr. Johnson?

Y: They were practically nonexistent.

M: Were they actually as bitter as was reputed at the time?

Y: Well, he had no use for Lyndon Johnson, and I'm sure that Lyndon Johnson cordially hated him.

M: Did this emerge in specific acts?

Y: Well, no. Just in general tone I'd say.

(Interruption)

M: Actually, I have no other subjects on which I know that you are an expert commentator, but I don't want to cut you off. Are there any open-ended comments about your knowledge of or experience with Lyndon Johnson that you think should be a part of this kind of record?

Y: Well, let's see. I think it's probably worth noting that when he was vice president--this goes not to Lyndon Johnson so much as to the problems of being vice president--that we used to have these telephone conversation conferences and they would go on endlessly. I mean half an hour or forty-five minutes was not unusual. I was no particular confidante of his, but to me this was an indication of the extent to which his talents were not being used as vice president. It's by way of a footnote.

M: Yes. He doing most of the talking?

Y: Oh, yes. Yes.

M: As is usually the case.

Well, I certainly thank you for giving me an hour or so out of this type of morning for you. If there is anything you want to add, now is the time to do so. Otherwise we'll call it a morning.

Y: No, I think that's probably covered the ground.

M: Okay, fine.

[End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview I]

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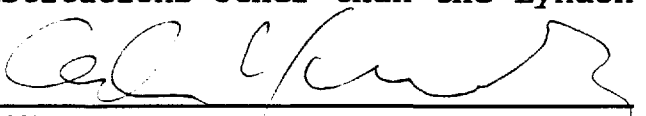

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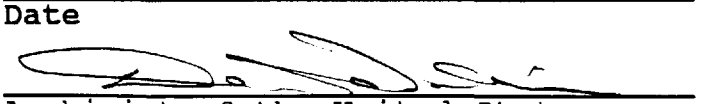

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