

J. Herman van Roijen Oral History Interview – JFK#1, 10/28/66
Administrative Information

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Biographical Note

Ambassador to the United States from the Netherlands (1950-1964). In this interview, Van Roijen discusses relations between the U.S. and the Netherlands, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and John F. Kennedy's administration, among other things.

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J. Herman van Roijen – JFK#1

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Oral History Interview

with

J. Herman van Roijen

October 28, 1966
London, England

By Joseph E. O'Connor

For the John F. Kennedy Library

O'CONNOR: Mr. Ambassador, perhaps you could begin by telling us of your first contacts with John F. Kennedy.

VAN ROIJEN: My first contact with President Kennedy was when he was still a senator. I met him at a dinner, and then we invited him to come to dine with us. This was a very pleasant and informal contact. But my real contacts with the President from which I could draw a conclusion as to his personality and character were, of course, later when he became President. I was in Washington as Ambassador for over thirteen years, and that period covered, of course, the whole of the Kennedy Administration. And during that time I was privileged to see the President on many occasions, not only occasions of receptions at the White House state dinners -- as I was, toward the end of my stay in Washington, vice dean, I attended several state dinners given by the President -- but also on occasions on which there was more close and intimate contact such as on visits paid to the President by Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands and on one occasion Princess Beatrix, our Crown Princess, came to Washington and the President received her and later gave a large luncheon in her honor on which both occasions I was able to have talks

with the President. And then there were also cases in which our Foreign Minister, Mr. Luns [Joseph Antoine Marie Hubert Luns] came to Washington and on several occasions saw the President in my presence.

During those months and years I developed a very real and deep admiration for the President, his charm, his personality, but also the way in which he was able to stimulate and inspire his associates. I saw him at different times working with his associates. I saw him at different times working with his associates. And, of course, I knew several of his close associates who again told me about how they worked with the President, how the President used to call them on the telephone at all hours of the day and night and ask them what they had been doing on certain subject, whether they had seen a certain item in the paper and what they proposed to do about it. And also, the way that they evidently knew that they were being led, felt inspired by it, and worked great enthusiasm under that leadership.

But I also admired him for the way in which he showed himself a leader of men, that he was recognized not only in his own country but also abroad as a great leader. As you know, he inspired youth. He himself when he became President was forty-three, not so very young, but yet youth all over the world felt that in him they had their symbol, their leader. This was, among others, very true in my own country where there generally was a tremendous admiration which almost went further, almost a veneration, for the President.

There was one point, of course, on which I differed with the President. It was the one point on which I didn't quite understand his real motivation. And that was the difference of opinion between our government and the American government on the matter of New Guinea. As you may remember, the Western half of that island was under Dutch administration, and the Indonesians laid claim to that territory, to West New Guinea, that they called West Irian. We felt that the Indonesians had absolutely no right to the territory, and that the population definitely didn't want to come under the sway of Indonesian domination; that, if West Irian at that moment was a Dutch colony, which it of course was, it only meant a change of colonial administration; that if we gave it up, it meant that the Indonesians would take over, and they were hardly known as very able or lenient colonizers. We felt the Papuans, quite rightly, were dreading the day that the Indonesians might take over the

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administration over their country.

But I was struck by the fact that President Kennedy, when I spoke to him about New Guinea, seemed to have no understanding for our motives in wanting to keep the administration until such time as the inhabitants, the Papuans, could decide about their own future: whether they wished to be independent, whether they wanted to keep some link with the Netherlands, or whether, as the Indonesians claimed, they would quite willingly help the Indonesians take over the administration of their country and to help West Irian become part of Indonesia.

When I mentioned to the President that I felt that the moral obligation which we had towards the Papuans, the inhabitants of West New Guinea, was comparable to the moral obligation which the United States government had towards the people of West Berlin -- as

you know, the American government had promised the inhabitants of West Berlin that they would not be let down, that they would, when the time came, to be able to decide about their future that they would not be just handed over to the Russians or to the East Germans under Russian domination -- when I brought that forward, the President immediately answered and said, "Oh, that is entirely different because there are something like two and a quarter million West Berliners where there are only seven hundred thousand of those Papuans. Moreover, the West Berliners are highly civilized and highly cultured, whereas these inhabitants of West New Guinea are living, as it were, in the Stone Age." I could not see that that really mattered in this context. But that was the way in which the President reacted, and he asked me, not only on one but on several occasions, what material interests we had there: whether there were raw materials in West New Guinea which we thought we could exploit, or whether West New Guinea had strategic importance for us, or whether it was a matter of wanted still to claim some influence in that part of the world -- in Southeast Asia -- that motivated us in not being willing to give up our administration over that territory.

