McGeorge Bundy, Oral History Interview – JFK#1, 3/1964
Administrative Information

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Biographical Note
Bundy was Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs (1961-1966). In this interview, he discusses John F. Kennedy's thinking and decision making style; his relationship with other members of his administration, including his close working relationship with Theodore C. Sorensen; the aftermath of the Bay of Pigs invasion; the Cuban Missile Crisis; Laos and the Vietnam War; the threat of military conflict with the Soviet Union over Berlin; and JFK's relationship with other heads of state, among other issues.

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Oral History Interview

Of

McGeorge Bundy

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McGeorge Bundy—JFK#1

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First of Four Oral History Interviews

with

McGeorge Bundy

March 1964, May 1964

by Richard Neustadt

For the John F. Kennedy Library

NEUSTADT: Now here you were, Mac, in the last months of the Kennedy [John F. Kennedy] Administration, after the trip abroad, and you must have had by this time a pretty refined set of do's and don'ts in your mind as to when you went to the President, how you presented things to him, what bored him, to what he responded. Everybody in this kind of role has developed such a checklist, and I think one might learn a lot about him at this late period, if you can reconstruct yours.

BUNDY: Well, I suppose the simplest and most basic rule about my part of his affairs was his eagerness to know anything that he might have to, or might wish to, act on. So that one was most sharply sensitive, I think, after two and one-half years of experience, to the need to make sure that he did hear either reports of events abroad, or differences of view developing within the government, or matters that would become public, which are always important to any president. One of the things I certainly had to learn at the beginning was the importance of the newspapers in the process of government. So that the first rule I would set is that you made sure that the President was informed. I remember one of the few times in the later months where he really sort of deliberately gave me an instruction and felt that he had not been properly served—it was some one of those small rows over troops in Germany which occurred in the months after his European trip. The President hadn't

seen a cable which expressed reservations, or which showed that there had been some clumsiness in informing Chancellor Adenauer [Konrad Adenauer] as early as he wanted it—not in time, in fact, to affect the way it was handled—and he was annoyed by that, quite properly.

The principal substantive issue in those last months was, of course, the Vietnamese problem. And it was also one, to be honest with you, which was not very well handled. The President was incurably willing to decide, all the years I knew him, and he made one or two weekend decisions which weren't necessarily bad decisions, but which were not clear decisions in the sense that all the people who had their hands on the heavy load heard about it before the course was changed. There's a famous cable to Saigon sent on a weekend in August, the language of which was settled by a phone call between George Ball [George W. Ball] in his bedroom, and the President in Hyannisport. The President thought he had cleared one kind of language, and George took another kind—took a different view. And while Mike Forrestal [Michael V. Forrestal] and Roger Hilsman told their opposite numbers, nobody told Bob McNamara [Robert S. McNamara], nobody told John McCone [John A. McCone], nobody told Max Taylor [Maxwell D. Taylor]. And all hell broke loose. I don't think that the President himself ever cared very much about the process of interdepartmental clearance, but in this case he got the point very quickly and from then on everybody was always latched on, at least in the sense that they were in the room when he made the decision, and had to ride with it from then on out

NEUSTADT: When you say that he was incurably willing to decide, was his tendency…

BUNDY: No, that's a very good wording because he was willing to decide. Let me put it another way. When he knew what he wanted to do, he was unwilling to be vacillating or to hold up, if he thought the situation as painted to him was urgent and required action. I have a kind of a feeling, Dick, that when the President was off on a weekend he felt it particularly necessary to prove he was still is President. The thing is he might well have said, “We can wait till tomorrow and get everybody around.” He made a bad decision over the Bay of Pigs from that place they had in Glen Ora because it was Sunday and he didn't want not to decide. He made, I think, not a bad decision, but a decision by bad process on this weekend because he didn't want to have people thinking he couldn't settle something on Sunday. We had some discussion of that afterwards, and I teased him a little about weekend government, and we did, I think, more or less, adopt a rule that we would not make decisions by that process from then on out.

Your broader question, whether he was incurably willing to decide in the larger sense, I think I would put against that the fact that the President was very reluctant to make a decision he didn't have to make—bringing him a document which asked him to decide something that it was not in the interest of the President to decide, although it might be enormously helpful to the planner; or the man who had to get a lot of

odds and ends going, or who thought he did; or simply the man who had written a long paper and wanted the President's opinion on it so as to validate the work, make him feel good about the fact that he was doing it—none of this interested him very much.

And I've always thought that one of the reasons the President put Walt Rostow [Walt Whitman Rostow] in the Department of State was so he wouldn't have to read quite so many papers which he didn't have to decide on. Not that he didn't admire Rostow right through, but that Walt did and still does produce long, operational recommendations, not all of which relate to anything that a President is ready to decide. We have a great big paper right now on "What to do when the Chinese get a nuclear weapon." A president like Kennedy isn't going to deal with that except to say that he wants a lot of plans prepared. Actually, he was deeply interested in that problem. He himself would have probably wanted to read that particular piece of paper—that special case.

NEUSTADT: Well now there's a distinction here somewhere in the way this fellow operated. He wanted to decide only what was significant for him. I take it he wanted to think about things that he particularly cared about.

BUNDY: It's hard to separate those two out, I think. He thought restlessly and continuously about all kinds of political phenomena, and he thought of the word "politics" in a very wide sense. I never heard him talk with real interest on any topic except personalities and politics.

They didn't always have to be political personalities, but they usually were. He thought about politics, and he thought about political processes, and political issues, and people with ranging curiosity. But when you were transacting business, bringing something that involved either a decision or a request for more information of an official sort, or an action that either he or someone else would take, then he was very businesslike in his sense of what the relevant data were. Two kinds of data, the kind of data to make the decision correctly, and then always right around that the problem of having the decision look right. And I suppose what I'm saying about this weekend decision was that it didn't look right, within the government—something that he thought about all the time within the week, but on the weekend a the government seemed to him to come to a head in the man who was on the telephone. It didn't seem that way to the people who weren't on that end of the telephone.

NEUSTADT: You've raised something that must be significant—the weekend psychology. Why did he take weekends?

BUNDY: He took weekends because he hated the White House on Saturday and Sunday. More than for any other single reason, he took them to be away. The places he went away to were characterized by relative privacy, relatively social and non-professional environments. His weekend guests were

almost never business friends. I think three places he came to like were Palm Beach, Hyannis of course, which

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were familiar places, and Camp David. He always felt done in by having been conned into building a house in Virginia by Mrs. Kennedy [Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy], I think, and didn't particularly like that place. Now why did he go on weekends? He went on weekends because, as I say, he simply wanted to get away from a building that was never a place for casual relaxation; where people could always get at him; where he could not go out of doors and be alone; and where he couldn't very well get into that kind of mood that he could get into if he had the Bartletts [Charles Bartlett; Martha Bartlett] or the Bradlees [Antionette Pinchot Bradlee; Benjamin C. Bradlee], or Chuck Spalding [Charles Spalding], or Lem Billings [Kirk LeMoyne Billings], or Red Fay [Paul B. Fay, Jr.], or any of those people.

NEUSTADT: And yet your suggestion is that he goes off for relaxation, he goes off into privacy, into his own world, but he's nervous about it somehow?

BUNDY: He was at the beginning, but I don't think he was nervous about it at the end. And, as I say, I draw this sharp distinction between the decision he actually made and the form of the decision in August of 1963. I think he made the right decision. I think it had been maturing in his mind for some time. It was essentially a decision whether you would or wouldn't distance yourself from Diem [Ngo Dinh Diem] and Nhu [Ngo Dinh Nhu]. It took a sharper form on that particular cable than was real because the people were talking as if the United States could decide when and how to have a coup, which the United States cannot decide. But the real issue, which is whether we go with the Diem brothers or whether we don't, had been maturing for six weeks in the President's mind,

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and he was quite clear and, I think, quite right in his judgment that they'd either have to change or we would have to put ourselves in the position to expect a new set of people to make a new try. But I think it wasn't as if the weekends passed without communication; there was almost never a Sunday morning paper that didn't trigger some sort of a phone call. And as the President became increasingly disenchanted with the *New York Times*, you could count on that paper alone to produce this kind of reaction.

NEUSTADT: Now we're talking about the Kennedy 2-1/2 years out, but the papers issue raises something I'd like to get your sense of at this period. It may have changed over time. He was very sensitive to press criticism, but I sense that that sensitivity had nothing to do with his own self-confidence, that it had to do with something else.

BUNDY: Well, there were two kinds of reactions, I think, to press criticism in

the President's mind. One was that it was politically a minus to be criticized—just as an operational matter. A politician needs a good press—needs a good public image. I know nothing about the operational details of the years before 1961, but I am morally certain that the business of getting people to like the entity they thought of as Jack Kennedy was just enormously important. And as a cold, professional matter, therefore, it was no help to be chopped up once a week in *Time Magazine*. As a parenthesis to that, it was

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doubly annoying to be chopped up just after you'd applied the very best butter to the local representative. And then there was a kind of sense of permanent frustration in the President's relation to *Time* and to *U.S. News*. And there was another kind of irritation of a quite different sort, which was the irritation with the kind of news story that might indeed make the Administration look bad, but that entangled the process of government—that showed that the government was leaky or messy, when indeed it was leaky and messy—or that showed the government worse off than it really was because the *reporting* was messy.

NEUSTADT: This is again cold, professional irritation.

BUNDY: Well, that was irritation of a deep-seated sort. I happened to agree with the President, for example, that the *New York Times* in its diplomatic reporting—especially as it has been handled by Tad Szulc and, to a lesser degree, by Max Frankel, in the last few years—does legitimately cause this kind of irritation. This was very annoying to the President. Then sometimes, of course, as a cognate element you get deep irritation over what somebody else had actually done that happened to appear in the papers. The two figures that leap to mind from the fall of 1963 are Chancellor Adenauer and Mme. Nhu [Madam Ngo Dinh Nhu] who, in their several ways, were not treating the President of the United States as their best and most intimate friend.

NEUSTADT: How about the personal side?

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BUNDY: He used to get furious at damaging stories that were not so. This is something that Pierre [Pierre E.G. Salinger] can tell you on so much better than I can—that business of whether he had been married before he married Jackie—just dancing up and down with rage—of a temporary sort, but temporary in the sense that it was a topic on the top of his mind for about 24 hours with people with whom he felt easy enough to pop off about. Personal criticism in the sense of being cut up by Ev and Charlie [Everett M. Dirksen; Charles A. Halleck], or sort of the legitimate political game of personal criticism in that sort of normal, political warfare sense, I don't think bothered him a bit. Personal criticism from columnists certainly did bother him because that was the battleground where he wanted to turn their opinions around and have it going for him and not against him.

NEUSTADT: The distinction I want to be sure we get down is your perception of whether he was bothered as a human being by evidences of people not liking him—by taking criticism, taking it personally, in that sense.

BUNDY: I don't think he was bothered by people not liking him because I think he was well aware of the fact that there weren't very many people who didn't like him. I don't think he felt—I never heard him worry, for example, about that rather mean book of Victor Lasky's. I would doubt very much that he was entirely leveling with us when he gave the impression that other people had read it but perhaps he hadn't. But I don't think it bothered him. I think that maybe

the best answer to your question because that book is just one long series of sharp knives.

NEUSTADT: This is a person who looked superficially very self-sufficient, very confident about himself, not nearly as dependent on warmth from others as most people in politics. But that's a superficial impression, and what you say tends to bear it out.

BUNDY: He was a cool man in the sense that, as I saw him—he was passionate about his family, he was always extraordinarily courteous and patient in his immediate dealings. But I remember thinking with some surprise in this same period—my father [Harvey H. Bundy] died in October and I went to tell the President that I'd have to go to Boston. And he said, “Are you going to have to go? Who's going to handle the wheat deal?” Not that he didn't know that it mattered, but that he knew I knew. He knew I had to go, but his mind went at once to his operational problem, which was that there was one particular mess which he learned to blame me for, and who was he going to deal with while I was gone? The contrast, for example, is fascinating. If that had happened with President Johnson [Lyndon Baines Johnson], I would have missed the plane because he would have had his arm around me and, you know, long speeches. There's no difference in the humanity of the two approaches, but there's a great difference in the style and process. I think Jack Kennedy didn't really expect people to waste a lot of time on sympathy with him. And he had around him and, I think, learned

to rely on, people that he didn't have to lavish butter on. As a matter of fact he had a butter-free diet with his staff.

NEUSTADT: That's right. I found that out almost, well, by the third time I saw him. Let's turn this chronologically for a moment…

BUNDY: One reason he wasn't a Congressional figure, I think, Dick—one reason he was impatient of the Congress, is that this business of beginning the conversation by saying whatever you did yesterday was the greatest; or that your support is the most valuable that a man could have; the rotund superlatives which are the give-and-take of daily conversation were deeply out of character and out of key for President Kennedy.

NEUSTADT: Even offensive?

BUNDY: I wouldn't go that far. It certainly would have seemed to him…. He never minded being told that he'd survived a press conference. That was always a sort of seconds-in-the-corner-of-the-ring seeing whether the champ would come back in good shape, and he liked to be told that he had, and then he would run in and have a good hard look at it. That was a combination of ordinary interest in one's own performance and deep concern with, again, professional concern, with a process.

NEUSTADT: When did you first meet this fellow?

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BUNDY: Oh, way way back. I first met him in the 1920's because we were at the same school, which indeed our fathers were co-holders of the mortgage on, because they'd closed up an old school in Boston, the lower Noble and Greenough School, and that left a lot of people with sons with no place to send them, in terms of proper Bostonian standards. And two of the people who had the most sons were Joe Kennedy [Joseph P. Kennedy, Sr.] and my father. They were almost contemporaries. So we were all at the Dexter School together, and Jack Kennedy was at that time in my older brother's class. Therefore, we always knew who each other were and always assumed that we knew each other by our first names—and actually didn't know each other at all, because he went on to Choate, Princeton, and Harvard, and I went on to Groton and Yale. I knew his sister Kathleen [Kathleen Kennedy Cavendish], so as to dance with her and maybe take her out once or twice—anyway it was in a friendly way. But I never knew him at all for more than literally saying “hello” in the street until we were grown up. And I remember meeting him at Arthur Schlesinger's [Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr.] in the spring of ‘52 when he was deciding whether to run for the Senate. And he got a great deal of good advice, the sum and substance of which was that he must under no circumstances run for the Senate. And then I didn't see him again, which was probably just as well, until he came on the Board of Overseers at Harvard, and I saw him a little bit in connection with those meetings. I sat next to him

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at Commencement in 1960, and we talked about “How do you beat the Republicans?” His mind had gone beyond the Convention—this was before the Convention. I was involved a

little bit in the campaign of 1960, in the sense of announcing the fact that I was for Kennedy, which was an announcement of modest interest only because I was a Republican. And then I had a long and painful process—as everybody did that I know of, perhaps with the exception of Bob McNamara—while the President made up his mind how he was going to organize his Administration, because he first offered me a job which turned out not to be there, and there was quite a lot of gimmery and crackery before it got sorted out.

NEUSTADT: Which was that? I knew of one he had offered you.

BUNDY: He asked me to be Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs. He knew that Chet Bowles [Chester B. Bowles] was going to be the Under Secretary, and he assumed that Chet wanted to be an Economic Under Secretary. The way that law is written by the Dillon [C. Douglas Dillon] amendment, the Under Secretary can choose which of these two subjects will be his, and then the third-ranking man in the department nominally takes the other.

NEUSTADT: Yes, I remember very well when Bowles announced that "no politics" was his interest.

BUNDY: But it turned out that Chet wasn't going to be an Economic Under Secretary—he was going to be a Political Under Secretary—and the President was never better advised than when he reached the

immediate conclusion that people really would bust out laughing if he made me Under Secretary for Economic Affairs, which was the only Under-Secretaryship left. The Green Book, which was provided for victorious candidates that year—do you remember that book, a great big green thing which showed the sort of positions directly available to the candidates? (NEUSTADT: That was Clark Clifford's [Clark M. Clifford] triumph)—most unfortunately contained an error. It gave the impression there were three Under Secretaries of State. So we hemmed and hawed for a day or two, and then it turned out that that wouldn't work. I remember I was in New York having dinner with Kingman Brewster [Kingman Brewster, Jr.]—tremendous old friend of mine—and we got a telephone call in the phone booth in the restaurant, and the President wanted to know if I would like to be Deputy Under Secretary for Administration. I had a lot of administrative experience…

NEUSTADT: That's the one I heard…

BUNDY: …and he thought that would be just fine, and I said No. That was, I think, about the only useful decision I made, and I hung up and came back. By that time I really didn't want to go back and be dean at Harvard at all, and I don't know whether the President really ever understood what a cliff-hanging experience was created for all the people who had said "yes" in principle, but

would have to figure out what kind of a job… (I had a little talk with Sarge Shriver [R. Sargent Shriver, Jr.], in a quiet way) and then found out that the *Washington Post* was arranging their lives for them.

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It was particularly embarrassing for me because as it narrowed down to the job I've had ever since, or the job that Paul Nitze [Paul Henry Nitze] took (the ISA job), Scotty Reston [James B. Reston] got it just enough wrong to say that it was going to be my brother, who had many qualifications for being Special Assistant right here, except that he didn't have any personal connection at that time with Kennedy. And I think, candidly, that the Kennedys were engaged in trying to appoint an Administration which not only would *be* good, but would *look* good, and that bringing in a Harvard dean-type, who was an ex-Republican, had more surface veneer than some of the other things about other people who might have been better qualified. I didn't know all this was going on. Finally we agreed on this job. Nothing luckier ever happened—if we're really talking off the record and for history. I think the luck of not having to work in that department through the complex relations that necessarily developed, given the opaque character of communication and feeling through the Secretary of State [Dean Rusk], and the luck of being here, which was quite accidental—was extraordinary from my point of view—and I don't think it was anything but luck, except in the measure that the President may have had some feeling even from the beginning that there was a certain ease in communication between us, and that it would be useful to have me somewhere nearby. I don't know—he never said that to me, and that's something you'd have to find out from somebody else.

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NEUSTADT: Now he had, so far as I know, no very precise notion about his job except that he couldn't always be calling up the Secretary of Defense when he wanted to find out something, as he put it to me once.

BUNDY: No, he didn't have any notion about this job at all. And it certainly was not the same thing at the end as it was at the beginning. He knew, I think, instinctively, and certainly it became clear from the way he behaved, that he had no interest at all in the job as it was when I came into it—conceivably we could have done a job of sorts by continuing the Operations Coordinating Board and the Planning Board, and the Eisenhower [Dwight D. Eisenhower] process, but we would have had nobody on top of it, and our reports would have gone nowhere. I'm inclined to think that the usefulness of the office would have been analogous to that of the Office of Emergency Planning, or something of that sort, because that was not what concerned John Kennedy. What concerned him was to get a hold of the instrument of government for the conduct of international affairs in a situation in which it rapidly developed that he couldn't call the Secretary of Defense because he was too busy, and he didn't want to be bothering him; and he couldn't call the Secretary of State because he

probably wouldn't get an answer. I hope that's not an unfair way of stating it, but I think that's really what happened. Walter Lippmann said a perceptive thing to me yesterday—he said that he thought that Kennedy had conducted the Office of the Presidency in such a way that he

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literally had no room for a person who would be a Foreign Secretary in the sense in which Couve de Murville [Maurice Couvre de Murville] is the French Foreign Secretary, or Alec Home [Alec Douglas-Home, Home of the Hirsel] was Foreign Secretary—even for a strong man like Macmillan [M. Harold Macmillan]. Kennedy was in the deep sense his own Foreign Secretary. He had a negotiator and an ambassador-receiver, and a figure of caution, discretion, and care as Secretary of State, but he didn't have a Foreign Secretary.

NEUSTADT: I have always thought this was—this suited him, rather. There are other people who think his methods evolved because Rusk turned out to be that sort of man.

BUNDY: I don't believe we'll ever know. That's a hen-and-egg question. I believe he meant to try a different arrangement—Jackie thinks, and I think Bobby [Robert F. Kennedy] thinks—and they would be the only two who'd really know—that he meant to, or at least played with the idea of moving Bob McNamara over to the State Department if he'd won in November, which he certainly intended to. I don't really think I knew his relation to the Secretary of State because I thought it so terribly important never to get into a wrangle with the Secretary that I never opened that subject with him. Occasionally we would laugh at some particular case of caution—occasionally we would admire some particularly skillful piece of business, because the Secretary is not a man to be underestimated in the kinds of things he's good at—and very good at. But we didn't talk much about whether he was or wasn't happy

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with any one of his Cabinet officers, or indeed with anybody on his staff because he didn't do business that way. He never encouraged people to complain about anyone else, and his clear intent was to manage his own administration his own way, and to have everybody stay on board and be, at least publicly, in the in-government sense—at least in the conduct of normal business—comfortable with one another and not wrangling publicly. His determination on that point was so self-evident that the question never came up. The two officers that he and I, at least, fussed about (in the sense of how to organize and manage his relationship to them) were John McCone and Adlai Stevenson [Adlai E. Stevenson], and to a lesser degree Chet Bowles, but that ceased to be a problem when Chet became the Special Representative, and it became even less of a problem when he went to New Delhi. The President was always edgy about McCone.

NEUSTADT: Why did he ever appoint McCone?

BUNDY: You'd better ask the Attorney General—I think that's his crime. Allen Dulles was involved in it too. He wanted very much to have a man who was strong on the Hill, strong with conservative opinion, who wouldn't expose him to any risk of criticism from that flank. He could take the heat from liberals who didn't like McCone, and he got a little of it privately before he went ahead with it. The President never much enjoyed being told not to do something he decided to do, so he didn't waste much time on it, but I remember the phones jangling

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from Jerry Wiesner [Jerome B. Wiesner], Jim Killian [James R. Killian, Jr,], and George Kistiakowsky [George B. Kistiakowsky], and so on. The reason he became wary about John McCone was simply that John McCone showed himself in two or three sensitive cases more concerned about McCone than he was about Kennedy. The President valued people who would take heat on his behalf, and not people who were insulating themselves from the general fire. The trouble with Adlai was a different one—it was a deeply temperamental difference, I think.

NEUSTADT: It's got all kinds of roots? That's understandable, but that was….

BUNDY: There again the practical reason for maintaining a connection was very strong. This was a man who'd run for president twice, who was the touchstone of loyalty to the Administration for many liberals—and for quite a lot of money. The President once said to me quite bluntly that he did not wish to get separated from Stevenson. You know and I know that that article of Stewart Alsop's and Charlie Bartlett's wouldn't have happened if the President hadn't at one point, and for a period, been very irritated with Adlai. But it was a case where he let himself go, or let others go—whichever way you want to put it—and I will say for myself that I never saw that damned thing before it appeared—but Jack Kennedy did (and we may have to rub this part out when we redo the tape). The reason he did it is interesting.

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It had nothing to do with the second Cuba—the Missile Crisis itself, Dick, or with anything Adlai had said in that, which hadn't bothered him. Everybody had boxed the compass in that week. What tore him apart and made him furious was the sort of constant drone of marginally different advice, and the constant reluctance to do what the President wanted, in the period of negotiation over the IL-28 bombers. He got to the point where if he had one more call from New York telling him that "it was going to be very hard to do this," and "that there were the following considerations"—one more attempt to go around an instruction which he'd given to McCloy [John Jay McCloy], with whom he always worked extraordinarily easily and whom he put in there because he just didn't think he could stand negotiating this through Stevenson—it got to the point where, you know, goddammit, there it goes again, and what will he do if anybody ever finds out what he said about Guantanamo,

and let's find out, and there it was—and all it was was a large platter of milk right in the President's face.

NEUSTADT: Do you know anything else to compare it to? This does not seem to me like a characteristic action.

BUNDY: I honestly think this, Dick: he didn't do it, he let it happen.

NEUSTADT: That's what I mean.

BUNDY: In that sense it was one of those things; I never have known the exact circumstances under which the article was done, or the exact sense in which it was not so much cleared as not stopped. Clifton [Chester V. Clifton, Jr.]

knows that story, and Kenny [Kenneth P. O'Donnell] knows that story. I only know that there is a story.

NEUSTADT: Now let me make you very self-conscious for a moment.

BUNDY: This whole process is quite self-conscious, don't you think?

NEUSTADT: In my perception, such as it is, you came in here in late December of 1960, and had to feel your way both with him, while he was feeling his way, and you came in here with a job to create and a man to get to know. The two of you were experimenting, obviously. By April my perception is that you had established an extraordinary working relationship. My further perception is that it got very badly dented for a while thereafter. And I come back a year later and it seems to me very thoroughly restored—restored and somewhat changed. I offer you that….

BUNDY: Is that between April '61 and April '62?

NEUSTADT: No, it's between June '61 and September '62.

BUNDY: I'm not aware of…. You'll have to tell me where the perceptions of dent are.

NEUSTADT: The perceptions of dent are in that post-Bay of Pigs and man-on-crutches, and hurting-back period.

BUNDY: No, I don't think there was—I would put it this way. You are certainly right that there was a very hard job of establishing a relation to be gone

through—and you are certainly right that it was a deeper and different relationship by 1962 from what it had been

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at any time in ‘61. It is, I think, further, correct that the President became wary of all his first estimates of his Administration in the aftermath of the Bay of Pigs, insofar as the people he was estimating had been closely involved in the actual decision, and I was certainly one of them. I do not feel, though, that he made it either more difficult to transact business with him, or that he shied away in any sense. What he did do was to add in quite consciously the need to consult and use people who had not been used in the Bay of Pigs—most of all Bobby, next to that Ted [Theodore C. Sorensen], and, to some degree, General Taylor. The bringing of General Taylor over here involved a kind of a problem for both of us as to what was his job and what was mine, which I don't think gave me any real trouble, and I don't think it gave General Taylor any real trouble. I don't think the President was aware that there was any problem because he was used to having people really sort themselves out, and he counted on us to do it, and I think we did. Now, one is always the last to hear, so it may be that I was living in an unreal world.

NEUSTADT: No, I'd accept this with one qualification. I think, myself, he was quite conscious of a choice when he inserted General Taylor, and resisted Bobby's proposals for a form of bringing Taylor in which would have complicated your life enormously.

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BUNDY: Well, I know he was conscious of that choice because we discussed that very explicitly. I recall that he had that chart of General Taylor's—did you ever see it?—the great chart of the Cold War staff?—it was done as a byproduct of the Bay of Pigs inquiry. It got up into the President's bedroom, and it stayed there for quite a while, in the way that things did in that bedroom. It was most extraordinary—sort of accidental—there were a couple of novels there that were there for a year and a half that I don't believe he ever looked at. And nobody seemed to be in charge of getting the old magazines out. And this Cold War strategy chart—in a sense the President didn't know what to do with it—he didn't want to put it away and he didn't want to put it into effect—and it just sat there in the bedroom in May and June, I guess, of ‘61. And he did perfectly clearly make a conscious decision that he was not going to have a Cold War Chief of Staff—not from his own point of view, and I don't think really out of a worry about my position, because I don't think that mattered to him—but I think a good deal out of concern: what would he be saying about his Department of State? And what would he be saying about the Department of Defense? And did he want to organize anything as flat and formal and in a sense as delegated from him, as a sort of Vice President for the Cold War? I don't suppose it helped that proposal that it was called that, because “Cold War” and “strategy” were three words he didn't care much for.

