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MCGEORGE BUNDY ORAL HISTORY, INTERVIEW II
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MCGEORGE BUNDY

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Mary L. Bundy — November 5th, 2005
Donor — Date

Allen Weinstein — 12/3/05
Archivist of the United States — Date

INTERVIEW II

DATE: February 17, 1969

INTERVIEWEE: McGEORGE BUNDY

INTERVIEWER: Paige E. Mulhollan

PLACE: Mr. Bundy's office, New York City

Tape 1 of 1

M: I'm sure you have no reason to recall exactly what we covered in the last tape.

B: None. You'll have to stop me. Just put your hand up if I've said it before.

M: I'll do it. On the outline that I sent you in advance, we covered, as I took it, the first two points. That would leave us to the number one foreign policy subject for today, I suppose, which would be the whole matter of Vietnam involvement, which we almost didn't mention at all last time. As a way of beginning, I suppose, can you describe what in your opinion was the nature of the commitment that the United States had in regard to Vietnam at the time Mr. Johnson became president?

B: Well, the President took over not very long after the change of government in Saigon, the coup, the killing of Diem and his brother, in a period in which there was a great deal of uncertainty as to what was going to happen next in Vietnam but not much doubt of the importance--from the point of view of the United States--of that area, at least, in the government in Washington. The number of troops and all that is an easy matter of record, and I don't have the figures off the top of my head. The more subtle question is sort of what did people really think was the size and shape of the issue. And there were already differences of degree, emphasis and point of view toward Vietnam. There was

not an immediate sense of military crisis, as there came to be a year later. So the immediate issue for the President in 1963 was whether to proceed with and to support a policy of trying to get the strongest possible government after Diem, and to rebuild and intensify the various efforts of Pacification, political reinforcement, military advice, and all the rest, which were associated with the policies of 1962 and 1963.

President Johnson, I think, always felt that the U.S. had made a serious mistake in letting a situation develop in which Diem could be overthrown by people believing that they were acting more or less on the advice and recommendation at least of Americans. President Kennedy, I think, was equally clear that the assassination of Diem and [Ngo Dinh] Nhu was a terrible thing, but I believe had tended to side with those who felt that there was reason for putting pressure on Diem and hoping for change, without necessarily hoping for a change in government. The reasons, therefore, for taking a certain distance from him were compelling simply because--public reaction after his death did tend to show he had become, and Nhu still more, hopelessly unpopular with the ordinary rank and file, the population of Saigon, and indeed, South Vietnam generally.

We were not, so we were heavily engaged there. We had not reached the questions of decision as between defeat and larger intervention that were inescapable a year later or less [inaudible].

M: That's getting to the question, and I suppose from what you say you consider it somewhat academic then, as to what Mr. Kennedy might have done given the same circumstances.

B: It's just an impossible question to answer. And one reason for not answering it in these years is simply that there's something very unsuitable about using a dead man on one side

or another of a debate that he never lived to take part in.

M: Although some of his friends, I think, may have done some of that.

B: Well, some have, but a lot have not. One of the things I agree with Ken Galbraith about is his very clear-cut, flat statement that you can't do that.

Now, President Kennedy and President Johnson are two very different men, and their ways of assessing and acting, while they have many similarities--profound political skill, readiness to accept final responsibility, and high intelligence--there are other ways in which they are very different. And in those ways, which have to do with the degree of emphasis that might have been given to this or that part of the program, the way in which it might or might not have been explained, the kinds of people that might or might not have been picked, there would have been some differences. But just what they would have been and just how they would have affected the result, I think will always be a matter of speculation. My own guess is that the war wouldn't have gotten quite so big with President Kennedy, but I can't be sure of it. One can judge that more readily in the smaller case, the Dominican Republic. It's very unlikely that President Kennedy would have wanted to put twenty thousand troops in. And President Johnson had a darned good case: if you're going to put one soldier in, make damned sure you have enough. President Johnson never felt that he should, in this kind of an issue, be governed by what he would have called the *New York Times*-Harvard crowd. President Johnson never felt that way, and President Kennedy might have just thought about it that way himself. He would not have felt comfortable with that many troops in and around Santo Domingo, and I doubt very much if he would have put them in. I'm not saying he wouldn't have put

any troops in. Although he might not have, and that might have been a mistake. We won't know. We'll never know the answer to that.

M: Maybe the real question is, if Mr. Johnson had wanted to reverse the commitment or the investment that had already [been] made in South Vietnam, would it be fair to say that he would have had to go and vie against virtually all of his advisers to do this?

B: You can't ask that question very well in the context of 1963 and 1964, because it wasn't that much policy [?]. You could ask that question very well in the context of 1965, and there you would, I think, be in a position where the President, if he had said, "No, boys, I'm sorry. If it means a couple of hundred thousand troops and a permanent commitment to bomb, I'm going to go with George Ball against Dean Rusk. I know that Bob McNamara and Mac Bundy are more on Dean Rusk's side than they are on George Ball's, but I kind of think they'll go with me," whatever the President decides will stick. And it would have. Now, I'm not saying for a minute that either Bob or I would now say we gave wrong advice or would be at all disposed to conceal the positions we then took. I'm saying that we had enough experience with both presidents on reaching decisions that were not exactly what we had advised, that we wouldn't have made difficulties for President Johnson. That would have been a most improper thing for us to have done, unless we had a feeling of catastrophe, or absolute certainty that the case had to be taken to the country, would lead you to resign, and nothing of that sort came up.

I think there would have been very heavy military opposition, and sensitivity to military opinion was a very strong characteristic of both President Kennedy and President Johnson. Neither of them had the kind of feeling that it was politically okay for him to

simply tell the generals what they ought to do, that for different reasons both General [Dwight] Eisenhower, because he had more stars than they did, and Mr. [Harry] Truman, because he just didn't give a damn, really did have. I've exaggerated in both cases, but still on balance, Truman and Eisenhower, and indeed FDR, had more self-confidence in dealing with their senior military advisers than either Kennedy or Johnson did. Kennedy was closely aware of the fact that he was elected by a very narrow margin. And Johnson was a product of the Senate and of the belief that the Senate Armed Services Committee and the armed services together were a hell of a powerful group. He had seen a lot of people charge up against them and very few had survived.

M: That's where he came from in the Senate?

