

Chester B. Bowles, Oral History Interview – JFK#1, 2/2/1965
Administrative Information

Creator: Chester B. Bowles
Interviewer: Robert R.R. Brooks
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Biographical Note

Bowles was a delegate to the Democratic National Convention (1940, 1948, 1956); chairman of the Platform Committee for the Democratic National Convention (1960); a Representative from Connecticut and foreign policy adviser to Senator John F. Kennedy (JFK) (1959-1961); Under Secretary of State (1961); President's Special Representative for Asian, African, and Latin American Affairs (1961-1963); and Ambassador to India (1963-1969). In this interview, Bowles discusses his role as JFK's foreign policy advisor during the presidential campaign; staffing the State Department; Bowles' relationship with Secretary of State Dean Rusk and with JFK; Kennedy administration foreign policy towards developing nations; and the circumstances of his leaving his position as Under Secretary of State, among other issues.

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Chester Bowles
CHESTER BOWLES

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Chester B. Bowles—JFK#1

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First of Two Oral History Interviews

with

Chester B. Bowles

February 2, 1965

New Delhi, India

By Robert R.R. Brooks

For the John F. Kennedy Library

BROOKS: This is a recording by Ambassador Chester Bowles. It is taking place on February 2, 1965, at 17 Ratendone Road, New Delhi, India. At this time, Mr. Bowles is Ambassador of the United States to India. The interlocutor during this recording will be Robert R. R. Brooks, Chief Cultural Affairs Officer of the U.S. Information Service in India, a long-time friend and associate of the Ambassador. Mr. Bowles, when did you first meet President Kennedy [John F. Kennedy]?

BOWLES: The first time I remember meeting him was at the Democratic Convention in Hartford in 1954. He appeared as the keynote speaker at the Democratic Convention that year. Although I probably met him before that, I do not recall it. I do remember very clearly his coming to the Convention with his beautiful wife, Jackie [Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy], and making a very great impression upon everyone. He was, of course, particularly noticed because he was a fast-rising political figure in the adjoining state of Massachusetts and well-known in Connecticut.

BROOKS: Did you know him when you were in Congress? Did you ever work together with him during that period?

BOWLES: I knew him quite well in Congress and saw a fair amount of him, but by the time I had gotten to Congress (1958), he was in the Senate.

We actually worked together on only two major matters. The first was aid to India and Pakistan. This was in 1959. In that year, India was facing very real trouble in regard to foreign exchange. Doug Dillon [C. Douglas Dillon] was Under Secretary of State and was very actively trying to help India meet its requirements. He appealed to both of us to help him muster congressional support. We cosponsored a resolution calling on the United States and other like-minded nations—Germany, France, Britain, Japan, etc.—to join in helping India acquire the foreign exchange to meet its needs. Pakistan was included in the plan to avoid offense or implications of favoritism. This was the beginning of the consortium headed by the World Bank which we have today.

The resolution passed the Senate but failed to pass the House because of a last minute roll call vote that was not allowed to be taken before adjournment.

We also worked on the Area Redevelopment Program which he and I sponsored together. This program was enacted into law, I think, in 1961, his first year as president. It provided funds, loans, grants, and technical assistance to those areas which had an excessive level of unemployment, the limit I believe was 7 percent.

This was really the beginning of the anti-poverty program we have today. Both Kennedy and I felt keenly about this legislation because it was a constructive new approach to an urgent domestic problem and because we had relative poor areas within our respective constituencies.

However, these were the only two items on which I ever worked with him in Congress.

BROOKS: When did President Kennedy ask you to work with him on his campaign for the presidency?

BOWLES: Well, the first thing he asked me to do, or rather people around him asked me to do, was to come out publicly in his behalf. This presented some very real problems for me.

[-2-]

I had been a very devoted friend of Adlai Stevenson [Adlai E. Stevenson] over a period of years. I had gone to school with Stevenson, knew him very well and worked very closely with him in 1956. I would have worked with him closely in 1952 if I had not been Ambassador to India at the time. In 1960 I was hopeful that Adlai might agree to run again. I also felt very close in an ideological sense to Hubert Humphrey [Hubert H. Humphrey]. Indeed, I suppose I was in closer agreement with Humphrey than I was with Stevenson on most things, and I would have supported him. But I very frankly did not believe that Humphrey could get the nomination. If I had thought it probable, would have gone all out for him. As it turned out, I think I was right.

Before deciding to support Kennedy, I talked to Stevenson at some length and urged him very strongly to declare his candidacy. I said, "If you do come out, I'm sure that you'll find many people like myself solidly in your corner. On the other hand, if you are not going

to announce your candidacy and going to stay on the sidelines, then I think those of us who are concerned should do our very best to help produce the best ticket possible.” My first suggestion to him was that he declare his intentions at that time, which was about October 1959. When he said he didn’t think he could do that—that he wouldn’t do it—that he was planning to go to Latin America on an extended trip that winter, I asked him if he would go on the trip, consider where things stood, and, when he came back, announce either his own candidacy or his support for some other candidate, such as Kennedy, in April. Adlai was quite noncommittal.

It was only when he had made it completely clear that he was not going to commit himself to running that I decided that I probably had more to contribute by supporting Jack Kennedy and playing some small role in shaping the general campaign and the policies that he might follow.

While I was making my decision, Ted Sorensen [Theodore C. Sorensen] said that Kennedy would like very much to talk with me. I met with Sorensen twice in my house on Q Street in Washington in about October 1959. He explained that Kennedy wanted to see me personally but wanted these preliminary discussions. He urged me strongly to come out firmly in favor of Kennedy and mentioned the possibility of my becoming the foreign policy advisor for Kennedy’s campaign. He also

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discreetly dangled the possibility of my becoming Secretary of State if Kennedy was elected. I remember remarking that I thought that Adlai Stevenson was the logical person for the post.

In any event, I saw Kennedy at a hotel on Park Avenue at 49th or 50th, the Park Plaza, I think. I had quite a talk with him about the whole subject. He wanted me as his foreign policy advisor because he said we were in close agreement on basic policy. He had read every book, article, and speech I had written on the subject of foreign policy and thought that I was closer to his own line of thinking than anyone else.

Again I was uncertain, and I talked to Stevenson the next day at luncheon. Stevenson was still noncommittal and inclined to put the whole situation off. He obviously did not want to run or, at least at that point commit himself. I decided the best thing I could do was to give Jack Kennedy all the support and all the good advice I could muster and hope that I might be some influence in shaping his campaign and his ideas. At this time Humphrey was on his own as he should have been. Reuther [Walter P. Reuther], Soapy Williams [G. Mennen Williams], and Mrs. Roosevelt [Eleanor R. Roosevelt] were not committed. The liberals, somewhat skeptical of Kennedy because they were not sure of his views, were also withholding commitment. I, being the first one to support him, drew a good deal of private fire from some of my liberal friends—they thought I had made a mistake.

I explained to them that I thought Kennedy was going to win; that he had tremendous potential; that the best contribution we could make, in view of the unlikely possibility of Hubert winning the nomination and the equally unlikely possibility that Adlai Stevenson would decide to run, would be to move in and try to strengthen Kennedy in every way we could. This I, at least, had decided to do.

BROOKS: How closely did you work with him during the pre-convention days either

on foreign policy or on other matters of policy?

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BOWLES: I really didn't work closely with him at all. My new job caused quite a few headlines and considerable talk in the House, Senate, and around Washington. I had only been working in this new position for a short time when it became apparent that what was really wanted of me was whatever name or prestige I had rather than my advice on foreign policy.

Although I talked to Jack Kennedy perhaps every two or three weeks, and speeches he wrote on foreign policy were sent to me routinely to be reviewed by my assistant, Tom Hughes [Thomas L. Hughes], and myself, it was pretty apparent that I was window dressing, and Kennedy didn't really feel he needed this assistance. As a matter of fact, I'm not sure he did need it. He made some very good speeches during that period. I disagreed very little with their content. If I had, of course, I would have spoken up very strongly. Occasionally, I might have differed on a matter emphasis, but generally I felt that the ideas expressed were correct.

I would give Jack Kennedy principal credit for this. I would also give a good deal of credit to Ted Sorensen, who I think had an instinctive feeling for foreign policy, although he was more associated in the public mind with domestic policy. I think Ted helped guide the gradual development of Kennedy's policies during that period along constructive lines. The interesting fact was he really must have agreed pretty much with what I was saying, or at least he must have felt it was the expedient position to take. In the last analysis I had very little to do with speech writing or the general development of Kennedy's campaign.

BROOKS: You have anticipated somewhat my next question, but do you know of anybody else who was advising him on foreign affairs during this period before the Convention when you had the nominal position of foreign affairs advisor?

BOWLES: No, I really do not. A lot of people were trying to affect him and guide him, but, except for Ted Sorensen, who as I said was very strongly and closely identified with him, they did not have much success. I think most of the ideas at that time were basically Kennedy's.

[-5-]

I know Dean Acheson [Dean G. Acheson] was vigorously, violently, and vehemently opposed to him—bitterly opposed to him—and it always sort of amused me later when Dean tried so hard to get aboard the bandwagon. I remember conversations at the Metropolitan Club in Washington where I thought that Acheson was acting outrageously by taking such extreme views toward the Kennedy candidacy. He said Jack was unqualified and simply the wrong man. I can't remember who Acheson wanted, but I rather think it was Johnson [Lyndon Baines Johnson]. He was never very clear about it.

Tom Finletter [Thomas K. Finletter] helped Kennedy some, but considerably less than I did, and, as I said, I did not help much. Generally, I think it could be said that Kennedy was pretty much on his own with Sorensen.

BROOKS: This takes us up to the time of the Convention and the formulation of the 1960 Democratic platform. Did Kennedy play a direct or even indirect role in the formulation of the 1960 platform?