But it's certainly true that that was a part of the process of learning to be useful to the President. My own sense of the matter, for what it's worth, Dick, is that much the hardest period for me in my relations to the President was at the very beginning, for the reasons you stated a little earlier. I didn't know him; I didn't know the job; I didn't know Washington; I didn't know how to transact business with him; I didn't know what the job really was going to be like, because the first business we were gong through was to dismantle the obviously irrelevant parts of it, which was relatively easy. And it took a long time for me to get clear the process of being at ease with the President and being useful to him. That's really the moral, more generally, of the whole Bay of Pigs exercise, in my judgment. I wrote a long memorandum on that at the time, which I don't think I can improve on at this or any time.

NEUSTADT: No—that's why I don't want to pursue it because it seems to me everything else that needs to be said is in that thing. I've remembered that vividly, Mac, as a splendid piece, an incredibly good piece of staff work. Now you got to know how to deal with this man—let me come back, as this tape runs out, to that first question. There must have been things you had a sense were premature to take, and things you had a sense were right to take. Action was your relevance for his action…. Was the criterion you layed out…. Are there others?

BUNDY: Oh yes, there's a standing criterion of anything that was just plain amusing or first-rate, or otherwise going to give him pleasure. I agree with a lot of (what's his name?) the red-faced Englishman says about the American presidency being a monarchy.

NEUSTADT: Denis Brogan [Denis W. Brogan].

BUNDY: Yes, Denis Brogan. If you see something that you think will amuse the President, you get it to him. Now this was governing a lot of people, and a lot of people did more of it, and did it better than I did. I think Arthur Schlesinger was particularly effective in finding the article that would strike a note. But across my desk happen to come the cables of the people who wrote with a sense of style—who were really Bruce [David K.E. Bruce] and Galbraith [John Kenneth Galbraith], and very few others. Analytic stuff from Dowling [Walter C. Dowling] he liked very much; the President had a great respect for Dowling. So you pick the things that are interesting, the things that are lively—you pick the things that are important, obviously, in an operational and action sense. You pick the things that express a point of view that he is not getting normally. That was a conscious part of our function, I think. We weren't the only people who did that, but we were expected to let him know if there was a row that was not being reported from the State Department—between the African desk and the European desk, which is the normal, endemic condition of the Department of State,

and nobody's fault. I mean, people who are trying to deal with one set of clients, and trying to deal with another set of clients, get into a row with each other. In the State Department under Secretary Rusk, those rows are not normally resolved by the Secretary's own processes, and they have to be resolved over here, which, as you say, was the way Kennedy liked it. But to get him informed of them in a timely way was what the staff were really here for, and that was where we were so lucky to be able to do it….

[END OF TAPE #1]

BUNDY: Well, you were asking me about going back again to this question of levels of confidence and the President's own concept of himself and his staff in ‘61. And I would say, myself, that the error in your picture of my having got very close to him and the thing having faded downward is that I wasn't that close, because it was very much of a feeling process—and what we have to remember, sitting here in March of ‘64, is that Lyndon Johnson, who seems as if he were just beginning, has now been president longer than Kennedy had been president at the time of the Bay of Pigs.

NEUSTADT: That's right. I accept without question this perspective I still think, though, that—I'll put it the other way around—his self-consciousness after the Bay of Pigs was guided by some very shrewd limits—the temptation to do a Cold War strategy board and the pressure that he consciously resisted—that much is clear.

BUNDY: I think that's right. Going back to the Bay of Pigs and the kind of thing he was trying to be wary of, I remember a rather carefree moment, just after we'd cast the die and just before we had begun to get the consequences, on Saturday, I guess, before the actual landing, in the President's office. The people who were there were Dick Bissell [Richard Mervin Bissell, Jr.], Dean Rusk, and I—and some other former professor, possibly Bob McNamara. And I said to him in a cheerful way that this was bound to be all right because all of his advisors were professors—and I've often hoped that he didn't remember that remark, because I remember it so well. But he did go through a process of saying that there must never be another Cuba. I remember his remarking to me that in any other form of Democratic government he'd be out of office on the strength of the Bay of Pigs, and that no English Prime Minister could have survived. I told him I didn't really think that—this would depend on the nature and circumstances of his majority. And then he used to say, “Well, at least I've got three more years—nobody can take that away from me.” He probably said that to you. And he did come under hot pressure because Bobby had absolutely charged to the rescue—because in Bobby's picture of the world in ‘61 (I don't mind his hearing this; he can correct this if he wants to)—but Bobby's

picture of the world in ‘61 was that somebody must have done this to Jack. The President couldn't possibly have done it himself. And, therefore, in a fairly determined way

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the Attorney General was going to find out just who had done it. In that period I suspect he had a fairly wary view of me. We became very good friends afterwards, but we didn't know each other at all in that period, and Bobby established this very valuable friendship with Max Taylor. Incidentally, it was Chip Bohlen [Charles E. Bohlen] who suggested Taylor to me to do the Bay of Pigs inquiry. I suggested it to the President and the President jumped on it. But I think it's also true that about eight other people had the same idea at the same period, which was a very obvious one.

NEUSTADT: One thing that stuck in my mind very strongly in that period—correct me if I'm wrong, but if I'm right it opens up another line of inquiry—what he suggested to me was that he had made a bum decision and 1,200 men had landed in jail. What I drew from that—and it was after he talked of this that he said “I cannot have another”—that those 1,200 men are the concrete equivalent of nuclear escalation. The consequences of bum decisions are represented by this human consequence.

BUNDY: No doubt about it that the prisoners in the Bay of Pigs weighed on the President's mind as a kind of personal responsibility. It's interesting you should raise that point because I never agreed with him at all about that. Those people had helped quite a lot to get themselves into that box, and I was personally not of the view that the President should regard them as his personal charge—he knew that.

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When it came time to get them out—I had nothing to do with it because he knew I really didn't care about it—it was Bobby who cared because his brother cared, and he took charge of it and did it. I, frankly, was very skeptical whether that could be done, leaving aside whether it should be done. If the President decides it should be done, it should be done, but I wasn't clear they were going to be able to raise that kind of money, or make that thing happen without fairly severe domestic consequences. And, as so often, I think it turned out much better that way. And it is certainly true that getting the prisoners out removed something from his mind. It was like an operation for a block: he felt better when it was done, without any question at all. Then he went down and made himself a little trouble by the Orange Bowl speech, which he recognized later as one that he didn't want to repeat because the constant dilemma about Castro's [Fidel Castro] Cuba was that you wanted to say things you weren't then going to have done much about.

NEUSTADT: Yes. Now, we'll have to come back to that speech because it was repeated once, in a sense, at Berlin, as going an inch beyond….

BUNDY: He never admitted it. Let's talk about Berlin while it's fresh. You were talking about whether in his speech in the great open square in Berlin he said more than he had intended to when he landed there. That's what what's-his-name, the good Lasky, Melvin Lasky [Melvin J. Lasky]says—he was

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there that day. I don't think he went—there was one phrase…

NEUSTADT: That's the one I'm talking about.

BUNDY: …that went just a shade beyond what he had in mind because it made it sound as if he were declaring, against the Soviets, sentiments that he wished to declare against other Communists, as I recall it.

NEUSTADT: Yes, that's right.

BUNDY: And he corrected that by an insert of a phrase in the Free University speech. I know exactly what happened there because I was the one who had to haggle with him as to whether it would be better or worse to make the change. I thought very strongly he ought to make a minor but important addition. He wondered whether it wasn't better to run for luck and let the phrase fade away, which is always the perfectly fair political choice. He fully agreed that he had not intended to give the implication which one or two sentences in that speech did give. He did, in fact, make the correction. I think on the whole it was not as big an issue as those things always seem to be when you argue about them over a lunch table.

NEUSTADT: Well, I'm not sure. I think your instinct turned out to be sound because the play in the American press and the British press was very sharp on that extra phrase in the Rathaus.

BUNDY: In any event, to go on—we were talking about…

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NEUSTADT: Well, here's my—what I want to bring you to. When he got into the second Cuba crisis—the missile confrontation—the impression one gets from other people around here is that he (I'm trying to distinguish him from you)—he was terribly conscious, not only of his own capacity to miscalculate, but of his counterpart's capacity, conscious that decisions can have extraordinary results like 1,200 men in jail, only now on a wholly different scale. One of the things I'm curious about is the connection—was there a carryover of learning process here?

BUNDY: Well, I got asked that question in connection with an NBC reconstruction of the Cuba Missile Crisis a few weeks ago, so I've

thought about it a little. I don't think there's a close connection in the President's mind—at least I don't ever recall his talking about a close connection between the Bay of Pigs and the Missile Crisis during the period in which he was making the Missile Crisis decisions. That doesn't deny your premise, but at least it says there's an absence of evidence to confirm it. I think, myself, that the kinds of things that entered into his thinking in that two-week period were more richly compounded than that obvious, that sort of naked, comparison between one Cuban affair and another would suggest. I think the Berlin pressures, the build-up of warning and concern about Cuba itself in August and September of '62, the constant problem of judgment and action about nuclear capacity, in a sense, I think, the whole tough

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business about testing, were as much in his mind as the first Cuba crisis. Those things which had involved him vis-à-vis Khrushchev [Nikita Sergeyevich Khrushchev] are more important in October of '62 than a complicated and, in the end, mistaken set of judgments about whether a brigade of Cubans could deal with another bunch of Cubans, because the context of the first Cuba was only marginally the Soviet Union.

NEUSTADT: Yes. I didn't mean to make this a literal connection except in the sense my query really is: How sharply did he perceive the risks of mutual miscalculation?

BUNDY: Very sharply. But not primarily in terms of the first Cuban experience. The analogue of the first Cuban experience, and the place where it most affected other decisions, was Laos. I've heard the President say—and I'm quite sure that he meant it—that it would have been very much harder for him to decide not to move further into Laos if it hadn't been for the Bay of Pigs. He applied to the Joint Staff a set of inquiries, and he tore apart bad papers from General Lemnitzer [Lyman L. Lemnitzer], in a way that he wouldn't have done before the Bay of Pigs. He let skeptical, sort of anti-minds, work on it. His own mind became skeptical and anti, but he had reinforcement in the sense that Sorensen was asked to look at these things. We all looked at them in a different way, but he made a special effort to look coolly on this kind of problem, and the Laos decisions were different, I'm sure, because the Bay of Pigs happened.

The October decisions were shaped in the context of the

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dialogue with Khrushchev, which is a different line of experience and thought.

NEUSTADT: Granting that the President's concern about the risks of holocaust by mutual miscalculation, or really of escalation out of control, derives from something much more complex than any simple connection of '61. My impression is that the risk was felt to be very real by Kennedy, and this is, I think, historically critically important because a great many very responsible people, both civil and

military, in the Pentagon, below the level of Taylor and the Secretary, do not think the risk was ever real, on the rational grounds that both our local and our strategic superiority was such that the Russians would never have been tempted to let the thing escalate into a third stage.

BUNDY: Well, I think you're right that he felt that it was very dangerous. My own—let me tell you what I think, and then say that I'm not sure I know what he thought. I think that the danger here was not that at any given moment we were likely to find ourselves subjected to a Soviet first strike. I didn't go to bed at any time in those two weeks thinking that was going to happen overnight, and I don't believe that the President did. But what did seem quite likely was that there would be a counter-blockade against Berlin, or a flat refusal to turn ships back, and a naval encounter there, which might be followed by some isolated act of violence. President Kennedy was particularly concerned about the vulnerability of the Jupiter missiles, which he

made haste to take out the following winter—really capitalizing on the Cuban success to do so. There were a number of different parts of the world in which a sudden action of this kind might have occurred, which would either trigger your alliance commitments in a large-scale way, or show that they were hollow; and a situation in which, for example, you had a quarantine of Cuba and a quarantine of Berlin working against each other was not one that you could be wholly comfortable about. But if you mean that he—to restate it again, I think that he did not think on any given day that the general war was going to come the next day, but he did think, for example, that time might be running out on Saturday—that we might be landing within a matter of days, or conducting an air purification, general air war against Cuba, and that this might easily pose choices for Khrushchev that would pose further choices for us.

NEUSTADT: That next set of choices is where you feared miscalculation, I take it?

BUNDY: I certainly did, and I believe he did. Now let me say (about the degree to which I know his own sense of fear and concern) that I think quite properly the President's own nightmares were not share as far as I know, in any widespread way, with the rest of us in that two-week period. I don't recall his ever saying, “The thing I'm afraid they'll do is thus and thus,” or “The thing I'm most afraid of is the other,” or estimating the chances, except in that famous comment, that I guess

has been reported, that people whose choices don't get adopted ought to be happy because the ones who do are going to be sorry—characteristic wry remark. But I think you're right that he felt there was a danger that it could go all the way. I don't think he felt it in quite the absolute way in which the Secretary of State felt it and still refers to it—sort of “we were on the brink of incinerating the Northern Hemisphere,” and that sort of thing.

NEUSTADT: No, I didn't mean that.

BUNDY: What do they say in the Pentagon? That there was never any real risk at all?

NEUSTADT: This is not said at McNamara's level and, I gather though I don't know directly, it's not said by Taylor, but it is said by a lot of people next level down. And you have here a different conception of what accumulated miscalculations can and can't be—a different sense of rationality—very little perception of whatever concern there was over here, or what its basis was.

BUNDY: Well, take another case. It was a lot clearer in the open days of the crisis than it was the week before that everything that was in Cuba that might be nuclear was under good tight control. It was a lot clearer that Khrushchev wanted less trouble after he turned a few of those ships around on whenever it was, Wednesday, I guess, than it was before. And it was much clearer afterwards that we had strength and to spare and that that worked, than it was to anybody beforehand.

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I will say that the junior officers with whom I worked in the staff processes of the first week were just as troubled as I was. I feel quite good about the Cuba crisis myself now.

NEUSTADT: Yes, yes. Let me ask you for the President's reasoning on the removal of the Jupiters from Turkey, particularly.

BUNDY: Well, that's a very interesting story and I think I know it very clearly. He was sharply aware in the first, the sort of secret, week of the Cuba crisis, that the obvious parallel to the Soviet missiles in Cuba was the U.S. Jupiters in Italy and Turkey. (I think they were all Jupiters, I am not sure.) He indeed asked to have a plan prepared on the first Sunday of the crisis, just the day before his speech, to get agreement to get those things out of there if necessary in the course of the crisis. Then, just at the very end, when Khrushchev came in and raised the Turkish, but not the Italian, missiles as an issue, the President asked what had been done with this plan and was very angry to find that really in effect nothing had been done. I myself believe that nothing was in fact all that could be done and I tried to say so to him that day, which did not add to his good humor, as I remember it. The reason nobody had done anything was that to go around and talk to these people about a plan for getting the missiles out in return for the Cuban missiles would have had very heavy strain effects on NATO, and there was a despatch to Norstad, to which he commented in the course of those last 48 hours, made the point very firmly and, I think,

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correctly. So the President dropped that and fortunately Khrushchev came through on the other channel by Sunday and we were not left confronted against those missiles. But what he did decide, and had decided, I think, in his own mind in the very first week, and confirmed to us as soon as the smoke cleared away (in instructions which I can't date for you but which certainly come before the end of the year), what he decided in his own mind was that these really were dangerous, useless, and diplomatically disadvantageous weapons. They were not modern and protected. They were easy targets and tempting for a first strike. They were not, as I recall it, of any continuing importance in U.S. strategic plans, and the defense for them was always that the Turks and the Italians need them—and you will get into terrible trouble and nobody will understand it and you will have to pay for them very heavily with some substitute—and he just didn't believe that. What he thought was going on was a kind of inertia, and with the new confidence that came to him after the Cuba crisis, and with the feeling that he had always had that these things were no good—a feeling which goes back to a report of the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy, a special committee that Chet Holifield [Chester E. Holifield] was the Chairman of, which reported in January or February 1961 about not just the Jupiters but the quick reaction aircraft and all the other nuclear gadgetry lying around in NATO—it gave the President profound shock, and this was his chance to deal with one part of it

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which had proved its unusefulness diplomatically and which was increasingly unimportant in a military way. So McNamara got the duty on that, as on so many other things, and the Polaris-in-the-Mediterranean substitute was worked out. I really think the President was deeply relieved when those things were inoperable, but they just hadn't helped and he was delighted to get rid of them.

NEUSTADT: What your story suggests to me is he saw them as a side complication in the process of communication….

BUNDY: A diplomatic disadvantage, a point of vulnerability if we had struck—it was closely on his mind, and this is an interesting point. President Kennedy gave up the notion of a limited air strike against the Soviet missiles in Cuba only on the Sunday morning before his speech, very late in the game, and after specifically instructing me when he went away on his campaign trip West—on Friday, I think it was—to keep that option open as best I could. I didn't succeed in keeping it very open because the only allies I got for an air strike were people who wanted to strike everything that could fly in Cuba, and that wasn't exactly what the President had in mind. So he finally went over it again himself with Sweeney [Walter C. Sweeney, Jr.], the Air Force General who would be doing it, to see if there was a way

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of actually hitting those launching pads and fixing them and having it done with. The reason was that he shared, in some degree at least, my fear that a quarantine would lead to a Berlin

quarantine. In fact, we talked that over Thursday night because when he reached the first decision that he would buy the quarantine track—which had very powerful backing from all the people you could hear—I didn't sleep a bit well that Thursday night, and went up and saw him while he was dressing Friday morning and told him that I really thought this was very dangerous and uncertain and I wasn't sure it would bring an answer. He said, "Well, I'm having some of those same worries, and you know how my first reaction was the air strike. Have another look at that and keep it alive."

Well, I mention this in this context because the more you thought about an air strike the more you could ask yourself what the natural counter to that was. And you were going to be in a very difficult position if the Soviets took out an equivalent number of European-based soft first-generation missiles. Were you going to make that a trigger for a NATO war? Not bloody likely. Then what had you done? You had put something in to defend somebody and all you had done was get them shot up.

NEUSTADT: And a week later you faced this….

BUNDY: Then you had it in the diplomatic front the week later in terms of a relatively plausible proposal that "we will stop doing this to you if you will stop what you have already done to us," and everybody

who is concerned with the health of the alliance jumps up and down and tells you that you can't do that because they don't really think it is very dangerous, and they don't have the final responsibility, and you decide not to do it. But by God you're not going to be in that box again—this is the way I think it went.

NEUSTADT: On the Saturday when you still had the two messages from the Kremlin and didn't have the third, and you were having to plan your next step….

BUNDY: We never did plan our next step. We just pushed it ahead of us, I think.

NEUSTADT: Well, it was very close to you, it wasn't more than an inch ahead of you anywhere during the day.

BUNDY: That's right.

NEUSTADT: All these worries would then have arisen in the most concrete form, I take it—all sorts of worries about retaliatory action elsewhere.

BUNDY: Well, not quite. For example, I think the Berlin worry had gone down at that point. The reaction in Berlin had been very firm and clear, the reaction in Germany and the alliance as a whole that NATO was still there for its own purposes was very good. I think that where you got the problem was that

you were now moving toward the stage where your own action would have to take the new shape, and there you would get worries about retaliation. But my own

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recollections of Saturday don't have that kind of concreteness. They have only the sense of the shortening of time. We had our acceptance of one and our ignoring of the other out on the table. That needed an answer. Time was running short because of the air incident which might or might not be accidental and repeated, another totally extraneous sort of worrier was set into this and a proof of the kind of things that could happen accidentally was this U-2 weather plane which flew in the wrong direction and came through over the Soviet Union. It wasn't shot down. So I don't think that once you had decided that Paul Nitze had not produced his plan and therefore you did not have the Jupiters safely out of the argument and therefore you had to ignore that part of it—I don't think that entered in again in any sharp way. The real question was when you were going to have to move further in Cuba and what that might imply for both sides.

NEUSTADT: Well, the whole thing suggests that cumulatively once it's over, his insistence from this time, getting those things out of there has plenty of power behind it, and….

BUNDY: And the ultimate power behind it is exactly this thing that you are describing, that he has on his mind that other people don't, which is that this thing could get out of control. He isn't that sure of his own controls. He knows what hard work it is to keep command of this enterprise. The same problem exists for any other human

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being sitting on top of this much power. And he is not a bit in the habit of thinking of general war as a real choice. That's the other thing.

NEUSTADT: You see from the Pentagon perspective, knowing our strategic superiority, Khrushchev would not take chances. But my impression is that if you sit here you can never be so sure—knowing how hard your problem is—you're never so sure about that guy as they can be.

BUNDY: I think it's probably true in a general way. I thought about this in another context, that it is harder to make the decision than it is to see what the decision ought to be. I think that's probably true. Because you are so sharply alert to the consequences of miscalculation, that terrible, much-repeated word, but there it is. What is the way he kept saying, you know, the advisers go back and get some new advice.

NEUSTADT: Is it true, by the way, as someone reported after he came back from

Vienna from his meeting with Khrushchev 15 months before, that he had asked Khrushchev the question, “Haven't you miscalculated?”

BUNDY: He asked Khrushchev at lunch one day whether Khrushchev had ever made a mistake, and didn't get any answer—it was a very curious exchange.

NEUSTADT: Once given that meeting and the Berlin episode that you referred to, and then this thing, do you have any sense that he was revolving in his mind his image of future relations with Moscow?

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BUNDY: When?

NEUSTADT: After Cuba, after the second Cuba. Another way to ask this is, what is the connection between the American University speech and those events?

BUNDY: The connection is about a three-stage one. One stage is well marked for us by the President's own remarks in his press conference December 17, 1962, that television discussion in which we obviously haven't begun to make peace—it took us a month to get the IL-28's out after the—almost a month, it was the 20th of November—and then we began to get entangled in your other favorite subject, Skybolt. And then he had this press conference in which he said, you know, that these people created a very dangerous situation, I am not sure what we can go on and talk about, but he indicated the U.S. would be looking. Then there followed those interesting months in US/USSR relations at the beginning of the year in which really there was an extraordinary quiet. I think that's true on the private wire as well. It would be worth checking the pen-pals, but that's my guess. And the President noticed, as we all did, that life was normal in Berlin for the first time, that there was no pressure for a conference or a peace treaty, that the whole noise level changed. There was…. I forget when the second series of Soviet atmospheric tests was completed, but sometime in that period, or maybe before, I don't really recall; and we were not planning

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a new set of tests in the atmosphere. We were getting along nicely underground, and in the spring—longer before the American University speech than before any other speech I can remember—he and Ted and I—in what ways I don't recall—reached a reasonable agreement that we needed to make a speech on peace, that we had that University engagement coming and that it would be then. It certainly was a month, and may have been six weeks ahead of time. The preparation of that speech and the full articulation of its argument is a matter that Sorensen knows all about and I know nothing really about except that a lot of different people poured ideas in and that Ted made the organization. The one thing I remember clearly

is that in the course of the time—after it had been decided it would be time to make a speech, which was not so much envisioned as a major, in my mind, anyway, when I heard him say that it was going to be more a statement of U.S. views than a direct appeal for a new and more sympathetic view of the Soviet Union and in that sense it appealed to them. That color, I myself think, Sorensen put in mainly. What the President put in in terms of concrete decision was the product of a casual conversation that he and I had somewhere in that period in which we were talking about the Prime Minister's renewed pressure, which enters in, actually, and which begins somewhere in the early spring. The Prime Minister wants to have a summit, reminds the President of his conditional promise to have a summit—

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we always had a row with the British on that question. The Prime Minister said he would go to a summit either if we were making progress or if we weren't, and the President's view was we'd go only if we were. We had several messages back and forth in which we made it clear to old Harold that we were not pinned to his view of when a summit would be helpful, but nevertheless we were glad to make another stab at this test-ban problem. And that always turned to the usual argument: that they thought our requirements for a comprehensive treaty were still a little extensive, and we thought that we'd have to be the judge of what would work, and we didn't really see much in the comprehensive treaty. We'd had a winter in which Khrushchev did come in with that funny three-inspection proposal, and that had filled the air, but there hadn't been much in it. So we'd reaffirmed the limited test-ban offer, and in the conversation about those problems one day—in exactly what context I can't remember—it occurred to me to ask the President if he thought he'd be the first to have atmospheric tests from the situation as we then were. And he looked up and said "no." I said, "Is that a firm decision?" And he said "Yes, we don't need them." We'd had all these estimates of superlative strategic strength and comparative results of their tests and our tests, and there was no problem. So I said that if that is your decision, that is a good item for the peace speech.

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And he agreed and I gave it to Ted and he put it in.

By the time we got to June, it was clearer and clearer that the tentative decision to make a peace speech was a good decision, and this marvelous draft appeared—a very remarkable speech. It was changed less, I think, than almost any major foreign policy speech in terms of editorial suggestion and comment. Somewhere in this period, and not much before this speech, we had developed a relatively standardized system for doing this, which was that all the raw material be fed into Sorensen. He would then produce a first draft and then he would disappear. We would clear that draft, which generally had been seen by the President but sometimes not, and it would be fought through the interdepartmental committee—if it was an international speech, I would do that. I used to feel that I was watching Ted's interest because we usually had Tom Sorensen [Thomas C. Sorensen] come from the USIA. He didn't have his brother's immediate sensitivity, but was perfectly prepared

to say “he will fight like hell over this,” or “I don't think he cares about….” That got to be a quite smooth and easy process.

This particular speech had very little tampering to be done to it and the President liked it. I don't think any of us thought it was as great a speech as it turned into being in terms of history, but that's just fine. That's one of those things that happen. In fact, I once heard the President laugh about that afterwards, and how “one of the most important things

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Sorensen isn't going to tell the papers is where my great peace speech came from.”

NEUSTADT: Let me ask a question beyond this. Do you have any indication that in his own mind he was revolving notions longer term than a speech? Perspectives, not notions. I don't mean about what he was going to do, but what he thought he was going to face over the next three or four years.

BUNDY: I think his sense of perspective on this was cautious but very determined in the sense that the more he measured the situation after Cuba the clearer he was that a kind of corner had been turned and that it was certainly part of his job to keep that corner turned and to move along. I don't think he had any clear sense as to what any given next step was going to be. In this same year he began to talk more and more about the Chinese—he had them a lot on his mind.

NEUSTADT: He didn't foresee that you'd have to keep the corner turned with another confrontation of that sort?