B: That's right. That's my point. So I don't think we can be very categorical about the choices, who President Johnson would or wouldn't have to overrule, except to note the very important influence and role in his own thinking, not only of the notion that he wasn't about to be the first American president to lose a war--which he did say to [Henry] Cabot Lodge right there in the first few days of his administration--not only that, not only that he believed on the whole, on balance, in the notion that this was a test of the balance of power between communists and non-communists in the Pacific. He had said so himself in a very carefully drawn report in 1961 after a trip out there. Not only that the majority of his advisers, though not all, leaned to that side of the argument, but also--here is I think the critical point--that the choice, by the time it did become a sharp, hard issue in 1965, was really just that rough. Are you going to do a whole lot more, and are you going to let the damned thing go down the drain? And the great difficulty that I

recall--the documents will do better than three finesses or oral memory here--in the arguments of those who were against escalation was that they weren't able to produce any very good scenario that would be anything but the Americans getting licked and taking the licking. Now in that sense, the events of the previous years had created a hell of a situation, because it wasn't just saying these people are inefficient; it was having to go back on a whole series of pledges.

And if one has to add that President Johnson in the campaign and in the year of 1964 had used an awful lot of language about carrying out commitments of three presidents and so forth, there's a sense, some would say, in which 1964 was a year of assurances without much action, and those due bills fell in. As soon as the election was over, when it became apparent, as indeed it had been right through the year that we were living on borrowed time, the President hadn't wanted to make and the government did not press him to make those hard decisions during an election year. Some people, Bob McNamara would probably say, it is not possible to say how far this is still his view, but there was a time that he felt that the most serious problem in those few years was that we lost the year 1964--

M: Started too late.

B: --because of the election, yes.

M: And yet we did have the Tonkin Bay authorization in 1964.

B: Yes, but you know that Tonkin Bay authorization was a very strong resolution, which, again, was passed in large part because everybody thought--nobody was voting for it on the ground that we were going to send a hundred thousand troops. Indeed, the President

was still making speeches a month or two later about how he wasn't going to send American boys. Those passages at times, it may be fair to say, in defense of the speech writers and the speech reviewers in the White House, were generally off the cuff.

M: He has made some like that on several occasions, I think.

B: But they were his honest expectation. I don't think the President himself thought he was going to be called on to make decisions in 1965 as tough as the ones he was called on to make. And my own view is that we may not have served him very well in not getting him to put a tighter lid on what the military did ask for and get during the summer and fall of 1965. But without having the documents in front of me, it would be hard for me to spell that out sharply.

M: There has been a lot of criticism, all after the event, of the whole Tonkin episode, even to the extent of doubt being cast on the nature of the attack on the American vessels. Was there any such question at the time?

B: We certainly believed that things were as we represented them to the public. I wouldn't be able to say of my own memory exactly how thoroughly and fully everything was checked out. I think I'd better leave that subject to people like McNamara, who made a major study of it and major public statements of it when the Congress reviewed it again in what, 1967?

M: 1967. Was there any disagreement at that time about the need for retaliation, given the reality of the attacks on American vessels?

B: Assuming the attacks, the retaliation seemed reasonable, and I don't think much of anyone was against it. Obviously, it was also occurring in the shadow of the campaign.

And there is force and I think accuracy to a degree in the charge that the administration did capitalize on the Tonkin Gulf episode to get a resolution. That was said at the time. The notion of a resolution has been around the government for a long time, and the problem had been do you want to ask for a resolution that you might have a majority for, but you'll have a hell of a debate, and you're just adding to your congressional load. And the President was always one to strike when the iron was hot in congressional terms and pass a bill when he could pass it. So when this thing happened, and it became clear that he could get a resolution right quick, he went and got it. Now, how bad was that? How was it bad? The notion that you pass a bill when you can pass a bill was the way Lyndon Johnson was brung up.

M: He was praised for it a year earlier in certain other matters.

B: Exactly. Exactly.

M: Philip Geyelin, I think, has said that Johnson really didn't pay much attention to Vietnam in 1964. Some of what you've said kind of hints that. Is that your estimate?

B: Well, he paid attention to it in the sense that he had it on his mind, but it was not his main account. His main account was the election of 1964, the nomination first, the securing of his political flanks against what he saw as the Kennedy threat, and the effective choice of the right vice president; all this is the period of sort of spring-summer. The immediate business was to govern the country. And while Vietnam was certainly the principal overseas problem, it wasn't one that he had to deal with right then. One of the things that I may have said in our last session that I certainly should add now if I haven't about Lyndon Johnson as president was that he decided what was ready for decision. His

notion of what was ready for decision would be almost anybody else's view of over-ready for decision. He never decided whether to go the Ranch until the last possible moment, and that was also true about Vietnam.

M: That matter displeased reporters, particularly greatly when they didn't know whether they were going or not.

B: The person who really had to live with it was Mrs. Johnson, and how that extraordinary woman has put up with not knowing what's going to happen next for forty years is one of the wonders of the world.

M: When did he really have to decide? When did it finally get down to that point on Vietnam, then?

B: I think he would say, and this is a terribly interesting question, that he knew that the events of 1964 were not--it was not getting better. And I think you'll find that even in 1964, there are lots of meetings in which he has the brethren in and saying, "Look, you know I can do practically anything but be a good commander in chief, and I'm not getting results out of this, and you're letting me down!" Hammer! Hammer! Hammer! Hammer! But [these occurred] within a framework in which he wasn't authorizing that much action, nor was there that much fertility of imagination as to what additional kinds of action were needed, just more and better of the same.

Many of us would have said that neither Cabot Lodge, who came back, you recall, to fuss around with the Republican primaries, nor Max Taylor was exactly the right fellow for that job. But the President wanted men of eminent, nonpartisan respectability who wouldn't give him any trouble, and both of these fellows--they were honest and able

men. I don't think either of them is of that stature that he finally got with [Ellsworth] Bunker, or as smart politically about how to go about things.

He had it on his mind, but he didn't have to make decisions about it. Once he got comfortably positioned with the view that he was just carrying out the policy that General Eisenhower announced in his letter to Diem, which was, you know, partly an exercise in bipartisan propaganda and partly true, there was a continuing line there. But it's a long way from a conditional promise of economic assistance to the situation we got into by 1967. Once he had got himself positioned there and was working hard on doing the best he could in the existing situation and felt that it would hold together and was the right basic policy, if he wasn't going to make any major change, he decided I think that he wasn't going to press for a major change, and he pushed ahead of him the question of whether he would bomb the North and did not react to various episodes, especially one that occurred just before the election.

M: The Bien Hoa attack?

B If it had not been three days before the election, whatever it was, I think he would have reacted to that. I think he stored that in his own mind's eye as the last time he would put up with that sort of thing, but he didn't say so to anyone. That's not his way.