Well, to make a long story short, when later the President, upon advice of his associates, decided to apply pressure on Holland in order to force us to give up the

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administration of New Guinea, which would be taken over by the United Nations and then after a few months handed over to Indonesia -- which in other words, was actually abandoning New Guinea to the Indonesians -- when he decided to apply that pressure, he did so quite ruthlessly.

I often do remarked to my American friends at the State Department and White House that I felt that the American government in this case was sacrificing principle to expediency: the principle which America had always stood for, a question of a minority having the right to decide about its own lot, another principle of not appeasing a dictator -- and certainly Sukarno was recognized in the United States as being a director -- and, thirdly, also the principle of not accepting or agreeing to any change in territory brought about by force or threat of force.

All those principles, as it were, were thrown overboard for the sake of expediency, the expediency being to my mind understandable because the United States felt that they had already so many commitments in that part of the world -- they had troops in Korea, Formosa, in Vietnam; at that moment there were troops standing also in Thailand -- that they did not want to become involved in any further trouble which might end in armed conflict. It was in order to avoid that possibility, and also avoid the opprobrium which they would have met without any doubt in the United Nations on the part of the whole of the Afro-Asian bloc, that they decided to take the line of expediency and to force us to give up New Guinea.

But although there was this point of fundamental difference with the President, I could not but admire him for the way in which, when he decided to take a certain course, he did so. He obviously always tried to alleviate any hardships which would occur. In our special case, New Guinea, he agreed that should there be a clash between the Netherlands and Indonesians, and although he definitely stated that American forces would not help us in any way, yet he did promise that the civilian population, the western European civilian

population, of New Guinea would be taken out of New Guinea so that no harm would befall them. There is no doubt that also in other respects, he was willing to help.

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When once we had agreed to certain conditions, according to the so-called Bunker Plan, to give up the administration and hand it over to the United Nations on a certain date and when the Indonesians still seemed hesitant to agree to that arrangement and were threatening to start using force anyway -- actually, the embarkation of their troops had already started for an expedition to New Guinea -- when that happened, President Kennedy got the Indonesian foreign minister who at that time was in New York, Dr. Subandrio [Raden Subandrio], to come to see him and gave him a piece of his mind in no uncertain terms and said that, as the Netherlands now had agreed, Dr. Subandrio should not forget that there were still American forces in the vicinity and that could become very disagreeable for them if they, now that the principle of transfer of administration had been accepted and agreement was possible, did not themselves give up the idea of using force and achieving military glory as an end of this anti-Netherlands campaign.

O'CONNOR: You mentioned the question of using force ruthlessly against the Netherlands or applying pressure ruthlessly against the Netherlands. Could you elaborate a little bit on that? Could you tell us something about the sort of pressures that were applied?

VAN ROIJEN: Well, of course it wasn't a question of using force. It was a question of using diplomatic pressure. One of the things which the President did in that respect was to refuse to allow passage of Dutch troops by way of Alaska, which was one of the ways which we were using to send troops out to New Guinea, making it extremely difficult for us and implying that they could also prevent ships from stopping over in Hawaii on their way out to the East. All this made it much harder for us to continue. And there was no doubt that also the United States was perfectly prepared to bring the matter up again in the United Nations before the Security Council.

O'CONNOR: Mr. Ambassador, I wanted to ask you if you knew of anyone in the State Department who you found more sympathetic, for example, than President Kennedy to the Dutch point of view or less sympathetic, more hostile?