BOWLES: Well, first of all, I should go back a little bit before that and mention the way I became chairman of the platform committee. I was asked by Paul Butler [Paul M. Butler], who was then National Chairman, to head the platform committee, to write the platform, and to take charge of presenting it to the Convention. Naturally, the first thing I did was to check with Kennedy to see whether he thought this would be in his interests. I remember trying very hard to get Jack Kennedy on the telephone and being unable to do so. I finally was able to reach Bobby [Robert F. Kennedy]. I think Jack was somewhere in the West Indies that weekend, and I had to give Butler a decision by Monday. Bobby felt it was a very good idea and said he thought he could answer for his brother.

I pointed out that, naturally, as Democratic platform chairman it would be very important for me not to be too involved in the speechmaking and infighting leading up to the campaign, or I would find myself with many self-made enemies of the platform itself. I pointed out that this position would be a major restraint on my activities from that time on. Bob Kennedy said he understood this perfectly but thought there was much more to be gained by my taking the platform chairman role.

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Up to this time I had also done a considerable amount of writing on foreign affairs. Always, of course, I carefully went over it with Jack Kennedy. For instance, in the April issue of *Foreign Affairs*, I had an article on what was known as the "Two Chinas Policy," pointing out that the U.S. should advocate Communist China coming into the UN, provided that Taiwan did not lose its membership. I had wanted to write this article for a long time but had hesitated to do so for fear of stirring up a political hornet's nest. However, I thought in all justice to my own strong views I could not postpone it much longer.

I wrote the article and was quite blunt in pointing out the problems. I showed it to Jack Kennedy, and he enthusiastically endorsed it. This was the first of several experiences in which I found Kennedy to be far more advanced in his private views than in his public statements. I think he thoroughly understood the Chinese situation, wished he could do something about it, and was very glad to have somebody step out and say more or less what he was also thinking.

A point which I've neglected to mention was that in my original agreement to support Kennedy and work with him as his foreign policy advisor, I set down certain conditions, the most important of which was that I would never have to campaign against either Adlai Stevenson or Hubert Humphrey. If there were speeches to be made and if there were primary battles to be fought, I would have to be counted out as far as these two people were

concerned. They were both very close and good friends of mine, and I didn't want to become involved in a controversy with them. I was working for Kennedy primarily because I thought neither of these two people were available, and I thought that Kennedy was by all odds the next best bet.

Kennedy said that not only did he agree to this condition but thought it would be very much to his disadvantage to have me take a partisan stand on his side against either Stevenson or Humphrey. He said that he would rather have me in a position to bridge the gap between these two men and himself during the pre-campaign period. It would be helpful in uniting the party if he were nominated.

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BROOKS: Did you have any other role at the Convention in addition to that of chairman of the platform committee, or did you have any role in the formation of Kennedy's Convention strategy?

BOWLES: Let me answer the last question first: no, I really had no part in the pre-Convention strategy at all. And, as far as working on the platform with the Kennedys, I showed him a very early draft in my office in May, a draft I had written personally. He went over it and said he thought it was promising. I made it clear that it was a very, very early draft. Just before the Convention, the platform had begun to take on a fairly clear shape although it had not gone through the process of debate and discussion. Before the platform had been fought through the committee at the Convention, I showed it to Bob Kennedy. I asked Walter Reuther and Bob to come to breakfast, and we went over the platform together. Bob had only one or two minor suggestions to make. In the end, I don't think that the suggestions of the Kennedy group affected the platform half of one percent.

BROOKS: From your somewhat inside position during the Convention, did you get any inside view as to the way in which Johnson was chosen as the running mate for Kennedy?

BOWLES: It has been somewhat of a mystery to me as to just how this came about. Although I was fairly close to the process, there was a sleight of hand, so to speak, that I never quite fully understood, so I'll have to depend on other bystanders and participants for enlightenment on that point. I remember a meeting which I attended with Sarge Shriver [R. Sargent Shriver, Jr.] and Bob Kennedy in Shriver's hotel room. From the discussions at this meeting, I was fully convinced that Stuart Symington [Stuart Symington II] would be the VP nominee. This was the afternoon of the day Lyndon Johnson was nominated. Something happened between that meeting and the evening session of the Convention.

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I suspect that probably Jack Kennedy and his political advisors, among which I could not be counted, began to worry about the South and felt that the Catholic issue would be very

difficult here. They needed someone who was from the South and could hold some of the Southern states in line. Apparently they thought this sufficiently important to overlook the rather bitter differences the Kennedy group had with Lyndon Johnson. In any event, Johnson's selection came as a great surprise to me and a number of others.

BROOKS: After the Convention was over, what role did you play in the formulation of Kennedy's campaign positions, particularly regarding foreign policy statements? Did you have any part in the composing of foreign policy statements or do you know who else may have had some influence on them?

BOWLES: The first thing Kennedy did after his nomination was to make an announcement that he would like to have Adlai Stevenson and myself represent him in any discussions that might take place with the representatives of the existing administration—Chris Herter [Christian A. Herter] and Doug Dillon, at that time. It had always been the tradition that the nominee of the party not in power at election time would be given full access to all CIA [Central Intelligence Agency] documents and background intelligence so he would not blunder into a situation where he was in direct opposition with the government in power unless he deliberately wanted to be. This information also allowed the candidate to adopt a constructive and responsible line of policy if he so chose.

The CIA people and President Eisenhower [Dwight D. Eisenhower] were not anxious that Kennedy should have this privilege. There was also some doubt regarding with whom they should deal. However, I had a long relationship with Chris Herter, who was then Secretary of State. I had worked with him and Doug Dillon on aid legislation and many items of foreign policy. Since I already had full security clearance as a member of Congress and a member of the Foreign Affairs Committee, Chris Herter simply invited me to call at his house every week or two during the campaign to discuss the state of the world as he saw it. At that time he would give me any background material he thought might be passed on to Kennedy.

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As a matter of fact, nothing came up during this period that was of any great importance. Of course, the Bay of Pigs operation was being planned, but we were never informed of that until the election was over. Thus, while these talks were useful to me, not a lot came out of them.

During the campaign, I kept in contact with Kennedy, Ted Sorensen, and others, and we frequently discussed speeches, tactics, and strategy. I remember urging Kennedy to take a very strong position in regard to Quemoy and Matsu in his debates with Nixon [Richard Milhous Nixon]. When he took this advice, the result was something of an uproar, but I still believe it was the right position for him to take.

I might add that at this time I had an important personal decision to make. I was nominated for re-election to Congress on the Democratic ticket in late July, about three or four weeks after the National Convention. At that time Kennedy had not yet offered me any position in his Administration if he won the election. He had, however, again referred to the

position of Secretary of State, and I had again promptly mentioned Adlai Stevenson as the more logical choice for the job. Kennedy stated that such a choice would depend on Stevenson's actions and the tactical situation during the course of the campaign.

I was at a loss at what to do. Although both he and Sorensen had mentioned Secretary of State, Kennedy had made no definite offer to me. I really wanted to be somewhere in the Administration. I wanted to be back on the executive side, the policy making side. I had enjoyed my two years in Congress, gotten a good deal out of it, and had accomplished a few things, but I preferred to be part of a new, incoming administration.

At the same time, I was very anxious to get re-elected. I thought I could win by a really overwhelming majority, and it would have given me some satisfaction to see what I could do with a whole Republican district, as that part of Connecticut used to be at that time. However, if I did successfully run for election and was then offered a position in the new Administration, as Secretary of State or Under Secretary or head of AID [Agency for International Development], I would have to resign and the State of Connecticut would be put to the expense of a special election. Moreover, if I did do this, there was a good chance that the Democrats would lose

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a special election in the Republican district. I felt that either I ought to run for Congress and stay there, or I should withdraw and give someone else a clear shot at it in the regular election.

It was a very delicate position to be in, and Abe Ribicoff [Abraham Alexander Ribicoff] and John Bailey [John Moran Bailey] didn't make it any easier because they were obviously quite unsympathetic. They wanted me to run because a) they thought I could win the district, and b) they were not particularly anxious to have me in the Administration, perhaps getting some prestige from my presence there. I'm sure they felt also that only so many people from Connecticut could join the Administration in top level positions, and they had their eyes on at least two of those spots and didn't want to encourage competition.

I finally went to see Kennedy at Hyannisport in late July or early August, and he said what I'd thought he'd say. The choice was entirely up to me; he knew there would be work for me to do in the new Administration, but he couldn't tell me precisely what the work would be.

With this assurance, I came back, saw Bob Kennedy in Washington, and told him I had decided to withdraw my nomination as Democratic candidate for Congress and let them nominate someone else. My campaign manager Bill St. Onge [William Leon St. Onge] was the eventual nominee. He won the election and has been there ever since doing a very good job.

At the time, however, I was in a real quandary. If Kennedy had lost, of course, I would have lost also—I would have been out. But if he had won, I would be giving up a congressional seat in the hopes I could find some role in the new Administration (which I assumed, of course, I could find).

BROOK: That leads up very well to the next question which is this: Do you have any impression as to the basis on which Kennedy made his post-election

appointments, particularly in the foreign policy field? For example, do you know who was consulted during this process?

BOWLES: Well, I know a good deal about it. I had done a good deal of campaigning throughout the country, particularly to university groups in California,

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where I had a good deal of personal support. I also had some following of my own and did a great deal of campaigning in Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Kansas, Missouri, the Dakotas, Oregon, Washington, and, just before the election, in Hawaii.

But, as soon as the campaign was over, Jack Kennedy asked me if I would go to Washington and take over seeing a lot of people who were anxious to see him. Everybody wanted an appointment with him, and a lot of these people were shunted off by his staff to me. We were living then at 29th and Q Streets in Georgetown, and my day was just one long row of callers. Of course, in the background all this time, there was the struggle and question as to who was going to get which job in the new Administration, and many forces were at work.