M: There is this statement by I think it's Chalmers Roberts of the *Post* who says Mr. Johnson told him in 1965 that he had decided to start bombing the North as early as perhaps May of 1964.

B: I forget to whom he said that sort of thing in 1965, but he did say it. I'm not sure it is Roberts. I think it's another reputable reporter [Charles Roberts of *Newsweek*], but you

could check it, who did come away from a meeting in 1965 with the feeling that the reason the President said there was no policy change with the bombing after Pleiku was that in his own view he had made that decision earlier. And I kind of recall his saying to me once, "Didn't we decide all that earlier?" I brought him back a long memorandum when I came back from my visit, which coincided with the Pleiku attack in February of 1965, recommending a selective bombing program. He read it through in his bedroom the night I got back and said to me, "Well, isn't that all decided?" And I said--I forget what I said I was so surprised at that, I thought that this was--

M: Maybe by you, but not by me.

B: If I had been feeling pert, I would have said, "Well, thank you for telling me," or something of that sort. But I think there was in his own--but, you know, it's terribly hard to be sure with him exactly when a decision is made. This is a point we did discuss the last time.

So, in any event, certainly by March of 1965 he was clear that selective bombing--and it was always selective, he really looked at every target during the year or so I watched him. The troop decision is a much more complicated matter, and in my own judgment the only two people who can really tell you much about that are Lyndon B. Johnson and Robert S. McNamara.

M: I'm supposed to talk to McNamara next month. I hope he will tell us something about it.

B: I think he probably will. I think he probably will. If he decided that, you know, this is really going into a lead suitcase. Because while I have recollections of the meetings and know the shape of the discussion and remember how we gradually decided that we were

going to do roughly so much--we had first thought we were, and then we decided we were not going to call up the reserves, and that was fairly a presidential decision--the way the problem got shaped in that fashion, and the expectation of how much more you would do or not do, and the degree to which both the economic and the military costs were explicit in people's minds, I'm not a very good witness on. That in itself suggests that we may not have had the perfect proceedings. But the President wanted it. He wanted to be able to present this decision in just his own way, and that meant that the ways and means of accumulating the information and the forms of discussion in which the decision was conducted had to be conducted very much his own way. And while I'd be very far from wanting to say that he didn't look at every angle of it, I would want to say that a lot of his looking took place in ways that only one person at a time saw, because this is the way he works.

M: Was there significant opposition to the beginning of the bombing on a regular basis when it did begin in February of 1965?

B: Yes. Again, you would have had explicit reservations from George Ball and quite a lot of implicit reservation from places like the Intelligence Division of the Department of State, and one or two of my younger staff--James Thomson--and caution at least in some parts of the Pentagon, and a willingness on the President's part to hear all those arguments no problem. Probably reservations about Vietnam generally on the Moyers-Goodwin side of the White House, but just exactly how those were presented I really don't know. One of the things that I thought was too bad about that part of things was that I didn't always know what the rest of the staff was telling the President about my own area, and I think

you can do better work if you really level with each other.

M: Was there, at the time the bombing began, some sort of specific term that it was hoped that they would accomplish something within?

B: Specific term, no. I think--but again, the documents would be better on this. I certainly didn't feel that one--I didn't have a specific term, neither would I have said in early 1965 that we'd still be bombing three-and-a-half years later. I mean, I don't think any of us thought or believed that it would be that long, that inconclusive, and be that big, or should be. But why we didn't think so and what kind of balanced view we then had as to how big it would and wouldn't get is very hard to do by memory.

M: Was there some specific accomplishment that the bombings were supposed to accomplish more than any other?

B: Well, I always thought that the President's Baltimore speech stated pretty accurately what we thought the bombing was about, and I never had any--my own comments, I hope, were consistent with that, and I think they were in 1965. Other people had larger ambitions. I mean the straight air power people would have felt if only people would take the wraps off, they could button it up. But the President's view--after all, that is the authoritative one--was much more moderate.

M: You mentioned Moyers a minute ago. I heard Moyers on television not very long ago say that by the end of 1965--which would be about the time you were preparing to leave your position--that dissent on the Vietnam policy was becoming widespread in government. Do you think that's a fair estimate by Moyers?

B: I'm not sure I know the answer to that. I would guess that over on the domestic side of

the government there was quite a lot. Those were people who were--I don't think it hampered their budgets in 1966, but they sure as hell felt it in 1967. I would have thought that that was a little early to date widespread dissent in the government. There might have been unease about it, disquiet. Perhaps the best point I can make on that is that it didn't occur to me, when I was making recommendations to the President for my successor at the end of 1965, to rate them or think about this in terms of their degree of support or doubt about Vietnam, as I certainly would have done a year or two years later. I had occasion for accidental reasons, to look at a memorandum which I wrote on that point the other day. Someone from the White House sent it up to me because they thought it might belong in my personal files, and I told them it didn't, it ought to go to Austin, where it now is. But I did look it over because it was in the office that day, and it mentions a considerable number of people, but it doesn't raise the question about anyone, whether he is hot, cool, or medium on the Vietnam war.

M: So that suggests maybe that it wasn't as widespread as Moyers--

B: Moyers is one, incidentally.

M: Moyers is one of those that you recommended for your successor, you mean?

B: I think it may well have been my first choice.

M: That's very interesting.

B: I didn't rank the choices, because that was not a way of getting anything to happen with Lyndon Johnson.

M: Then presumably the advisers in 1965 were not falling into definable groups?

B: Well, I wouldn't say that. I mean, we clearly knew that George Ball had grave doubts

and was expressing them in an articulate, effective and determined way within the government. I would have guessed that Bill [Moyers] was wary about the war, but I don't really concretely know. One of the ironies about that period is that the Baltimore speech, which began in the flattest possible language about aggression from the North, was written by Dick Goodwin.

M: Who later on shows up as one who questioned that seriously. Right. What about the dissenters generally? Did they have any trouble making their case directly to President Johnson? Did he hear what dissent there was?

B: Well, you have to be careful about that in this sense. The President was always ready to hear from people that he regarded as advising him as friends, trying really to think of the American interest and his interest as president and not advising him as opponents. He was never all that interested in public opposition. Once he and Walter Lippmann had their falling out, as they did somewhere along this period, and Bill Fulbright, as they did later in that summer, he never paid any attention to them again. They were no longer friends; they were hostiles. But I think the President took advice and counsel from--I know he did from Galbraith during the summer of 1965 because it was Galbraith who first suggested [Arthur] Goldberg for the United Nations. He suggested him <u>direct</u> to the President, and the President thought it was a great idea, and we mustn't any of us spoil the idea by letting on we knew it was Galbraith. (Laughter)

M: That's typical.