BUNDY: Well, that question used to come up in terms of what you'd do about Cuba, mostly, because of the politics of life in the wake of the October crisis—the sort of: “Is your surveillance any good How do you really know the missiles have gone? What will you do if the don't keep reducing their troop presence?” We spent months and months and months taking relatively inaccurate counts of numbers

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of Soviet soldiers, and they began to go down later in the year, which was a very important phenomenon in a lot of ways. But I would not say that he had developed a large-scale view of this thing that was more precise than his reflective comments on the split in the Communist Bloc, and the problem of Khrushchev, and the difference between Khrushchev and the Chinese, which I think are again in that December meeting with television reporters.

NEUSTADT: Was he a man to take long looks?

BUNDY: I think he was speculative in an episodic way, that is to say, he would think about things like that and then put them aside for another time.

He wouldn't take an afternoon saying, “Now we've all got to think about the long-range future of our relations with the Soviet Union.” On the other hand, when he interviewed a returning Kohler [Foy D. Kohler] or sent for Thompson to talk about the meaning of a given Soviet message, he would always be measuring this against, I think, a number of different perspectives. I believe it probably is fair to say that, at least after the summer of ‘63 and in a sense after the Berlin trip, he began to construe nearly all problems in the framework of their relation to the election of ‘64. And in the context of your present question that would mean, I think—although I never actually saw it happen in a provable way—that that kind of large-scale, long-range operational enterprise would have been left for the “What do we do with the next four years?” planning

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operation that would have begun about the 4th of November.

NEUSTADT: Right, we pick that up when the time comes, right. That is a very comprehensible and presidential thing to do, I think.

BUNDY: Well, it would certainly be true of him. I mean, for example, he was thinking about making a number of expeditions after the European trip turned into such a success. Those were not going to do any harm in foreign policy terms. Everybody in each bureau was delighted with the prospect, but it was not really for the bright blue eyes of the Japanese that the President was going to Japan, and so on.

NEUSTADT: I have come across some evidence in the course of that Skybolt study that in terms of places where really dangerous confrontation situations could develop, outside of Cuba the one thing he focused on was Berlin. He was pretty dubious about the various other scenarios for other kinds of trouble in Europe….

BUNDY: You're absolutely right. One of the unfinished pieces of business, actually, when he was killed, was a desire which he had to press that argument directly with Secretary McNamara, because when the argument was developed, as it regularly was for conventional weapons; and when the Defense people reasserted their interest in the basic frameworks and purposes of the Acheson [Dean G. Acheson] report, which is still government doctrine to this day, it was always the President's view that when they talked about slicing off Hamburg or nibbling at the

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Dardanelles or bothering the Norwegians, that these were not really very likely and that the protection for these was in fact the trip wire, and that the place where you had to have a more believable and readily useable force was Berlin. And that Berlin was in that sense the danger and the justification of the pressures on the conventional front. I think the President

considered it a very even thing in 1961 whether he would or wouldn't really call up the Reserves. And he did it in part because it was the momentum of wise advice of all kinds of people; you were not doing anything that pulled a trigger, and you were yet doing something that was strong and good.

You are absolutely right, though. Berlin was the center of his European worry and the center of his sense of the need for action in Europe, and his strategic view was, really, that the conventional build-up didn't make much sense except in terms of Berlin.

NEUSTADT: Now there must have been a time in '61, up to early '62, when you and Adenauer got into your stalemate, or whatever it should be called. Was he playing with the thought that maybe Berlin could be diffused in this sense?

BUNDY: Well, he had a readiness to cope with Berlin.

[END OF TAPE 2]

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NEUSTADT: I have a sense—I may be mistaken—that in '61, even though there were no authoritative Anglo polls here on the German question, the President himself was enamored of the idea of a Berlin solution over the Germans' head, to a degree.

BUNDY: Yes, I think that's right. I think that it wasn't so much the notion of going over the Germans' heads, because I never saw him actually press to the point of going over the Germans' heads. It was rather a kind of feeling that he would like to get rid of the Berlin problem. Reasonable men should be able to. He couldn't give up the basic U.S. position in West Berlin, but he would like to sit down with a reasonable man and come up with a reasonable answer. And that is why in the period between the raising of the Berlin question as a serious issue, which is not quite in the first 100 days, it's a little after that, in the, sort of, prelude to Vienna—why he did insist on sort of trying reasonable arguments, why he pushed all the Berlin and EUR planners, why in a way Vienna was such a shock to him, because Khrushchev was not violent in tone but he was violent in content; and why, even after that, he continued to be eager to try out on everybody the prospects for a reasonable answer. He was annoyed by the stubbornness of the Germans. It was only partly a personal difficulty with Grewe [Wilhelm Grewe]; Grewe was a representative of a kind of German rigidity which he found very trying. Left to himself, he would have written a solution to Berlin and Germany which would

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have accepted the division of East and West and would have involved some sort of peaceful arrangements, indeed even double peace treaties and that sort of thing, as long as the Western guarantees were left undisturbed in West Berlin. The thing that he finally concluded on all

this after some, maybe months, and maybe even later on in the game, was that there wasn't any point having a large row with the Germans when the Soviets weren't moving, and that that had been tactically unnecessary and that his own desires there had not led to a useful result. And that became the kind of watchword of diplomatic relations with the Germans—"don't stir up a row with them unless you are going to get some money for it"—and that made life much easier.

NEUSTADT: But that attitude again was presumably modified by his experience in Germany.

BUNDY: His experience in Germany made him sharply aware of the great strength of genuine German feeling for the United States, a point to which the President is always very responsive. He knew that the cheers and the extraordinary reception were both for him and for the country; it gave him a new kind of confidence in the mutual support of Germany and the United States. He liked the Germans vastly better after this trip than before and he also—somewhere along the line, very shortly after this trip from some piece of evidence, and I never knew what it was—was reminded in a lively way

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of the very great political value in the United States of good relations with the Germans, both in the more general sense that the country has been friendly to the Germans—and it has been a popular policy, at least since about 1950 or '51—but in the more specific sense that there were very large numbers of voters of German extraction in the United States. He was now making headway with them in a sense that he had never expected to, and he didn't want self-righteous little men running around the Government and losing the Germans in an election season. That's one of the reasons he was very firm about his annoyance on a point I think I mentioned a little earlier, that when we got into little bickers with Adenauer and they could have been prevented if he had been more alert or if we had been more alert and he had been kept better informed, that he was annoyed, just for that reason. But still and all I think that new friendship for the Germans and new understanding of their concerns and new willingness to regard them with sympathy did not change his underlying desire to produce progress toward a central European settlement. The question never became operational because the Soviets never backed away in formal terms a bit from their unacceptable proposal. The best we were able to achieve was a continuation of the sort of Berlin freeze that set in after the Cuban episode. The President continued to be very irritated always by these haggles over little things on Berlin, and it remained—even after his trip to Berlin and Germany—a regular necessary argument with him that any particular kind of rule

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needed to be kept. We had this haggle over mountable and dismountable convoys and whether convoys—trucks—would or wouldn't lower their tail gates in September and October, and it annoyed him as much as it had annoyed him back in early '61, and I used to

have to go over each one in just the same way. I will say that his alertness to these problems and his willingness to pay personal attention to them did, I think, serve to keep them from being quite so much a kind of a game of sport played by military men, who had this kind of confidence that nothing serious would really come of it that you were talking about earlier. The great history, of course, of that interlock of the military man who is sure he knows just what he is doing and the President who isn't sure anyone knows just what he is doing, is in the period in which Clay [Lucius Dubignon Clay, Sr.]was in Berlin. But the best way to talk about that would be for someone to read all the cables and then go back and look at what actually was said and done.

NEUSTADT: Yes, I agree that ought to be taken as a second-stage operation. It really should because it has its peculiar importance for understanding the President in that he later thought he could make a guided missile out of General Clay and the domestic….

BUNDY: I consider that the President's relation with General Clay is rather like his relation with *Time*. He kept hoping for the worst and his hopes survived a series of disappointments.

NEUSTADT: You mean hoping for the best.

BUNDY: Hoping for the best, I am trying to say. His hopes survived a series of disappointments. I will say that the one reason for his making this mistake (which I think was a mistake) in the Clay aid mission, was that when you gave Clay an order, when he was in Berlin, by God he did carry it out. You had to give him the order, and then about three days later you would get a weekend message to the effect that he thought it was time his mission was properly ended and his usefulness was at an end. Then you would write one about how there had never been anyone more valuable to the two countries than he, and that he was totally indispensable, and we relied on him implicitly, and then he would calm down. But I think what made the President think that he would be good on aid was that, in the end, when he had a direct mission, he did what he was told. He might do some things he hadn't been told not to do; that in fact people rather wished he hadn't done—but that's a different thing.

NEUSTADT: Of course I would imagine from Clay's point of view the Berlin mission and the aid mission were incommensurate.

BUNDY: Yes, I think he regarded them as totally different functions. In one he was called in for honest advice and in the other he was sent as a representative of the President. That's a distinction that President Kennedy never clearly made in his mind. If you were a friend of his, and you were working for him as his advisor, your advice was supposed to be helpful. And you know how this works.

The President thinks so much in terms of appearances and of someone who is going to be helpful that the notion that you might ask someone for his advice, and he would then give you advice you didn't want, wouldn't really occur to you if the man was one of your crowd. As a matter of fact, I think that is, generally speaking, a sound proposition. I think if the President had picked one of my heroes—if the President had asked McCloy to do that job—he would never have got a report that hadn't been very carefully sounded out as to whether this was the report the President wanted. Or if he had asked Clifford to do this, that's what would have happened. And McCloy was one of his crowd on disarmament and handled those things exactly that way. Clifford was his man—toward the end, anyway—on the Advisory Intelligence Board and he always handled things that way. So I think that what the President forgot, in a way, was that Clay was not quite that kind of a friend.

NEUSTADT: He was in another crowd.

BUNDY: Yeah, somebody else's friend.

NEUSTADT: The notion that—just to wind up this particular matter the underlying notion that if the Soviets ever came to it, a genuine division of Germany—something that would take the sting out of the Berlin problem—even if the Germans didn't like it—how closely is this related to what we were earlier discussing?—his sense that Berlin was a danger he would like to be relieved of, a potential?

BUNDY: I think very closely. I think I may have misspoken myself. I don't think I could pinpoint any real evidence that the President was ready to sign the U.S. to the permanent division of Germany as a juridical matter. I think what he really hoped he might do, and what in fact Adenauer once or twice suggested that he might like to see happen, was a kind of ten-year standstill agreement in which everybody would reiterate his own view of what was desirable and simply say for the moment that this is what we can do because we disagree on the solution and our disagreement affects interests which are vital to both sides; we therefore cannot solve the matter, and it is better for both of us to leave it as it is. I think you'll find a good deal in the files of communications to the Soviet Union in which this is put with all the sweet reason of which the President and Sorensen together were capable, and put in every sharp and flat and in language that is as much like Khrushchev's language as possible, but always leaving a clear-cut Western presence. And what you get back and forth again and again from the Soviet side is: well, you can stay for a year or two and we would be glad to have other kinds of people take your place, or the UN take your place, but the whole object of the exercise is that your occupation should come to an end. And that is why we never made any progress.

NEUSTADT: All right, I think it is useful to get that amendment into the record.

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You spoke of something a while ago—I wonder if there is anything to put into this record about it—you spoke about the Green Book[1] and the fact that it was still government policy. Does the memorandum, that I understand is now known colloquially as the Holy Writ memorandum, involve any story between you and the President?

BUNDY: I don't remember the date of that.

NEUSTADT: November 21st. At least so I was told.

BUNDY: Well, it's based on my conviction that he was coming to a conclusion that unremitting insistence on conventional weapons to deal with a whole series of things was just not what he meant. I don't believe that I cleared that memorandum with him in that form, but I am absolutely certain that it was an accurate statement of his own view of the problem. He simply was not that clear that all those doctrines were what he wanted, and he was waiting for an opportunity—indeed, had said to me that we must talk to McNamara about this. But it wasn't a matter that had immediate urgency and we didn't get around to it. In order to prevent people from painting themselves deeper into the ancient doctrine than before—in order, in a sense, to repair the damage done by this one instance in which we made a permanent policy guidance in this Administration, I guess I sent that memorandum out.

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NEUSTADT: And of course he had just read that thing of mine which showed two or three real examples of the risks he ran when he had this….

BUNDY: Yes, but I don't think there is any playback from that to this because we hadn't talked about the report except for him to say how much he liked it; then, there may have been some unconscious relationship between my reading of your report and my emphasis on this, because there is so much proof in your Skybolt paper of the degree to which people who thought they had marching orders were marching around in the dark.

NEUSTADT: Well, it's fascinating that he was coming to confront this issue with McNamara. Were there any other things, Mac, that are sharp in your mind in which he was coming to new, sort of internal, policy confrontations?

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[1] See page 14

BUNDY: Well, the obvious point of crisis in ‘63, in the months just before his death, was the Vietnamese thing. Now he had not reached any clear conclusion as to what he wanted or did not want there. He was deeply shocked by the assassination of these two brothers and troubled by the evidence, which began quite quickly, that the new crowd were not taking control. But I don't think I could say that he had been brought to face a need for a new set of choices in the same way that one can feel the Johnson Administration now being brought to that need. So that the thing that was taking most

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of his time internationally did not have that character to it. I don't think he felt that 1964 was going to be a red hot year on the peace front and therefore he wasn't pressing very hard there. His principal preoccupation in political terms on foreign affairs remained the problem of Cuba, and he was walking up and down that in the same way that he had for better than two years since the Bay of Pigs and in the same way that we have done since. And yet he, I think, did not feel that that was going to permit anything large or new that we had it in us to do, and he didn't have it so much on his mind that he felt that there was a persuasive connection between the need to restrict trade to Cuba and the wheat deal. He put a lot of store in the wheat deal. He cared about that, watched over the calculations and the meetings on it intermittently but actively. That was an instance—it was the first case, really—of a major going-concern sort of affair in which you had a very complicated set of international negotiations which involved a very complicated set of bargains by internal departments, departments with primarily internal concerns, and we didn't handle it very well. There are some loose ends in the process by which that thing was bargained out, which relate to the fact that it was a new procedure for the Kennedy Administration. They relate also to the preference of George Ball for rather personal bargain-making or non-staff operation, a very able man but not a man who works well in harness with a lot of other people.

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NEUSTADT: As a partner in a law firm.

BUNDY: But Jack Kennedy cared greatly about the wheat deal and more for its earnest of future commercial and economic connection than for the gold, although you know—I am sure you know—how he counted those golden coins and how much he cared about the balance of payments which had been a kind of a permanent vexation to him. There is another place in which he had a secret point of view, I guess, now that I think about it, and it was one that I would claim to have helped to plant in his mind: it was that he couldn't devalue the dollar and say “the hell with you bastards” any time before the 3rd of November, but that he could do so with a wave of his hand thereafter, in real terms as well as in political terms—because if you suddenly say “I will let the dollar find its own level” you discover it is like saying that I'm going to let this water sink. It doesn't sink because it's in its own sea. And the dollar was in that sense enormously strong and the President had no need to be governed by the mythology of the

bankers, except that it wouldn't look good between now and election. I don't know whether he ever fully believed that, but he believed it a whole lot more in October 1963 than he would have believed it in October 1962, in his sort of sense that the balance of payments shouldn't run him, that he ought to run the balance of payments, was stronger. There are even one or two phrases somewhere in ‘63 where he says that

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sort of thing about the balance of payments. They were more hope than conviction, but there was a distinct move in his view on that point.

NEUSTADT: And you're projecting just one more year.

BUNDY: And I would have guessed that by ‘65—of course it may turn out to be a not very serious question because the balance of payments itself has improved and the interest equalization tax has had a larger effect than people thought it would—and it may turn out that this doesn't get to be that sharp an issue.

NEUSTADT: Are you tiring, because if you are, we ought to….

BUNDY: I think we might go another 10 minutes, what do you think?

NEUSTADT: That's fine with me—we'll have to talk about Vietnam—but before we do let me toss out a couple of things which are marginal. How aware do you think he was of the impact he was making in Europe, he, personally?

BUNDY: In Europe at which point?

NEUSTADT: At the point—when he died—in this last 6 or 8 months.

BUNDY: Well, I began on that earlier. We had a running argument with him all through the first months of 1963 as to whether he should go through with this trip to Germany. Who'd got him into this trip to Germany? Hadn't we better back away from this? “It could easily be a failure, you know, and we didn't make any money when we'd go on a trip and it didn't work.” And then we got into all sorts of trouble because governments began falling in all directions

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and the British got all Profumoed [John Dennis Profumo] and the Italians had an indecisive election in April…

NEUSTADT: And Walter Lippmann seceded?

BUNDY: And Walter Lippmann seceded with a bang, or at least a whimper, and the President began to feel that someone had conned him into this. He knew where we had made the decision. He had made the decision when we were talking about it one time. I was strongly for it and tried to tell him over and over and over and over again that the one certain thing in the processes of politics was that he would have the greatest triumph in Germany of anybody in recent years, and certainly he had nothing to fear from de Gaulle [Charles A. de Gaulle]. He had nothing to fear from anybody, that after Cuba he was the greatest, and he had been pretty big even before, especially with the Berliners, who were the center of the problem and there was absolutely universal evidence on this point, and he wasn't bypassing General de Gaulle. That wasn't the way it was going to be read. Well then he went and did it and saw how big he was there and it was a….

Well then they'd changed Popes, too. It looked as if the prospect of a visit from Kennedy was the, you know—enough to send everybody to the showers. And Rome was a bad day in terms of crowds. The Roman crowds do not swarm out. He went, and he conquered, and he knew that he had, and he knew also that all the things that people like Monnet [Jean Monnet] had told him about being the visible spokesman of the West

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were really true. He also knew that the concrete prospect of serious progress was low in the immediate 12-month period. He and Herter [Christian A. Herter] had a quite private understanding that if the Kennedy Round got pushed past the election no harm would be done. The one thing we did not want was a confrontation and a failure of the Kennedy Round because he hadn't figured out a way of doing what he always threatened to do, which was to say, the moment it gets kind of cool, that it's the Herter Round. And that was a joke that they had back and forth with each other. But it wasn't entirely a joke because this damned thing had got named before he was ready to name it. It got named by European commentators, really. I think he did know in that sense what tremendous personal authority he had. And I think his eagerness to travel in other countries is a very good index of his judgment that he would run strong there too; that an African trip would be a plus if we could find the right relatively stable place to go; that a Far Eastern trip would be a great success. He didn't want to go to India. He didn't think there were any votes in visiting India. And he didn't want to go to Pakistan because you couldn't go to one without the other. But I've often wondered really whether he had any notion—I am sure I did not have any notion—of what the magnitude of personal shock would be even in the light of that European triumph. Of course you don't think in terms of “how they will love me when I'm gone,” especially not if you're as much

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alive as he was. I don't think he thought that we were making very good progress on the building of the Atlantic partnership, and I don't think he had anything like the kind of intrinsic enthusiasm for unity of Europe that some of his speeches say that he had. It was an important thing for him to say—he greatly admired men like Monnet—but he was acutely alert to the butter-and-eggs fact that the Europeans were economically increasingly difficult.

The rest of us used to complain about the chicken war, but people were fighting that chicken war across his desk, and it was proof of the stubbornness of the Europeans.

NEUSTADT: Did he have any sense of how and when he and de Gaulle were going to have their inevitable?

BUNDY: Yes, de Gaulle was to have come early in 1964. That was agreed in May of ‘63. Then we suggested that it might be useful to announce it because it would create the perfect explanation of why the President wasn't going to Paris on his June trip. No, the Elysee didn't think that was a good idea. There was time enough to consider it in the fall. So we brought it up in the fall, October.

Yes, in principle it would be useful, but it was not convenient, to settle the matter definitely right now. Bohlen, I think, began to feel—and it would be interesting to ask him, and I'll try to ask him when he's here this weekend—began to feel that what probably was happening here was that Charlie was planning some

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devilment and didn't want to be pinned to a visit to the American President. President Kennedy really in a sense had been up and down this hill often enough so that it didn't bother him. The one question he always used to ask—he asked it, I've heard him ask McNamara, and he certainly raised it with me four or five times and I think probably he talked to Chip about it too—was whether, if we had gone to Paris in 1961 with a pocket full of nucs, we would have had a different relation with de Gaulle. I always told him that I thought not, and I believe that was McNamara's opinion. Of course it was passionately George Ball's opinion, but that doesn't tell you very much. It is suspect. Joe used to poke him on this (Joe Alsop [Joseph W. Alsop]), “Mr. President it's a case of ‘place à table, place à table.’” And the President didn't know enough French to know what the hell “place à table” was, and we'd go up and down that. I would myself guess that he would really have liked to replay that one, not that he knew that he would do it that way, but that he had a very lively curiosity as to what would have happened if he'd done it that way.

NEUSTADT: Here's something very important about him, Mac, that I'd like your direct testimony on. In a case like this, or like his curiosity over Skybolt, my impression is that he went over old ground out of curiosity, speculation, interest in “What can I learn out of this?” Nothing Hamlet-like in this performance, I mean not regret…

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BUNDY: No, it wasn't regret. It wasn't an “Oh my God.” The things he regretted he never did do that about. He knew, for example…. Banishing of the *Herald Tribune*. I once said to him, “Don't you think it's time we had the *Tribune* back?” He said, “No, it was a mistake to put them out, but it would be a mistake to admit it.” And, you know, no fuss. I would think that you're exactly right that this is

simply like a chess player playing an old game, wondering what would have happened if you had made a different move at move ten, and balancing that on its choices.

NEUSTADT: I make a point of this because a number of people, Dean Acheson among them, remarked to me at various times this tendency to look back, and sort of equated it with what people used to say about Adlai Stevenson's tendencies. I think it is altogether different.

BUNDY: No, there is a deep-seated difference between Acheson and the President, which has nothing to do with that characteristic except that it is probably true of Dean Acheson that he is not conscious that anything in his life could ever have been done differently or improved in any way. The difference is that Kennedy really believed in a friendly and sympathetic relationship to all these third forces which were just plain offensive to Dean Acheson. He really believed in the opening to the left in Italy which is at best a *pis aller* to Acheson.

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He believed in a policy of civility toward Nasser [Gamal Abdel Nasser], who is nothing but a fellow that the British should have dealt with more firmly in ‘56 to Acheson. There is a deep-seated difference between these two men—unlike Joe Alsop, who carried his affection for the President as a shield against knowing what a softy he was. Acheson had no such affection—liked him, I think, but wasn't close in a personal way. And the President liked Acheson because Acheson is the most articulate and amusing spoken voice in the process of government. He may not be quite as funny as Galbraith, but he is in fact a rather better organizer of a powerful case. The President liked that until Acheson tried to take over the presidential function of decision in one important assessment which he made in the balance of payments, and instead of advising the President—as I think with all its weaknesses the Green Book does, advises him things he then wanted to hear and wished to decide—he advised him of a lot of things that he didn't want to hear and didn't wish to decide, and he really didn't darken the advisory doors again. And he [Acheson] reached the conclusion, I am sure, that this man is really not very strong, he shies away from the big ones, and he is not the sort of man that is worth *my* while to be advising.

NEUSTADT: You almost quote him.

BUNDY: Really, is that about the way he felt?

NEUSTADT: That's about the way he felt early November, late October, somewhere in there.

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BUNDY: Well, I'm not surprised, and the reason was precisely that he thought he had the balance of payments problem solved, in what I do really

think was a strong paper, but it was clear the President was not about to change Secretaries of the Treasury or even give an instruction deeply against. This all happened earlier on, I don't know when that Acheson paper was, but the record will show—in the springtime I would guess, maybe summertime. But that is the difference there and it's a difference which a number of men have with the President's temper.

I would say if we are going to go into this hard game of where you are between hard and soft, the President was perceptibly softer than I am, but never on what I would call major substantive matters. What he had was an infinite patience with a lot of people that I don't have an infinite patience with, and he was right in nearly all those cases. I was fortunate in having for most of the countries of the third world that most unlikely soft-liner, Mr. Robert Komer [Robert W. Komer], who got himself almost perfectly attuned to the Kennedy mind, and was an extremely valuable staff officer in very large areas of the world where he came to know what the President was going to want, and where the President came to know that what Komer recommended coincided with his own temperamental approach to the matter, and really my only usefulness was in knowing that it was better to stay out of the way.

NEUSTADT: Was he really interested in the Sékou Touré, or was he just attracted by the idea of making them think how interested he was?

BUNDY: No, no, he was really interested, I am glad to find that this surprises you a little, too.

NEUSTADT: Well, it's important to get this straight,

BUNDY: He was interested in them. As I must have said to you before, Dick, there's a sense in which all heads of government belong to a heads-of-government club, and if you are or have been a head of government, but most of all if you still are, because you're still thinking that way—so I don't think there were practically any heads of government that he found genuinely uninteresting, with the exception of Diefenbaker [John G. Diefenbaker], and that began as a sense of what a footless character this was and turned into just plain disgust. But Khrushchev was interesting—difficult, but interesting. Adenauer was irritating but interesting. Macmillan was a friend—became one.

NEUSTADT: Became one. That's something else that fascinates me

BUNDY: I think you are probably right about that. And the Latin Americans—of course some of them were more interesting than others and the Africans the same way. But many of them were genuinely interesting—people like Senghor [Léopold Sédardar Senhor], Sékou Touré—and there were others who irritated the Jesus out of him, like Nkrumah [Kwame Nhrumah], Sukarno, but who were nevertheless interesting. The really bad hats were

less interesting to him in ‘63 than they had been in ‘61. They were a more tactical problem, but they were less interesting.

NEUSTADT: This relates to something you said earlier—there is something very subtle here. Personalities and politics were the things that really held his live interest, yet his perception of fine distinctions among grades of people on the Left is far beyond the usual interest in personality and politics, or is somewhere beyond.

BUNDY: Well, I don't know what to say about that. I'm turning in my mind actually a comment he made to me in the fall about not wanting to have another meeting with some head of government—I can't remember who it was—it wasn't one of the great or strange figures like de Gaulle—and his argument was that “there is no point in doing that because we have said it all before; I've played that record.” He used to say that about some of the relatively important and continuing powers. This may have been, if not Ayub Khan [Mohammad Ayub Khan], his foreign minister, or something of that sort. Just a weariness about batting the ping pong ball of Kashmir back and forth across the net when in fact nothing was going to happen about Kashmir. That he didn't like.

But to return to your other question of how subtle his differentiations were, I don't think that he was enormously interested in shadings of internal political complexion among foreigners. He was interested in their approach to the policies of nations, in their approach to economic development, certainly, in their practical concern for

specific ways of getting forward, and also in what moved them in terms of their national conviction, and what was the way of being a leader in a given country, and who went about it with more style and who with less. But I never felt that the President's years at the London School of Economics marked him with the interests of Harold Laski in subtle differentiation of political theory at all.