[BEGIN TAPE 2]

BROOKS: This is a continuation on reel #2 of an interview with Ambassador Chester Bowles on February 2, 1965, at 17 Ratendone Road, New Delhi, India. I had just asked Ambassador Bowles about the appointment in the foreign policy field after President Kennedy's election, and I had asked who was consulted in this process. I might extend the question a little by remarking that you, Mr. Bowles, were closely involved in the appointment of the Secretary of State, and it may be of interest to know how Dean Rusk came to be appointed. What is your own personal knowledge of this?

BOWLES: Following the election of President Kennedy, there was an enormous amount of speculation as to who was going to be Secretary of State. Adlai Stevenson was one person who was considered; Bill Fulbright [J. William Fulbright] was another; I was another; Jack McCloy [John Jay McCloy] who was chairman of the board of the Ford Foundation was still another; Bob Lovett [Robert Abercrombie Lovett] was considered. There were probably other names, too, but these were the principal possibilities at that time.

[-12-]

Adlai Stevenson was passed over, I think, because of personal spite. The people around Jack Kennedy—I'm not at all sure that he shared this—were very bitter because Stevenson had made the nomination in Los Angeles a little bit less easy than it otherwise would have been. I don't think it was a very difficult Convention for Kennedy, but there was a little scare when the "Stevenson boom" began. This was resented.

In fact, I think that Adlai probably could have been Secretary of State very easily if he had come out for Kennedy in May. I don't think it would have looked like a trade. I think it would have naturally gone his way, but he didn't want to do it. He was being pressed on all sides at least to be available as presidential candidate if Kennedy didn't make it, and he hung back.

Jack McCloy, whom I had mentioned to Kennedy, was considered for the position but didn't want it, nor did Bob Lovett. But both of them I think had a considerable influence. Bill Fulbright was, I think, also very seriously considered, but he had signed the Southern Manifesto, and it was generally felt that this would be a great handicap to him in Africa and would cause resentment among a good many Negro Americans. This was, I think, basic to his being bypassed.

As far as I was concerned, I had been mixed up in politics for some time on a somewhat controversial basis, having generally been on the liberal side of most issues. I think, as a matter of fact, I know that when many of the Southerners saw that Fulbright couldn't become Secretary of State because he had taken a position antagonistic to civil rights in the opinion of many people, they said it shouldn't be given to Bowles, who was the author of the very liberal Democratic platform plank on civil rights, a very strong section that was deeply resented by some of the South.

I suppose all of these factors had played a role in the selection process. In any event, as far as I know, Kennedy had talked to a good many people about it during that month. I think he even talked to Dean Acheson, who had done everything he, could to prevent Kennedy from getting the nomination.

[-13-]

I think Dean Rusk's name came up the first time when Kennedy once said to me, "I want to ask you a hypothetical question: if you were Secretary of State, what kind of an organization would you set up?" The question was asked me at breakfast at his house on N Street about three or four blocks from my own house in Georgetown. I thought about it for a while and said, "I think I'd take Dean Rusk as Under Secretary." Kennedy asked if he wasn't the Rockefeller Foundation president, and I said yes, that was correct. I had known Dean over a period of years and felt that he would be an extremely good chief of staff. I thought he'd be the person I'd be inclined to want to bring in as Under Secretary.

I don't want to suggest or imply that Kennedy was in any way dangling the job in front of me because he really never did this. It was purely a hypothetical question. I think he wanted to know what I thought about it and what kind of people I'd want to bring in. I then mentioned Averell Harriman [William Averell Harriman] and several others that I felt would be qualified—Tom Finletter, for instance. In any event, there is a rather interesting side story to this.

The Rockefeller Foundation board of directors, of which I was a member, was meeting in Williamsburg, Virginia, for their annual meeting. I think it was about December 4, 1960. At the table among the trustees were several people who were prominently mentioned for Secretary of State. There was John McCloy, Bob Lovett, Ralph Bunche [Ralph J. Bunche], and myself. I was sitting at Rusk's right when he received an urgent telephone call. Somehow, instinctively, as he left the room, I guessed it might be Kennedy calling him.

I don't know why I ever thought this, but it clearly went through my mind, and when he came back, he wrote on a little piece of paper, "That was Kennedy—he wants to see me tomorrow morning in Washington—what in the world do you think he wants to talk to me about?" I wrote on another piece of paper, "I think he's about to ask you to become Secretary of State."

That night Dean Rusk came back to Washington and stopped at our house with Steb [Mrs. Dorothy Stebbins Bowles] and myself for dinner, and we talked long into the evening. He asked me a good many questions about what Kennedy was like, and what his position was on foreign affairs. Rusk had never been particularly active in politics. He was a Democrat from the South, but he had never been actively identified with the

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party. He had, of course, been Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs under Truman [Harry S. Truman].

The following morning he left to have breakfast with Kennedy, and he told me, "I'll call you from the station to tell you how it all comes out." So at about 10:30, just before he took the train for New York, he called me to say, "Well, that's one item you can cross off your list. I'm not going to become Secretary of State because Kennedy and I simply found it impossible to communicate. He didn't understand me, and I didn't understand him."

However, within a week or so, I received word—I can't remember where it came from, whether it was from Sarge Shriver or Bob Kennedy or who—that Rusk was going to be Secretary of State and in all probability I was going to be asked to be Under Secretary of State. I was asked whether I would be available that night around 9 o'clock to receive a telephone call from Kennedy, who was in Florida. I went out for an early dinner with the Van Slykes, who are old friends of ours in Washington. I remember it was snowing, and on the way back I slipped on the snow and ice, fell down and hurt my back. I got into bed and waited for the telephone call.

Finally at about 9:30 p.m. it came. At first Kennedy spoke to me, and then Rusk, who was also down there with him. They asked me if I would like to be Under Secretary of State. I said I would and accepted the offer. They said they wanted me to be the top-ranking of the two Under Secretaries, my portfolio might say Secretary of State for Political Affairs or Secretary of State for Economic Affairs, but in either case I would have the top rank. I said I thought I would like to take the Under Secretary for Political Affairs. They said fine, so be it.

This was the first of a series of errors, because what I should have done is said, "I'll be delighted to consider this and think about it, but I would like to know a little bit more about the job, what it will consist of and what you expect of me." I should have found out how I was to work with the Secretary and how I was to work with the President.

The responsibilities were never defined, and this was the beginning of a great deal of confusion. I assumed that the Under Secretary of State entailed the general management of the State Department, carrying on the organization, the day-to-day operations of the Foreign Service (e.g. choosing ambassadors),

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developing of basic policy, pointing out the key decisions to the Secretary, and sharing with him in the making of these decisions. However, it worked out somewhat differently.

BROOKS: You've described the way in which you came into the State Department. Can you say anything about the way in which the President or the Secretary of State worked together or otherwise in the selection of other prominent figures within the Department?

BOWLES: Dean Rusk and I were immediately given offices in the State Department, and we had secretarial staff assigned to us and started the job of recruiting. The first thing we had to do was to try and recruit someone for the position of Under Secretary of State for Economic Affairs. There was a lot of discussion as to who this might be. It came down pretty much to Bill Foster [William C. Foster] and George Ball [George W. Ball]. Both of these men had had a good deal of economic experience. Rusk's view was that Foster probably was the best qualified. I was inclined to agree although I didn't have any strong feelings.

In any event, I was given the job of telling George Ball that he would not be asked to be Under Secretary of State, but we would like to have him be Assistant Secretary of State for Economic Affairs, which entails the negotiation of various economic treaties and the rest. We also offered him the directorship of the aid program. I completed this unpleasant task as best as I could, trying to make George feel as good as I could about it. However, after lunch that same day, Bill Fulbright saw the President and asked if it would not be a good idea to place Democrats in the key positions. Foster was a Republican and Ball was a Democrat. Fulbright asked, "Why are you taking a Republican when you could have a Democrat?" So the signals were reversed. George Ball was asked to become Under Secretary of State for Economic Affairs and Bill Forester was rather pushed aside.

Another person who was picked at that time was Henry Labouisse [Henry Richardson Labouisse] for the AID program. I had rather wanted Harlan Cleveland [J. Harlan Cleveland] for the job. I knew Harlan had had long experience in the aid program. I knew him much better than I did Labouisse, although I admired Labouisse's work with the UN in the Middle East.

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However, Adlai Stevenson, who had moved by that time into the job at the UN, was very anxious to have Harlan as Assistant Secretary for International Affairs. Harlan, who I think was anxious to get away from development economics, was inclined to want to take Stevenson's offer, so Labouisse was brought in.

In regard to USIS [United States Information Agency (USIA)] there was a lot of talk about who would be the right man. I insisted there was only one person that really was fully capable of handling USIS, as I saw it, and that was Ed Murrow [Edward R. Murrow]. Everyone smiled at this and said there was no chance of getting him. I had known Ed Murrow for some time, and I knew that he had a hankering for public service, so I said, "Well, if I can get him, will you agree?" Both the President and Rusk said of course they would be delighted to have him. I brought Ed down from New York and asked him if he

would take the job. I told him I knew it was a great financial sacrifice, but I thought he was the ideal man for the job. He said, "of course I'll take it, when do I start?" It was the quickest recruitment venture I think I've ever been in on. Ed had to go back to New York and make arrangements for leaving his very lucrative job with Columbia Broadcasting Company, but he did it without hesitation. I think he was a tremendous success in this job.

The ambassadorships, of course, are another and very much longer and more complicated problem.

BROOKS: Mr. Bowles, what qualities do you think the President was looking for in the Secretary of State or in the combination of the Secretary and the Under Secretary so far as the formulation of policy and management of the Department was concerned?