B: As you say. And of course, he must have persuaded Goldberg about 60 per cent by persuading him that he was going to be his man of peace. His line throughout that period

is "I want my man McNamara to be my right arm, my war arm, and my man Rusk is going to be my peace arm." And I believe the honest truth is the President wanted more probing and more skillful management on the particular question of negotiations than he got from the Secretary, because the Secretary, rightly or wrongly, and I think quite understandably felt there wasn't much in it. The President wanted the game played out to prove there wasn't much in it. In that respect, they were temperamentally not on the same wavelength. Whereas Goldberg and the President were, especially at the beginning. Later on, all presidents get bored by having people think there's a White House on East 42nd Street.

M: There's a whole book about that now.

B: Yes.

M: What about the arguments the dissenters made? Did they dissent strictly on tactics, or did some of them actually question the concept, whether we should be in there or not?

B: Well, you know, I think that probably is a hard question to answer categorically. They probably dissented in the ways that they thought would be influential at the time that they registered the dissent. You don't usually start in by saying, "We've been wrong for four years," because, why bother?

M: You can't undo that.

B: You might well have thought that, but I don't think people should be held either way on that.

[Interruption]

M: In regard again to the dissenters, you were one who dealt frequently with dissenters

outside the government. You commented last time, and I wanted you to go into it a little more, that there was a basic disagreement between you and the President as to how or whether you should try to sell the war?

B: There was a disagreement certainly. How basic it was, hard to say. The President felt I think, perhaps more accurately than I, that some of the people who were trying to debate with representatives of the government were simply trying to get themselves reflected attention from being on the same platform with the White House assistants or cabinet officers or whatnot. The teach-in--from which the President removed me by sending me to Santo Domingo--I'm sure struck him that way, and he may well have been getting some stuff from the FBI about one or two of the people involved in these movements that they would have said were agitators. Every now and then he would go so far as to say that he'd hear what the party line was one week and then he'd read it in Walter Lippmann's column the next week, and this kind of thing. He didn't want to pick debates with those fellows, because he just had it in his mind that they were the enemy, and he didn't want to debate with them any more than he would have debated Goldwater in the 1964 election. It was just as dumb in his view.

I suppose I came at it out of a feeling that however they might be misbehaving--as in the famous White House affair that Eric Goldman has been writing about--these were people with whom I was used to being in communication. And many of them, at least, were feeling deliberately cut off from and rejected by an administration with whom they were trying to communicate in good faith. And so we had a whole office for the purpose of receiving and communicating with men of good will whose sentiments were more

moderate or more on the dove side or whatever you want to call it than the administration position. Chester Cooper, who is now at the Institute for Defense Analysis, ran that.

M: I just ran through a thing on the national security process that's a pretty good piece of work.

B: Well, he could tell you how many man-hours he spent with churchmen and professors and students and so forth and so forth and so forth. It was, I think, a right thing to do, and I don't think the President thought it was a wrong thing to do; it just wasn't that interesting to him. This was the sort of position Moyers would also have agreed with, and Moyers did a good deal of that informally, too, being an open-door I should guess, especially to--as he said in a radio discussion I saw a transcript of the other day--to young people within the administration who thought, you know, he's a Peace Corps type and he'll be on the side of the angels and let's go and talk with him. I'm sure that happened. Part of it, I think, was so that people would feel they had a hearing, and part of it was for real. We got some pretty good ideas about specific kinds of things that could be done better from some of the people that Cooper saw.

But the President did, I think, feel that in going on the air with CBS--which I did without his approval--I informed him after the decision had been made and told him I just couldn't live with myself if I didn't do it--that that was not really the sort of thing that a man in my position ought to do. And there's a lot on his side. I felt that this was a case where I'd better not ask him, he would say no, and then he and I would--he would be damaged in the long run. My own pride would obviously be engaged, but I hoped that wasn't the dominant fact. People would say the administration is afraid to meet its

opponents, and that this would be more destructive. The President temperamentally just didn't see it that way. He did have Rusk go up and testify on Fulbright's committee, all that seemed to be a tactical error.

[Interruption]

M: Regarding the dissenters, I think maybe a couple of final points, the ones outside. Did Mr. Johnson ever feel it necessary for anybody to explain to him the responsible dissent, men like Galbraith you mentioned, and others, [Edwin O.] Reischauer, certain senators?

B: Reischauer, you know, was in the government through this period. Reischauer didn't leave the government until the summer of 1966. And I would not have classed him as a dissenter during that time. I may have missed some parts of his cables, I don't know. I certainly wouldn't want to be categorical about it. I think the answer to your question for the period that I'm in the government was that I don't think we would have felt that it was that bitter or that tough, or that communication was that badly broken. And I wouldn't be a good witness about much later periods.

M: Do you think that the academics, for example, had the information to make a sensible judgment on the whole question, or did they act in ignorance of some very critical and important information that the government had?

B: I don't really think I've ever been of the view that the government on an issue of this kind, is likely to have all kinds of information that the public doesn't have. I think the government may have had a view of the situation--that is to say how near and shaky it was--that was gloomier, perhaps, than some of the public views. If the government didn't rest its case on that point, it could be that the government itself is partly

responsible. That of course raises the dilemma, you know, how good is it for your ally's morale if you say the son-of-a-bitch is going to get flushed down the drain if I don't plug it up? Well, there's middle ground between that and pretending that the other fellow, your ally, is all virtuous. It's a hard ground, and the President wasn't that much interested in complex public exposition. He said himself, since he left office, that explaining the damned war may have been the thing that the administration could most be faulted on. I think there's something in that.

(Interruption)

M: Let's turn to one of the topics on Vietnam that's come out, and I think has occasioned a lot of controversy, the alleged peace feelers that began presumably in 1964, particularly during your time, I suppose, the one which involved U Thant and Adlai Stevenson.

B: I never thought there was anything in it, but I never, to be honest with you, went back and checked all the cables and whatnot, because I really assumed that what U Thant was saying was that he would be delighted to serve as the polite master of ceremonies over an American withdrawal. That was all he was talking about. And that the notion that people were ready to talk in Cambodia [Burma?]--wasn't that it?--

M: Yes.