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VAN ROIJEN: I cannot say that I knew of any one person in the State Department who was in sympathy with our views. And on the whole, I think they agreed with the purpose of President Kennedy, namely, to see to it that this territory did not become a source of armed conflict in the Pacific. But there were, of course, shades of opinion. And it's quite obvious that in Republican circles, one found people

who were inclined to say that we should hang on to New Guinea. But we would naturally be hesitant, as we were, to try to mobilize the opposition in the Senate. We, therefore, although listening to the opinions of different Senators, never tried to get them to take any action. And I don't think they would have, as a matter of fact, because I feel sure that both the White House and the State Department would have explained to them why it would be extremely dangerous if there were an outbreak of armed conflict in that part of the world and how disastrous it would be for the United States to get implicated in it -- disastrous not from a military point of view but from a political point of view because in this case of New Guinea, to my mind, of course, wrongly, the whole of the Afro-Asian group in the United Nations were against the Netherlands and sided with Indonesia. Quite differently from when a later conflict arose over the confrontation between Indonesia and Malaysia, which only quite recently was called off. In that matter of "confrontation" we find that Malaysia had a great many friends among the Afro-Asians, and that when Britain and the United States were willing to support and help Malaysia, this did not meet with general disapproval among the Afro-Asians.

I think that some of the people at the State Department possibly would have preferred to see a less rigorous method applied to us. With the Bunker Plan we were faced, on the authority of the President, with a new plan for handing over the administration to the United Nations before we had had any opportunity to comment on it. This plan was submitted simultaneously to the Indonesians at Djakarta and to us at the Hague. This made it, of course, impossible later for the United States, even if they would have wanted to do so, to change anything to the disadvantage of the Indonesians because here they had been offered this plan as conforming to the purpose of the United States. That we felt was

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unfair, especially because we had been always loay allies to the United States and we had on this very matter of New Guinea constantly consulted the United States government. We felt that they might just as well have warned us that this plan existed and given us a few weeks to comment on it and then, if they felt it absolutely necessary, go through with it ruthlessly. But I must admit that I personally, and many of my compatriots with me, could understand the point of view of the United States of not wanting to become implicated in this matter by standing behind us and threatening the Indonesians with armed measures if they were not willing to desist from their intention of taking over New Guinea, if necessary by force.

O'CONNOR: Who else did you have to deal with in the Kennedy Administration on this particular problem?

VAN ROIJEN: In the first place, with Dean Rusk.

O'CONNOR: Did you find any difference in his attitude from that of the President?

VAN ROIJEN: At the time of the flaring up of the New Guinea issue in the United States -- this was in the Assembly of the United Nations -- when the

so-called Brazzaville Plan was proposed and was voted down with a small majority, or rather did not attain the necessary number of votes, at that moment the United States government who had stood on our side during the voting decided that they would have to take another course. At that moment they decided that they could no longer stand behind us in our offer which we put into that Brazzaville plan. I believe that this purpose was inspired by the President's brother, by Robert Kennedy, who then was Attorney General and who had just made a trip to Indonesia. On his return from Indonesia, I am practically certain that he advised the President that the situation was becoming extremely dangerous and that unless something was done very quickly about it, the Indonesians would force the issue by an armed attack against the Dutch in New Guinea.

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Dean Rusk at that moment was not in Washington. He was in Geneva. And I have reason to think, although this is not proved, that Dean Rusk, on his return from Geneva, was surprised to find that the Bunker Plan had been submitted to us. When I first talked to him about it, he seemed taken aback and inclined to believe that this didn't necessarily represent the thinking of the Administration. But, of course, when he went into it and asked the White House about it, it proved that this was indeed a plan which had the full approval and the sanction of the President. So here is a question of a matter of, shall we say, a difference of opinion on methods within the American administration. Some people in the State Department, perhaps also Dean Rusk, would have preferred a different approach. But I am certain that any administration, even a Republican administration, would not have wanted to become involved in this conflict because of the consequences it would have with regard to the Afro-American group in the United Nations.

O'CONNOR: In view of the American position of not wanting to become involved, for example, and in view of President Kennedy's position and the position of his advisors, do you feel that there was anything more that the United States could have done in the way of reconciling this really very strong difference between the two countries -- two allies, in fact?

VAN ROIJEN: I don't think there was very much which they could have done except with respect to the method used. As I said before, I felt that the method was very ruthless, especially as used towards the Netherlands as an ally. And don't forget that Indonesia was not an ally of the United States and that, therefore, we feel and felt at the time that we could have been treated less in the way which was described to me by one of the members of the White House as "shock therapy." I replied at the time...

O'CONNOR: Do you recall who that was, that member of the White House?