BOWLES: I am not sure that this was very carefully thought out. In the first place, if you want to understand Jack Kennedy's presidency, you have to realize that he never had any really deep or broad management experience. The campaign had been organized with great skill and capacity, largely by Bob Kennedy and the various people he brought in. Management in Jack Kennedy's mind, I think, consisted largely of calling Bob on the telephone and saying, "Here are ten things I want to get done, why don't you go ahead and get them done." Bob would take over from that point.

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Both Bob and Jack, I think, had a rather deep sense of skepticism about the Foreign Service and the State Department in general. I think that President Kennedy was always determined to dominate, as I think any President more or less has to do, foreign policy making. I think he wanted the State Department to be a good and efficient instrument to carry out his policies. I think he was prepared, as again I think any good President should be, to carry on a good deal of personal diplomacy. However, he wanted a smooth running organization and a Secretary of State who would carry on, who would not be too prominent publicly or take too much of a public lead but would see that a good foreign policy instrument was provided and maintained.

BROOKS: Mr. Bowles, you have said that you think the President, although he wanted to take part in a certain amount of personal diplomacy, also wanted a smooth running organization. How effective or successful do you think he was in securing support of this kind from the Secretary and from the Department?

BOWLES: I don't think he was very successful. I don't think it worked very well. And I feel to some extent that I bear some responsibility for that.

Let me say, first of all, that we had been gradually recruiting. We tried very hard—I tried very hard, and I think I did most of the work to go out to get really outstanding outside people. We brought in Phil Talbot [Phillips Talbot], for instance, and Averell Harriman. Soapy Williams came in to run the African Bureau.

I felt strongly that the top ten or twelve people in the State Department should probably not be Foreign Service Officers. I thought they should be people who were astute and experienced in foreign affairs, who would be willing to be expendable when things went wrong, who were prepared to take risks and to think imaginatively and freshly. I thought our foreign policy had been stagnating for a good many years and needed fresh ideas. I was frankly very doubtful that these fresh ideas would come out of the Foreign Service.

I think that this was a very fundamental difference of opinion between Dean Rusk and myself. I remember writing a memorandum to him about a month before the inauguration pointing out the kind of new fresh faces I thought we ought

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to recruit, and I listed a few. On the whole, we did bring in a good many of these people.

Roger Hilsman came in as head of the Intelligence Department. My old associate and friend, Tom Hughes, came in as his assistant. Phil Coombs [Philip H. Coombs] headed up Cultural and Educational Affairs and was given a very big job, a tremendous responsibility, only late to have the rug pulled out from under him in a very unfair and unreasonable way.

But there was a real fundamental difference between Rusk and myself. I felt that Foreign Service needed to be revitalized, that new young people ought to be encouraged to come up through the ranks. I thought there was too much deadwood at the top. I felt a lot of this deadwood was represented in our embassies abroad. I thought we needed a revolution in the organization of the State Department. The Secretary was polite, but I don't think he was in agreement.

I think that if Kennedy had known of the problems, he would have been much more closely in agreement with me. As I look back on it, I think the things that I tried to do in the State Department were almost the very things that Kennedy would have tried to do if he had been fully aware of the needs and demands.

However, I made a very fundamental mistake in more or less cutting not only my contacts with him personally but also my contacts with the public and with Congress. I did this deliberately because I had a feeling that Dean Rusk felt a little uneasy about the fact that Stevenson and I, and a few others, had had a good deal of public experience, had been in public life for a long time, and were reasonably well known, while he was much less well known among the political people, the press and the public generally. I didn't want to give him the feeling that I was in any sense competing with him. I was Under Secretary and not Secretary, and I wanted to play the role of Under Secretary and not be competing for the Secretaryship.

For this reason, all through these months I held only background press conferences. I'm sure I'm the only Under Secretary of State who ever went for a full eight or ten months without having a press conference. I refused I don't know how many invitations to go on "Meet the Press" and other national television programs. I did this because I thought it was important that the Secretary emerge as the top figure.

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Also in Congress, of course, I had a great many friends and associates, not only in the House of Representatives, where I had served, but also in the Senate, where I had come to know almost all of the Democratic Senators and many of the Republicans quite intimately over a period of years. During this period of my position as Under Secretary, except for appearing before the Foreign Relations Committee to get their final approval and support for the vote on the confirmation, I hardly went near Capitol Hill, other than to talk to Bill Fulbright about the ambassadorships so that he would know who was coming up for ambassadorial appointments.

I think this approach was a very great mistake. I stayed away from the Kennedys, I stayed away from the Hill, I stayed away from the press. I did it deliberately. I think the motivation was good enough, but I think the wisdom behind this was very questionable. The result was that I was cut off from all the sources of influence I might have had.

BROOKS: Mr. Bowles, you've said that you've made no effort to bypass the Secretary either in your relations with the President or with the public and with Congress. This means that there was considerable importance to the direct relationships between the President and Secretary Rusk himself. How would you describe these relationships?

BOWLES: Of course, they saw a good deal of each other. I was in most of their meetings during this period. (Dean Rusk went away much of the month of March 1961. I think he went to Japan and a few places in Europe. I was acting Secretary during this period).

The relationship between Rusk and the President was polite. I never heard Jack Kennedy call Secretary Rusk anything but Mr. Rusk or Secretary. It wasn't an intimate or close relationship, although I think it got more so as time went on. During this period they were relative strangers. I would say generally that the State Department during much of this period was also pretty well cut off from the White House.

Mac Bundy [McGeorge Bundy], who was a very brilliant person and I think had the President's full confidence, was much closer to policy making than anybody else. Mac Bundy did not have a long background in Asia, Africa, or Latin American affairs; most of his experience had been in Europe. But he had an

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excellent mind, and although I found myself in frequent disagreement with many of the things he thought and felt in the early period, I grew to respect him and also to feel that our views were closer as time passed. I think, by and large, he was very powerful and a very constructive influence on the President.

In a sense, I think it is fair to say that Kennedy during this period looked on the State Department as a huge bureaucratic roadblock to all the things he would like to do. He saw foreign policy making on a personal basis—moving from problem to problem or area to area. For example, he was, I think, very anxious to create some bridge with the Soviet Union. The Soviets had been quite patient during the election, doing everything possible not to embarrass him in any way by embracing him or appearing to favor him. They came to me immediately

after the election to ask when we would begin to talk business. When would we begin to talk about relaxing and relating our policies a little more closely? We kept putting the Russians off because we weren't ready to talk and because our own policies were bogged down between the old guard in the State Department, who didn't want to move at all towards easing Soviet-U.S relations, and some of the newer people, who would have liked very much to see "what the water was like" and to see if we couldn't open a dialogue. I think Kennedy was very much on the latter side. But he kept waiting for the State Department to take the initiative, and the State Department was not prepared to take the initiative.

I might add that one place I think Kennedy was extremely helpful was in supporting the kind of ambassadors who had been lacking for quite some time. This was part of my job, but at first everyone was in on the act. It was a pretty tedious job running these people down to find out if they were available and to spring them loose from their business or university positions. I found more and more that it was being left to me, and without any great difficulty, I persuaded the President to set his ambassadors up with full administrative authority over the entire mission in the host country.

This had been done theoretically for a long time, but actually the aid and USIS programs and, certainly, the CIA were inclined to go off on tangents. Moreover, the old-line Foreign Service officers, who constituted most of our ambassadors, hesitated to extend their authority over these other

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agencies because they just did not have the confidence or experience to direct them. These old-line Foreign Service Officers felt they were judged personally by their analytical ability, by their reporting ability, and by the old traditional standards. They didn't want to get into these new fields. Consequently, we had many people to replace.

We also had many new ambassadors to appoint in Africa, for instance. As a matter of fact, we decided to replace or change at least 70 percent of our ambassadors. It was a huge undertaking. But this was by all odds the most satisfying matter on which I worked with Kennedy, except India, which we will come to later. He gave me a great deal of free rein in bringing in fresh new people.

I felt that about 70 percent of our Ambassadors should be drawn from the Foreign Service, with particular emphasis on the younger people. I thought they ought to be promoted and given a chance at Embassies when they were as young as 35 or 38 years old, particularly in the smaller new African countries. Of course, this was totally against the whole concept of the Foreign Service. It was a little difficult for the Foreign Service to argue with them on the basis of age, however, because Kennedy himself was only 42. When they began to tell us that only a man of 50 was approaching the appropriate age for an Ambassador, it was not too hard to knock them down. I had a great deal of help on this from Bill Crockett [William J. Crockett] and others in the Department who I think understood the problem. In any event, we brought in a good many new people who, incidentally, were not political payoffs. There were only three or four of those that Kennedy and others insisted on.

Most of the new people were from the universities or from foundations—individuals who knew foreign affairs, had experience in it, were professionals, had been abroad, and were a kind of new element in foreign affairs. Kennedy backed this change very fully by

ordering a directive to all the ambassadors to really take charge of the embassies and run the whole mission. There were a series of four letters which were sent out later with his approval, defining precisely what this meant. I think this constituted a kind of a revolution in the operation of embassies and the choice of ambassadors. This was the kind of thing that Kennedy understood. On it he was easy to work with, decisive and very affirmative.

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BROOKS: You've said a good deal already, Mr. Bowles, about the relationship between the President and the State Department. Perhaps you could say whether you think the President was interested in the internal organization of the Department and the day-to-day operation of the Department and the agencies which worked with the Department.

BOWLES: No, I don't think he was particularly interested. I think he was mystified and very impatient with it all. Policy in the State Department, in my opinion, has always been made in a rather roundabout way. If you wanted to know something about Germany policy, the process started at the German desk in the very lowest levels of the Department where German policy is analyzed. Papers are written at that level and they work their way up gradually through the Department, accumulating initials as they go and getting agreement through continual compromises. This information finally arrives at the top level. Usually the information is needed in two or three days, and there is no time to make extensive evaluation or revision of the plans. They have to be pushed forward to the President or rejected, and the whole process must be started over again.