B: --was really only that people were ready to talk about that. And that for us to have gone in without more preparation than we had made or simply to have had a meeting without alerting our brethren in Saigon and so forth wouldn't have proved anything. If we had alerted our brethren in Saigon and had made it clear that we were going in for our then-purpose, namely to negotiate them back out of South Vietnam, there wouldn't have been

any meeting. Now, that isn't to say that it was all handled perfectly--it obviously wasn't. People felt they didn't get answers and that their offers had been more or less spurned, and this involves the problem of effective communications between Washington and New York, which is very tough and on which I'm not a terribly good witness. I don't know the details in that case.

M: What about the President? It has been charged, for example, that he never really was told of this initiative, that he didn't know about it. Is that possible?

B: I would think it was very unlikely, but I couldn't say categorically that it didn't happen. I'm sure that the President didn't ever get a feeling--I never had a feeling, and I would have known I think about this at the turn of l964-1965--that a real opportunity for a real negotiation existed. And I myself don't honestly think that there was such an opportunity, but I can't prove that negative, certainly on the basis of unaided memory.

M: There's a very mysterious statement in the [David] Kraslow and [Stuart] Loory book, *The Secret Search for Peace in Vietnam*, about a State Department memorandum evaluating the initiative which was returned to Secretary Rusk with your notation "as per our conversations." Is this of any importance, or is this a fiction of Kraslow and Loory?

B: I don't remember. I'm just not in a position to recite.

M: Were there other channels open at that time which the White House and the State Department thought might be more fruitful than the one through the U.N.?

B: I really don't think I can recite on that period, just out of not having ever had occasion to refresh my memory on it. And I just don't think I can help you very much on that. I don't believe myself to this day that a serious opportunity was lost then, but the ways and

means of the ins and outs of the argument, and who thought what, I just don't have clearly in my mind.

M: What about a year later, the so-called [Amintore] Fanfani initiative of the fall of 1965? Was that a more serious one?

B: No, I don't think that any of the things that came through the Italians--the fellow that was principally involved in that was a bird named [Giorgio] La Pira, wasn't it, the mayor of Florence. Well, he was an innocent sort of fellow traveler, not a party-lining type, but the sort of fellow who found communists plausible, who was told how much they wanted peace and came back thinking he had the keys to the kingdom. And the more you poked, the less he had. There must have been dozens of those sent back from Hanoi, one size and shape and another. And the more you looked at them, the more they said, "Hanoi says it will be glad to meet with you on the basis of the four principles and the five principles and so forth." All those were ways of complicating our problem of dealing with the people who <u>were</u> sort of <u>for peace</u>, without giving away any bargaining ground at all.

M: What were the circumstances that led to the decision to try a bombing halt in the Christmas of 1965 period?

B: Well, primarily that both critics in the United States and more sober judges in the international diplomatic world believed that a bombing halt in one form or another was the key to bringing the thing to the conference table. This was felt by many different kinds of people. One I remember is [Canadian Prime Minister Lester "Mike" Pearson] Mike Pearson. I remember [Anatoly F.] Dobrynin feeling very strongly. This was

influential with me. He thought that real progress could be made if there could be a bombing halt of significant duration--weeks. McNamara, I think, was the man who took the lead in keeping that subject open, up, and argued in front of the President, and I joined him in it. Again we had the usual problem with LBJ, that you argued back and forth, and he seems to turn it down, but he is still turning it over in his mind, and he doesn't decide until, by God, he decides "clap, bang," and then everybody has to get in the nearest jet and go the furthest capital and preach peace. We sure as hell didn't get any response to that one. We didn't even get a "Hang on for another week, and it'll be better." While I didn't feel then, or at any time after 1966, that the bombing was all that important, neither could I honestly say we were getting anything for having stopped it. So eventually, presently the President started the bombing again, and the internal thinking and process by which he reached the decision as to when he would do that is just as obscure as the process by which he reached a decision as to when he would start it. But the motivating purpose among those of us who were urging it on him was not just for show; it was for use. We thought there was a respectable chance--I wouldn't want to put a quantity on it, I might not have it right as to what our quantitative thought then was, but a respectable chance that something would happen that would give us a handhold to go the next step. But nothing did. I don't think anyone has ever maintained--I don't recall Kraslow and Loory's chapter and verse, but I don't think it was ever seriously argued that I'm aware of that that one was about to work. The argument tends to be, "Well, it was too noisy, and it was done so obviously flamboyant, Christmas-gesture that it wasn't serious and so forth." Well, that's *ex post facto*; the people who were urging it beforehand didn't

say, "It'll only work if you hide it."

M: What was the purpose of the flamboyant travelers for peace? You went to Canada, for example. What kind of messages were you and Harriman and the others taking?

B: Just that this is serious and if you can get anything, let us know. It also was very welcome in the capitals, all of which loved to be in the act for peace. Mike Pearson gave me a very warm welcome, a very cold trip.

M: That time of year is not the best time to tour Canada.

B: It was one of those VIP affairs, because there was no way of getting from Washington to Ottawa except in one of the little air force jets, so from that point of view it was a dandy little circus, but that's all it was.

M: Did any of these capitals ever get an answer of any kind?

B: Not that I recall. No serious response of any kind came from that one that I can recollect. And it got so that even our friends on the Moscow side were sort of reporting that they hadn't heard anything that it would be to our advantage to continue. I'm just making it up, because this is what I guess to have been--recollect is too strong a word--I reconstruct to have been the situation.

M: Then you left the White House about the time the bombing did resume in February of 1966?

B: I left the White House, yes, at the end of February 1966. I went on the Honolulu conference--it was about my last action, and that was after the bombing had resumed, I think.

M: Right. And that was during the televised Fulbright hearings.

B: That certainly was, and nobody in authority ever admitted to me that the two had any connection, but I always believed they did.

M: How long had the planning for that Honolulu trip been in the works?

B: Well, in one sense it had been on burners, front and back, for a long time. I made that point to the press at the time in loyal defense of the President, and it's true. The President would sooner or later, I am sure, have had some sort of Pacific parley if Bill Fulbright had never lived, but that he had it that week was another matter.

M: And it did do, in a way, what he wanted it to do, too.

B: Yes, it did, except that it also looked--it was one shade too smart, because an awful lot of people knew what he wanted it to do. Again, a temperamental difference between him and me. I would have let Bill Fulbright have his week of noise, or two weeks of noise, and then made some noise of my own on the same subject. I wouldn't have tried to blanket him by, in effect, arguing another subject, which is what the President did.

M: Then, when you left the government, you left under the condition that you would come back?

B: Left it up to the President, and I didn't.

M: Right. You left under the condition that you would come back for special cases, which you did in regard to other things, but did you continue to play a role on Vietnam in the interim there?