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VAN ROIJEN: This was Walt Rostow. I remember saying to Walt Rostow at the time that shock therapy was something which was frequently used in medicine, but that usually the doctor applying it made sure that there were no harmful side effects, and that I felt that in this case the application of shock therapy was very harmful indeed because it undermined the confidence that we, the Netherlands, had in the leadership of the United States.

O'CONNOR: I was going to ask you if this particular problem had any ramifications in other areas, for example, in NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] unity? The Kennedy Administration pursued a policy rather unsympathetic to colonial policy, or whatever you would call it, of the Netherlands, of Portugal, of Belgium, and various countries in Europe, various allies in Europe. And I wondered if this attitude of the Kennedy Administration had any effects toward loosening up the unity of Western Europe. Did it have ramifications, for example, with regard to NATO powers of Europe?

VAN ROIJEN: I think that in the case of Portugal, it did have such effects which are still to be felt. In respect to the Netherlands, I do not believe so, although there are certain people, also members of our government, who still feel very strongly about the way we were treated at the time and who felt and feel that the United States should have stood by us, not only in the interest of our alliance -- although they admit that purely formally speaking, of course, the NATO alliance does not apply to other parts of the world than to the NATO territory -- but also in the interest of Western solidarity, and who think that in the interest of the future of the West, one should not always give in to these newer, emerging countries, that it is bad policy, and that the more one gives in, the more these people will demand.

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I think in the case of the Netherlands, one should not forget, however, that there was a large segment of public opinion which was perfectly willing to give up the administration over New Guinea in order to avoid an armed conflict. They felt, and to my mind rightly, that although there obviously would be thousands of Indonesians killed, because our military people knew exactly where their ships were and their convoys would have been taken immediately under fire and attacked by our submarines, but yet then in the end, hundreds of our own men would be killed and one could ask oneself to what purpose, because, eventually, given their huge forces, the Indonesians probably would have succeeded in overrunning New Guinea. I am not one who believes in just fighting for the sake of the honor of the case, certainly not in an instance such as this. But given that fact that there was a large segment of public opinion who were willing to give up the administration over New Guinea, under duress, obviously, but without putting up an armed fight for it, I believe that one can understand that, therefore, there were no very general resentment in Holland at having been let down.

O'CONNOR: Does your attitude in this problem differ in any way from the attitude of Foreign Minister Luns, your attitude toward West Irian or your attitude toward President Kennedy?

VAN ROIJEN: I think that both my attitude with regard to President Kennedy and my attitude in regard to New Guinea differ from Minister Luns.

O'CONNOR: Would you elaborate on that, please?

VAN ROIJEN: I have the feeling that with regard to New Guinea, Minister Luns would like to have put up a fight, probably because he still thought, and with him I believe it was wishful thinking, that if we were implicated in an armed conflict with Indonesia about New Guinea, the United States would eventually be forced to join us and help us. I tried with all means at my disposal to disillusion him on that point and to make

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it clear to him that it was absolutely certain that the United States would stay out of any armed conflict of that sort, that it was not to their interest to join and, in fact, was very contrary to their interests, that they definitely would not do so and that when they told us that they would not, they were being absolutely sincere and just giving the facts, whereas Minister Luns evidently thought that although he was told both by Rusk and the President that the United States would not contemplate fighting together with us, that when it came to the point, they could not very well stay out of any fight of that sort.

O'CONNOR: How about with regard to President Kennedy? You have commented, for example, on the charm of President Kennedy, and I know that though it's rather hard to define exactly what effect this charm does have, it does have a certain amount of effect in smoothing over diplomatic relations and relations of various sorts. I've heard various other people comment - diplomatic comment -- on the charm of President Kennedy. Well, do you feel Foreign Minister Luns was affected by the Charm of President Kennedy? Did he like the man, or did he not like the man?

VAN ROIJEN: He liked the man very much, but he felt that the man was ruthless and had no feeling whatsoever for such values as those that I mentioned in the beginning of my talk -- of moral responsibility towards the inhabitants of a developing territory -- that he was coldly pragmatic in this matter and was perfectly willing to sacrifice principle to what he saw as being expedient. On that point I could not disagree with Minister Luns, but my evaluation of the President, I think, on the whole was a great deal more favorable to the President than that of Minister Luns. I was, of course, in Washington at the time of what one would call the second Cuban Crisis -- the missile crisis. And I thought that the President handled that in such a remarkably statesmanlike way that if that were the only thing that he had done, he would rightly have

gone down in history as a great statesman. That was something which I felt was a measure of the man and showed his character. And therefore such a matter as New Guinea, which after all I

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think one has to really see in the context of history as a whole, it was only, shall we say, a footnote to the episodes of that year. The way in which it was handled was probably typical of the President in one respect. But when it really came to the great issues in politics, he saw things in their right light and was an inspiration to others.