NEUSTADT: And yet I am right, am I not, in thinking that he understood the difference between Touré and the Algerians?

BUNDY: Oh, yes.

NEUSTADT: And Tito [Marshal Tito] and Gomulka [Wladislaw Gomulka].

BUNDY: Oh, certainly. If you're talking about whether he could have easily framed a picture that might run from Mao [Tse-tung Mao] through Moscow to the Eastern Europeans to Tito to Sékou Touré in one phase, and Nkrumah in another, and Ben Bella [Ahmed Ben Bella] in a third; and that he had

a very clear sense that Nasser was Nasser and not a Soviet stooge; and that he knew the balance of forces in Indonesia as well as any of us can hope to; and that he distinguished sharply between neutralism and neutrality; and between one form and another of variation within the Alliance; and between English labor and Mollet [Guy Mollet]—oh yes, he did all of that easily, and effortlessly. No problem.

NEUSTADT: Well, that's something you couldn't have got from Harold Laski.

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BUNDY: No, it hadn't happened then.

NEUSTADT: But this is curious, because this goes way beyond what one normally means when one talks about a politician's interest in personalities and politics. And I can see this personality and politics centered, but it's….

BUNDY: When I was talking about personality and politics, I put into the word "politics" all this kind of shading as it affects performance and behavior and alignment and what does and doesn't influence a man. One of the ones that interested him very much was Tito. And we had a funny time over that because this was a case where his international concern and his sense of real values and his sense of what was smart politically were directly at odds with each other, so, as you may remember, Tito was practically smuggled in and out of here, and in fact we didn't get very much flak.

NEUSTADT: Well, his presumed standing as an intellectual—this I toss out to you to see what you will make of it.

BUNDY: That's a tendentious way of asking a question, but go ahead.

NEUSTADT: It's just because I think the word is so ambiguous, because I wish to deny it to him. But it rests partly on the subtlety of this term "politics" as you're using it.

BUNDY: Let me say that I don't think that, as intellectuals use the word "intellectual," President Kennedy was an intellectual at all.

NEUSTADT: Thank God.

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BUNDY: If you mean that he was a man with an uncommonly well-stocked mind and a high intelligence and a habit of believing that it was useful to apply intelligence to evidence, then he was that kind of a man. But he didn't have a great interest in books of elaborate theory. He didn't read detailed speculative

papers. He thought very much more concretely, and the word pragmatic is certainly right. I don't myself believe that he was much of a reader of the *Partisan Review*, certainly not of literary criticism or works of literature for their own sake. I was actually rather surprised to find that just at the end of his life he was quite familiar with and constantly had in his thoughts that famous speech in *Henry V* in which the King describes how everything comes back to him, and he would have quoted it in a public speech if he hadn't thought that on the whole it was very unwise for a President to compare himself to a lonely king. But he had a set of favorite quotations, and this is a thing to talk over with Sorensen, and someone must do it. I suspect that Ted knew nearly all of them before he was through—that nearly all of them had been used. A new one would come in, like the bullfighter—you know, the only one there is who knows, and he's the one who fights the bull. That seemed to him exactly a description of his life and condition. But the voracity of political concern which I am trying to use as a kind of a general catchall in a way excluded spending an evening on something else because it meant you couldn't do

what you wanted to do. And if it wasn't just plain a party then it ought to be something political, in the widest sense of the word.

NEUSTADT: But along with intelligence and the application of intelligence, you got a kind of analytical mind, I think, that's quite rare in this building. Yet it isn't altogether clear to me how much was seat-of-the-pants and how much was 1-2-3-4-5-6 reasoning.

BUNDY: Very little was 1-2-3-4-5-6 reasoning. It was more a kind of a collecting of the evidence and of opinion and of judgment and then a crystallizing. And we ought to talk about this some more because we're almost at the end of the tape. But let me just mark it, in case we don't get back to it tomorrow, that the question of the way he made up his mind and the things he needed to know before he made up his mind is a terribly interesting and difficult one about which I don't really believe I can be more than one part of the testimony. I think it's a good thing to leave as an open question and to think about overnight; it's so utterly different from the question we were talking about earlier, which is, why he would make a quicker decision on a weekend than he would on a week day.

BUNDY: They're both equally good decisions, as like as not. And the decision-making process as distinct from the structure of appearance of the decision is a very mysterious thing with any man, and certainly with this one.

NEUSTADT: Right.

[END OF TAPE 3]

NEUSTADT: We were starting at the end of the last tape to talk about something really rather deeply interesting—not the work processes of decision, but the Kennedy mental process to whatever extent you have a sense of pattern. You may not have a sense of pattern, but if you came to perceive anything it would be worth recording.

BUNDY: We'd better agree that this is a very tentative process of discussion. I think the thing that comes first to my mind is the sense of the limits defining the problem, which always operated very clearly. Things you really could not do, or forces which you must take account of, were there very promptly. I think, for example, of the Cuban crisis in October of 1962. The one thing that was clear to the President was that he would have to act, that his own previous statements, position, and opinion of the country, the international impact of the Soviet move, all required action, so that the very interesting hypotheses that could have been played out as to what you would do if you decided to grin and bear it never occupied his attention at all.

NEUSTADT: Were his own statements sort of at the top of the list?

BUNDY: They were fairly high, but I don't think they were the…. Certainly if he had never made a statement, if he had not been as clearly committed as he was, both by his own statements and by the Joint Resolution in which he had been an architect in September and October, he would have wanted to look at the question whether you had to act. This point is, I think, an interlocking part of the picture puzzle and

right that this steady awareness of the irrelevance of the thing that you really couldn't do is what made him temperamentally so impatient with liberals.

NEUSTADT: Uh-huh.

BUNDY: That they were constantly coming in and saying, you know, “we ought to deal with this problem.”

NEUSTADT: Fighting the problem, as the Marines used to say.

BUNDY: Fighting the problem, and really begging the question, in his judgment. And getting up and saying that you ought to amend the Senate rules and get rid of the seniority rule, and generally do a lot of things that you had about nine votes for—not interesting to John F. Kennedy and deeply irritating to him that so many people whose social purposes and sense of judgment he shared—because in that sense he was a deeply liberal man—were so unaware of the limits of the problem. So I think

I'd begin with that as one of the built-in characteristics of his way of thinking about a problem.

NEUSTADT: How did he come to an assessment of limits? Was it a fairly quick, intuitive thing?

BUNDY: Of course it varied with the problem. Some of them, I remember—one spends too much time citing the Cuba crisis—but I remember how sharply he was clear about that—that was an immediate thing—we'd been watching for it—we'd made warnings against it—it was no more than the expression of a built position—

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it was hardly more difficult than to say, “Well, I know that I'm going to have to act because I've said I'm going to, and everybody else has said they're going to, and we are.”

NEUSTADT: Take something like the decision to go ahead with the Trade Expansion Act.

BUNDY: Well, I think there I'm not as close to that one as Larry [Lawrence F. O’Brien] was, and George Ball or Ted, but I would be inclined to say that there the decision to go ahead was a strictly tactical decision, shaped by O'Brien's canvass of the political possibilities. Just as the decision to wait on the tax bill was shaped by Wilbur Mills. It was clear that Wilbur just wasn't ready, in the summer of ‘62 when Phil Graham [Philip Leslie Graham] thought he should be (and I sometimes thought that Phil Graham's last illness may have been brought on by his annoyance with the President's failure to respond to the combined forces of the publisher and the editor of the *Washington Post* on the tax cut). So that those are straight choices of tactics. Now you get another very interesting process. We talked yesterday about the difference between the judgment and the validation of the judgment. The most interesting and simplest case of that that I can remember is the decision to resume testing in the atmosphere after the Soviets tested in the atmosphere. I don't think really that Kennedy was ever in any doubt that he did not wish to be in a position in which the Soviet Union had shot off 60 atmospheric tests and he hadn't done any. It was not the posture which

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he wanted to be in about this time in 1964. And neither did he want to have anyone think that that was the way the judgment was being made, in large part because of people whom he greatly admired, and with whom he hoped to accomplish something in this direction—people like Wiesner, Sorensen, and Wiesner's science advisers, and all the articulate, sensitive, students of weapons with whom the President found himself sympathetic.

The most interesting example is probably Harold Brown, of whom he had a very high opinion. All of these people would have resented and been disappointed and upset by a hasty,

sort of thoughtless, decision, and would have found it very hard to perceive that it was neither hasty nor thoughtless, it was simply an immediate perception of the enormous fact that a man who had not conducted a few atmospheric tests would appear frivolous to many people in the middle of the road and would put himself in an unworkable position. So what happened there was that this early, hard-sense-of-reality decision was stowed. He never made the decision. He told me about it. He told one or two others, I think. But he made it extremely clear that this was not a decision—it was just where he knew it was going to come out. And we didn't make a decision. And if you look at the record you'll see that entire fall and winter of 1961-62 we played out an extremely complex and carefully staffed process of interdepartmental analysis, and one of the things that disappoints me about the human process is that the only really good piece of staff work we ever did was essentially unreal.

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NEUSTADT: Well, in some ways that's the greatest kind of—knowing what you are going to do and then not doing it. That's what Harry Truman [Harry S. Truman] always found very difficult, and why I think it was harder for Kennedy on Sunday than on another day.

BUNDY: I think in a funny way it was harder on Sunday. I wouldn't want to press our discovery of the weekend (in yesterday's discussion) but I think there's something in that. Going on to the question of how he made up his mind, one obvious and very important process which we all go through but which he did insistently—the matter which was at the top of his mind at any given moment was one that you could almost count on hearing about even if it wasn't your direct business. The better you knew him the more you did so, so that at the end I would be hearing a little bit, just if it was hot in his mind, about some New York political judgment, or some matter of whether he and Mrs. Kennedy should accept a given invitation which I would never even have known existed in 1961.

And conversely Kenny got just as much heat as I did over whether we ought to go to Germany in 1963, and he was just as clear that we ought to. This is by way of preliminary to saying that one of the major elements in his process of thought was to push an idea against a relatively known and respected mental quantity. I think I've pointed out somewhere that one of the troubles in the Bay of Pigs was that these men were unknown quantities, to each other and to him.

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But this is a very characteristic phenomenon with Kennedy, and as he developed confidence in your discretion so that he could be sure that he was bouncing the idea at you and was not going to find out later that “the President is thinking of thus and so,” or, “the President wants to do the other.” He would quite deliberately leave it open, quite deliberately guard his own judgment, keep his own freedom in thinking about it, not that he wouldn't indicate the tendency of his mind, but that his real objective, I think was to—and a half-conscious one, a perfectly normal one—one of the ways that he collected evidence was to

slant it off another person's mind. This was his standard practice and he did it a lot because he deeply enjoyed conversation. Just to make a distinction, Lyndon Johnson likes to do this too, but nobody can figure it out because he is so busy explaining what he thinks that only a limited number of people are prepared to say, “But Mr. President, bingo,” and he's only gradually learning to wait and see what someone else thinks. Because otherwise you can have a meeting of 25 people and say, “Well all right, we all agreed.” Of course we did all agree because the President said, “I'm pretty sure we'd better do this, doesn't everybody think so?” And very few people will go around saying “No.” One of the things I like about Douglas Dillon is that he does say no when he feels that way.

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NEUSTADT: Actually this is another way of trying to do the same thing, isn't it? Or is it the old Rooseveltian [Franklin Delano Roosevelt] technique of having you in without talking to you?

BUNDY: No. Both of those go on. Both of those go on. That business of having you in without talking to you or just sort of applying 25 minutes in which the visitor goes away feeling the President is deeply interested in him because he has talked at him so long—Kennedy never did that—didn't do that at all—and certainly Johnson does.

NEUSTADT: But if I get the distinction, his way of testing was not to say “I think so and so” and see if it was challenged. It was, “What do you think?”

BUNDY: Very often it was a pressing as to what you thought. You were constantly being pressed—also constantly being pressed for evidence—constantly being pressed for details—constantly being pressed for facts—and then he'd want to get more facts—and that's the other kind of evidence that I think one should throw into this. We now have the limits of the process of decision. We have the process of exchange about the meaning of choice with people whose minds were useful. And then we have this insistent business of the relevant data. I think perhaps too much has been said, almost, about the number of fact sheets and the amount of quantitative volume of reading materials that he was interested in. I'm inclined to think that there was another thing going on in most of these matters which was

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a real effort to get it clear in his head what the politics of the problem were for the other man or the other group. I'm thinking now in terms of international meetings, but this would be true of nearly any operation other than a straight intellectual analysis of how you organize strategic forces. That he did, really in the same way and with much the same skills as McNamara—less mechanically, more sensitive to the politics of the edges, less persuaded by a rigorous argument which was likely to break down at the moment of actual choice and decision. But let's take a matter like General de Gaulle and the nuclear power, or Khrushchev

and Vienna. The problem is not how much you helped the French nuclear force or how big it's going to be; the problem is what is on de Gaulle's mind and how will that affect his mind. And the expectation, I think, with which the President began in that kind of matter of judgment and analysis, was that other people were much like him. The conclusion to which he led by experience was that people weren't much like him.

NEUSTADT: What an enormous discovery! How that would have fueled him for the next year!

BUNDY: Yes—that these people had processes of behavior and senses of target—they were all like him in this fact that they intended to take and hold forth….

NEUSTADT: They were all kings….

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BUNDY: They were all kings, and none of them intended to give up his kingdom. But other than that, this really least nationalist of men, except in irritation when other people were getting the better of the United States, this least doctrinaire of men had to deal with a man who was deeply doctrinaire in Khrushchev, and a man who was totally nationalist in de Gaulle. And in that sense, it literally didn't make any sense to him. He had to come to terms with the fact that that was what they were, and that writing them a polite letter or rational exposition of the sensible way of dealing with a problem was really not operative.

NEUSTADT: Was he able to get beyond the recognition that they were different to an operational sense of how the world looked from inside them?

BUNDY: I think, as we said yesterday, that most of those problems were sort of—what were they really like, and what are we really going to do with them?—were "to be opened at Christmas for '64."

NEUSTADT: Right. Right.

BUNDY: That's really what I think.

NEUSTADT: Well, was he curious? This is one of the things that Roosevelt went off on in dealing with Stalin [Joseph Stalin], it seems to me, completely.

BUNDY: Yes, he was curious, but I don't know how much he really—we talked about this yesterday—I don't have any clear sense of the degree to which he was really examining analytically the evolution of

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the Khrushchevian era—to be honest with you, Dick, as I think about it, I don't think much very good work has been done on that. Our own internal USG work is very tactical right now, and I haven't seen a large-scale study of these things that seems to me persuasive. The President always talked eagerly with George Kennan [George Frost Kennan], who perhaps has too big and too vague and too fuzzy a sense that it's all very big and great things are happening and nobody is taking account of them. That was unfinished business and it was not front-and-center when he died.

NEUSTADT: Well, this first perception is enough for three years, it seems to me. I meant to ask you at some point, as an expert now in transitions, when would you date the end of the Kennedy transition, looking back on it?

BUNDY: In one sense, I wouldn't give it an end. I think what actually ends is attention to the transition. The real process goes right on. You cease to get newspaper stories about it, even *U.S. News and World Report* only reports it once a month instead of once a week. I would say that in the larger sense—in the sense in which you mean "Have our people shaken down and do they know where they're going?"—in the foreign field, it looked easy and smooth until the Bay of Pigs and then it got a rude shake. And then there was a bad summer of great tension and strain not created by the transition but by the situation. And then I would say you had an operating Administration with a relatively clear sense of its lines of

distribution by the fall of '61, but that's rather impressionistic. I think it's terribly important to bear in mind what a different Administration you had in the middle of '62 from the middle of '61, and at the end of '62 from the middle of '62, and so on around.

NEUSTADT: Well, this is always true.

BUNDY: You look at the Lincoln [Abraham Lincoln] Administration and you see how different the atmosphere of responsibility and delegation and attention is in any one year from another. Of course he was in a war, and that compresses time. But we had some tensions too, and they compress time.

NEUSTADT: Let me turn to a slightly different point, Mac. What you have said about the least nationalist of men opens up something. I don't know quite what this comes from. Is this the outside or on the inside? Is this the Boston Irishman in the white Anglo-Saxon Protestant tradition? Somehow here this guy was opener from those people….

BUNDY: I don't think I know, and I don't think I'm a good witness of that.

NEUSTADT: All right.

BUNDY: If I were guessing I would say that for people who had a liberal education and an exposure to affairs before the second war, the operating combination of that kind of an education in Kennedy's case and I think significantly a Harvard education, a serious war experience, and an almost endless exposure to cant, which is the process of politics

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in its lower phases—all of these would make a man detached about ordinary patriotism. I wouldn't want to say anything that any casual reader later on would misunderstand. This was a deeply American type and a man whose sense of "Hail to the Chief" and honor guards and courage and duty, honor, country, was very strong indeed. But the interesting thing is, in a way, that he represents what I think many people in his generation represent: a very deep-seated ability to reconcile intense loyalty to his country with a real absence of nationalism. Carl Kaysen reminds me that once when he was preparing with the President for a meeting with Chiari [Roberto F. Chiari], the President read over the papers and said, "Well, you mean our position is we're going to screw this poor bastard, and I guess we have to." And then he went and did.

NEUSTADT: That reminds me that apropos of your earlier comments on his probing process, I'll send over to you for incorporation by reference a little memo of conversation that I had with Carl this summer in which he recounted just for nothing but history his happening to be in the room when you were getting the President to sign off on a message to the Prime Minister last spring on MLF. And Carl just recounted the inquisition to which he, as a bystander, was put, that fits perfectly. You can toss it in here if you want it.

BUNDY: That Carl was quizzed as to what he thought about it?

NEUSTADT: Carl just happened to be there, yes, and he bored in on

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him, "Who have you been talking to?" and so forth. The reason for that question—I wouldn't press you on it—is that it's critically important to try to understand what was the source of this guy's self-confidence? I think I understand Harry Truman's; I flatter myself that I maybe understand Roosevelt's; but this man's is not of a piece with theirs; this is something very different. This is a detached and self-contained human being who, so far as I perceive him had enormous inner confidence. But what it comes from is critical to comprehend, and I don't think I do.

BUNDY: Well, I think I probably ought to try to answer that out of concreteness rather than out of the situation…. Let me think a minute.

NEUSTADT: Yes, that's right.

BUNDY: I think one clear element in it, by the time I knew him, was simply the number of times that he had accomplished things that people said could not be accomplished. So that “no” was a word he was used to hearing and used to disproving. And I can remember quite often in earlier years advising him against something which he then went and did and it worked; and it worked because of the extra aura which was on that running train. The great blow of the Bay of Pigs was that it broke the picture of infallibility and its great service to him was that it did exactly that.

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NEUSTADT: Yes, I think it was a blessing, in a way.

BUNDY: So that part of it was the sheer momentum. Part of it, I am quite sure, was the fact of his extraordinary perception of other men's weaknesses. One of the things that he never talked very much about but clearly had constantly on his mind was who was good at what, and who was limited in what way. There wasn't anyone, not even Bobby, whom he found useful and up to him on all subjects. There were people who did more and better things than he did in specific fields, but he had been able to take the measure of, and to make use of, all kinds of people. Part of this, I am bound to say, I think led to an insufficient appreciation of certain kinds of skills. I never understood why he really didn't—no, I think I understand, but I think it was a weakness—that he had such an essentially cool and distant view of the legislative process. And a weakness in a way that he had a similarly cool view of the diplomatic process. He could have used them both more effectively if he hadn't quite rightly felt superior to them.

NEUSTADT: And let it show a little.

BUNDY: And let it show. But the reasons for this self-confidence were in fact that he hadn't lost the arguments; he did in fact understand the diplomatic problem better than most diplomats; the realities of politics better than most Congressmen—except for the reality that the Congressmen were there, and that he understood in operational terms;

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I mean, this is a marginal thing, he understood it vastly better than an awful lot of other people, and he did get an enormous amount of legislation through. But I think history will be right in what is now the casual judgment that Lyndon Johnson was a better first legislator than Jack Kennedy—that will turn out to be so.

NEUSTADT: But Lyndon loves and treasures those fine distinctions, and didn't they bore Kennedy?

BUNDY: They bored Kennedy, and they involved him in a lot of stuff that he didn't want to do; having their house, having Jackie and himself to have to spend endless evenings with 40 or 50 fat wives, you know, not a tolerable picture of what they made all this effort for. And so they didn't. And they paid a price.

NEUSTADT: Uh-huh.

BUNDY: Just in the same way as if you don't have Perle Mesta and you don't have Betty Beale you give away the easily conquered women's page, which is the easiest source of soft soap in the world. Actually what you do is leap the women's page by being the most beautiful creature in the world, the most enchanting. It doesn't matter that none of the vehicles think you treat them right, because they have to treat you right.

But to go back, there's another source of self-confidence which in a funny way not all Kennedys have, and especially not the Kennedy girls, and that is the real integrity of the inner processes

of the Kennedy family. Integrity is not a word that most people with my Boston background would hastily apply to Old Joe. I don't want to get into that argument.

NEUSTADT: No, but that's beside this point.

BUNDY: But inside the family it's a different thing, and there is a tremendous, mutually reinforcing expectation, and comfort, and so on.

NEUSTADT: But it was a man's world?

BUNDY: Very much a man's world, and it was a man's world in which the girls were made, in a curious way, competitive rather than—not the wives, but the Kennedy daughters, and of course it takes extraordinary forms. Eunice [Eunice Kennedy Shriver] has done a job, that would make any professional woman proud, of making mental retardation respectable. She's had extraordinary weapons, but she has used them. I would say that one more element in this self-confidence which is clearly important is the combination of energy and pain as physical phenomena. This is a man who had had to live with pain, cast it aside, who had had to—schooled himself that how you were seen to be was a part of what you were. Things which in your trade and mine are tolerable—a kind of surface eccentricity, or lack of courtesy, or bad manners—none of this is possible, except in privacy, for a political man. My own guess is that Jack Kennedy was always in that sense a graceful man, in the same way that his great friend David Harlech [William David Ormsby-Gore Harlech] has always been a graceful man. But this gives self-confidence, I think, to have

this kind of natural discipline and to have it with great physical force and to have it through the process of major kinds of suffering. All of these things, I think, strengthen your position.

NEUSTADT: Did his back ever stop bothering him in these past years?

BUNDY: No, not to my knowledge. It was up and down, but the downs were always when it mattered most—I mean, travel, pain. In Germany, I remember real strain at tough moments, characteristic of that damn back. I don't know the details of it. I don't know what form the pain took, but I do know that…. I think it may have been better this last fall than it had been for some time. Wasn't there some swinging of golf clubs last summer? And a certain amount of sailing?—which is a lousy place for a bad back. And I think a kind of physical serenity in that latter period, I would guess, but I'm not a good witness.

NEUSTADT: Then how about the term "excellence?" This represented something to him.

BUNDY: Yes, the man who was best at something, almost no matter what it was, was always enormously interesting to him. I think that goes way, way back to the competitiveness of the Kennedys, to their feeling that whoever was the champion or the winner of the tournament or the head of the class…. I listened to an old Hyannisport-type in December describing Bobby as an adolescent the other day

and her assertion was that there never had been a 15-year-old "who more flagrantly cheated at every possible activity." And I'm inclined to believe it. I'm inclined to believe that Bobby at that age would not have had a clear sense of lines and corners and edges and pluses and minuses and what you do and what you don't do; and that the fierceness which was innately tempered in the Jack Kennedy I knew—certainly from '52 onward—took longer to come under control with Bobby, and breaks out every now and then even now. So I think with Kennedy, then, you get this natural resonance to high intelligence. The most extraordinary case is certainly Sorensen, a relationship so close and so entangled and so full of repressed worry to both of them that it's very hard to take it as a model, and yet it's hard to see who else in American public life could have attracted the energies and dedication and abilities of a man like Sorensen, or who else could have served Jack Kennedy in quite that way.

NEUSTADT: I think I understand something of Ted's worries about the relationship, but you interest me very much in saying that there were worries the other way. Can you enlarge on that?

BUNDY: Well, I haven't known much about it until recently, and that from

Bobby, but my impression would be that it matches occasional margins of what I saw in the earlier years that Jack Kennedy was never entirely comfortable about having as much of his product the work of another man in very large outline, and that there was always,

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I think, the suppressed fear that Sorensen might claim credit, or that other people might give him the credit. There was an outburst, which Bobby will have to put on tape, over the relative roles of the researcher and the writer in Profiles in Courage which almost led to a parting of the ways in the late ‘50's, and I don't think either of them ever entirely forgot it. Maybe Ted has talked to you about it—I would doubt it.

NEUSTADT: No, he's hinted at it once, but he never has talked about it. This leads to something else that I'm curious about while we're on Ted. He's never forgiven Jim Burns [James MacGregor Burns] and neither, I guess, has Bobby, for characterizing the President as a man without passion. I think they're right not to forgive Jim, but I'm not altogether clear about it.

BUNDY: I don't think they're right not to forgive him because I think they may really be right that he was wrong.

NEUSTADT: They're silly not to forgive him—the Good Book…

BUNDY: But to have reached that conclusion from the Kennedy most of us could see as a public figure in 1958 and 9 seems to me no more than normal. Here is a man who is just 40, running full time for the presidency of the United States with great skill and energy and making very sure he didn't put a foot wrong. No wonder he looked as if he lacked passion—he was an awfully busy fellow.

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NEUSTADT: And untouched by the things that other people in his own generation had been touched by—the Depression in particular.

BUNDY: Well, I suppose I missed that key because I was in the same kind of sheltered position—not as big a sheltered position. The passion which Sorensen and Bobby think they find in the President is in part his receptiveness to their passion. I would think without any question that they were both more passionate men about justice and injustice and right and wrong than he. But he was receptive to their passion and he was receptive to evidence, and I don't think it was a put-up job. It was the real thing that that West Virginia primary gave him a sense of unfinished social business in the United States. Of course he'd been in the tenements of Greater Boston, up and down them with Dave Powers [David F. Powers], but there's a sense in which the people who live

in those wards like it that way, you know, which is not true in West Virginia—as I understand it. I would think that he was certainly not the cool machine that he appeared to be to a fellow like Jim Burns, but neither did he have the fiery feeling about right and wrong that Ted and Bobby both have.

NEUSTADT: I think Jim's error is not in perceiving that difference; I think that must be right. But assuming that if you don't have the fire you're incapable of commit, that's different. I think this man was capable, as he lived through history, of taking on commitments.

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BUNDY: I'm not sure that I'm the right fellow to talk about this because although no one ever knows exactly what other people think of him, I think I'm often thought of as a cold kid and I don't think I am.

NEUSTADT: No, I don't…

BUNDY: And I would think my friends might probably get sore if someone said so. But I would not claim to be the kind of "goddammit look what's happening over there, go break up that brutality" which Bobby is, and I wouldn't claim to have that sort of cold fire or feeling against reaction and oppression which Ted has.