B: Let's see. I didn't really get called back for anything other than White House dinners, something of that sort, and to have a chin with Walt Rostow or with Francis Bator, or usually with both, when I was down there on any other business, until December 1966, or

November. The President asked me to explore something I'm still exploring--an East-West Center for the study of management problems in advanced societies. I'd been doing that. It's rather desultory; it's rather tricky and complicated and not necessarily a high-speed negotiation.

Then he called me back much more urgently the morning of the Six Day War and kept me there, because there were [complications]. Did we talk about this last time?

M: No, you mentioned going back.

B: Well, there were complications about who was talking to who down there. It was mildly embarrassing that three of the people most closely involved with the problem were Jewish. That would have been dandy if the President had been adopting an anti-Israeli policy, but he wasn't. He needed someone with a different apparent image, and I did do the job anyway. You can come back to it if you want to.

And I didn't explicitly do much Vietnam in that meeting, but I did sit through Tuesday lunches, where my business, Middle East business, was up and would listen to the argument on other subjects. Didn't have any serious difficulties with it. Then I got involved publicly briefly because one of the Senate subcommittees of Armed Forces came out with a report about how nice it would be to intensify the bombing at the end of 1967. And I wrote a letter to the *Post* about what a bad idea that was, and how this was an example of what the President really had to contend with and where the dangerous critics were.

Along about that period, I was asked in as kind of a part of--a sure sign of old age--one of these wise men panels that he put together.

M: This is the twelve wise men thing that the *Post* had a feature on a week or so ago?

B: Yes. Yes. I went down to a meeting of that sort, a Vietnam briefing and a session with the President in 1967, late in 1967, where the dominant sentiment was "Steady as you go," and I agreed with that. Even then McNamara was pressing for a bombing halt, and I wouldn't have at the end of 1967. I didn't see what you'd hang it on to or that there was that much prospect of a response.

Then came Tet, and worse than Tet, the reaction of the whole-line hawks to Tet: "More troops," from Westmoreland. "Nothing's really going wrong," from Walt Rostow.

M: A victory.

B: "It's a great victory." "There aren't any problems here," and, "We weren't surprised," and all that. That seemed to me dead wrong. It seemed to me that it wasn't at all the sort of total catastrophe that Bob Kennedy was calling it, but that it was a very, very good signal that we'd better look again before we decided that we were going to spend the next five years like the preceding three years. And so I was against escalation--I guess I said that in the middle of March in a speech in Cambridge. I sent word to the President I would probably have to do that. It was lucky, because I got a letter back saying, "I quite understand and know you'll conduct yourself very well." It's not the way he felt in October, the following October [1968], but never mind. And I was invited to the wise men's session, a little surprise to me, because I had said I was against escalation. I suspect that the orchestration of that wise men's session owes a lot to Clark Clifford. You can ask him when you get him under the microscope.

In any event the session did occur. The briefings were unusually candid and

direct. The questioning was more skeptical than it had ever been before from that group, and the dominant--not unanimous--recommendation was, "Don't escalate except through South Vietnamese forces, which you should reinforce with maximum speed, and have either a partial or a complete bombing halt." Opinion was divided as to which would be better. Then the President wrestled with it for another ten days, twelve days, and I had some back and forth. Then like everybody else except Mrs. Johnson and [Horace] Busby, I fell off my chair when he got to the end of that speech, because <u>that</u> never entered my mind.

M: He had never indicated any doubt about the past course of action during that time, either.

B: No. No, he didn't work that way. He was, in fact, really quite irritated at the temper of our advice, and who the hell had been briefing us, and he insisted on hearing them himself. And they were not made to rejoice then, that they had talked this way to these outsiders. I don't mean that they were told not to, but when that face gets set hard, you know how it can be. And Walt felt that we had been misled by the briefing, and I'm sure said that to the President because it was his honest judgment. On the other hand, the White House at that period was quite open to the notion of a bombing halt in its relationship to dissent and difficulty and disturbance in the United States. I remember Rostow saying quite explicitly that he thought there ought to be a bombing halt, if not in March then before California. I should be candid with you and say that I also was aware of the relationship between our posture in the bombing and the political situation in the United States and felt very strongly that this would be an important way of demonstrating, both for political and for general civic virtue of the United States, that the

President was--the administration was--not neglecting opportunities for an honorable peace, and this was a doable thing. The bombing had always seemed to me to be a bargainable instrument. The question was what could you bargain for.

M: Was there a single argument that could be isolated as the one that turned the tide among the wise men?

B: I think the fact that the thing was so expensive, that it was not apparently making decisive progress--you could say at least this about the Tet thing--that a lot of your assumptions about steady progress and pacification in the countryside really weren't consistent with an effort of this magnitude and with the kind of struggle you've had over considerable areas. That there was a good deal of evidence, too, that you just had over-Americanized the war. That had been true in 1967, but if it was working you could stand it for a while. I don't know that you can pick out one thing. My own thinking, I don't think I can even now improve on that language I used in my speech at DePauw; that was as honest a statement of why I thought what I then thought and think now as I was able to make, and I don't think I can second-guess it. As to why I said it in October was simply that I had been saying it privately to anyone I could get to listen among the people I cared about, which were the administration and the Humphrey crowd. I figured I had a right to say it publicly, too, so I did finally.

M: The *Post* piece I think mentioned that the change of view by Mr. Acheson was very influential on the President. Would you say that's accurate?

B: I wouldn't know. I don't recall that I saw the President in an intimacy or in a situation in which he would have said, you know, "Old Acheson was very impressive." I don't recall

his singling out any one guy. Acheson is a very powerful advocate. I was assigned as the recorder of those meetings, and I guess some sort of minute of them probably is in the files.

M: I was going to ask, was that minute presumably kept then?

B: Yes, it would have been there. It wouldn't have come back here.

M: And will be part of the records that were turned over, so, good. After the meeting then in March, and the President's announcement, was the next statement or next contact you had with Vietnam your DePauw speech?

B: Well, no, I went down and had a weekend at the Ranch in July [August]. You can check it. It really wasn't about Vietnam, but Vietnam was hanging in the air all the time. It was about the President's library and the guest list was potential philanthropists, plus the Secretary of Defense, and wives. So Mr. and Mrs. Gene Black, he's an old friend of the President's, a trustee here at the time, he has since retired; Mr. and Mrs. [Clark] Clifford; the Arthur Krims; Mary and I. We had dinner with [University of Texas] Chancellor [Harry] Ransom and a lot of the boys.