I tried very hard to get this changed, and I don't think he understood what I was trying to do at the time. I said that what we should do is start with the top level people at the Department, discussing German policy at length and in depth. We could thus arrive at perhaps two or three different approaches to German policy, and then assign the technicians the task of exploring and amplifying these concepts, perhaps in competing or alternative memorandas. This series of choices would be considered by the top people and the policies could be again criticized, questioned, and perfected.

I tried to foster this approach, but, frankly, it was impossible. The Secretary didn't see the need for it. Clearly, it was the custom to work the other way—that is, from the bottom up rather than from the top down. And I think the President, at that time at least, was simply bored with such procedural suggestions or discussions.

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BROOKS: One of the important remaining questions in this area is whether the President had any procedure through which he arrived at a given policy position, and, if so, what were the basic principles which lay behind this procedure in reaching a conclusion?

BOWLES: I think that on the big things he depended pretty much on his own insights, following talks with Mac Bundy and Ted Sorensen. I know that over and

over again I saw him arrive at big decisions, very big decisions, in opposition to the general consensus of the meeting which he called to discuss the question. I think this is part of his very remarkable capacity and his growing confidence that was so tragically cut off by his death.

[BEGIN TAPE 3]

BROOKS: This is the third reel of an interview with Ambassador Chester Bowles on February 2, 1965, at 17 Ratendone Road, New Delhi, India. To resume the interview, I'll ask Mr. Bowles a very short question before we get on into matters of greater substance. In your experience, Mr. Bowles, what were the reactions of the career people in the State Department to President Kennedy and his New Frontier?

BOWLES: I think it pretty well divided between the older people in the State Department, who viewed the whole thing with a certain disdain, particularly when it was clear that a lot of them were not going to be pushed into the embassies that they had expected to get, and the younger people. Many of them were very enthusiastic and excited.

Of course, there was another large group in the Foreign Service which was perfectly relaxed about it, Kennedy was President and likely to remain so for eight years. Their main concern was to adapt themselves to his way of doing things, to find out how he thought and felt, and how they could be most effective in their jobs under his leadership. I would say that, in general, the younger and the middle level group in the Department and the Foreign Service were enthusiastic about Kennedy although there were certainly exceptions.

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BROOKS: Perhaps we should now get into some matters of greater substance. Could you describe, from the perspective of your job, the evolution, as you saw it, of Kennedy's policy and actions regarding, first of all, the Soviet Union and the communist bloc nations.

BOWLES: Kennedy, as I pointed out before, was very anxious to ease the tensions with the Soviet Union. He was a very bright person, had read a lot of history, and understood that an intransigent Russia and an intransigent America would sooner or later confront each other in a hideous blowup. However, we were slow in getting our policy really thought through.

The policy making system at that time was not devised to create broad new policy; rather it was devised to meet emergencies. The Department was a fire brigade, rather than a creative agency. Mac Bundy, who probably did as much as anyone in the creative line, was limited by the system. I tried very hard to instigate new approaches on many subjects, but I ran smack bang into the whole apparatus of the State Department, which was pretty formidable.

With regard to policy toward Russia, all of these factors were particularly present. As a result, there was rather a tragedy, or a near tragedy. Khrushchev [Nikita Sergeyeovich

Khrushchev], I think, interpreted the Bay of Pigs as a sign of fundamental Kennedy weakness. Kennedy looked on it as a rather hard trained enterprise to begin with, but once he had embarked on it, the Russians assumed that he would go through with it.

I was told by the Polish Ambassador, by other so-called Iron Country embassies, by the Yugoslavs, who were hardly in that category, and by other people with whom I talked, that once Khrushchev had started to face up to the problem of Hungary, he had plowed ahead, even at the cost of 32,000 dead on the streets of Budapest. Thus, Khrushchev assumed that Kennedy would do the same thing. In other words he would in two, three, or four divisions and clean up Cuba. When Kennedy didn't do this, (thank heaven he did not, since it would have been a very great mistake), Khrushchev drew some wrong conclusions. He decided that Kennedy was a soft, not very decisive young man whom he could push around a bit. So in the Vienna meetings that took place in May 1961, I think, Khrushchev was very tough, so tough that Kennedy returned to

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Washington in a very upset and disturbed state of mind. At this point Kennedy was convinced, as were many people, that the Russians really meant trouble, and we were inadequately prepared to deal with it. So in that summer we added substantially to the American military defenses, and during the early defense meetings after the Vienna Conference there was pressure to increase defense expenditures much further.

Dean Acheson, who had by that time worked his way back into a position of favor with the Kennedy administration, or with Kennedy at least, was strongly of the opinion, along with Mac Bundy and others, that we ought to go a lot further and get a lot tougher right away.

In any event, I think largely through Ted Sorensen's good offices (and I give Ted Sorensen a lot of credit for many of the good things that happened in this period) but also to Kennedy's own credit, the President made a wonderful speech at the UN in September. He again held out the olive branch to the Soviets and said that we were interested in world peace, anxious to find the basis for discussions with the Russians, and held the door wide open for such discussions.

Unfortunately, the following confrontation on Cuba, which Kennedy handled, I think, with great skill, was another severe setback. I was in Africa at the time on an extended trip, but I think it was a remarkable accomplishment all the way through.

I had had frequent talks with the Soviet Ambassador to the United States and had one such discussion just before leaving for Africa. Tom Hughes had just left my office before lunch. Tom was at that time head of the Intelligence and Research Division of the Department of State. He said that they had just received some very alarming information from photographs which clearly showed missiles and heavy bombers being unloaded in Cuba. I went to see the Soviet Ambassador at lunch that day. I said, "We have reports that you are introducing offensive weapons into Cuba. This could be a very great threat to us." I am quite certain from the expression on his face that he didn't know about it. He was quite skeptical, of course, with me in conversation, but I think he really didn't know. In any event, the situation came to a head shortly after that, and Kennedy handled it with great imagination

and, I think, great brilliance and courage. This was really the end of the Cold War in a sense because

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Kennedy didn't give up at that point. He was still open-minded on the whole subject of relieving tensions with the Soviets and easing the armament struggle.

I remember in the spring of 1963, I again had lunch with the Soviet Ambassador, and we discussed what appeared to be a dying effort to arrive at some sort of nuclear agreement. Both of us agreed that if we were unable to find some basis for understanding, it would be tragic and might mean that the rift would last for many years.

On the very important subject of inspection for underground nuclear tests, we were asking for seven inspections a year. The Russians were tentatively willing to give only three. The natural dividing point or compromise was five, but the Russians insisted they couldn't go to five. However, he made the suggestion that perhaps we agree on a lump sum over a period of years, say twenty-five or twenty-seven over a period of five years. He was so very outgoing and so encouraging that I stopped off to see Kennedy in his office at the White House to tell him about the luncheon. I saw him hesitate, and I said, "I earnestly hope that you are not going to be afraid to take this issue before Congress. You can win, and you can get the two-thirds majority in the Senate because if this comes down to the issue of whether we are going to prepare for peace or submit ourselves to the inevitability of war, you simply can't lose." His answer was very quick and very much to the point. He said, "I don't care if I have no more than ten votes in the Senate. If I get an agreement I think is right, we are going to do our best to push it through."

This was very unlike the old John Kennedy. He was no longer the Kennedy of 1959 or '60 who was basically, it seemed to me, a young man desirous of gaining power. Now he was anxious to use his power effectively and creatively. He went on and said, "I know it may sound a little corny but our world doesn't matter much. But I think Caroline's [Caroline Bouvier Kennedy] world does matter, and I am prepared to take every conceivable step to bring about a nuclear agreement with the Russians."

Now Jerry Wiesner [Jerome B. Wiesner], who was advising him on nuclear affairs and disarmament at the time, played a very big role in Kennedy's decision, as I think Mac Bundy and Ted Sorensen did. I may have played some role myself. In his speech at American University in June, he again repeated what he had

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said before, but in even broader form, the need to establish good relations with the Russians. It was a great speech, written, I think, largely by Ted Sorensen, but Kennedy himself must also receive a lot of the credit. He was really dedicated to breaking down the barriers between the U.S. and Russia. He was careful how he did it; he was very worried about public opinion; but I think he showed an extraordinary amount of courage. This is one of the aspects of his career that made me feel that in his second term he would have developed real greatness as a President.

BROOKS: We are a little bit out of the time sequence here, but I would like to go back to the first problem with Cuba, the Bay of Pigs episode. Do you care to say anything about how we got into that, and what the role of President Kennedy was in this connection?

BOWLES: Well, of course, for historians, there are many documents available which are perhaps more reliable than my memory three or four years after the event. But this was one of the most extraordinary happenstances in the history of the United States.

As I understand it, Allen Dulles [Allen W. Dulles] and the CIA had cooked up this Bay of Pigs venture before the election of 1960, and they more or less confronted the new Administration with the plan when it came to power. An attack force was in training in Guatemala. Whether to continue with the operation or not was obviously a decision for the new Administration to make.

The point of the matter is that I don't think a decision ever really was made. We sort of drifted into it. In the first place, it was never discussed very much, and very few people knew about it. For instance, Adlai Stevenson didn't know about it; George Ball, as Economic Under Secretary, didn't know about it; George McGhee didn't know about it, and he was at that time head of Policy Planning. I don't suppose ten people in the State Department were familiar with it; perhaps a larger number in the Pentagon and a much larger number in the CIA. We had drifted into it, and nobody knew quite how to stop it.