NEUSTADT: Well, I think this distinction may apply in your case as in his.

BUNDY: Well, let's go on about him…

NEUSTADT: Anyway, commitment does not have to come out of nothing but fire.

BUNDY: No.

NEUSTADT: My own feeling—I just want to test this out on you, that what had happened to him by the summer of '63 had made integration, and in some kind of control of American-Soviet relations things to which he could only have become increasingly committed as time went on.

BUNDY: Those two certainly, and I would add a third: that is, commitment to finding ways and means of asserting reasonable,

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rational processes of decision and action over the economy. He really believed that it was within our grip to ensure, not permanent prosperity but permanent growth, that this could be done. His press conferences are full of the hard things about it:

how many jobs you have to find; how much unemployment you have; how automation has to be dealt with. But the deeper strand is the one that is nearest the surface in the Yale speech, which is an unfinished statement of a deep conviction from which, in a measure, he backed away because people were so unresponsive to it, so that you get much more orthodox arguments for the tax cut. But those aren't what are really cooking.

NEUSTADT: But the Yale speech was still what….

BUNDY: The Yale speech is one that he had printed because he cared about it.

NEUSTADT: That's important.

BUNDY: I always thought a little bit he had it printed because Sorensen didn't have much to do with it, but that's marginal.

NEUSTADT: All right.

BUNDY: He worked on that one himself. He cared greatly about it. He was disappointed that only the converted got the point. As a practical matter he backed away from it and I'm sure felt more comfortable with the argument as it went on in terms of reality. But the man himself was absolutely certain that a lot of tiresome myths were in the way of the operational effectiveness of the American economic society,

and I'm sure he would have come back to have another big whack at that one. I think that was at least as important in his mind—well, as important, as of the same magnitude—as the other two. The civil rights thing became a necessity. I don't myself know what the balance of necessity and desire were there, and I'm not sure that there's much in it, and you're certainly right that turning the world—trying to lower the levels of—nuclear danger was an absolutely permanent major preoccupation.

NEUSTADT: On civil rights I find fascinating the shift between February and June in ‘63 as the risk of enormous alienation on one side or the other became manifest after Birmingham. Obviously the commitment is not do-goodism, it's preserving this fabric of reason in the society.

BUNDY: It's not a black-and-white thing in the same way it was for Lincoln, but it is to keep the social order going. You have to make this kind of progress, so that it wasn't so much civil rights, it was to incorporate this enormous new force within a society that was the object. And I think you know one reason that people, in the civil rights thing, one reason that I think people might have felt he was cool was that to him it was so obvious. He really was color-blind himself, in the simplest and most complete way, and in that sense the degrees of passion and feeling of other people

didn't upset him because they were so clearly irrational. And therefore he never got sore at the

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Dick Russells [Richard B. Russell, Jr.] of the world. Nor did he ever seem quite sufficiently exercised to the Baldwins of the world.

NEUSTADT: You suggest, though, that in all three of these things there's a certain common thread of concern for the on-goingness of the society, the processes of reason in the society, of balance, maybe this is what….

BUNDY: Yes. I'm not sure, I'm a little wary that we may have built on this tape too much of a pattern of the man of reason, but these are certainly parts of this man, no doubt about that. It was so seldom he got really angry at anyone else. Roger Blough [Roger M. Blough] really occupies a kind of lonely eminence in the Administration.

NEUSTADT: There is also the sense in which he stood off and looked at himself wryly. I don't know how deeply that ran; I'd been exposed to a little of it. When did he stop looking at himself wryly? Were there any points beyond which objectivity couldn't go?

BUNDY: Oh yes, and I'm sure that the objectivity of his looking at himself was more apparent with people themselves somewhat objective and less apparent with people deeply committed. I am not sure I know the thrust of the question.

NEUSTADT: I'm sorry, let me try it over. This commitment and passion, and the degree to which the things that attract commitment in relation to objective circumstances with which you have to deal turn me back toward his perception of himself in which there seem to be

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some analogues. In my contacts with him I found him inclined not to take himself unseriously but to make a running commentary on himself as a very special characteristic, and yet I'm not sure how deep it went.

BUNDY: I can give you a tangential answer, I think. It didn't go terribly deep, in the sense that he was worried about himself, or thought himself the most interesting subject in the world—I don't think he did.

NEUSTADT: No, I'm sure that's right.

BUNDY: And you don't get with him that kind of self-consciousness that you get in the adolescent diary in which *my* thoughts and *my* problems and how I'm doing….

[END OF TAPE 4]

NEUSTADT: You spoke a minute ago about the special relationship between the President and Ted Sorensen. One of the things I found most curious about it is that there were areas in which they had total intimacy and areas in which they went quite separate ways. Obviously Ted served some purposes but was ruled out of others.

BUNDY: Well, to begin with, the importance of Ted's role—because I think there just is no exaggerating his value and his closeness to the President, and in all sorts of ways—he foresaw problems; he had a sense of politics; he knew how to organize a bill; he knew how to of course write a speech, but I put that late because it's not the center; he had a deep sense of the President's own values and

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purposes, although Ted himself, I think, would have pressed much earlier on civil rights; would have been much more disposed not to test in the atmosphere; was in the crude calculus a more liberal than the President, or at least more willing to fight for a liberal position; and less deeply aware, I think, than the President was, of the realities of the international world. Although Ted wrote a great deal of excellent rhetoric about the Communist threat, it is far from clear to me that he felt it, or does now. The working relationship of course was wonderfully easy because of Sorensen's…. How they built it I don't know, but when I saw it it was perfect mutual reliance, real mastery of the prosody Kennedy style, or Sorensen style—I think Kennedy style probably more. And then another special thing which Ted did was to provide a lot of Kennedy wit. He was the only person I knew of who could actually produce jokes that the President would use. The President made enough jokes on his own and had enough fun with life so that nobody would accuse him of living on borrowed wit, but Sorensen was the only person who really could come up with a funny one. To a considerably lesser extent Goodwin [Richard N. Goodwin] could do it, but I don't know of anyone else who could.

NEUSTADT: Yet Ted was all this. He was a touch football companion, but he wasn't a yachting companion, or a luncheon companion in the Arthur Schlesinger sense.

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BUNDY: No, he wasn't. Ted used to say that that was by mutual choice. I don't really know why that should have been. I think it's…. There weren't

very many people actually who were social companions who were also professional companions. I wasn't, for example, except for the dances, and I always attributed that more to, at least as much to, my wife [Mary Bundy] as to myself. The Arthur Schlesingers were great sort of social and back-chat friends and yet the President really resisted…. Never gave any encouragement at all to efforts to put Arthur into the operational stream. We tried it two or three times and it didn't work, and he really reached the sort of conclusion that Schlesinger wasn't that kind of a man, he was another kind of a man, he was a sort of a "let me know when Denis Brogan's in town" sort of man, and "make sure I don't miss anything really good that's in the *Economist* or the *Manchester Guardian* or even *The New Republic* and *The Nation*, but don't let me think that I'm really going to keep salt on Adlai's tail by having Arthur be the UN liaison officer because he honestly doesn't operate that way. Following a bill through, or following a vote through the UN—if Arthur has a speaking engagement on the day of the vote, the speaking engagement is where he'll be. And in any event he's likely to come back and tell me what Adlai wants instead of telling Adlai what I want—this kind of thing."

But Sorensen—all business—I mean if you want something done it gets done. If you want someone to do any job—from the cultivation of selected

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newspaper men to the drafting of a major program—if you want someone to ride herd on the Cabinet with no lack of self-confidence, Ted will do all these things. Now, one does have to say that—well, this is a separate comment really—but the responsibility as a presidential staff officer was always lying around for the man who would take it. The President in a sense never pushed people out of problems if he had real respect for them. Ted had taken it right along. The source of what tension you might find as between Sorensen and Dungan [Ralph N. Dungan], and Sorensen and O'Brien, and Sorensen and O'Donnell, was the number of things he had taken. And some people had set up rather sharp barriers that he wasn't supposed to cross. And he didn't have much to do with (I think too bad, in a way) with appointments, who saw the President, or appointments, who got the job. He didn't have much to do with the legislative tactical things, and I understand this because I used to have to repress normal reactions in order to make sure that he did take part in pen-pal letters or whatever it might be, where his contribution was one the President really wanted.

NEUSTADT: But you and he managed very well, from all I could ever see.

BUNDY: Well, we did, I think. Kaysen claims he managed better. He and I were talking about that the other night—and he is very close to Ted now, and it's a good thing—that he had the advantage of being one of the few people who Sorensen thought around the White House was both competent and in no sense a threat, and I think that's probably not a stupid observation.

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NEUSTADT: You go outside this little circle to somebody like McNamara—what

was the connection, what was the real connection?

BUNDY: Very strong, both ways. A man who could accomplish more than anyone else in the Administration in terms of the fact that what he had was the largest enterprise and that he ran it extraordinarily well; a man who was immediately responsive to any presidential request; a man who could be relied on to conduct himself with total loyalty; a man who was personally very close to the Attorney General, which was very helpful.

NEUSTADT: Does that antedate?

BUNDY: No, no.

NEUSTADT: This all came right out of, grew.

BUNDY: Grew, grew. So that when the President is shot the person who really takes care of Bobby, getting him to Andrews, and getting there privately—I think it may have been Max Taylor that Bobby calls, but it's Bob who is there doing it. The very parallel casts of their minds, a great desire to get things done, but a sense of the need to do them within their range of what was manageable. There was always a tension between Wiesner and Kaysen, who were very well informed about the Defense budget and who had, I think, really a better grip of what really ought to be done, even than Bob on some of these issues, but who didn't have to sell the Armed Services Committee, and didn't have to take the heat, and weren't the visible figures.

One thing about Bob is that he hates to explain that it's a political judgment.

NEUSTADT: Yes, he hates to.

BUNDY: And therefore we'd always get this kind of artificial intellectual argument which he would lose, but he'd win the judgment. And the President, I think, was wryly amused by this, because I never really talked about it except just at the end once or twice, but it was very plain to me—what was plain to me as a matter of intellectual perception in an argument of this kind (I doubt very much if it escaped the President's attention) was that at a certain point the McNamara advocacy would go into overdrive, you know, “Watch out, there's an Edsel in this package somewhere.” And what you had to figure out was that what he really meant was you could only improve the rational position of the Defense establishment so many jumps at a time or he'd be in a lot of trouble. And sometimes he'd put it like that in a smaller group direct to the President and then he'd have no trouble at all. So there was that kind of skill and energy and directness and lack of fuss that, if you asked him his opinion, he always knew it; and if you wanted him to take on a difficult job for another reason he would do that too.

He took the heat on the TFX. I would suppose that when you finally get to the bottom of the TFX that it was not an entirely technical decision.

NEUSTADT: I would suppose so, too, and not entirely his.

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BUNDY: And not entirely his. And I would suppose that no one will ever be able to know that, and this is very important.

NEUSTADT: Yes. Were there any reserves? I mean, you and I have talked about some aspects of this great guy that are limiting.

BUNDY: Of whom?

NEUSTADT: McNamara.

BUNDY: Which ones do you mean?

NEUSTADT: Well, I recall the observation at one point that, like Senator Taft, he has the best mind in Washington until he makes it up.

BUNDY: Yes, that's what I'm talking about. It's when he has made his decision, then other people's arguments are a damned nuisance, because very likely he's thought of them all and they have their weight, and he's got some other weight that he doesn't like. When he hasn't thought of them, then, like any other human being he has pride, intellectual pride, almost vanity. I guess we all do in some measure. I am constantly getting irritated at one or two people on my staff who constantly do keep after me until I've got some point on which they are right and I am wrong, and it's very irritating.

NEUSTADT: He also has a great—a faith in reason—he enthrones reason, or analysis.

BUNDY: He enthrones this thing they teach in the business school which is analysis of—I don't know what they call it, they have another word for it—but it's, you take your problem, you take it apart, you

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measure all the pieces, you get them in order, you put them together, and you have your answer. And of course some things aren't like that.

NEUSTADT: Well, that's what I wondered.

BUNDY: The real terror at the moment is that he did measure and tape Vietnam in just these terms and he left out one great component which he now sees that he left out, namely, someone to run the country, because he posited someone to run the country. And that is why the shakiness and the question of effectiveness of the regime were so resisted by those two fellows last summer, he and Max Taylor, because to remove or to assert that the country could not be governed was to assert that there was not only a piece missing but that it was a very large piece and hadn't been measured and taped in the problem in the first place—I think this is true.

NEUSTADT: This is true. Was the President getting conscious of this limitation? Your suggestion that he might be thinking of moving in….

BUNDY: Well, I myself, as I say, I think he was thinking of moving in I'm sure that's what Jackie thinks, that's what Bobby thinks. If he'd ever asked me about it I would have tried to sort of make clear to him that I really was not talking in personal terms and that my own roles and possible functions in the government didn't enter into a judgment—that it would be very dangerous to put Bob in as Secretary of State—which is my own thought. Not that, you know…. I think that's Bob as he was a year ago.

NEUSTADT: Yes, that's true.

BUNDY: That's a very important point—that may change—is changing.

NEUSTADT: There was another limitation that I became aware of in the course of my Skybolt talks with him. The sense that conflicts of loyalties in this kind of government among subordinate officials were never legitimate, that loyalty to one's superior which he obviously felt as first, was first, and anybody who alleged there was a conflict was being snide or….

BUNDY: That his oath of office might be to the office and not to the man.

NEUSTADT: Right. He talked about Admiral Anderson [George W. Anderson, Jr.] and he talked about Owen and Schaetzel [J. Robert Schaetzel] in the same terms, and then he went back to talking about military officers. But this is to miss something in this town.

BUNDY: Well, I'll have to make you a tangential argument just because it's on my mind at the moment. Lyndon Johnson feels the same way that McNamara does, and that's one of the reasons that they get on so well. He cannot get it through his head that he is, at the moment, to tens of thousands of bureaucrats, the caretaker of an office that they own, and that by their standards they have been remarkably loyal. And that the leaks he reads about in the papers of people who want to

stimulate a little bombing of Hanoi, or people who are sure they know how the Aid program ought to be organized, or whatever it may be—these are not anti-Johnson, they are simply

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trying to help the dear old President be President in the way in which any sensible man would be President in which they—in their arrogance, I grant you—think they know better than he. It's an inevitable process.

BUNDY: Of course it is also true, as you know better than I, that a strong president gradually bends the bureaucracy, so that they do begin to think in his terms. And it certainly happened with Kennedy. People were ready for it and he got an enormous response, and even though he denounced diplomats and made brass hats think that he was casually ignoring them, he nevertheless took hold of the Executive Branch—and the Executive Branch likes to be taken hold of—and it began to operate. Now as to whether…. I agree with you about Bob—that he has this linear view. There's something else funny about him. I don't think he really understands the passions of loyalty and ambition and of expectation that move military men at all. I just think that he assumes about them the kind of ready and responsive attention to the views of the president of the company that he would get in the Ford Motor Company. Well of course the social organizations are totally different.

NEUSTADT: Yes. Did Jack Kennedy understand this better?

BUNDY: Well, I think so, although I think, you know, to put it another way, I think he had a lower expectation. I think it annoyed him very much, and he was really very irritated by people within the Executive Branch who seemed to be bending in a direction, or trying

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push him, or not responding. He had not much respect for brass hats, except General Taylor, and even General Taylor, as the President came to take control of these matters and recovered his confidence in military judgment—General Taylor was an enormously comforting force in ‘6l, less important from about the middle of ‘62 onward—not ever trivial, always respected, and a man of great intelligence and honor, and loyalty, and quality, but not depended on in terms of thinking his judgment mattered very much.

NEUSTADT: That's the change from ‘61 where he was clinging to him like a life line. This is very senatorial, this thing you record about the new President. And I don't fully understand it. Senators sit up there and are part of the reason why the bureaucracy is so fragmented, but they think it's a thing, they think it's a monolith.

BUNDY: I agree to that.

NEUSTADT: I watched this happen to Truman.

BUNDY: Kennedy felt that way, when he came in, had a sort of a—those fellows up there attribute to this place the same kind of monolithic force that ignorant bureaucrats attribute to the Hill, and how in fact you must govern in either of them by moving in, and influencing, and persuading, even from the presidency. Of course you can't do it—no president can be asked to go…. And that's why McNamara is so prized by both presidents, because within the limits of the possible he offers a president more leverage with the Pentagon than any other instrument available.

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NEUSTADT: Yes.

BUNDY: And it's why two presidents are impatient with a Dean Rusk who not only doesn't control it himself but really sort of makes harder the problem of operational control.

NEUSTADT: Also he takes heat.

BUNDY: They both do that. I think in that sense, taking heat, that's a quality that Kennedy admired very much, and people who didn't worry too much when they got…. In a funny way, one of the mistakes I made became one of the sources of a kind of affection between us—it's this famous Canadian press release—one that I never even referred to him. He did later begin to needle me about it, but first he sent for George Ball, and the way in which he took out his heat on George Ball did not fill me with pride. He said, “But George you're supposed to know something about politics.” And he was quite annoyed, and the way that the thing went, he knew perfectly well that I had spent a good deal of time making clear that it was not the President who had made this mistake, that it was the White House staff and, in particular, my office, because Kenny said to me, “You know, the President thinks it's kind of funny you’re going around telling everybody your own mistake—he doesn't think you'll get very far in life.” But obviously it was what he did want done, and what we did very carefully, and there were a certain amount of brickbats, as you always get when something looks out of joint.

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Walter Lippmann wrote a column about extraordinarily bad management, and the President got the impression that on the whole that didn't bother—that we were laughing it off. We were watching the election fairly carefully, and it would have been very poor if old Dief had won, but he didn't, and the boys put up a sort of a “you-don't-have-to-go” flag the day after Pearson [Drew Pearson] won, and the President was very funny about it. He really did, I think, get the impression that this was just one more trouble in our office, that we weren't going around saying we never did it, or it wasn't our fault, or we had been misunderstood, or

anything else. And the same way on the Bay of Pigs: he took the heat, and he knew who else had taken the heat, and although he was shaken in terms of "Whose advice is any good?" he was heartened in terms of the kinds of people who didn't jump the ship, and that was a great central thing to him, and it's a great quality in McNamara, and it's a great quality in Rusk.

NEUSTADT: Yes it is.

BUNDY: And it's deeply fundamental to people who have been in political office, and especially that all mistakes are made by subordinates wherever possible. Now, you were talking about the sort of intimacy factor with McNamara—it was very high. He really was close to the President. The President used him on things partly because he was the

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only big businessman in the Administration, so that he was deep in the steel thing, and partly because he was the sort of person that the President and Jackie liked.

NEUSTADT: There was social intercourse.

BUNDY: I don't know how much, but certainly a considerable amount—not in the sense of the Fays [Anita Fay], the Bradlees, the weekend-guest kind of thing, but in the sense of being in and out of the White House, certainly always being guests at the small dances and often being at dinners for this or that person that were a small sort. And then, of course not as intensively and systematically as Lyndon Johnson has done it, the President used McNamara to show what a good administration he had. McNamara would address this group, or would shake hands with that group, or would be available to speak for the President to Mr. Outside as well as a Mr. Inside…. Very valuable….

NEUSTADT: You know it's fascinating…

BUNDY: …in a way the President never used Sorensen. For example, Ted never…. He did his own lectures, which the President admired very much and reviewed carefully before they were given, but the President wouldn't say to a group of visiting dignitaries, "Now I want to get Ted Sorensen in to talk to you about that" distinction.

NEUSTADT: It interests me very much that for a man who loved these foreign nuances, fine distinctions, and felt he had to keep his hands on things, he was toying with that shift…

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BUNDY: Well, let me say that he never said that to me, that I have this at

second-hand and after the assassination, so I don't know how much weight there was in it. I think what he did feel, probably, was a real frustration in the operational effectiveness of the diplomatic and foreign policy machine as a whole—with reason—and not all of this frustration was fixable. Some of it developed from his own difficulty in perceiving how hard it is to make the four Western Powers agree on things when they don't agree on them—how hard it is to make a Bonn Government, which also has a political life, see its real role in relation to East Germany as John Kennedy sees it. Very easy then to say "the goddamn Ambassadorial group" and I suppose if I heard him say that once I heard him say it 50 times in a 3-year period. But it wasn't the Ambassadorial group, it was the stubborn facts of Adenauer vs. Kennedy, in one sense.

NEUSTADT: Of course this is what's so scary and also sort of fascinating, and my vision of McNamara coming in to do to the State Department what he had done to Ford and the Pentagon….

BUNDY: I wonder what would really have happened—it's a hypothetical affair.

NEUSTADT: Yes, sure it is. The one thing, though, this does suggest to me is that the President never did mix you up with the State Department, with the machine, this outside image which I've always thought nonsense: Bundy is the substitute for the Secretary.

BUNDY: No, certainly not. I mean, the President was the substitute for the State Department in a very considerable measure and his staff did a lot of things that he had asked them to do, but they were not doing State Department business. This simple distinction which I've drawn in a number of public statements is just a fact.

NEUSTADT: You do the President's business.

BUNDY: Yes. And he did make an awful lot of his business things that might in another season have been the Secretary of State's business—that is true. But there isn't any way you can do the State Department's business, there is no substitute for the Department, and nobody has ever tried to substitute for the Department, and he certainly didn't see it that way.

NEUSTADT: Let's turn to some other people. I always had the feeling, from the very beginning, when he talked to me about the appointment, that Jerry Wiesner represented somebody he respected, found interesting, but somehow the flow of connection was never to his taste.

BUNDY: Wiesner accomplished an enormous amount and the President had a great respect for his abilities. The communication process wasn't good

because Jerry had no way of saying anything short, nor did he really manage to get clear in his head which things needed to be done by the President and which things he ought to be doing himself—or, rather, he did manage to get it clear, but it took a long time and he damaged his relation to the President in the process. So that it did get

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to be, in a very considerable measure, my business and, in matters that had no National Security aspect, Sorensen's business, to deal with Jerry's problems and to feed his advice into the Government. Now that leaves out all the great things that were done by the creation of the Office of Science and Technology, and the advice and effectiveness of Jerry around the government in all sorts of areas, and the fact that this loose connection which you perceived was not perceived in the government. I don't think Washington thought that Wiesner was distanced from the presidency, and I bet you would find if you went around that people were not aware of the problem of communication which you are quite right about.

NEUSTADT: It was sort of a modified, small-scale version of the Bowles communication problem, wasn't it?

BUNDY: Yes, except that there was absolutely no "Goddammit he leaks that he is wiser than I am" problem which was a big problem with Bowles. And there was no problem of "really this man isn't effectively doing…" The President was always loyal to Rusk in the sense that he didn't want people trying to outsmart his Secretary of State from within the Department. *He* might do it, but he had a very clear sense that Bowles always came in with wild ideas when he was Acting Secretary of State, and I don't think Chet intended anything I don't give him that much credit for guile.

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NEUSTADT: No, that's the horrible part about it, he didn't—I think you're right.

BUNDY: I mean, he'd say, "You and Dean and I have the same view of these matters, Mac," you know, and he was trying to make himself think so. I like Chet, and I think he has been effective as Ambassador in India, and I think it was right to hang on to him, and that he was more often right than wrong on my substantive matters, but he was just plugged in at a bad time and in a bad way.

NEUSTADT: Yes. One side name, young Roger Hilsman, who seems to me—maybe by the President, maybe by somebody else—to have been pushed up faster than was, strictly speaking, good for him.

BUNDY: That's exactly what happened.

NEUSTADT: What did he represent to Kennedy? Or was this really somebody else's

doing?

BUNDY: No, certainly I don't know that the initiative came from the President, but he warmly supported it. Roger was an admirable head of INR [State Department Bureau of Intelligence and Research]. I think he was the most valuable intelligence reporting officer because of his ability to sense where the next issue was and his willingness to frame the thing in intelligence terms. I think he was much admired within his staff over there. I've always heard that. And he had a kind of freshness and buoyancy and energy and a kind of absence of professional inputs, so that he and Ray Cline [Ray S. Cline] are the two best at this business that I've seen. They have different skills.

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Cline has an encyclopedic experience, but he's been a cold warrior a long time, and he would agree to that, I think. I admire them both. Then The Crocodile [William Averell Harriman] ran that bureau and established standards beyond the wit of man to match as Assistant Secretary for the Far East and when he left they needed someone strong, clearly a member of the Administration and not a member of the bureaucracy. And I was certainly in favor of Roger, and I think you've said exactly the right thing about it: he wasn't quite ready. He had himself an image of the Assistant Secretary as the man who provides press guidance, the man who makes public statements, the man who establishes an image as the leader of the United States in this area, and he gravely neglected the simple business of running a great government bureau and a great interdepartmental machine. And the bureau, my brother tells me, is really now in pretty shaken condition, and I believe it. The interdepartmental thing not only came apart but turned into outright hostility as a result of people's feeling that Roger just plain constantly took other people's footballs and ran for substantial yardage on unorthodox plays. You know how these fellows are, many of them, they don't really care whether you make the yardage—they are like a determined coach—the question is whether you play the signal.

NEUSTADT: Some of these fellows were superficially attractive…

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BUNDY: They were very attractive, and they were very responsive. Roger was very good with the President. He really didn't always do his homework and he sometimes blustered, which was not perfect, but his heart was in the right place. His political judgments about this terrible Vietnamese mess were good. His sense of what was really cooking was right. He was perhaps a little optimistic a year ago this time and perhaps still feels, really, that if people would only leave him alone he could straighten that war out—a kind of energy that is more admirable than it is an instance of sound judgment, I think.

But another thing about Roger is that it's very complicated, about which I'm a very poor source of evidence—the complexity of his relation to the Secretary of State, who

initially was very high on Roger and came, I think, to be very wary about him at the end. I don't know the ins and outs of that.

NEUSTADT: But the attraction for Kennedy was perfectly valid qualities in a person without seeing that these are not the qualities for this role, is that it?

BUNDY: I guess we none of us knew, in one sense, how little Roger knew about the realities of operating a tough managerial job. I think that's probably true. I wouldn't think Kennedy was terribly close to that actual problem of choice.

NEUSTADT: I see. Well then there's no point in pursuing it. Turn to Carl Kaysen for a minute—did he ever develop one of these distinctive compartments of relation with the President?

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BUNDY: Not a distinctive compartment, because Carl did so many different things and because he was so extraordinarily good at getting things settled so that they didn't have to go to the President. This was one of his great skills. He did get to know the President well. I don't think the President ever felt fully at ease with him, but he had a great respect for him. He thought Carl wrote better than he talked, and that it took a little longer to get the problem from Carl orally than he liked—I'm not sure he was right about that, but when you get that kind of an idea it can slow your attentive processes. They never had the Kaysens in the house, which was stupid of me to think that that mattered to the Kaysens, but it did. And I'm not sure that… I think one of the reasons Carl went away after a period was that although there were all sorts of satisfactions in the job, and although there certainly was no limit to the parts of it that he could lay hold of in terms of his relationship with me, yet nevertheless the President was dealing with the Bundy office when he was dealing with Kaysen, and for a man with Carl's enormous gifts you can only do that for so long.