M: A Blue Chip--in several ways--meeting

B: The President talked to us about the Library. We had a briefing about it--the Califanos were there, and Joe did the briefing, did it very well. We had a really wonderful time. The President was relaxed and easy. He was fussing with the steel crisis--one of those, it was that weekend, because I remember the sort of splendid, ridiculous picture of LBJ and Clark Clifford and Joe Califano on three different phones around that pool, haggling. The President not talking, just (hard, angry breaths). I didn't have anything to do with the

steel prices and I didn't say boo about Vietnam, but I did talk to Clifford about it and listened to his current thinking, which I agreed to 107 per cent, which had hardened some even from what it had been in March, to the point that what he thought was decisive was that we must really move forward. People in Saigon would go the limit to prevent us from making progress, that they were gaining from the war and we were losing from it, so our real conflict of interest was with the government in South Vietnam. And that Harriman and Vance were ready to move and there was pretty [good] evidence--there was *de facto* evidence--that the other people were easing up, and it was time for the President to stop the bombing, roughly speaking. And he had rehearsed, as Clark does, an extremely careful speech, and he tried it out on me, and I talked to him about it. Then I said, "You know, I will be glad to tell the President I agree with you." "Hell," he said, "I haven't even had a chance to speak to the President yet." And then we agreed that if the two of us did, on the same weekend, that we would be caught in the conspiracy syndrome; he would feel that he had been ganged up on. So I didn't say a word about it, but I do know exactly what Clifford said, and I know that he was heard in absolutely total silence.

M: And then it took three months presumably--

B: Well, there were a lot of other things that happened in September and October. Let me just say to you that here we get into a territory that still has a kind of operational classification so that I didn't want to talk about it, and I don't know enough about it, I'm not the best witness, but there was an extremely sensitive and complex series of negotiations in which the President played his hand with great skill, a shade more slowly

than I would have, but with great skill. And I'm not the best witness on that; I just know that that did happen in September and October.

Why did I say what I said at DePauw? Not a terribly important question, but just to finish the story. Then nothing happened in July, except that the President in August conducted the Democratic convention as if the principal enemy were anybody who wouldn't take exactly what he wanted in the majority plank, and efforts at compromise of all sorts were unsuccessful. Then Hubert found himself stuck with this awful business of, "What is he? What isn't he? Who's he against? Who's he for?" And he didn't get that sorted out well in any way really until the end of September, and not very well even then. And at that point I thought that the useful thing for me to do would be to sort of assume that the argument is over with respect to the administration and just recast the argument in terms of what will the next administration do. Let's just assume that the people in Washington are making the best effort they can, and nobody wants to second-guess them, and that's fine, and we must all hope they'll succeed. But suppose we haven't gotten anywhere in 1969, what would you do? And then I was able to say, "I think at that point I would stop the bombing, and so forth." Not aiming it direct at the President. Well, he hit the ceiling. He was furious. And it interrupted our cordial relations for a spell. They are now restored. And I knew it would. I knew if I was going to say it, I mustn't try and get it cleared because he'd never in the world clear it. I think if you poked him right this minute, he'd say, "He's a good fellow, worked loyally for me. I'm fond of him. Lady Bird likes him, and that Mary is great, but every once in a while he'd do a damn fool thing like that speech."

M: Like that speech in DePauw. Let's not let the story end exactly right there. In my opinion it's an extremely clear speech, but you were predictably attacked from both sides--

B: Yes, I got it from everybody.

M: The *Washington Post*, for example, argued that--

B: The *Washington Post* said I was giving up.

M: --giving up. [Hans] Morgenthau says that--

B: It's too late.

M: I know you don't answer them in the public print, how do you answer them?

B: I haven't read Morgenthau's piece, because I knew I shouldn't get into a wrangle with him in the public print, so I honestly don't know how his argument goes.

M: He simply claims that if you had such limited goals all along, that the type of war we fought was not justifiable in pursuit of those goals.

B: Well, you see I think there's some truth in that. I did have more limited goals, I think, all along. And the war did get bigger than I ever thought it would. And I still don't quite know how we got from 175,000 men in the summer of 1965 to 540,000 by the end of 1967. It went further and faster, cost more, and I never did think it was wise to sweep the cost under the rug the way the President did, but I wasn't in government then and I wasn't going to pick a tactical quarrel with him on a matter of that kind that I was that underinformed about. Maybe I should have. I didn't anyway. I think the war did get bigger than it should have for the measure, the purposes that I had in mind, so I don't have a quarrel with Morgenthau on that.

M: He didn't quarrel with your conclusions.

B: I would certainly not say that out loud, because I'm not in the business of second-guessing the President out loud on the period in which I was closely associated with him.

M: You went to Europe in December, then, and the press, at least, mentions that you visited with Kosygin's son-in-law.

B: I did. That was quite unrelated. That was this East-West Center and only this East-West Center, and there was nothing about Vietnam in the meeting. That had been scheduled, really, at the convenience of an Englishman, [Sir] Solly Zuckerman, to whom we had, all of us, given the kind of next-step discussion phase of the East-West Center. And he said, "Here's a chance to meet [D. M.] Gvishiani ," and so I went. But it had no Vietnam relation.

M: Did the Russians play a constructive role at any point with which you are familiar?

B: I believe they did, but I believe I'm not the best witness.

M: Before leaving Vietnam, a thing you dealt with every day for a long time, are there important areas of it that I've overlooked by a lack of knowledge on my part?

B: Well, you haven't overlooked them, I don't think. The other thing that needs to be said about this thing is that one of the great areas where if we had it to do over again, I sure hope we could do better, is in organizing the government actually to operate that enterprise. One of the reasons it got overmilitarized, and the political side, the economic side, and our reconstruction side didn't get the kind of weight they should have had is that backing our boys and appropriating for war, moving our bombers, is just an awful lot easier. And if I were guessing, I would guess that there would have been more emphasis

put on that if we had had a different secretary of state and conceivably if some of us in the White House had been better apt to speak emphasis on the nonmilitary aspect of the business. The President was always excellent on that in terms of his intellectual grasp of it, his willingness to make speeches about it, but not really in terms of managing it as if he were himself, you know, the NYA director. He didn't make that happen, and I'm not sure anybody short of the President could have. I'm certainly not saying I did it very well, I don't think I did. I do sometimes wonder whether that might not have been the thing that Jack Kennedy would have done, and had a Vietnam Reconstruction Administration or for example put the Peace Corps in there, which some of the Peace Corps wanted to do. But the President was always wary of the Peace Corps; that was somebody else's invention, and if they didn't give him any trouble, that was the most he'd ask of them. We didn't do that business of what needed to be done to strengthen the South, not because of a failure of intellectual grasp on the part of the President, but because organizing an executive branch enterprise to do this just fell between--didn't ever get quite the right push from the right kind of people.