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I was acting Secretary of State during the month of March 1961, while Dean Rusk was away, and I had been in several discussions of the possibilities and problems, and I was very alarmed by them. I wrote a letter, I think on Friday, about a week or two before the event. I told Dean Rusk that I thought it was vitally important that he take a strong position against this venture. It could only work with vast military support, and this would mean the risk of a major war. I thought the whole venture could be stopped and that a strong position by Rusk at the meeting, which was scheduled, as I remember, for the following Tuesday, would probably succeed in this. The military people with whom I had talked—Ros Gilpatric [Roswell L. Gilpatric] and Bob McNamara [Robert S. McNamara]—did not seem at all enthusiastic and told me that unless we were prepared at least to put in the Air Force, it wasn't going to work.

What happened during the next week or ten days I have never been sure. I wasn't in those critical meetings. Rusk was back as Secretary, and I simply didn't go to them. Apparently, there was a failure of communications between the White House, the State Department, and the Pentagon that historians will have to unravel. I know I can't explain it; I just don't know enough about what happened.

I do know that I was convinced that the invasion was not going to occur. Only when Scotty Reston [James B. Reston] of the *New York Times* dropped by my home on N Street one night to tell me that he knew the whole thing was scheduled for three or four days from then did I really begin to believe that it was likely to occur. Even then, I was skeptical. He said he knew for a fact that it was going to happen, and, of course, he turned out to be right.

When the bombs were dropped by the B-26's, it was a Saturday, I think, I wrote another letter directly to Kennedy, strongly urging that we forego any such adventure. I did not at that time know the venture had been formally approved.

It was a first-class mess. The situation was a result of a new administration, new people who had not worked together, and lack of communications. I suppose it was the kind of thing that could happen once in a hundred years, but it was no great credit to any of the people involved. I feel I was

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guilty in not having gone to the President and talked to him myself. Feeling as strongly as I did, I should not have been content simply with a letter to the Secretary. However, in my letter and in the conversation I had with the Secretary, I did say that if the plan was going forward, I would like a chance to talk directly to the President about it. However, this was the last I heard on the subject.

BROOKS: There are several other matters of substance that we might discuss, first of all, perhaps the relation of President Kennedy to the Alliance for Progress, and perhaps also some comments on President Kennedy's relations to Africa, and the problem of the Congo.

BOWLES: Well, in regard to the Alliance for Progress, it really in a large measure grew out of the Cuban situation. I think that one thing Castro [Fidel Castro] deserves credit for is waking us up on the subject of Latin America. If we had been made aware of the situation earlier, there would never have been a Castro. Because we had neglected the basic problems of the common, everyday people of Cuba, we were faced with a Castro.

The Alliance was set up as a reaction to this situation, an effort along very constructive lines to undertake a major economic effort in Latin and Central America based on a foundation of internal domestic reform. The principles of the program were laid down pretty well in accordance with the Punta del Este resolutions calling for land reform, tax reform, and all the other necessary reforms to make a vital and free society. I don't think, however, that the Administration ever had the real courage to face up to the implications of these principles; we never quite decided whether we were prepared to put up with dictators in a pinch, prepared to put up with them at all.

As a result, we felt a little bit confused as to what should follow. When a right-wing group took over Peru, for instance, we allowed Jim Loeb [James I. Loeb], who was Ambassador down there, to fall by the wayside as more or less their scapegoat. I strongly favored an all-out liberal land reform, a progressive program identifying ourselves with new student groups that were emerging in Latin America and also the young liberal leaders offering a strong alternative to Communism.

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During Kennedy's lifetime or period of presidency, this policy was never quite implemented. We behaved in one way in one country and another way in other countries. I think now I might add that the Alliance is going fairly well, but I still think it's more effective from the top down and not from the bottom up, but that's another subject.

In regard to Africa, the first tough decision that Kennedy made was in regard to the Volta River project in Ghana. This was the best engineered major irrigation project, for that matter the best planned project of any kind, in Africa. Yet Nkrumah [Kwame Nkrumah], the Prime Minister of Ghana, was at that time bitterly opposed to the United States and bitterly critical of us. Therefore, we faced the old dilemma—here is a country that doesn't like us, that is leaning towards the Soviets away from neutralism, do we help them or don't we?

I think it was one of the hardest decisions that we could make. After a great deal of thought, I found myself in favor of going ahead with the Volta River project. It was a hard decision to make, particularly because Nkrumah had just come back from Moscow with more blasts against the United States. I argued, as did a few others, that we were not giving the money to Nkrumah, we were giving it to West Africa. We were trying to build a basis for the future development in West Africa, and this was a good way to do it. Nkrumah wouldn't be there forever, but the dam and its irrigation and power would be.

The interesting thing is that Kennedy thoroughly agreed with this policy and took some big political risks in implementing it. He called on some very prominent businessman in Chicago, I have forgotten his name, to make a study of it. He assumed that this man would turn in a favorable report. The report was not favorable. It would have been very easy for Kennedy at that point to have thrown up his hands and said, "Well, let's drop the whole thing." But he didn't. He asked this particular individual not to make his report public and then went ahead and approved the expenditures.

The program was hit by a few congressmen and senators but not very hard. Its success was an example of Kennedy's perseverance and initiative. Once he had a strong insight on the situation, he went ahead and did what he thought was right.

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The Congo was another such instance. I will never forget the meeting in which it was determined that the United States would fully back the United Nations in the Congo, even to the extent of throwing out Tshombe [Moise Kapenda Tshombe] by military means if necessary. The Joint Chiefs of Staff were at the meeting, and they were solidly arrayed against the enterprise. They said they had enough wars and trouble on their hands, and they did not wish to add to the burden. There were at least thirty people in the room, and only one or two of them were in favor of supporting the UN. I was one of these, and so was Adlai Stevenson. But the rest of the people were either lukewarm or against, and yet when the argument was all over, Kennedy decided affirmatively.

I remember one point that I made. I said that the so-called rebel mercenaries would never fight seriously against the kind of military competence that the Indian Army provided in the Congo. The mercenaries were there for the money only, and they would fight up to a point but not beyond that. I couldn't conceive them stalking Gurkhas in the jungles of the Congo. Kennedy picked this idea up and understood it and said he fully agreed with it.

In any event, the consensus of the meeting was wholly against our going through with this rather risky and tough operation of backing the UN, backing the Indian troops there, and backing the effort to get rid of Tshombe, which also meant antagonizing the French, the British and the Belgians. But when the final decision was made, Kennedy decided in favor of the three or four who wanted action and against the twenty-five or thirty who didn't want action. This is the sort of thing that leaves me with a strong feeling of respect for Kennedy's own imagination and ability to see the basic issues and to rise above the purely political considerations.

It seems to me that there are two reasons why people go into public life. One is simply to accumulate power for power's sake, and many of the people around Kennedy had gone into public life and politics for that purpose alone. These people viewed their first goal as achieving power and their second as maintaining power. The other reason for entering into public life and politics is to secure a certain series of clear objectives, ideas or ideals of how you would like our society, our foreign policy, or some aspect of our

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domestic economy to develop.

I think that Kennedy went into politics largely because he was interested in securing power. Perhaps he basically felt somewhat unsure of himself, but once he was in public life and once he had become President, it seems to me that he moved steadily toward this broader concept of using power constructively.

I watched the big decisions that Kennedy made with very great admiration. One such decision which I haven't mentioned immediately followed the Bay of Pigs disaster. When abject failure of this venture became clear, which was the day after the attack was made, a large meeting was held in Kennedy's office. There must have been forty people there, and the whole consensus of the people at the meeting was to get tough with Castro. Some of the people at the meeting were very outspoken and took an attitude of "He can't do this to us. We've got to teach him a lesson." If the President had at that point followed such a course and had decided to send in troops or drop bombs or whatever, I think he would have had the affirmative votes of at least 90 percent of the people at that meeting.

I know that I spoke up against such a move, and I felt very much alone. On the way out, one person came up and shook my hand and said, "I agreed with you even though no one else in the room did." But, again, the point is that in the last analysis, we did not do the things that these people had wanted done. Kennedy very properly decided, having made one mistake, he was not going to compound that mistake out of a false sense of pride.

BROOKS: Perhaps we might push along now to another part of the globe—Southeast Asia. Do you have any recollections of Kennedy's interest and positions?

BOWLES: One of his primary interests in Southeast Asia was China in 1961 and '62. Communist China was in a very difficult situation because of a lack of food. The Great Leap Forward had failed, and, in addition, there had been a crop failure due to a failure of the monsoon and other rains in China. The people were really quite desperately hungry. The calorie intake per capita on the average was probably

down to 1500 or less. The questions that were uppermost in Washington were: a) should we sell the Chinese food?;

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b) if we did, for what in the way of return?; and, c) under what conditions?

We had many meetings, and I think it was generally determined that we would probably be willing to sell them food for dollars on the ground that we didn't want to see people starve. This was not in our tradition and, besides, the foreign exchange that they gave us would tend to hold back their industrial growth anyway. However, before I went out to Southeast Asia and South Asia on a visit in the winter of 1962, I had a long talk with Kennedy about China generally. We discussed the two-China policy that I had talked about before his election. I reminded him of his agreement with the article I wrote for *Foreign Affairs* and asked him whether he thought we should try to find some way to crack the communications barrier between ourselves and Communist China. He asked me if I had anything specific in mind. I said I would be willing, if he thought it wise, to try to arrange a dialogue or negotiation with Communist China through U Nu, Prime Minister of Burma, who I might stop off to see in Rangoon. He asked me what I thought I might say, and I suggested that we might refer to our willingness to sell China rice and wheat for foreign exchange. But if China was willing to go further and freeze the political situation in Asia, take the pressure off Southeast Asia, take the growing pressure off India (this was before the aggression against India), agree not to attack Formosa (they didn't have to accept the political permanence of the Taiwan situation but just agree not to go to war over it), we might be willing to give further help to Communist China in the way of food over a longer period of years. I pointed out to the President that we could always halt this aid if necessary and that with it we would have some degree of leverage over Chinese policy.