NEUSTADT: Yes. To come up to a quite different level—brother Bobby. One of the things I've often wondered is how much having been a younger brother for so long had to do with the President's whole care in his relation to his younger brother. Or is there some chemistry that's…

BUNDY: Well, I don't know enough about that to be sure that I have much to add to what you would say. I think the first and simplest, most

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basic fact about the relationship between the President and Bobby was that, with no reservation, I think, with no sense of doubt or uncertainty, it was plain that the entire interest of Bobby Kennedy until Jack Kennedy hung up his shoes, would be in the

advancement of Jack Kennedy and his purposes and in affecting events through his power. Now Bobby had enormous interests. He had this great—the ones in my area—this great counterinsurgency interest, this great sense that you've got to get to the youth of the world, this feel that you had to communicate what America was really about, this sort of "dammit, what are we going to do about Castro?" kind of a thing—not always constructive, and sometimes ferocious. I mean, Bobby is capable of dealing with bureaucrats in a way that you wouldn't deal with a dog. And one of the reasons for putting Averell into the CI group was to have someone there whose just seniority and manners and sense of dignity would prevent Bobby from damaging his own cause by one of these outbursts. But the relation was one in which there was total mutual confidence in which everybody knew, that both of them knew, that when JFK had made a decision, that would be completely it, in which there were decisions that Bobby didn't approve of, like this one on Ghana that Carl was talking about yesterday. Were you there when he was talking about it?

NEUSTADT: No.

BUNDY: Well, there was an NSC meeting on the Volta dam. Bobby had got all steamed up about the wickedness of the Volta dam, from whom

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I still don't know—that this was a bad decision—we ought not to do it—and it was going to cost us a lot. The President had just about made up his mind to go ahead with it, and as he made the decision in an NSC meeting he said, "Now just behind me (Bobby often sat behind him) I feel the hot breath of disapproval, so we will record the Attorney General dissenting." I haven't got the language right, but the general feel was, you know, "I know you're sore, but this is the way we're going to do it." And then this tremendous protective thing that Bobby had, which made him so fierce, as I was saying yesterday, about the Bay of Pigs. I don't know what the President's view of his older brother Joe [Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr.] had been, what their relation had been, and how much this sort of becoming first in the family led him to have a different view of his younger brother, or the same that his brother had had to him, that I just can't recite on. But their closeness was very great, so great that it often led to misunderstanding among the rest of us because it was easy to suppose that when Bobby called you up this was in fact what the President would want to do. And it was only really in the last year or so that I got clear in my mind that the thing to say was "Well, I'm not sure that…. I've talked to him a little bit about that, and I'm not sure that's what he really wants," and Bobby was delighted to know—I mean he wasn't trying to push something that would be against what the President wanted. He had an independent

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sense and view of these matters. He didn't always bother the President with them himself. You know, there is much too much business being transacted in a busy government for anyone. One of the things one forgets is how small a part of the iceberg in any serious office can go to the next man about him, so that you had to learn that what the Attorney General

was pushing might just be what the Attorney General was pushing and that you might know more about what the President really wanted than he did in a given case. And once he thought you did, then he never made you any trouble at all. Or if you said, “Hadn't we better ask him about it?” he'd say, “Yes, if you think so, please do.”

NEUSTADT: The few little glimpses I had at the beginning of these two is that Bobby was another—a very trusted—but another aide. But he was treated with a courtesy that younger brothers don't often get—and much more courtesy than Sarge Shriver was treated with.

BUNDY: I think the President always thought Sarge was faintly funny—very able, wonderfully energetic, but an advertising man, a marvelous advertising man—made the Peace Corps effective. Sarge could never help sort of coming in and reeling off the last ten glorious exploits of some Peace Corpsman in some obscure country, and I really think that the President just got a lot of amusement out of watching Sarge perform. He liked him—how could you not help liking him? He's a most marvelous human being, and he was a tremendously effective servant.

NEUSTADT: But faintly unserious.

BUNDY: But faintly unserious.

NEUSTADT: That's a good insight. Now the other night at that party that I think so shocked John Gardner [John W. Gardner], or at least unsettled him, Mrs. Kennedy said to me something that I found fascinating. I want to see if it elicits something from you. She said that he had brought her that Skybolt report, and it was the first time he'd ever brought her a government document, and then she went on to say, “I was in my compartment too; my compartment had nothing to do with all these other compartments.” And she'd been touched by this because of its specialness. Now that I have this isolated….

BUNDY: Now I don't mean to be disloyal to Jackie, but she gave you just a little bit of soft soap.

NEUSTADT: She did? All right.

BUNDY: Yes, because he did show her documents from time to time—documents of that length and importance I know of no example, but he showed her odds and ends….

NEUSTADT: Good, because this sounded strained to me, and I….

BUNDY: I don't think he ever did take her anything of that length, because I

don't think he ever had anything of that length that was a government document that was that well written.

NEUSTADT: Well, there was effort in that. But it was that it was readable at that length, not the fact that….

BUNDY: Yes.

NEUSTADT: O.K., that makes life much more nearly normal. There clearly was some kind of a relationship there that….

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BUNDY: Well, I think the number of things that in one way or another he discussed with her would be extraordinarily high, and I would put it another way: I would think that within the limit of her interest—I can't believe that they discussed at length the theory of balance of payments, but I'm sure she had a clear idea that the President thought gold was important, and I'm sure they talked persons, and I'm sure they talked preoccupations of any big sort, because when he had something on the top of his mind he did, as I say, talk about it with people he trusted, all the time.

NEUSTADT: That's good, Mac. We're coming to the end of this tape, but I want to get you on Vietnam a little bit. [END OF TAPE 5] One thing about Kennedy in my own experience that has baffled me—if you can shed light on this at all it might shed some light on him. You know, he didn't know me from Adam when he asked me to write him those transition memoranda. It was just…. After all, you can't lose by asking somebody to write something.

BUNDY: Well, whose idea was it, then?

NEUSTADT: Jackson [Henry M. Jackson] brought me to him. I was Scoop's consultant on that funny little committee.

BUNDY: That's about the only good thing that ever happened between Scoop Jackson and the President, as far as I can make out.

NEUSTADT: Well, this was after they'd chosen Scoop to be a patsy and before they'd found out he hadn't understood.

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BUNDY: Was that what happened, that they'd meant him just to be a pure figurehead, welcome tenants…?

NEUSTADT: Yes, you're a good clean….

BUNDY: And he wants to run the damn….

NEUSTADT: Yes, that's right.

BUNDY: Oh, dear.

NEUSTADT: And in the interval he introduced us and suggested that I do this stuff. But what happened was that I found the day after that everybody from Hyannis Port was calling me because Kennedy was running around brandishing these memoranda and giving orders on the basis of them, also some changes from them—still, it was universally assumed by the people who called me that I was a secret old compartmentalized buddy.

BUNDY: A friend, yeah, yeah, that's funny.

NEUSTADT: And I never recovered. I was so baffled by it that I never took it seriously. What I have been puzzled about ever since is the fact that this man would pick up a guy accidentally and make intimate use of him on no basis, see. There's something special about the guy who will do that.

BUNDY: Well, let's downgrade the eccentricity a little bit by saying that those memoranda were unusually thoughtful and pertinent, that he had an enormous need of exactly that kind of counsel at that crucial moment, and that if he hadn't used them one would raise at least

as sharp questions. I think you are right that in that period where people were extremely unclear what other people's role and relation was—though the fact that the President was asking about Neustadt memoranda almost certainly created an enormous picture of Neustadt as the hidden organizer, the secret weapon of the transition from candidacy to power—and this happened with everybody. People wondered about what your power was. And some of the mythology, for example, about my own role was simply that for a great many people the process by which they learned what the President wanted was me, but that is nothing but a transmission belt in one sense, and the integrity of the process actually required that I not feed too much in. It is true that if you take in the decision and you say, “I've tampered with this because I really think it would be better that way,” then you are doing something to events; and I don't mean to downgrade the opportunity to be damaging that one gets in an office like this. I don't think one should worry too much about your case. I think it's interest is in the extraordinary process of taking hold of the Executive Branch when you have a complete change of Administration, and the uncertainties that surround that, and the need of the man coming in for things that seem reliable that he can then put in train the enormously much larger number of things that have to be done than he has any chance to do, the

incredible vagueness of people's sense of who they are and what they're going to do, so that I think this was an enormous service.

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NEUSTADT: It was a service all right, but what I found interesting in terms of his psychology was not that if he found these memoranda useful he wouldn't call for the guy that had written them, but for a period of about two weeks when he was, you know, sort of bereft of people, he…

BUNDY: When was this, sort of mid-November?

NEUSTADT: Mid-November. He called me in or called me up and asked me the damndest most intimate questions, and I was scared to death, you know, in the sense that in my training you don't give people you don't know these kinds of licenses to meddle in your business.

BUNDY: What did he have you doing?

NEUSTADT: Oh, he had me, for one funny period, checking out Jerry Wiesner, for example. Well, I've always wondered if the protection for him was that he probably had three other people doing the same thing.

BUNDY: Oh, probably he had more than one.

NEUSTADT: And this would be the corrective factor. I just wondered if you'd ever seen him play this kind of operation.

BUNDY: Yes, I have, later on. I didn't, as you know, it was not my business, but in a particular case you get asked about somebody, and you'd say, or you'd say you'd find out, and you knew perfectly well that he was going to ask several other people. In fact, one of the things I admire about Bobby is that when it came to Supreme Court appointments he always kept the very existence of the vacancy so tight that nobody else

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had a chance to get their advice in, except Sorensen and me in a couple of cases, and our advice never got taken.

NEUSTADT: Yeah, yeah. The other man I find, the other relationship, which seems to me may shed some light, is with Ken O'Donnell who was a fabulous character in his own right. Does he represent something else in this President's…

BUNDY: I think it would probably be right to say that Kenny represents two kinds of things which meet in a curious intersection: he represents enormous personal integrity and he represents total politics in the "how do you get and win elections, get and keep votes, get the money to finance them, influence people." Now I say they come to a funny intersection. I forget what the issue was, but there was something that I was involved in where it was important that what we had done not become known, and where the only effective answer to any inquiry was you couldn't "no comment" it, and I forget why—you really in effect had to lie about it. This is not a matter in which I have great operational experience. I won't say that deception isn't a part of life for deans and for bureaucrats, but I remember the President asking me, with Kenny there, what I had actually said, and what I had said was a sort of sop to my New England conscience, was not a direct denial of something that had better be directly denied. And Kenny said, "You know, it's much better and it's really simpler if you just say 'no,' even though the answer is 'yes' on a thing like that." I said, "Well, it's hard to tell a

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direct lie," and the President said, "That's not a lie, that's simply a refusal to give people information they have no right to." And the form it takes may be not precisely the truth, but what I liked about Kenny in that case was that he had been all around that and he decided that if you were going really to operate as a presidential officer, there would be occasions where you would just plain say, "I never heard of it," when you might have been working very hard on it for a month. I think he's right about that, that this is in fact a necessary function unless you're simply going to say nothing to anybody, ever. And the entire Kennedy assumption was that officers of the Kennedy staff were open, they were available. Now those intersections occurred in a number of ways and forms. The President was totally unworried about Kenny, therefore, in any respect, and Kenny's judgment as to who he would and wouldn't trust, while harsh—I mean, he tried in 1961 to get Arthur Schlesinger sent back to Cambridge just because Kenny's instinctive feeling was that that kind of heat wasn't needed, and he had no sense of the intellectual values, let alone the political values, really, that in a sense Schlesinger had for the Administration. I suspect him of having some fairly narrow prejudices I think he may be anti-Semitic—but I don't *know* any of this. What I really *know* is that he made my life easier in about a hundred different ways. I could always get in. I passed an apprenticeship

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in the winter of '61 sitting and waiting, and gradually got into a situation in which I didn't ever have to wait, I could get in anytime and get out. And you know, I'd ask who was in there, and if it was an interruption case we'd interrupt, and if it wasn't he'd call me when he was free, and you'd learn to adapt to a man who really didn't have a sense of schedule at all although he accomplished an enormous amount by not…. His relaxation of course was talking to newspapermen, a process not unlike this one. O'Donnell also was totally the trusted figure of the President's private life, and the President *had* wanted to have when he went on trips luncheons or dinners or entertainments of various kinds that nobody was supposed to

know about. He didn't want to stay…. And we had a terribly funny time over where the President would stay when we stopped overnight at Lake Como on the way down to Rome.

NEUSTADT: Villa Serbelloni.

BUNDY: Villa Serbelloni. And it became clear that the President just wasn't going to have the Secretary of State in the Villa Serbelloni with him. And how could that be arranged? Dean's feelings were hurt. This is a funny thing about Dean Rusk: his feelings are more hurt by a social slight than they are by having the entire substance of the office of Secretary of State managed by somebody else on any given issue. He's not troubled by the fact that Bob McNamara is running U.S. policy in South Vietnam. But he was really very deeply shaken over the

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thought that the President might stay at the Villa Serbelloni and that he, Dean Rusk, would be at a hotel.

NEUSTADT: Particularly since it was his villa.

BUNDY: But that was the whole point, that it was his villa. So he didn't come. He went straight to Rome and had a diplomatic excuse. Let me say, in fairness, that my sympathies were with Rusk in this case, in that I don't think the President should have supposed that if he was taking his Secretary of State's villa the Secretary of State wouldn't be there, and he should have arranged to take some other villa and never got into that box if that was the way he was going to want to have his night off. But anyway, Kenny understood all that.

One of the things the President never did entrust to me again was his housing after the Bermuda meeting with the Prime Minister, because he had to stay with the Governor General. The bed was uncomfortable, the hot water failed, he had to give a tip from his personal billfold instead of having Angie Duke [Angier Biddle Duke] handle it and it just generally, you know, he couldn't have been nicer about it cheerful, friendly—but I never got within gunshot of any of those problems again. It was perfectly obvious that my standards of comfort were not his.

NEUSTADT: You know we haven't talked at all, or very little, about operations around here, perhaps because I think we know each

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other's minds too well, and that's not fair to you, since there may be some things you want to get on record.

BUNDY: Well, there may be some things that maybe we ought to talk about, or that someone else ought to come in and ask those questions *de novo*.

I'm not sure there's a great deal that isn't on the record one way or another, because there wasn't any great mystery about our methods of operation.

NEUSTADT: And except for this deepening of personal relationships, the alterations of relationship, the operation doesn't seem to me to have changed gigantically from your conception at the beginning.

BUNDY: No, I don't think it has, and I think what we would have come to and had to deal with, and what we never did take a hold of—and it's a legitimate criticism of our method—is how do you look a little further ahead and think in a larger term? We had a paper from Walt on how to handle long-range policy planning, which I just never…. It's indicative of the difficulty—that I kept thinking, now this is what we'll talk about when we have nothing else to talk about, and the good moment never came up. Part of that is that Walt's own structural sense of how you conduct long-term policy is so personal and in a sense so deeply academic that it's not a governmental process at all.

NEUSTADT: No, that's right.

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BUNDY: And a part of the difficulty is that JFK just didn't think that way. But right now I would have wanted to—and we must do this actually anyway for this President as we should have been getting ready to do it for the last one—we must separate out the survival problem, which an Administration has in the fourth year, from the new perspectives problem that it has in the first year of its second wind. And we were beginning to do that. The other thing that had begun to happen, that operations were affected by, was the President's clear intent to use everybody that he really trusted in the electoral process. Now how to do that, both in terms of form and appearance in a National Security staff, is one of the interesting problems of government. My friend Dean Rusk is deeply persuaded that Cabinet officers should stay out of politics and at the same time deeply persuaded that it's their function to defend the President, and how he will work out this dilemma I don't yet know—it's workable in terms of private briefings with Congressional leaders. President Kennedy certainly intended…. We've got two or three folders now, not just Democratic Committee stuff of the achievements of the Administration but dossiers of how you deal with anybody who tries to get rough with you on the tough issues, and this was deliberate, and this would have been increasingly his preoccupation, I think. In that sense the rhythm of an office like this one is almost a year to get started, two years of operation, and a year to defend yourself.

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NEUSTADT: That's about the rhythm of the Presidency.

BUNDY: It's shocking that the time interval should be so long, and of course

they're not entirely…. You get a tough issue at any point and you deal with it. Well, you want to talk about Vietnam.

NEUSTADT: Yes, it's the one area of key substance we only barely touched upon. You made a connection, and I'm sure it's a valid one, between the Bay of Pigs and the Laos decision. The initial Vietnam decisions, if they can be called that, then follow with Vietnam distinguished from Laos, I take it, rather sharply. Were the connections back in '61 between Laos and Vietnam seen as sharply as the distinctions were?

BUNDY: Well, I think so. I think the notion that Laos and South Vietnam were connected problems was very clear. The difference which seemed decisive then was that you literally had no choice but to work for a neutralization in Laos because you weren't going to be able to win short of a wholly undesirable level of military investment and Phoumi [Phoumi Nosavan] was not in that sense a great force. But the premise of policy in 1960, and the dominant premise within the government when we came in, was that we had to back Phoumi and that that was, or could be made, a winning horse. There's a special niche in John Kennedy's picture of international statesman in which the stubborn weak, who insist on things they can't do for themselves, and that it's not in the interest of the United States

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to do for them, are enthroned, and General Phoumi Nosavan is in that category. It took the resolution and determination of The Crocodile, and of everybody else playing “push me, pull you” to get him finally to go into this coalition, because he had a kind of a tremendous feeling that if he could only pull the United States in hard on his side he could be the strong man of Laos. But his own forces, his own battles, never seemed to turn out that way. And Laos is not in that sense a warring country, and the more the President looked at the plans for Laos—SEATO plan 5 is the one that sticks in my memory but there were bunches of them—the plainer it was that you didn't want to have U.S. Armed Forces, and especially not U.S. ground forces, committed to Laotian loose-living or loose operation. And this was confirmed to the President by the sort of deep conviction of General MacArthur [Douglas MacArthur], the deep political counsel of Senator Russell, and the inchoate character of the actual play.

NEUSTADT: Yes.

BUNDY: The thing that always amused me was that—and I used to have to go around and get asked about Laos—that was the sort of standard question, “What about Laos?” from the middle of ‘61 until the Geneva Accords, really, “Are you giving up in Laos?” And you always used to get this question with more ferocity from naval officers so that I was always tempted to ask exactly how the Navy was going

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to liberate Laos. In addition to all its other qualities it is totally landlocked, and it was always the people whose forces would not be used who were enthusiastic about intervening there; Marines and the Army commanders not. Now Vietnam as a substantive matter certainly was importantly affected by Laos—the roots of communication, the example of neutralization, quite shaking to Diem as it was to Sarit [Sarit Thanarat], but it was an entirely different problem in terms of available means of operation because insofar as you had an effective government there you had something you could help, and the Vietnamese had proven themselves quite able to…. They had done this unexpected and substantial job after the 1954 Geneva Agreements, you had a going concern…

NEUSTADT: The unexpected in this is important, I take it—if they could do it once they could do it some more, maybe.

BUNDY: I don't remember how consciously that entered in, but they *were* a going concern and it was felt that if you applied the techniques used in Malaya and really put your mind to it and operated with energy you had a darn good chance. At the very least you couldn't say you couldn't do it, and that the level of commitments you were undertaking, which was carefully limited, below what Taylor and Rostow recommended, had quite a sufficient promise of success so that it didn't make sense to quit.

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NEUSTADT: I never quite understood, Mac, the Malayan analogy in the sense that there was no open border between the Malays and anybody.

BUNDY: Well, I think the truth is that Rostow and Taylor said the open border problem was serious and that you had to deal with it. And others said, well, that is not the heart of the matter because that is not what is keeping the Viet Cong going. If you'd really clean up and straighten out countrysides, the fact that they can get trucks or advice or radio communication from North Vietnam is not the crux of the matter. And I think you would probably get argument even now as to whether people beg the question or whether they had a right to make this try. My own sense of the matter is that what was decided was to do the maximum amount that did not create a major international noise level and see what happened, and did not create a major domestic noise level and see what happened. So that, as I recall it, there were American combat units in small degree involved in the Rostow-Taylor proposals—those were omitted. The man who took charge of the sort of "what we're going to do and who we're going to do it with" was McNamara, with Taylor. They made their commitment and we got this Nolting-Harkins team, and for a year and a half, on the whole, the evidence was that they *were* making progress. Now you can call that evidence in question—it had a certain mechanical quality

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and a certain up-through-channels quality, both of which make it open to question. But we didn't begin to get in the reporting from the field, or the reporting from other diplomats, a sense of malaise about this effort, starting in December ‘61 until about the spring of ‘63, about the same time that Diem and Nhu begin to get into domestic difficulties. And then you have that whole process which ought to be done against the cables, really, and against the meetings of argument and row within the U.S. Government which was very violent, and in which the President tried extremely hard not to give either side the feeling that he was against it. He didn't wish to be overthrowing Diem and Nhu against the advice of Taylor and McNamara and McCone, and neither did he wish to be leaving them in place, especially as he listened to Mme. Nhu, in a situation in which most of the political advice and the advice which sounded to him as if it had political authenticity, was that these people had run out their string, that they were just no longer able to command the minimum level of confidence that even an autogenous [unclear] has to command even to operate. Meanwhile the war was certainly beginning to go worse, although this is still fighting language in the Pentagon where the gospel is that the war didn't begin to go badly until we distanced ourselves from Diem and Nhu, but that's clearly not so, I would think. And Johnson, I think, in that sense,

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has the advantage that the question of whether Diem and Nhu were rightly or wrongly overthrown is not a Johnson Administration question.

NEUSTADT: Right.

BUNDY: I think probably if you had poked President Kennedy very hard—which I don't recall that I ever did—he would have said that we're doing this because it's the best we can do and because it's certainly essential to have made a determined effort and because we mustn't be the ones who lost this war, someone else has to lose this war. But I don't think he would have said to you that *he* saw any persuasive reason to believe that this was certainly going to succeed. I think he was not so much a pessimistic man as a man who built no realities on hopes, and this was in that sense not as clear to him. He supported always Bobby's work in counter-insurgency, and he liked and was, I think, amused by the kind of methodical belligerence of Rostow. But he wasn't so sure himself. He was deeply aware of the fact that this place was in fact X thousand miles away in terms both of American interest and American politics.

NEUSTADT: He was not a Domino-theorist, I take it.

BUNDY: Well, he was not prepared to be an anti-Domino theorist, but he certainly was not in the sort of straightforward way “you lose this and all is gone” kind of fellow.

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NEUSTADT: I suppose the more important question is…

BUNDY: If he had been he wouldn't have been a neutralizer of Laos.

NEUSTADT: Yes. He did not regard Southeast Asia as the be-all or end-all.

BUNDY: No, he didn't. But I don't think—I think his real feeling was that he wasn't required to answer that question.

NEUSTADT: Right. Yes. To come back to your earlier characterization…. On the Sukarno front, which is a…

BUNDY: That's an extremely interesting case. I think the West New Guinea enterprise which became very much the President's own enterprise, and Bunker [Ellsworth Bunker] a diplomat very much to his personal taste, quite certain to me that his ability to get a grip on that owes a very great deal to Komer and to Harriman, and then, as we were saying yesterday, to the fact that the position to which he came here was the one that was natural to his soul: namely, this is what's going to happen, making a righteous demonstration against it when the very people to whom it is going to happen couldn't care less, namely, in operational terms the non-political residents of West New Guinea and the politically apathetic residents of the Netherlands. And to allow your policy in this matter to be governed by Joseph Luns and Arthur Krock was in his view simple madness when you were really dealing with the uncertainties and the possibilities

of the eventual political allegiance of a hundred million people who did care. To make a principle out of something that the Dutch themselves were only prepared to make a principle out of if they didn't have to do anything—to use American force, in other words, to do something the Dutch wouldn't do for themselves in an area that didn't matter—once you'd framed it in those terms he was perfectly prepared to take a certain amount of heat as an appeaser in order to deal with the real problem.

NEUSTADT: This is on the assumption that one must deal with Sukarno.

BUNDY: This is on the assumption—to put it another way, you weren't going to overthrow him, and there were some scorched fingers over in secret places on that score. If you were going to have an influence with him you certainly had to play this way. If you were going to have an influence with others in Indonesia you had to play a little this way because on this subject there was no division in Indonesia. It's interesting, for example, and it was interesting to the President, that so belligerent and neo-Fascist a figure as Dean Acheson felt that it had been an act of the greatest folly on the part of the Dutch not to have thrown West New Guinea in in the first place at the time of Indonesian independence and that Stikker [Dirk U. Stikker], who had once been a Dutch Foreign Secretary, had that same view. In other words, the reasons for

adopting a rigid position here were unreal when you took them apart, and therefore you didn't do it. Now the President got a great deal of pleasure out of scaring Subandrio out of a year's growth at a fairly critical moment because he wanted to make the Indonesians stick to the manners of the transfer. I forget the exact issue, but it had to do with whether you would or wouldn't actually fight, or how long a UN cover there would be, or something of this sort, and he got it across to them that they had everything they wanted and they were putting it all in jeopardy, and if they made his position embarrassing as the head of the great Western power there was an object called the Seventh Fleet, and the likelihood of using the 7th Fleet wasn't very high, but the likelihood that Sukarno wanted to take even a finite risk for that marginal extra five yards was also not high, and they behaved.

Now we get to this quite different matter of Malaysia and Indonesia. The President took a very different view, and was greatly interested in it because he saw that it might lead, by steps not fully within his control to a commitment he would wish to honor. There's a very complicated point here which is covered in the documents, and the only thing I would say about it to add to the record is that he cared greatly about the question of exactly how—if the confrontation sharpened and if Australians were committed—exactly how the American commitment to support Australians who

found themselves dealing with aggressors under the ANZUS Treaty would operate and where he would have a whack at it and where he would not.

BUNDY: And the best we were able to do was to establish (a) that there was no automaticity to it in any constitutional or legal or treaty sense, and (b) that we would keep in closest possible touch with the Australians.

Well, all that meant was that John F. Kennedy was going to have to watch that one very hard and especially watch all the people who said things to Australians, and this is one of the times when The Crocodile got a little bit out of line, actually. He was telling the Australians, “In a pinch we'll be with you, old boy,” and that sort of, you know, sense of scout's honor that belonged still in the bottom of the soul of a man who graduated from Yale in 1913. And Kennedy was perfectly prepared to back the Australians if it came to that, but he didn't want any Australian carrying a blank check on the President of the United States.

NEUSTADT: Again this concern for holding it tight.

BUNDY: Yes, yes.