O'CONNOR: There has been some criticism of the President's handling of the Cuban Missile Crisis from Europeans in the light of the fact that, in effect, it has been said that not enough notice was given to European allies with regard to the action the United States was going to take concerning Cuba. Did you or did Minister Luns feel that that was so?

VAN ROIJEN: No. In this case Luns and I agreed that there was no possibility of giving prior warning and that the President handled this very well indeed. And I may mention, incidentally, that as it is generally known, one of the advisors of the President who advised not to go in for an immediate strike against Cuba was the President's brother, who so often is thought of as being rather brash and arrogant. But in this case it was he who said, "Mr. President, we don't want a Pearl Harbor in reverse in Cuba."

O'CONNOR: Were there any other issues over which you saw the President that enabled you to round out this opinion? Particularly, I'm thinking of the opinion of his being a man who is willing to sacrifice principles sometimes.

VAN ROIJEN: No. I was deeply impressed by the fact that when the President had anybody in -- a foreign head of state or a foreign minister -- to talk about any issue, whether it was the Congo with Spaak [Paul-Henri Spaak] or whether it was the Azores with the Portuguese foreign minister, he seemed immediately to be able to concentrate on that one subject and put all other matters out of his head. He also had the great gift of being able to place himself in the position of the other person with whom he was talking. It was for that reason that I was always surprised that he didn't understand better than he seemed to our motivation with regards to New Guinea. But on the

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whole, he was remarkable for that very fact, for that faculty of being able to place himself in another man's position. And he showed that gift also in his dealings -- with the

representatives of the developing countries, the Africans and Asians, who always felt not only at ease with President Kennedy, but being understood by him.

O'CONNOR: I'd like to switch now to another topic briefly, if you don't mind, and that has to do with NATO. There were many changes taking place in the structure and strategy and so forth of NATO during the Kennedy Administration. It has sometimes been said that these changes -- for example, the change toward more graduated response, I believe, was one of the terms that was used -- helped to undermine the confidence of Western Europe in American willingness to defend Western Europe. Was this the reaction of the Netherlands?

VAN ROIJEN: No. We felt that this was largely a French reaction. And we didn't feel that it was really bona fide. We felt that the French were trying to seek some objection or to grievance at American NATO policy. Most of us agreed. Of course, it was always very difficult to obtain on any change of strategy an agreement of all fifteen nations immediately. So very often these changes were made, as it were, without an official sanction by all fifteen, but by consensus among them. But then there were these objections which were never formally put forward by the French. It reminds one of the fact that the French government now claims that it felt that the NATO organization, as different from the North Atlantic Treaty Alliance, should be modified, should be modernized and streamlined. In itself, we felt that possibly they were right. But they never came forward with any proposal along those lines. They now say that they had always objected and that several times they'd said that it was becoming antiquated, the whole organization and the command structures and setup. But if so, why didn't they come with any formal proposals? They never did and nobody ever thought that they intended to. But it was just putting forward these objections so that later on they would have a reason, a grievance, so as

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to have a seeming basis for withdrawing from the integrated defenses of Europe, in other words: from our integrated North Atlantic organization as distinct from the Alliance.

O'CONNOR: I've heard criticism made of the way in which the United States put forth suggestions on changes of strategy. I've heard it said, for example, that the United States simply put forth these suggestions in a very paternal fashion without really consulting its western Europe allies. Would you agree with that or would you feel that Minister Luns would agree with that?

VAN ROIJEN: No, I don't think he would agree with this nor do I, certainly, because one can't have it both ways. One cannot, as we have so often done, ask for strong American leadership and at the same time, when that leadership comes, then object violently. We in Holland, and this is also true of other NATO countries, feel that above all we should have strong American leadership and that if that leadership is not forthcoming, there is a danger of NATO disintegrating. Therefore, we are

perfectly willing to put up with what I think some of the allies, and I'm thinking especially of the French, consider a rather arbitrary way in which proposals were put forward. I don't quite see how we can have it both ways.