He rather thought the Pentagon ought to do it most of the time. He kept coming back to the notion of civil government in Italy. Let's get some of these good mayors, and get them out there. Well, commissioning mayors and making them colonels and sending them out as province chiefs really wasn't what this one was about. And yet, we didn't do a very good job of figuring out what it was about. [Robert] Komer was as good a man as we could find for it, but Komer never had the standing on the scene that would have been ideal--embassy, military, both in different ways, wary about him. My last trip to Saigon,

which was before the Komer appointment, was really devoted entirely to an effort to try and figure out what was the matter with the embassy's own internal organization for these things. It was very clear what the matter was. Westy [William Westmoreland] didn't care about it because he was fully occupied running two armies, his own and Saigon's. Cabot [Lodge] didn't care about it because he didn't understand it. And [William J.] Porter, who was a very good foreign service officer, understood it pretty well--he'd been in Algiers, which was very good training ground for guerrilla war, and a good place to know how tough it is, too--but he didn't have the kind of independent authority. The best I could recommend was that he really should be made the head of all of this sort of thing and really put in charge of it. Well, he got sick a few months later. It's better now; it may be better now under Bill Colby than it's ever been. But it was never given the kind of clear priority, nor indeed even in that period did we have the right commander, a point which I didn't see until later. Westy's weaknesses, I think, were fairly plain by 1967, but not in 1965. On the other hand I was very wary of [General Creighton] Abrams. I didn't know he was going to be as good as he turned out to be. This business of the choice of commanders--if you're going to run a war as closely as we were trying to run it, in a way it should have been run even more closely, I think.

M: Were all the attempts at regionalism sort of attempts to compensate for this failure you're talking about, things like the Asian Development Bank for example?

B: Well, they were a help, but they weren't--they were useful to show and to mean, the serious purpose of the President. The Asian Development Bank was a sort of, again, a thing that wasn't inconsistent with his tastes, but it, by God, grew straight from the head

of Zeus at the moment of the Baltimore speech. I was reminiscing with Gene Black about that last night. I called him up from the President's desk, told him the President wanted him to run a committee for Asian development and wanted to make the announcement in a speech he was going to give either that night or the next day, or both. He said, "No, no, no." He told me just last night what I had never known before. He was having lunch with Henry Ford at the Chase Bank down here. And I said, "Well, Gene, there's someone who wants to talk with you about that," because there was a great pall reached over the phone.

M: Right, someone!

B: So he changed his mind. The President offered him just one thing. He said, "Whenever you want to go out there, I'll give you *Air Force One*." And Black just loves traveling on one of those glorious airplanes!

M: Were there a lot of people within the government who opposed that type of thing?

B: No! On the contrary! There just weren't a lot of people in the government putting it forward in well-organized, highly developed frameworks, because there weren't a lot of people in the government whose business that was who were that far up the line. I always thought my friends in AID for whom I have the greatest admiration--Dave Bell and Bill Gaud--never really thought of Vietnam in as high a priority for them as maybe it should have been. But I have to say, in fairness, that the President didn't, and I never had the authority to call them in and say, "Look, Vietnam is problem number one." Well, we did give it a division of its own; they did gradually tighten up and strengthen the forces working on it. They weren't in the anti-guerrilla business; they were in the development

assistance business. It's very understandable. The [Central Intelligence] Agency was the outfit that would have loved to do it, but we scratched that plate with the Bay of Pigs in the beginning, and LBJ was never much of a one for those people, nor would the military have wanted that.

That's another part of it. The military just assumed that if it was going to be a war, they were going to run it. And they were the big battalions on the scene.

M: How closely was the Vietnam policy related in the way that it was considered within the government to the whole problem of China?

B: Different people have different estimates on that. McNamara often said, "You know, it's not worth it unless it's stopping China." I never felt that stopping China was in the immediate sense the objective, because--although in the wider sense, I think there is a very important Chinese component in holding some sort of a line somewhere in that part of the world, yes. Where China came into the discussion much more sharply really was, "Let's conduct this thing, whatever we do, so that we minimize the chance of direct Chinese intervention." That was important, and I think was nearly universally agreed. Even the people who wanted to, you know, bomb much further north and bomb without limit, they would generally say, "Well, the Chinese won't react," not, "What if they do?"

M: Was there ever any sense in the Johnson Administration in the early years when you were there that we needed to have some movement in our policy *vis-a-vis* China?

B: It wasn't a major issue. There was some feeling about a little movement on that direction in the spring of 1966, as I recall it, just after I had left the government, or about that time. And the slogan "Containment without isolation" appeared.

M: Yes. Humphrey made a speech I think at that time.

B: I made a couple of speeches about sort of backing that idea in Japan, where of course the question of China is a very important issue, and I happened to be in Japan in the spring of 1966.

Operationally, there wasn't much anyone could do. There still isn't, as a matter of fact, because you could change the U.S. position on China in the U.N., and the Chinese wouldn't change their position. You could change your position on various other things, and they would still be saying, "What about Taiwan?" It will be interesting to see, these meetings came, I guess, later this week, but I would be surprised if much comes out of them. [Scheduled talks with China in Warsaw were not held.]

No, I would say that nothing very striking happened about China policy in the Johnson Administration while I was in it. Of course, they set off their bomb, and that led to a very carefully phrased presidential statement about that. Their relations with the Russians got worse, if possible, as time went on, and this was very clear to us. But we had no edgy moment with them, really. That was one of the interesting things. It was the dog that did not bark.

M: The public image is of Secretary Rusk as extremely rigid on the subject. Is that pretty accurate?

B: Yes, well, he was--as I say, the particular thing that made that a noisy problem was his talk about a billion people with atomic weapons. I always thought that was pretty unfair. If you look back at one of JFK's late press conferences, you'll find him talking about seven hundred million people with nuclear weapons and how dangerous that is.

M: He just projected it with the population growth into the future.

B: A little different public image, three years later, five years later, much rougher opinions, but in terms of what explicitly was said, not really different.

M: This tape has about run out and we're finished, as far as I'm concerned, on Vietnam and Asia. May I have one more session, perhaps, on the Dominican Republic and Europe? I think that will finish it--

B: Okay.

M: --if that will be acceptable to you.

B: Yes.

End of Tape I of I and Interview II