NEUSTADT: I'm terribly impressed with this, and I'm torn between thinking it's inherent in the present condition of the office and thinking it's a quality…

BUNDY: I think it's very much a part of the office. I'm going to give you before you go a paper I've done for Foreign Affairs on the presidency and the Peace which is an effort to try and simplify and explain some of these larger events in terms of the enormous role of the Presidency. I haven't put particular emphasis on the point we're now talking about but it's almost a prolegomenon, an underlying and preliminary element in the way you conduct this office, that you don't want people doing things to the world that affect you if they're your people—you can't avoid Khrushchev's menaces, or de Gaulle's independence, but you can avoid a man doing something that is going to entrain your support if in fact you have it in your power to say to him, "Now wait a minute, if it goes that way then what I said doesn't mean quite that, it means that that would only apply if it went the other way." We've got just this week from a man with the improbable name of Sir Garfield Barwick a long representation (he's the Australian Foreign Minister) about the moralities of dealing with Sukarno. Well, that is probably not the way a President of the United States is going to want to look at it, much as he may feel it.

Just to tell you a funny story which I may have told you before, when Bobby went out to his swing to try and cool this thing off, he thought out a most marvelous way of opening with Sukarno which is, "President Johnson has asked me to tell you that he has *just* the same opinion of you as President Kennedy and I do."

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NEUSTADT: It's marvelous. The President once sent me a little note after some testimony I'd given before the Jackson Subcommittee last, I don't know, a year ago, and which dealt with this top civilian sensitivity as against the official sensitivity. Evidently it was on his mind very much that he was different. I should think this will hit Johnson and anybody who sits in this kind of place from now on.

BUNDY: It's very interesting to me how much I myself have learned about that and how much I had to learn, and how often, even though in the personal sense—obviously people like Walter Jenkins [Walter W. Jenkins] have been with the President much longer than I have—how immediately I am aware of something that affects the office, where they're thinking about what helps or hurts Johnson in the immediate political sense, rightly. They are learning now, and the President, I will say, knew, it seems to me right from the beginning that he was custodian not just of the political future of Lyndon Johnson but of the presidency. And I think in that sense, having watched what the Bay of Pigs was, and he thinks the Vienna confrontation (it's not to me as interesting an example because it seems to me that had to be what it was) was conducted very well and was a draw and led to further action. But seeing these things as they hit the other man, he is very closely aware not just of his personal political role but of the presidency. You may have to remind him

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of it, that this or that action doesn't need to be taken by the President and it's just as well to have the Secretary of State do it—the distinction which Kennedy constantly made as to who was going to make the announcement, or who was going to be responsible, or who did something.

NEUSTADT: But was there more of this after the Bay of Pigs than before? Did it grow in him?

BUNDY: I don't think, that's not a particular watershed on that point, I mean, from the beginning. Of course, all presidents have the good news come out of the White House and the bad news come out of someplace else.

NEUSTADT: I'll strike the "pigs" reference because that's not relevant here. Was it Kennedy's idea to go down and look at a division from the air? Or did somebody suggest that to him?

BUNDY: You'd have to ask Clifton. My guess is that what he did was to get interminable suggestions from the Aides as to "would he like to look at this, that, or the other," and to shape them so that he could see more. He didn't look at the division from the air, he drove past it, I think, as I recall it.

NEUSTADT: I thought they'd taken him up in a helicopter.

BUNDY: Well, he may have done that, too. In any event, he liked visiting the forces in the field. He also disliked sort of sitting at length with 3-star generals. And he disliked long

briefings intensely. He liked looking at fancy gadgets like Polaris submarines, or nuclear weapons, or reactors, or divisions in the field. And it's one of the things he did with wonderful élan, and you get…. I think Shepard and Clifton in their different ways have a pretty sharp sense of what he wanted and didn't want.

NEUSTADT: Tell me one very incidental thing: Why was the party at Mt. Vernon the last of its kind, the one for Ayub Khan?

BUNDY: I don't know. I wouldn't be surprised that the sheer expense—but I would expect probably that what really killed that one was the length of the boat ride.

NEUSTADT: Very good. We talked before about Kennedy's notions—of when…

BUNDY: When you have one on a lawn, you have a long musicale, which the

President's interest in music was about like your interest in hearing a blackboard scratch.

NEUSTADT: I know.

BUNDY: And then you face another hour of politesse with no matter who, between 11 and midnight, going chug-chug up the Potomac. I doubt if there was much enthusiasm for another one of those.

NEUSTADT: He had an enormous sense of the fitness of things; this is where music entered in, did it not?

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BUNDY: Yes, and of course she loved it, and he had a sense of style and was quite willing to have it done that way if that was what people wanted, you know. And he enjoyed fancy dinners if they could be timed right and if he didn't get bored by them, but he much preferred doing it in the White House to going out to anybody else's place to a fancy dinner.

The only foreigners—that's too strong—but the foreigners with whom he came the nearest to having a sense of relaxation when he was among them were obviously the British. This is in part because of the extraordinary ease and good cheer of his relation with David Harlech, who was a *real* friend. I mean, he was probably in the house more than any other person with a serious concern for affairs—more than McNamara—except Bobby—and was an old social friend, and a charming one. And Cissy [Sylvia Lloyd Thomas Harlech] was company and friend for Jackie in a way that very few official wives were. And the President—I don't suppose I know myself, and I would know more probably than anyone else in our side how intimately and how completely they discussed matters—except perhaps you, because you've examined Harlech for the Skybolt affair.

NEUSTADT: Well, they certainly…. Whoever it was who said that the trouble with the British was that their views on America were shaped by knowledge from too high a source—I think that

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was Henry Brandon. There was some obviously real rapport.

BUNDY: That's a very shrewd remark, as a matter of fact, and it did occasionally make difficulty. But it never made difficulty in the sense that David ever gave those of us who were dealing directly with the President the sense that we were being bypassed in the conduct of British affairs, and that was where he was skillful and tactful and helpful in every possible way.

NEUSTADT: He did not take advantage.

BUNDY: He never did. And he carefully went back and retraced the steps. He was a particularly valuable and useful fellow to have here because he was so deeply knowledgeable about the thing that really mattered to the President, which is disarmament and the nuclear problem. Almost too much so. I mean David knew so much about it that he was a skeptic, and I think that's where Macmillan really made an enormous contribution a year ago in stirring up everybody again even if all he wanted was a summit; it wasn't all he wanted, he honestly cared about this passionately too. Without that stir-up I don't think it would have happened.

But we're talking a little about the matters of style and entertainment. The President would surely have spent the next few years seeing fewer foreign visitors, because that record

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had lost some of its freshness for him, and the exchange of views of people that he met before had rapidly diminishing returns. He would have spent ‘64 on three or four major international trips, but those would have been a vicarious form of U.S. campaigning. What he would have wanted to do with the next four years and how his sense of energy and freshness would have communicated itself to issues is a very interesting question.

NEUSTADT: It was sometimes said around here that he had vast ambitions for the second term. Arthur used to talk about it in terms I thought somewhat romantic. And since he never seemed to be romantic…

BUNDY: No, I never talked with him much about the second term; maybe Arthur did, but I never did.

NEUSTADT: I don't know how much is Arthur, you see.

BUNDY: Well, I would—I mean, Arthur may—that's what someone would have to ask, and ask quite by direct cross-examination. I would have to say in a negative way that I had never heard the President say specifically what he was going to do with the second term. I certainly did understand very explicitly that not rocking the boat was the signal for ‘64.

NEUSTADT: And stockpiling things. As you say your Christmas list, you take ‘em out and look at ‘em. That sounds

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much more characteristic to me. One thing we ought to clean up while there's a little time left on this tape, Mac—when I first got to England in the summer of ‘61 for that year, the woods were full of people retailing stories of the Prime Minister's unhappiness about his March meeting.

BUNDY: That was the Laos meeting?

NEUSTADT: That was the meeting at Palm Beach, I guess.

BUNDY: Oh, U.S. probably.

NEUSTADT: It was before the Bay of Pigs, and he told one person, at least who told me and I rather rely on him—Macmillan said that "that young man is going to do something foolish about Cuba."

BUNDY: Well, the President told him he was going to do it and Macmillan very unhelpfully didn't tell him it was foolish.

NEUSTADT: But there was clearly a sense in London that Macmillan felt there's a new era in Washington—"this is not the relationship I had with Eisenhower, you know," felt the gap in generations, etc. And yet one looks at the thing two years later and there's a really deep relationship.

BUNDY: Well, I think part of the difficulty of the Skybolt is that we thought we knew them better than they thought they knew us, and that they had a great sense of reticence; whereas we thought we got the cards out where they could see them and were hoping for—you know—this is one element in that whole history.

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[Interview with McGeorge Bundy, May 2, 1964]

NEUSTADT: I want to give you, Mac, this little memorandum which I said in the course of our transcribed interview I'd offer you for illustrative purposes if you wanted it.

BUNDY: This is a very interesting memorandum; it's very characteristic, very much the way the President…

NEUSTADT: Well, there was a point in the discussion where you were describing his tendency to probe, and this seemed to me a good illustration. You can incorporate it or not, as you choose.

BUNDY: (Is this thing going, do you think?)

NEUSTADT: Yes. Why don't we begin today with the items you had put on the bottom of my letter—I have them noted down, since I take it you put them there for a reason. There were three: the first, views on countries and people; second, JFK views of LBJ, and third, JFK views on press personalities—Matthews.

BUNDY: Well, countries and people is a fairly general item, and I'm not sure that we can go too far with that. I was thinking, I suppose, of the way in which the President gets a picture of a country and its problems. And one of the very remarkable things about President Kennedy, I think, was that he was able to get such a clear and individual picture of the countries with which he dealt. He didn't think of international politics, as political scientists so often do, as a matter of specific counters and weights, but rather in terms of the balance of feeling and of the relation between politics, politicians, and popular opinion; between the country and its

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neighbors; between history and present reality. So that he had, for example, before he got through, a very multidimensional view of Canada, or of Great Britain, and also of the new countries in Africa which he could differentiate—an ability which I admired because I never had it.

NEUSTADT: Where did that kind of information come from? I understand the sensitivity, from what you said before, but….

BUNDY: Well, I think that part of it was that he was…His very Catholic concerns for all kinds of information, and probably also that the input of politics—the fact that this was a new kind of politics in each case was attractive to a man to whom the movement of authority and the winning and holding of authority were the great fascination of life. I'm trying to think of examples, and I'm not sure that I can, but one aspect of it that was brought to mind by our conversation last week—we were talking about the relation between internal political forces in countries engaged in political negotiation, and especially perhaps friendly countries can go down parallel tracks without any clear sense of where they are heading. So they find themselves at least at a point of intersection, if not of collision. I think he always understood that—that's one reason why in the Skybolt affair when he finally understood what the political consequence was to an Englishman, he was so prompt and energetic in construction of remedies. Conversely, I think what was frustrating to him about General de Gaulle was that in that sense General de Gaulle was an unmotivated man.

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NEUSTADT: You talked last time a bit splendidly how the motivations and the nationalism of de Gaulle or the doctrinaire qualities of Khrushchev were just outside his ken.

BUNDY: Oh yes, I think we were talking about…another way of stating it, that he approved, but he had no difficulty understanding the politics of Adenauer and the skill with which Adenauer was holding together the collection of forces which made him the master of Germany. He had no difficulty

understanding the way in which General de Gaulle dominated and controlled internal French opinion within the framework of the detachment from Algeria and the construction of the internal framework of authority of the French government. He certainly had no difficulty understanding the monopoly of the television, though it was obviously not an American device. What he did not understand, because it genuinely made no sense in terms of the politics with which he was familiar and to which he was addicted—it made no sense, really, for the General to be posturing on the world stage, the idea that this would give simple satisfaction to de Gaulle's own spirit and that it would be somehow free of consequence within French politics. It really never occurred to the President, I don't think, or at least it seemed to him so pointless that he found it very difficult to believe that this was in fact what was moving French policy. But to go on about the way he understood people, I think we talked some about that the last time, but I am constantly reminded of it in part because it's also the way in which President Johnson tries to

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construe the situation with which he's coping internationally. And he does it, when he lends his mind to it, with great energy and force. But Kennedy did it in an extraordinarily unencumbered way, a kind of immediate unengaged way; occasionally his pride would get engaged, as it was oddly enough with this silly Ambassador Grewe we had trouble with, or as it was in a somewhat different way with these stubborn men who wouldn't do what he wanted them to and who had no power that wasn't American-supplied power—Phoumi, a perfect example. But otherwise he saw them very clearly and very coolly and very sympathetically and with great and very broad interest. Well, I think that may be enough of that—we may come back to specific examples of it.

Let me go on to the question of the two presidents. I think we're now talking about the part of the tape that had better stay put a long time. The very great difficulty, as Clark Clifford pointed out to me the other day, about the role of the President and the role of the Vice President, is not, as people commonly suppose, that the Vice President has nothing to do. Harry Hopkins [Harry L. Hopkins] had nothing to do at a time when he was the next most powerful man in the government. And as a matter of fact Vice Presidents at different times have been very, very busy. The fundamental difficulty is that the Vice President is bound to think every day about a subject which the President wishes he wouldn't think about. As Clifford said to me, never were there two men who were closer friends in other circumstances than Harry Truman and Alben Barkley. The sun

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hadn't gone down at the end of Inauguration Day before that relationship was essentially spoiled. Now you know more about that than I do. But I believe it. I don't think that President Kennedy thought of himself as physically a short-lived man, although he was very well aware of the chances and changes of history. And I don't think therefore that he eyed the Vice President as if the Vice President were waiting for him to die or hoping that he would die, nor do I think that he felt the Vice President was in any sense intriguing against him. But what he did feel, certainly, was that this was a separate political force, loyal within the terms

of the necessities of loyalty, and intelligent, perceptive, about the requirements of loyalty. The Vice President in fact, I think, behaved with extraordinary restraint and self-control in a situation that was extremely difficult and was a terrible thing, terrible thing, because this was a kind of man who will spend 45 minutes wandering around the White House circle, exchanging views, more likely giving his views, to whatever pair of ears comes within range, and who is not given to easy subordinate relationship—certainly not to a man younger than himself. Although of course he was able to do it, and conducted himself with extraordinary younger-brother responsibility vis-à-vis Sam Rayburn, his great political guide and counsel. But to Kennedy, Johnson was almost a caricature, the kind of person he didn't really do anything but business with, and he was a person with whom he had in effect very little business to conduct, and therefore a priori there was every reason for a kind of limitation on their relationship.

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That makes it, I think, the more interesting, the more remarkable that there was hardly a function, official, business or social, that fell within the framework of the President's visible business that the Vice President wasn't included in: breakfast before the press conferences, the National Security Council meetings, Cabinet meetings of course, Leadership breakfasts, I think—I am not absolutely sure, but I think so, Larry can tell you—and any large White House occasion, including the President's private dances. I don't think they ever talked about any subject that really touched very close to any problem but the politics of appointments in a business way. And space, certainly, because the Vice President was in charge of space. But I don't think they sat trading views on the timing of the tax bill, or trading views on the timing of Civil Rights. I could be wrong about this, but I am inclined to doubt it, and I'm certain that the President undervalued the Vice President's judgment on issues of that kind, and that the Vice President felt that the President undervalued his judgment. The President cabined the Vice President in terms of access of visibility. I'm conscious of….I used to get caught in the middle of that because I would get the suggestion that the Vice President might visit this or that notable foreign capital, and after '61 when the President did send him on an important trip to Southeast Asia, and sent him on that important morale exercise to Berlin, the Vice President certainly had the lower end of the circuit. And this was quite deliberate and was understood to be deliberate. It has reactions now in terms of the way the President treats Cabinet members. I don't think this was intended

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to annoy or humiliate. I think it was simply a cool assessment of whether this really did us much good; whether we wouldn't want to go there ourselves; whether there was any real need for it—plus an undertone of irritation with the very serious difference in style which the Vice President represented. A very considerable amount of President Kennedy's foreign policy was the effective production of his own style. There, I think, there's a ground for concern. Now let me once say that the Vice President never made a speech or offered a public comment on foreign affairs that wasn't very carefully cleared out of a lack of certainty that any given comment was worth making, and cleared out of a respect for the coherence of

the Executive Branch, since both men believed very deeply that there ought to only one Executive Branch. And I myself believe that they'd believe it about each other's Administration. But a queer, strained, incomplete relationship—and I wonder, without really knowing, without really knowing at all, whether there was a way of using the Vice President that would have been more effective. I don't consider that any real effort was made.

NEUSTADT: Well, one thing was done; you touched on—I know a little about it in the early days—this business of bringing him into everything, occupying his time. My impression was the fact…was it a rather conscious business of…

BUNDY: Yes, I think so. I think the "Let's get Lyndon because if he attends this one, or if he's seen at that one, he won't feel left out, he will be engaged." There's a history that I don't know about of the President

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wanting to have the Vice President involved in legislative affairs, and this just plain not working in terms of Mike Mansfield's pride—this is important—I don't know the ins and outs of that. The Vice President is such a tornado when he gets into the operating of a particular force that I can well see why the President wouldn't have wanted him to have something that he himself wanted to keep an eye and a control on, and of course he wanted to keep an eye and a control on nearly everything. Further, the exercise of having an operational Vice President is one that is tried when the President really wants a Chief of Staff relationship with somebody, and of course that was something Kennedy didn't want at all. You could not treat a man of the caliber of the Vice President, with his experience and standing and, above all, his personal sensitivity, in the same way that you would treat a personal staff officer.

NEUSTADT: You know one great attribute of all Vice Presidents is that they can't be fired.

BUNDY: They can of course be upgraded and downgraded, and that happens very sharply.

NEUSTADT: Yet I've never…

BUNDY: A great deal of time spent on the courtesies back and forth, and I think that is something that all four—Both President and Mrs. Kennedy and both Vice President and Mrs. Johnson [Claudia Alta "Lady Bird" Johnson]—were very alert and sensitive to that. I think what probably made the naked emptiness of the substantive aspects of life tolerable was that courtly character…Your letter says

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we ought to talk about the court. One of the things that was done was that the President and Mrs. Kennedy invested their Vice President and Mrs. Johnson with the same dignity and the same sense of membership in the royal family that you might have expected in the relations between a kind and his legitimate successor. But to make that comparison and to suggest that some of those satisfactions existed is to suggest that the frustrations and mutual suspicion were also there. After all, the worst thing about this kind of succession is that at the end of the term it still depends on the other man's pleasure.

NEUSTADT: Yes. Now let me interrupt what I was going to say by asking this: a number of people I know who are close to Lyndon Johnson are convinced and make no bones of their conviction that Bob Kennedy was beginning a campaign to remove him.

BUNDY: In '64?

NEUSTADT: I have no doubt that little drops of poison…

BUNDY: What kind of people tell you that? (We're really talking for the dead book.)

NEUSTADT: Well, the most vocal statements to this effect come from Eliot Janeway, his wife [Elizabeth Janeway] and son.

BUNDY: Young Eliot Janeway? The youngster?

NEUSTADT: No, that's Mike [Michael Janeway]. But his father and mother have been close to the Johnsons for years, and he was very anti-Kennedy—violently anti-Kennedy.

BUNDY: All Kennedys.

NEUSTADT: All Kennedys, starting with Joe.

BUNDY: That's where it does start, with many people.

NEUSTADT: So that this is a bit poisonous. But whatever the facts, it doesn't help that people who pride themselves on being Johnson aficionados….

BUNDY: I don't have the smallest doubt, to begin at the end of your question and work backward—I don't have the smallest doubt today that people come to the President and tell him things about Bob Kennedy. That really takes us out of the Kennedy Oral History and to the Johnson Oral History, and I don't

want to press it, but that does happen. Now going back as to what President Kennedy's intentions were, I have heard the matter discussed once or twice in preparation for a press conference because people pointed out that the question might come up. The President always looked around the question, but quite briefly, and never, I thought, with any hesitation, really. He'd always say, "Well, we'll simply say that of course he did on several occasions." And I don't believe for a minute that he had any intention on what he looked at as a serious campaign of exposing the Administration to the question of the uncertainties that would be raised by any change of candidates. I just think that wasn't about to happen.

NEUSTADT: Right, right, I don't believe it either.

BUNDY: And I never saw any evidence that it was so, and I would doubt it very much. I think this is a….One thing that I do think and I would say this now—I am talking entirely about the Vice President's entourage as they were—but they were….It was amazing how few of his

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people knew anything at all about what the Administration was really up to. Walter Jenkins was conducting a very sensible, shrewd, and knowledgeable operation in political areas, and if you wanted the Vice President really to know something it was then true, and it is now true, that you make sure that Walter knows it. But it is not…there was nobody else…Bill Moyers [William D. Moyers] was not close to the Vice President in that period because he had gone off to work in the Peace Corps. Jack Valenti [Jack J. Valenti] wasn't around. George Reedy [George E. Reedy] was not well acquainted with him in the Administration in a serious way. We used to find that when we went out there he did have a very generous…had us out there several times…that we were among a group of the kindest and the most friendly people in the world, but they were not people who were in touch in any serious way with what President Kennedy's Administration was about—just lived on a different wave length, walked a different circuit, and I'm sure when you are disconnected with things that way you can so easily take the thinnest rumor and just build it up with a picture…I remember the Vice President coming and saying to me a number of times that these stories about how he was a dumb man, or stories about how he had nothing to do, or stories about how he hated his job, were coming straight out of the White House. He knew they were coming straight out of the White House, people told him so. And I have no doubt people told him so, and I have equally no doubt that the people who told him so had no notion of what they were talking about. I just do not think…I know the President is not in the business of _____ the Vice President, and I doubt very very much if anyone close to the President would play that game.

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I don't doubt if people didn't occasionally say snippy things about the Vice President which they had no business to say—I'm sure that does happen—but it was not the President's view of the way to treat the Vice President. He might occasionally himself make joking remarks

about the Vice President because of the temperamental difference of which I spoke. But I don't think he ever thought that this was a small man; I think he simply thought this was a very hard man to use and an easier man therefore to construct a multiplicity of explicit relations which would take the place of real strain-bearing lines of operation.

NEUSTADT: I have the impression that far from _____despite this enormous difference you speak of which is really unbridgeable, President Kennedy was sensitive to the unhappiness of the situation—of Lyndon Johnson as a man without any power, and did his best to…

BUNDY: Sensitive to two very big_____: one, that this man had done a big thing in taking the job; (2) that he had been and was still a major political reinforcement—really more than two things—(3) I think that Jack Kennedy was in principle a generous man; I don't believe for a minute that he was going to go around amusing himself by making life miserable for his own Vice President—it doesn't make any sense; he wasn't like that. I don't say that he occasionally didn't do things that made the Vice President think he was being mean, and I think occasionally he did set up a control in this sense I was

speaking of before—but not because he wanted to make life difficult. I think the thing that astonished him in a sense was the degree to which the Vice President allowed it to be difficult for himself. I can only explain this by turning to the contemporary situation, but I think if circumstances were different, if Jack Kennedy were now the Attorney General and faced with the possibility of becoming Vice President for whatever reasons of contingency or political reinforcement, he would find a way of being Vice President where it wouldn't be his_____. I'm not a bit sure Bobby could do that, and it obviously was very tough for Vice President Johnson.

NEUSTADT: I don't think he knew, and this is something that belongs to the Johnson Administration. For some reason I don't think he knew that on leaving the Senate he had to give over all his power.

BUNDY: I think he knew that's the way it had been.

NEUSTADT: Yes.

BUNDY: I think he really, rightly, I believe, felt that he had powers and gifts as an individual which they would need, and I don't think he saw how little they would see it that way.

NEUSTADT: Yes. Then he was without power there—that he couldn't have power here and for a power-free diet; whereas I'm sure you're right that President Kennedy found some compensations….

BUNDY: He had a sense of time; he had a sense of wisdom; he had, after all, 40 of the most interesting quiet years in the House of Representatives, and really in a sense again between ’52 and ’56…in the first five years…there is an illness in there (this is a history I’m not familiar with); and this was a man who could take it or leave it in a very remarkable way. Well, that’s a fascinating topic, and it’s not one really you are ever going to know very much about because I do not believe—I think the way—the right closing note on the case—that it wasn’t very much on his mind.

NEUSTADT: Add one thing to it—when the Vice President was officially into things, was he largely a spectator sportsman?

BUNDY: Well, he was extremely careful on one point: he never expressed a difference with the President in the presence of anyone else. This was so conspicuous that I’m quite sure it was a conscious rule—in fact, I think he’s mentioned it to me since—that greatly inhibited his participation—there were things where he had strongly different views. John McCone has a memorandum of the Vice President’s views at the time of the second Cuba crisis. I never was aware what the Vice President thought, but John has a memorandum of a private conversation in which the Vice President very explicitly and quite a lot more written down, and who was talking to whom, and in what context—but still, I wouldn’t be totally surprised by that. And the President—since he became President—has made

remarks to me in that same sense. Therefore I would say that all the places I saw him sitting in he would often make a trenchant comment but it would always be within the context of the meaning to which the management was working. (Following garbled) Let us suppose that we decided _____ that a press conference answer or effect to make the problem smaller….more often by all odds to express our view without seeming to criticize Senator so-and-so…extremely good at a practical proposal that would meet that case _____ He was genuinely a reticent man. Now the program that he was most concerned with was the space program. I’m not leaving aside the questions of what installations went to Texas and what appointments went to Texas, because I don’t know anything about that. That is a subject of great interest, but one that there is no point in my even trying to justify. On space, the President made that extremely interesting and important decision that he did mean to have a crash program in space. In the spring of ’61 in the aftermath, in a way, of the Bay of Pigs and on the balance of various Soviet space triumphs…and I believe just after, not John Glenn, but someone else…somebody had gone up and done something, I forget just who it was. In any event, he made that decision certainly with the Vice President and with Jim Well [James E. Webb], who has some baronial (?) relation with the Vice President.

NEUSTADT: Yes, I know that relationship. Without putting it on your tape, I'll tell you afterwards.

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BUNDY: Jim Webb was the Vice President's man, not in the sense that he was not the President's man, but in the sense that the Vice President and he were a team. And they were hot for space. And therefore the Vice President's strength of feeling and the President's commitment to give him space as his baby, and his previous connection to the space business certainly weighed substantially in that major decision. It's always interested me very much that in the operational business of space decisions, and there were many of them, I could never detect any serious alertness or activity…I may simply not have known…there may well have been phone calls or two sentences aside…and I do think this was always true. I have_____ at least as worthy of inquiry, and we're now on a much less sensitive topic and we don't have to fuss about how the pages of these tapes are used. This one ought to be studied quite soon—it is that Webb had more weight than he himself should have had. Now part of that, I suspect, was an alliance with the Vice President.

NEUSTADT: Don't forget the alliance with the Senator from Oklahoma [Robert S. Kerr].