President Kennedy was interested in this, very interested, and said he thought that I ought to go ahead and hold the conversation. I said, "Do you want me to say that I am speaking for you, that I am speaking purely on my own, or something in between?" He said, "Something in between. I would suggest that you say that you had discussed the subject with me, I am in general agreement with your ideas, but I am not necessarily a party to the specific suggestions and precise concepts that you may advance." He said this approach would leave him some

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elbow room for negotiating. Again, I think this took courage. However, the meeting was never held because U Nu was put in jail the day before I was supposed to stop in Rangoon. The government was overthrown, and that was the end of it.

On the question of Southeast Asia, I tried very hard to get him and others to see that we could never win a military victory in Southeast Asia unless we built a strong political base for it. Everybody gave lip service to this idea, but the generals usually end up by saying "Well after all, security comes first, and after we have won the military battle then it will be time for the reform." This, of course, is precisely what Chiang Kai-shek told people just before China fell apart in the 1940's.

In the winter of 1962 after I got back from Southeast Asia—I had been out there for about a month—I wrote a memorandum to President Kennedy suggesting a whole new approach to Southeast Asia based on the belief that eventually the area must be neutralized and that we must start now to make sure that the neutralization was a proper and true neutralization rather than one that simply played into Communist Chinese hands. He was interested in the memorandum although nothing much came of it.

A month later I expanded the memorandum into a whole series of recommendations. I suggested that Kennedy make a speech to the American public describing why we were in Southeast Asia. He should point out our consciousness of the tremendous sacrifices which the people there had made over a period of years and our desire to help build up the area. He should also state that we had no desire to remain in Southeast Asia; that we were prepared to spend substantial sums of money in building up the Mekong River; and that we were willing to see if we could negotiate some agreement between the countries of the area which would be the basis for a common market in the neutralized area, possibly under some kind of UN or international supervision.

Kennedy and Dean Rusk both accepted these memoranda, approved the concepts, and we actually sent out cables to the various embassies announcing that I would be in the various capitals to discuss this program under the direction of the President. However, some of the people down the line in the State Department who adhered to the old line fought very

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bitterly against my proposals and finally ended up by saying the ideas were good, but the timing was wrong. They succeeded in having it postponed sixty or ninety days, and by that time we were involved in the conflict with Cuba, and the opportunity was lost.

[BEGIN TAPE IV]

BROOKS: This is reel No. 4 of an interview with Ambassador Chester Bowles on February 2, 1965, at 17 Ratendone Road, New Delhi, India.

The next topic which perhaps we might turn to is that of foreign aid, and since both you and President Kennedy were very much interested in the Peace Corps, you may wish to make some special reference to that.

BOWLES: Well, Jack Kennedy as a member of Congress was always a great supporter of aid. I have already mentioned the fact that he and I worked together before he became President to set up the first consortium for India and Pakistan at the request of Doug Dillon and Chris Herter. When the new Administration took office, there was a lot of talk about the kind of aid program we should have. I strongly advocated tougher standards in regard to the distribution of our economic aid, I felt a lot of the aid had been wasted by giving it to people who were politically inept. Some of it was being used to try to prop up people who were running their countries on a 17th century basis and couldn't possibly survive without our help. I felt that this was identifying us with the wrong political elements in many parts of the world, and I consequently supported strong and vigorous reform. Kennedy agreed with this policy, supported it, and we actually wrote these

principles with very rigorous standards to be met on the part of the recipient country into the new legislation that went to Congress in the spring of 1961.

Kennedy supported a generous aid program but I don't think ever went far enough in insisting on the kind of standards that I think are essential. While he believed in the principle, I think there was a gap between this concept and an appreciation of the administrative procedures necessary to carry it out.

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Henry Labouisse, who took the directorship of the aid program initially, was, I think, unfairly sacrificed for a number of reasons. He became the scapegoat for all of the criticism of the aid program. Much of this criticism would have been better aimed at the previous Administration. His successor, Fowler Hamilton, was brought in on the theory that he could sell the program to Congress. However, Fowler would, I think, be the first to agree that he never had much experience in this field or much sensitivity for the needs of the developing countries. Consequently, he was also unsuccessful. Dave Bell [David E. Bell], however, was a brilliant choice, and he has really carried out the program that I think President Kennedy had in mind.

As far as the Peace Corps is concerned, Kennedy took great interest and great pride in it. This was indicated by the fact that he put his brother-in-law, Sarge Shriver, in charge, of it. This program of young people moving in a vigorous, imaginative way to try to build some kind of better world society was a reflection of Kennedy's own thoughts. Although it had been advanced in various forms by others, this was Kennedy's own idea, and he made it into a reality. He gave Sarge Shriver the chance to make it into a reality and supported him very strongly in this task.

I might add that in the summer of 1962, I tried very hard to get a reorganization of the AID program which somehow just never came about. I felt that the standards which I thought were necessary needed to be underscored even more fully and dramatically. I wrote a memorandum on the subject to Kennedy which he read and agreed with, I think. However, nothing much was done with it.

I also suggested a reorganization of the AID program proposing that most of the technical assistance be transferred to the Peace Corps. Again, this proposal was generally accepted, but nothing was really done about it.

BROOKS: One impression I have from listening to the interview is that Kennedy's decision were largely in the form of responses to initiatives taken by others. Can you give any examples or illustrations of situations in which Kennedy himself assumed the initiative or, if not, explain this impression which I have received?

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BOWLES: Well, I think your impression to some degree is correct although all we have taken into account so far is the fact that during the 1950's a concept

of foreign affairs had been built up by the liberal wing of the Democratic Party which included thoughtful attention to the developing areas. Part of this concern was misguided because there was a feeling that if you put money into the developing areas, everything would progress by itself. Nevertheless, a general foreign policy approach had been built up. It was fought out in the Democratic Policy Committee under Paul Butler. It was expressed in the Democratic platform, and it was expressed by people like Humphrey, Stevenson, myself, and others who made a great many speeches and wrote a great deal on the subject. It was also expressed by Kennedy himself. If much of this sounds like Kennedy reacting to situations, he was, in a sense, reacting to the policies and attitudes of mind to which he had himself contributed as a kind of a Democratic Party, or liberal Democratic Party, approach to foreign affairs.

Kennedy, however, went far beyond that. I think two or three of the most important things he did included his speech at the UN in September 1961, which was a great speech in which he reached out for peace in a very vigorous and bold way at a time when it would have been very easy to crawl into our nuclear shell, glare at everybody, and say that the Russians were making such initiatives unprofitable. Second, a year later, when he won the Cuban encounter with Khrushchev, he was very skillful and very careful in leaving the way open for future negotiations. He wanted to use this opportunity not only to teach the Russians a lesson but also to advance the cause of peace by proving to the world, to Khrushchev and to the American people, that you just could not continue down this path of confrontation and counter confrontation without something very ugly happening sooner or later. Thirdly, he took the initiative in his speech at American University in 1963 by speaking out affirmatively once again for an end to the Cold War, or at least at an easing of the difficulties that divided the world.

BROOKS: It might be helpful if we shifted now from more general topics to the question of your own personal relationship with President Kennedy. I wonder if

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you would like to comment on the circumstances which surrounded your shift from the role of Under Secretary to that of Special Representative of the President.

BOWLES: Well, this is still a rather painful subject to me and one on which I don't think I can be wholly objective. I think anyone reading or listening to this must take this into account.

Let me start with the fact that, although it may seem a little strange, I had been very, very happy to have been made Under Secretary of State. Although a lot had been made about the possibility of my becoming Secretary of State, I had not taken it quite as seriously as many people had. Indeed, because of my ambassadorship in India and my experience in administration, I was really anxious to tackle the job of general management of the State Department and the apparatus of foreign policy. This is what I believed the Under Secretaryship to be.

However, as it worked out, I never was able to fulfill this role. The Secretary always used to suggest that I was his alter ego, interchangeable with him. This was very kind and I appreciated it, but I saw my role quite differently. I saw myself with a specific definite role as general manager of the Department, building the procedures and putting the right people in the right spots (including the right ambassadors), and creating in the State Department an instrument of foreign policy which would be an effective tool for the President.

Of course, as Under Secretary, I expected to have some role in the formulation of policies. But the actual building of the instrument, the administrative instrument, was the thing I had my heart set on, and I thought the first thing I had to do was to be very sure my relationship with the Secretary was one of mutual trust and confidence, which, as I pointed out earlier, I tried very hard to build.

During the winter of 1961, as I pointed out before, I meticulously stayed away from publicity. I stayed away from my friends on the Hill, and for seven or eight months—in fact, from the middle of November 1960, shortly after Kennedy was elected, until July 1961—I did not see the President alone for a private discussion. I did this deliberately because I felt that Dean Rusk might feel that I was “end-running”

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and I didn't want to have that in our relationship. I did, however, on several occasions send memoranda to the Secretary strongly recommending a reorganization of the State Department, the establishment of strong geographic Under Secretaries rather than Assistant Secretary, upgrading the job of Under Secretary, and bringing about various key changes within the Department, particularly in the process of formulating policy within the Department. Rusk was not sympathetic to these ideas. He saw the Foreign Service in a different light and was, by and large, rather suspicious and skeptical of people coming in from the outside (although I think he would have been the first to admit that many of the people we brought in were very good). In any event, I cut myself off completely from the White House, from the press, from the public, and from Capitol Hill.