BUNDY: Part of it certainly was the Senator from Oklahoma; part of it was Albert Thomas; and part of it was the President's own "goddammit I don't want to be second in space," and he did not make the space decision as a matter of a parallelogram of political forces of the sort we've just been discussing. He certainly was aware of that parallelogram, but he was also well aware of the logical arguments for not having a crash

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space program because, after all, the articulate Wiesner was right there and so was the cautious Sorensen, neither of whom on his own would ever have gone hot for space. As a matter of fact, I don't think I would either. We were the three people on the staff who were around him as he faced up to his decision. So he had a feel for the political value of setting high priority on space which was his own presidential feel. He had a feeling supporting that of the politics of space and there is this relevant but, to me, not easily weighed relation of the Vice President to that enterprise. I am conscious, thinking about this in the interruption we just had—I'm conscious in all this conversation about the President's view of the Vice President that that question should be pressed with many other witnesses. In the months since the assassination I have heard people say things about that relation that contrasts quite a lot with what I have said to you. And I feel certain that those who lived through the contest for the nomination and who had therefore seen the Vice President and his people in the adversary role—and some of them have a sharper and a less sympathetic recollection of all of these connections—and it might well follow that their sense of what the President thought

and said and did about the Vice President would be quite different from mine—and that while I don't think mine is wrong, I think it may need a complementary treatment.

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NEUSTADT: I must say, as somebody who also did not see the adversary period, I only had a couple of encounters on this one in the very beginning, and such as they were they rather tend to confirm your impression….

BUNDY: I don't know who is talking to Ken…

NEUSTADT: With those people it certainly needs to be pursued. Now you had told me a story the other day—to shift the subject—it's about Herbert Matthews [Herbert L. Matthews]—you had given me a quotation about him which I thought was delightful and ought to be recorded for posterity.

BUNDY: Well, you and the Attorney General are in agreement because he and I were transacting business on the Library the other night and in passing I told him the story and he said, "Well now, that's the reason for the oral history." And he had exactly the same recollection, so just in case he doesn't get around to it, I might as well. Matthews as in talking to me about foreign policy generally, having quite obviously been sent by his office to do a round of Washington. He's a very unhappy man; he's a broken man; broken by his love affair with Fidel Castro's revolution. And we had a very difficult interview in which he was really offering a monologue, and I was not disposed to contest the monologue, and he never, as far as I know now, he never put a direct question to me. What he did say at one point was that the only person in Washington who really understood Castro's revolution was John F. Kennedy—that a great friend of his and a very perceptive critic in Mexico had lately

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said that to him, and he had agreed, because he remembered how sympathetic and understanding the President had been in talking with him, Matthews, about Cuba and he, Matthews, understood the President's policy had to be what it was, implying that this was a matter of inescapable domestic pressures and requirement of power politics, and so on. But he didn't contest that or that the President had to say the various unfriendly things he did publicly say about Castro, but that he really intrinsically understood what the Cuban revolution was about and by implication sympathized with Matthews. And I restrained myself, feeling that it was not my obligation to disillusion Matthews about the opinions of the late President—certainly not in President Kennedy's interest, conceivably in the interest of the present Administration, I ought to have spoken to him because the illusion that the old Administration understood may become as a club to beat the new Administration with. But what he reminded me of was the pungent and repeated references to Herbert Matthews which we used to get from President Kennedy last summer at the time when Mr. David Halberstam had decided that Diem and Nhu must go before the USG had reached any such decision, and

the President used repeatedly to say, "We must not let foreign policy of the United States be decided by Halberstam, or we'll lose Vietnam just the way Matthews lost Cuba." And that same attitude toward Matthews

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was repeated in a number of cases in Latin American affairs in which the President was being very wary and walking a very narrow line which was repeatedly traced or which repeatedly required to be traced between an unthinking sympathy for the Right and an unthinking sympathy for the Left. What it illustrates, of course, because I do not think that Matthews is engaged entirely in self-delusion, is the extraordinary skill which the President had in making any given interlocutor feel that he was sympathetically understood and his position was appreciated and that principally the President, at least in intellectual terms, whatever he might have to do operationally, was sympathetic with him. I don't recall ever having anything but that kind of intellectual response until I knew him really well, and then of course you would get the, "Well, that's really a crazy idea, I just don't see how you can think that." And then he'd have a real argument. Matthews is a striking case simply because the lack of sympathy was so great, but the President's press relations involved that kind of effort with all sorts of conditions of men, and he really believed that it was his function and his responsibility to try to—I think we said this on one of the other tapes—to try to hold them all, and he did hold an astonishing number of them.

NEUSTADT: On one of the earlier tapes you spoke of his rising irritation with Max Frankel, the new diplomatic correspondent of the *New York Times*….

BUNDY: Well, I think he felt that they were continuously stretching for a story and that they would get it just enough wrong to build the

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angle or the color just enough, put their own interpretation into the mouths of official sources, and, in a way, write out of an assumed superiority to the government, which simply was very unhelpful to the conduct of affairs, and I think he's right. I think intrinsically that the way in which these fellows approach the news, the way the *Times* approaches the news, whether it's the *Times* editorial page or the *Times* foreign news reporting, is to assume that the *Times* is really the judge of foreign policy affairs, and that everybody else is slightly off.

NEUSTADT: The editorial page has become unbearable. But it's also true that Frankel is no Reston, when Reston was a great reporter, which he once was.

BUNDY: No. To put it another way, they simply have handed over to somebody else as beneath their attention the very interesting job of getting the story straight, and in that sense I don't think the President ever

particularly liked Mr. Chalmers Roberts [Chalmers M. Roberts] or Mr. Murray Marder, but I think he respected the precision of their work and its professional craftsmanship. He might feel, "Well, old Chal is giving us the shaft again," or something like that. Once he joked with Roberts in a press conference for being such a sardonic figure, but you didn't get that kind…you don't get from the *Post* that kind of thing in a news column. You may easily get holier-than-thou editorials out of Russ Wiggins [James Russell Wiggins] and some of his colleagues, but that's a different matter.

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NEUSTADT: He didn't mind columnists being columnists.

BUNDY: He did mind it. I don't mean to say that he didn't mind it, but he minded it much more when it was supposed to be a newspapers story and it was in fact an editorial.

NEUSTADT: Let me ask you, Mac, in the waning moments of his tape, to start talking a little bit about one of my two other curiosities. The nature of this town as a social thing in that Administration was in my perception distinctively different than under Roosevelt and Truman and Eisenhower.

BUNDY: Of course it's the only Administration I have ever lived in Washington in—comparisons are difficult for me to make. I will try to give you what description I have of the way it actually worked and go on from there, but perhaps we might as well change tapes.

NEUSTADT: All right.

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[Second tape of May 2, 1964]

NEUSTADT: All presidencies, as you and I agreed last time, are monarchies of one sort or another. One way to start asking you about this was this aspect of the Kennedy presidency, the social aspect. Who had the apartments at Versailles, and how did they get them? I know that a number of the Georgetown press corps felt themselves installed in second floor flats, if you will….

BUNDY: Why, it is true, certainly, that in a town like this and in a system as intimately presidential as this one, it makes an enormous difference to be on terms with the President that are more than just business terms. Actually, one of the dangerous things about working with the President is that people can come to feel that quantity of time in the presence is equivalent to effective service. And I used to notice that in my own early months here that merely to be in the meeting was in fact an encouragement. You would feel that the President in fact is using you if he wants you to

come to thus-and-such a meeting. You might forget really….whether you did any good in the meeting is a more interesting question in the long run. One of the things I've always admired about Douglas Dillon is that he never has bothered about being in a meeting unless there was something he wanted to do with the meeting. He never felt that whether he did or didn't come to a particular problem of international affairs was relevant unless in fact either he had dealt with the problem before and had a strong view which the President

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would then want to hear, or there was a Treasury interest. Whereas, you take the opposite end of the levels of sensitivity—I have spent a great many phone calls in the last three years explaining to John McCone that it really isn't a personal affront to the Central Intelligence Agency if the President had a talk with the Secretary of State or the Secretary of Defense, or, still more offensive, both, and doesn't even once include the Director of Central Intelligence. And surprising people keep pressing you as to the requirement that their agency or they themselves be there in order to maintain the morale of their agencies. It's particularly true of the National Security Council, but it spreads around to other topics, and I don't mean to say they are always wrong. I myself believe that both the Presidents I have worked for, and to a greater degree still the Secretary of State, develop a reticence in the presence of a number of people which is too bad. I think that it ought to be possible to conduct the affairs of the government and to clue in the interested parties without reducing the numbers, but one is trying to serve the people in their taste, and one doesn't (get away?). I take this as a prologue because there are two kinds of communication—there certainly were with President Kennedy. And how often you were in his office—how much you saw him in the West Wing—and how much you saw him in the Mansion were not totally separate phenomena, with the exception of Lem Billings at one end and Ted Sorensen at the other were people who were really close to him. But they were two different things.

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I would guess that there were—not that the same qualities weren't involved: intelligence, vitality, and a certain toughness of spirit, so that you can give and take, and the ability to laugh and be laughed at, would enter in on both sides, but nevertheless the change of tempo was very marked. The President, with the people he found really good company—I'm not sure that it didn't give him a slightly less serious view of them outside the social sphere. I'm not sure it was to Galbraith's advantage that he was so very amusing because the faintly frivolous, not quite businesslike, attitude which Galbraith took toward life affected the degree to which the President used his cables, as distinct from enjoying them. Well, anyway, you're really talking about the social side—now that's your question—and I would say that it really did turn on the kind of people they simply found it agreeable to be with—a slight edge of the people that they might not find agreeable but that were nevertheless chic. I always felt that Jackie was a little bit used by the Alphands [Herve Alphand and Nicole Alphand], for example, and didn't mind because the Alphands were at least elegant and polite and fashionable, etc. People they enjoyed most were their very old friends—let's see—the Bartletts, the Bradlees, and let's face it, very few of these very old friends were people with

plain or uninteresting wives. This is one quite simple fact of life: The President greatly enjoyed the easy game of charming attractive women, and he also greatly enjoyed people with whom he could completely relax—and there weren't very many of them, and there weren't….Didn't he say somewhere that the

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presidency is not a good place to make new friends and so a President is wise to keep the friends he's got? This was in refusing to say that Charlie Bartlett had written a bad article which in fact he had.

NEUSTADT: Isn't it something, of somewhat the same sort as being taxed with why he had not been nasty to Smathers?

BUNDY: Well, Smathers, I would say, had in effect ceased to be a friend, I think. The President never was willing to cross him; the President never shared the view, which was unanimous with the rest of his staff, that Smathers was the most unsatisfactory and unresponsive of personal friends in all political affairs. This is, I am delighted to say, something on which Old Joe Kennedy and I agreed 275%, although I only found it out after the President was killed. But the parties were very skillfully done. The people who were asked were a circle—did know who was and who wasn't asked, and the Kennedy family are being paid back now, you know. People who were not of that circle delighted now to feel that the environment is changed, beginning at quite high levels among journalists. Walter Lippmann the President greatly respected, but he was never socially an "in" journalist. And if you know the relationship between Walter and Helen [Helen Lippmann]you know that over the long term that was a great mistake, because if she's not psychically happy with an outfit, his joy with be moderate. And I can't imagine President Kennedy actually thinking it was worth his while to spend

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a number of evenings with Helen Lippmann, and he never would, but he was delighted to have Lippmann in for private interviews—respected him as much the wisest of the journalists—really put him on a great elevation—more than I would—and did not use the social powers of the presidency on him. That's a very interesting thing…now that you have a President who uses them all the time for the most immediate business of making people feel good. But I see how little was done by the Kennedys. They'd ask people to the White House dinners—you know, they'd have 175 people to come to a Nobel Prize winners' celebration, and they used the White House for style and for personal entertainment, but they didn't use the social instrument of the White House for making friends and influencing people, I don't think, do you?

NEUSTADT: No, they didn't. Moreover, they upset, completely upset, the hierarchy of the dukes, marquises, counts, in this town.

BUNDY: Well, I guess there were very few…the established royalty…the only person who was absolutely, totally, their friend in terms of easy, cheerful, and never-have-a-party-that-you-don't-think-about-her—you have her, etc—that's Mrs. Longworth [Alice Roosevelt Longworth]. That's because she is the cleverest old creature going, and a tremendous sport, and they honor the same kinds of courage, and wit, and elegance, etc. As a matter of fact, I'm going to interview her Sunday. They didn't pay any attention to the normal routines of Embassy entertaining;

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they didn't pay any attention to Mrs. Mesta—they paid no attention to….this is really where they just…Mrs. Kennedy's own beauty and charm smothered the people who would normally expect to be the people saying, you know, who decide how to handle, to market, her, namely, the local ladies' press.

NEUSTADT: The women's page.

BUNDY: Yes, the women's page.

NEUSTADT: It must have infuriated them, because they couldn't ignore her.

BUNDY: They couldn't ignore her. She was the news, and she thought they were dirt, and treated them approximately that way.

NEUSTADT: As for Mrs. Cafritz, Perle Mesta…

BUNDY: Of course they're not very significant even in their inner circle. It doesn't really amount to anything.

NEUSTADT: But their salons, if you call them that….

BUNDY: I don't know who goes to those silly parties, do you, actually? Even—who'd go now, in the Johnson Administration?

NEUSTADT: God knows who would go now, but in the Truman Administration all official Washington went.

BUNDY: You mean Cabinet, and semi-Cabinet, and Senators, and heads of committees?

NEUSTADT: Supreme Court…they were semi-official hostesses…

BUNDY: Extraordinary! And people did go because it was going to be a way of seeing everybody.

NEUSTADT: Yes, that's right. This was a social revolution.

BUNDY: It is.

NEUSTADT: A generational one, too.

BUNDY: That's true. Well, now, thinking about that for a minute, there were no social hostesses of that kind, with the exception…the only place that I remember going to in the Kennedy Administration where you in effect would see everybody in those terms was Kay Graham's [Katharine Meyer Graham]. If Mrs. Meyer or Kay gave a party…one or two of those parties were a time when Phil was behaving badly, and people were there just out of total loyalty, but in any event the nearest people to be able to call the Administration in to a big party, people who had that kind of money and who entertained that kind of way, would have been the Grahams, and next to them, the Dillons [C. Douglas Dillon and Phyllis Ellsworth Dillon]. Nobody else gave a very big party that anybody would want to go to.

NEUSTADT: Well, I was fascinated…

BUNDY: The Vice President in fact could have given that kind of party. It's an interesting point in the context of what we said before, and people would have gone, but he didn't do it. He didn't give parties, that were sort of, as it were, Administration parties. He gave parties to meet the new Congressman, or a party in honor of John Connally, or something of that sort. Very good ones, too.

NEUSTADT: Well, I think it's interesting that he didn't and she didn't—she's a woman of great sense. You had, of course, you had a rather

gay small society.

BUNDY: Oh well, you have a constant business of…The people who know most about that are the people who did more of it because of gifts and because of location and because, in effect, there was their great appetite for it. I think Arthur Schlesinger would know a lot about that. And I think that in another way Averell knows a lot about that. And Joe, of course, Joe Alsop. The President didn't go out very much after the first year. His calendar would actually show and I'm sure someone has that. But I never saw him except at Joe Alsop's—outside the White House—and perhaps once at…at least once somewhere else, but I forget where, now. He didn't do it much.

NEUSTADT: Bobby did a good deal of it.

BUNDY: Oh, Bobby went around. And of course there was that extraordinary institution, Hickory Hill, which had a combination of being a small and happy group and at the same time being a self-improvement society. You could see a very high proportion of the Administration at a big party given by the British Ambassador—and also at a big party given by the French Ambassador—especially those parts of the Administration concerned with world problems.

NEUSTADT: Well, what you are suggestion is that the Kennedys who had been in this town before, were now doing what came naturally to them.

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BUNDY: Yes, and I don't…There were people who were of great importance to the Administration and in whom the President had great confidence who didn't appear in their social life at all: David Bell [David E. Bell]—Sorensen we talked about—it's a very interesting case. And I frankly think the President himself, thinking it wasn't all that important, underestimated its meaning, as I did. One very interesting case to me was that it wasn't until Carl Kaysen was leaving town that he came in and said to me that Annette would like to be asked to the White House. We had operated on the general assumption that Annette [Annette Neutra Kaysen]really didn't like big parties because they had told us so often that she didn't, and we foolishly believed them.

NEUSTADT: Sure, well, it's curious, interesting, that I suppose it has something to do with this sense of privacy—he didn't set out deliberately to use all these society things that relate to the White House as an instrument of influence.

BUNDY: I think that's very much the case.

NEUSTADT: But he did use some influence on some persons of the press corps.

BUNDY: Yes, he did. What portions are you thinking of?

NEUSTADT: Well, they really were all people with whom he had connection….

BUNDY: I think all the newspapermen who came to dinner were friends.

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NEUSTADT: That's right. So it's a universal riddle….

BUNDY: I don't say that there may not be exceptions, but he had newspapermen in his office that he cared nothing for. And he would give a lunch for a sort of a certain high mogul, like Henry Luce [Henry R. Luce],

but…No, I think the truth of the matter is probably that he would have done it if he had had a different wife. If she had enjoyed that kind of thing and hadn't clearly been kicking against the pricks of the degree of formal engagements she had to have, he would have done, he might have done…The things she did do that were politically marketable he certainly never stuck in the closet: the redecorating of the White House, the White House guide book, the Cultural Center, and all of those things. Oh no, I think he would have quite cheerfully—if he had happened to have married that kind of wife—he might have done it. There are plenty of attractive women who also liked that kind of thing—Jackie didn't happen to. And you can imagine what his own sister Eunice would do if she were President Shriver's wife!

NEUSTADT: Yes, that's right. I think I understand that completely…one has every day here now the workings of this extraordinary team.

BUNDY: Absolutely, and there of course… (that's in the Johnson Administration). I think the repercussions therefore of their social life were probably negative in terms of the immediate impact of the city. I think fewer people were in and out, and I must say it does hurt.

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I remember one dance that I thought we weren't going to be asked to, after we were quite used to being at these little dances, and then we were asked, and it never would have occurred to me that I could be such a child about that, and I'm not honestly sure that I was—I think I just felt that it would be so annoying for Mary—but I don't know that I can prove that, even to myself.

NEUSTADT: Of course, that's always part of the problem.

BUNDY: It is. It's a very large part of the problem.

NEUSTADT: This is a town characteristically where wives need compensation for a lot of misery—their normal life exposes those to you. I don't mean to pursue this unless you want to.

BUNDY: No, is there any other? Or have we done them now?

NEUSTADT: No, I think that we've run down that little lot. Now let me turn over to something more substantial. Here you are, Mac, in the new Administration, going on four years' experience in this spot. Let me start out by asking you about your views of your job and presidential staff work generally, by putting this question to you: If you had to do it over again, in terms of the initial approach to the National Security Assistantship and its attendant machinery and mechanics and all of it, would you do anything different?

BUNDY: Oh sure, there are specific things I would do differently. I would certainly not allow the processes of judgment and decision to be as disconnected as they were in the first few months, so that I

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think we could…The lessons in a sense that we learned out of the pains of the Bays of Pigs—obviously would go back and plan it differently now. In a wider sense, if you ask yourself this question: Were we unwise to dismantle the machinery, let's say, of the Planning Board of the OCB [Operations Coordinating Board]? I think I would say that it had to be dismantled because of the fact that was the only way of turning loose forces that otherwise couldn't have been turned loose. But I think I would have tried to keep a sound instrumentation in being and tried to have developed early in that time a sense of staff work…interdepartmental staff work for the President, because I have now concluded that you can't get along without something of that sort, and yet I am not a bit sorry that we tried and in a way, as you and I were saying the other day, we haven't yet tried because we haven't yet sorted out what would happen if the Secretary of State and the Secretariat of State seriously undertook to do this job.

NEUSTADT: That's right, so that the theme wasn't really good…

BUNDY: I would not really want not to try that at all. I consider that we are really very loose over here, and we could tomorrow set up an interdepartmental staff performing that kind of function. As a matter of fact the President in effect just asked me to do that although his intent, like that of his predecessor, is more for show than for use. He doesn't want Eisenhower breathing down his neck and saying that the executive processes of the National Security are disorganized, so we

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are going to go back to the business of counting numbers of NSC [National Security Council] meetings, and the interesting question is whether we can perhaps conduct a little business that way—and I think one can if one is firm and imaginative about the kinds of things that can be done this way.

NEUSTADT: You keep real control of the agenda.

BUNDY: You have to keep control of the agenda, and you have to set the agenda up far enough ahead of time so that people will….you have to mean it. You see, that instrumentality was never available in President Kennedy's time, and I (doubt?) if it's really available for more than really and essentially image purposes now. You couldn't make Jack Kennedy say that he would agree two weeks from now to receive an interdepartmental report. We never were, we never wanted to and never did apply to the State Department nor to the Defense Department the kind of relatively tight discipline that I think Ted did apply to Commerce or Labor or Interior on domestic

problems. He didn't do it, and I wouldn't do that differently either, even if one could. I wouldn't do differently the….might try to do more quickly and would perhaps be more ruthless about the process of centralizing real information so that the White House has its own dope, which is one of the great things that we did do. I did it in the sense of knowing it was what President Kennedy wanted. He did it in the sense of making damn sure we did know that was what we wanted. Bromley Smith [Bromley K. Smith] did it in terms

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of actually figuring out how to make it happen, and making it happen—its cables, its State Department input, intelligence input, and of course gradually it becomes the feeling people have that if they want it to happen they'd better tell you about it, and that takes time.

NEUSTADT: But this is all the things that go together out of a predictable situation.

BUNDY: Yes, there's the Situation Room—the "Situation Room" probably isn't the best way of describing it—I think really it's Smith's little Secretariat, that's what it is. And then of course the other thing it is, it is a very unusual kind of officer who can get out and back to the government in a whole area of affairs and really know what the bureaucracy is up to.

NEUSTADT: Yes, it's another form of intelligence.

BUNDY: A Komer skill—I pick him because I think…Carl of course had it—fantastic how good Carl was at it—he had it at very high level and he also had—both of them had a sense of policy direction and purpose. This can only be done with a very limited number of people—we were very lucky to have as many of them as we did—not at all clear to me that you could keep that kind of batting average even in the Kennedy Administration where you had a President with a voracious appetite. Here you have a President now who wants to be informed, but who isn't, you know, constantly giving you the feeling that he wants more and that you don't know as much as he does—so it's literally not critical talk,

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it's a different temper. But the servicing of this presidency is going to be different. It's already different in striking ways. And the social satisfaction of being on the Kennedy staff…And this leads back to the something you said before…I'm coping with Forrestal's resignation this week, and I'm inclined to think that the thing he misses most may be the social ambience of the other time.

NEUSTADT: Some of his colleagues, at least, at first missed terribly the intellectual ambience in the sense of the fun of batting things back and forth.

BUNDY: And being in direct touch with the President and having the feeling…you know, to have that dialogue in that room is just a very different thing from having it any other way.

NEUSTADT: Yes. One of the difficulties which I am familiar with…were people at your Assistant level—that unless you see the President quite a lot—any President—do you really have a first-hand feeling of what's on his mind, how is his temper, and what he cares about. You can't for more than 2 days at a time really speak for the White House.

BUNDY: This President is aware of that; so am I. And you have a painful choice. This is really a Johnson Administration problem, too. Let me put it another way—that the enormously immediate sense of the enormous accessibility of President Kennedy to all kinds of people if they had some taste and style—as to how they go in and out of his office—a number of people that he liked to do business with made it easy to have that kind of person on my staff. Now the people on my staff who do not

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require that encouragement are the professionals, because from their point of view the question is not whether they are seeing the President every day as against their fancy partnership or their happy job at the Harvard faculty; the question is, are they seeing Bundy or are they seeing some Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Department? And on the whole you don't have to break your arm patting yourself on the back to see that they're a little better off over here—in those terms of status and access.

NEUSTADT: But you can't use them quite the way you used to.

BUNDY: You have to use them an entirely different way, which is not necessarily a worse way. You see, if you posit a strong department, or suppose you posit a for a moment a strong Assistant Secretary, a man who really knows what he is doing, who is in reasonably good tune with the President, it doesn't make too much sense to have someone else over here also doing that. We used to—this was very interesting—Forrestal was a very important person and very helpful because the two people to whom he was ambassador from the White House both needed the subtleties and the sense of perception which he brought, not because they were in tune with the President, but because they were so eager to be in turn with the President: namely, Harriman and Hilsman. And because each in his own way…I mean, Averell—a kind of slightly deaf, wonderfully eminent old pirate; and Roger—a very gifted, extremely intelligent man, with really disinterested energy and almost no sense of

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how in fact government operates. Roger is one of the most gifted men ever to think he understood the process of government, given how little he does, as you know. Because Roger understands the substance of policy with rare skill—I mean I think he has the best sense of what the hell we ought to think we're about in the Far East of anybody I know. And it's a great disappointment to me, and it was a great surprise, that a man with that kind of grip might almost have been an anti-administrator. He really believed that going in and saying, "I'm sorry, Bob, you're wrong," was the way of moving the Secretary of Defense.

NEUSTADT: No Henry Owen in him.

BUNDY: No Henry Owen in him, and no Mike in him. And those two different things: a sense of wonderful persistence in moving the bureaucracy, and a sense of personal tact and perceptiveness. Mike has other troubles, but those are not relevant.

NEUSTADT: It's because Assistant Secretaries—I mean some of them—were eager to be in tune, I take it…that one had to sort of smoke relationship from your aides to them. A Secretary, who was himself in turn and strong and close….

BUNDY: Would be doing that.

NEUSTADT: Would be doing that.

BUNDY: Why certainly.

NEUSTADT: The Acheson/Truman situation would remove that kind of…

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BUNDY: In any event, a Secretary who had that kind of quality would himself become a magnet, you see.

NEUSTADT: Yes, that's what I mean.

BUNDY: We're now gradually losing people from the Assistant Secretary level of the Department. Largely it's the operation of personal forces, but partly it's this other thing.

NEUSTADT: Let me ask you this, Mac. I know a document which posed the question of whether Bundy might not need a Bundy of his own—notes that you didn't have one. I conclude myself that you couldn't have one in this job as it then operated.

BUNDY: I'm not sure I know what you mean.

NEUSTADT: Well, there's nobody here, and there wasn't, as far as I know, who was your sidekick, aide de camp, in the sense of knowing all your business. Knowing what was coming up in your mind in a rounded way, watching your personal interests; your relationships were wide but bilateral, as far as I could tell. I suspected there was really good reason for this.

BUNDY: Well, I don't know that—certainly while Carl was here there were very few things he and I didn't talk over.

[Knock knock on the door—"Who's there? Come in, Bob." Bob came in, whistling. "Hi, Bob." End of tape.]

[END OF INTERVIEW# 1]

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