Now at the same time, in the White House and around the President, there were at least two groups that were antagonistic to everything that I, Stevenson, Humphrey, and others of our general viewpoint believed in. First, there were the Boston politicians who had been working around Kennedy for years, who had been supporting him and helping him on his march to the presidency. These were able men in a narrow, political field, but they were highly skeptical of the people whom they considered to be in the liberal wing of the party. They had no particular ideology. Their general desire was to achieve power through Kennedy and that was about the end of their ambition, except to maintain the power once they had won it.

There was another group also that was rather fashionable. A well-to-do group that Kennedy had seen and known socially over a period of time. Joe Alsop was a member of this group. He and others were very antagonistic toward the so-called liberal wing of the Democratic party and its relationship with the President.

Kennedy himself would have been the first to agree that without the liberal wing he could never have won the presidency. Having won it, I think these groups were very anxious to make sure that he cut himself off from the liberals.

These groups started by attacking Stevenson very hard. I think they were responsible for Stevenson not being appointed Secretary of State. They fought very hard to see

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that he was isolated and when he first went to the UN, he said one or two things which they didn't like and there was a widespread leaking of rumors to the press which were intended to undercut Stevenson. However, Stevenson was on TV; he was prominent; he was at UN; he had been a presidential nominee himself; and he was not so easy to knock out. I was an easier target and made myself a still easier target by drawing back into the bureaucracy and trying to work from within.

When the Bay of Pigs incident occurred, I also showed the memorandum to the Secretary, which I mentioned earlier, to George Ball, George McGhee, Adlai Stevenson, Abe Ribicoff, and one very good friend, Herbert Brucker, who is editor of the *Hartford Courant*. This was an emotional period, and in the discussions that followed, details of this memorandum leaked out, though not very accurately. I was then pounced on by the groups which I mentioned before and which were playing all kinds of games with various newspapermen. Alsop played a leading role I think. My memorandum was used as a basis for attack.

Now, Bill Fulbright also opposed the President's going into the Bay of Pigs. He also wrote the President a memorandum, and not only was this leaked to the press, but it was actually given to the press.

I don't think more than eight or nine people at the time ever saw the memorandum I wrote, but, nevertheless, it was used to beat me over the head in a way that was not particularly helpful to relations all around. These attacks continued. The two groups thought that while they could not change the Secretary, they at least might try to knock out some of the liberals surrounding the President. This is about the best way I can explain what happened to my own position in the Administration, and I admit that it does not seem like an adequate explanation. These two groups were constantly pressuring the White House. I think the President was somewhat embarrassed by it. He felt that I had worked hard for him from the beginning. If he had had any idea of the struggle that was going on within the Department to turn it into the kind of effective instrument that he was anxious to have, it would have been another story entirely.

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I don't think Rusk ever had much to do with the matter, although I may be wrong. He was very close-mouthed about it. The first inkling I ever had that something was up was in June, when Rusk said to me, "You must get very frustrated with this job of yours. I should think you would be happier if you were in some embassy." Well, this was rather a shocking statement, and I was surprised by it. I said I saw my job as a very-important one, I had no desire to leave it, and I certainly intended to stay on and master the problems that we were working on together. I went on to say that while we had certain differences about the role of Department and how it should operate, I was sure we could work those out.

A short while later Kennedy himself asked me to lunch. He suggested that I might be happier if I were in an embassy and out of the Under Secretaryship. I said this would not be the case. I had no desire to go to an embassy, but I did have a desire to give him a much better understanding of what was going on in the Department, of what was happening in the Department, and how it could be improved.

At this point the story began to leak that I was on my way out. The *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and various of the liberal papers around the country came quickly to my support. I think my opponents were rather surprised at the extent of this support, and they withdrew the pressure temporarily. However, by this time I had really opened the door to a full dialogue with the President, and from that time on I was able to talk with him very directly for the first time. If I had done this earlier, I do not think there would have been any trouble or difficulty.

However, the "Alsop group" again started rumors of my impending dismissal. Pierre Salinger [Pierre E.G. Salinger], when it was announced that I was staying on as Under Secretary, told the press, off the record, that he didn't think I would stay very long. This was, of course, reported back to me, but I never took it very seriously. I went away on a trip in the summer of '61 to solidify our program of reform within the embassies. I attended three meetings in Africa, meetings in Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and two in Latin America with the ambassadors and their senior officers. I took along with me representatives of the AID program, USIS, the Peace Corps, military, etc., to give the ambassadors an idea of the instruments

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that they had available to them. In other words, I wanted to show them how they could use all of these various elements of foreign policy, orchestrating them in their role as ambassador to promote our interests in the country to which they were assigned. I think these meetings were among the most important contributions I have made in foreign affairs, and they were, I believe, very effective. At least everybody who attended seemed to think so.

This project took me out of the country a good deal over a period of several months. In November, when I came back, I had just about decided the time had come to have a showdown with the Secretary and get my job as general manager of the Department defined. Either I was to be general manager or I wasn't. I wrote the Secretary a memorandum—this was in mid-or late November of 1961—suggesting how my job should be defined, what I wished he would do to implement this, and what the division of authority between him, myself, and George Ball would be.

But a curious thing developed over that next weekend. It was the weekend of the Yale-Harvard game, and I had a telephone call from Washington on Saturday—I was in Essex for the game. It was suggested that I come to Washington that afternoon. I pointed out that I was in Connecticut with my family, and, unless there was some real emergency, I would prefer to come down the next day. Finally, the Secretary rather reluctantly said, "All right. I'll see you tomorrow afternoon at 2:30." I returned to Washington the next day, which was Sunday, very mystified as to what was going to happen.

Rusk announced that the President was having a reshuffle of the whole Department, and he wanted me to serve as Ambassador-at-Large, as his representative to Asia, Africa, and

Latin America. I balked at this and said I would have to have the job much more clearly defined. Ted Sorensen was brought in to discuss it with me, and the discussions went on for two or three days. At the end of the second day, I think it was Tuesday, I met with the President and Ted Sorensen, and we agreed on the definition of the job which I felt could be a very important one.

It seemed to me that the Department was pretty much in the control of people who had been brought up on the theory of the dominant position of Europe. This was based on an earlier

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period of international relations when the British had made such a contribution toward stabilizing things during the 18th and 19th centuries by balancing the various power factors in Europe.

But a “new world” in Latin America and Asia and Africa had developed, and we were not giving it thoughtful or adequate attention. I assumed that in this new job, I might be able to accomplish a great deal more along such lines. So, rather reluctantly but still hopefully, I talked it out with the President, and I became convinced he was very serious about giving this “new world” the attention it deserved. Thus, I agreed to take the job. However, it turned out to be quite a disappointment. I was given a good staff: Jim Thomson, Sam Lewis and others. They were very able, very dedicated people. But in the full year in which I held that job I was not asked to undertake any projects whatsoever.

On my own I undertook a good deal of work, did a great deal of traveling, and I think perhaps I did some good. But it was never in response to requests by the Secretary or the President. It was done on my own initiative. They always seemed to be glad that I did these things but there was no real sustained concern about these areas of the world. I say this in spite of the fact that I think the President generally shared my views on Asia, Africa, and Latin America, the importance of the areas and the need for dealing with them sensitively. But I think by that time we had gotten into a kind of crisis philosophy. What we were more or less doing was responding to crises rather than, as I was desperately trying to do, foreseeing some of these situations and attempting to forestall them before they became crises.

In any event, this went on for about a year—with plenty of interesting work to do, trips all over Latin America, Africa, and Asia. I traveled in some fifty-odd countries during this period, examined the different embassies, helped strengthen the AID programs in various places, helped strengthen USIS, and so on. But this really wasn't leading anywhere, and by the fall of 1962 I was very keenly aware of this.

In early December 1962 I wrote a letter of resignation to the President, pointing out that I had taken the job in good faith because I felt that these areas were extremely important. However, I felt that I had not had any real role to play; the

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job did not have any particular significance in the foreign policy setup. I thought that he and I had been close on foreign policy matters generally, but my recommendations seemed to be

not especially relevant to him. For instance, Southeast Asia, which I thought was going to become an explosive area, was not yet an explosive area. Therefore, there was a tendency not to deal with the area until it became more difficult. I pointed out that this was true in the Middle East and many other parts of the world. I could not change my ways of doing things, and I thought we had to think and plan at least two or three years ahead. I told the President that I disagreed with anybody who thought that planning that far ahead was a purely visionary exercise.

I think it was a good letter, a strong letter. The President read it, and Ted Sorensen read it. I would like to give Ted a lot of credit for the positive side of the President's policy throughout this period. The President asked me not to do anything further on the subject until after Christmas. He said he had a lot on his mind and did not want me to leave the Administration. He wanted me to stay on and would have other thoughts after Christmas.

I saw him after Christmas, and he said, "I would like to have you go to India. Ken Galbraith [John Kenneth Galbraith] is leaving in the spring, and this is a most important underdeveloped country. You can make a big contribution there and I want you to go there."

I was very skeptical. I was skeptical because I did not have a lot of faith in the State Department's position on India and South Asia. I was inclined to think that I might be sent out there purely as a front, on the theory that if I were there, the Indians and other people sympathetic to the situation would assume everything was in good shape. Therefore, I said to the President that I wanted to spend some time really determining what the policies were, and unless I was confident that these policies were appropriate, I would not undertake the job.

He said, "Why don't you write your policy out as you think it should be in a directive from me to you. Then I'll look at it, and if I agree with it, I will accept it, and you will have written your own policy."

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I tried to do this; it was a difficult exercise. Finally, I settled for a series of memoranda, which I exchanged with the President and Dean Rusk, which pretty well covered the ground and largely satisfied me. However, I still had some doubt as to how deep their convictions were. I do feel, however, that Kennedy definitely wanted me to go to India to do a job, that he thought India was a place of great importance, and I think that he also was beginning to appreciate something of the struggles that had been going on in the Department.

[END OF INTERVIEW #1]

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