O'CONNOR: You were Ambassador during the Eisenhower Administration as well and, as a matter of fact, I believe a part of the Truman Administration, too. I was wondering if you would care to comment on the difference in the leadership from the United States toward Western Europe, toward NATO particularly, in the Eisenhower Administration and the Kennedy Administration. Do you feel there was much difference, there was any difference?

VAN ROIJEN: Yes, I feel that the Eisenhower Administration was a period of the consolidation of NATO, a time in which NATO was still developing. Perhaps at that time there was no real necessity or real demand for new strategic concepts or new ideas. But one certainly felt that the Eisenhower Administration with regard to these

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matters was very unimaginative. Of course, it was generally known in Washington that during the last two years President Eisenhower gave very little leadership. I was always surprised at the fact that, although it was known in Washington generally by insiders, even semi-insiders, by foreign diplomats not only but obviously also by the Administration itself, by the Congress, by the press that Eisenhower was reigning but not ruling, that notwithstanding that, Eisenhower was so popular that, as the Democrats themselves admitted, he could have been re-elected as President. There is a discrepancy there. People knew that he was not leading at that time, and yet he was popular and remained popular. He is, of course, such an awfully nice, decent, kind man with the right instincts. But he certainly wasn't a great leader such as President Kennedy was.

O'CONNOR: Another policy of the Kennedy Administration was really liberalization of trade and greater and greater economic integration of Europe, including integration of England. In pursuing this policy, could you comment on whether the United States made any major mistakes or not, any mistakes that antagonized the Netherlands government, for example?

VAN ROIJEN: I certainly think that this showed vision at that time and was worthwhile trying. Certainly President Kennedy's speeches at that time concerning partnership with a united Europe, concerning Atlantic community and Atlantic partnership were very warmly applauded in my country. People were inspired by them. They really thought that here was a possibility of getting united Europe within an Atlantic community as a nucleus for a really free and safe world. So that we applauded that.

Now I think, looking at it in retrospect, perhaps some of the advisors of President Kennedy, I'm thinking especially of George Ball, may have clung too violently, too grimly to that idea of wanting to unite Europe in a sort of federation which would be comparable to the United States. This may not prove possible as yet. He may have been too far in advance of his time. And I think that later on when France vetoed British membership of the EEC [European Economic Community], the Common Market in other words, that then some

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of President Kennedy's advisors still wanted to go on with this idea. And that perhaps then no longer was in keeping with the possibilities of the time.

O'CONNOR: I was thinking particularly, though, of specific policies the United States carried out to assist integration of Europe, including England. I was thinking specifically, for example, of the special relationship, so called, between the United States and England, particularly as exemplified by the Nassau conference in which the United States offered England Polaris missiles. It has sometimes been commented that this special relationship jeopardized the American policy of seeing England united with Europe. I wonder if the Dutch government reacted to that in any way, was affected or offended by the special relationship as the French have seemed to be?

VAN ROIJEN: We felt that at the time the French had decided -- General de Gaulle [Charles de Gaulle], specifically, had decided -- not to allow Britain to join the Common Market and had decided this for political reasons. The economic negotiations between the Common Market and England were progressing favorably and probably would have come to a favorable result. The General, however, opposed his veto in the first place, because he did not want to have any competition in the leadership of Europe, and he felt that if Britain joined the Common Market there would no longer be any question of French leadership such as there was and is to this day. And in the second place, he felt that bringing Britain into the Common Market, he would be introducing American influence by the backdoor.

As you know, the French press has spoken about bringing in the American Trojan horse if Britain were made a member of the Common Market. So that we felt that General de Gualle had already decided not to allow Britain into the Common Market and was only looking for a reason, for a pretext, and that in the Nassau Agreement he found that pretext and that reason. We did not believe therefore that this really was his true reason. Having said this, however, I think that one should add that looking back on it now, the Nassau Agreement was not wise. And I know that President Kennedy himself was still in doubt as to whether the Nassau Agreement had really been the reason for de Gaulle to veto British entrance. He

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asked Minister Luns in my presence at one time what Luns thought about it. And Luns gave the answer which I've given, that de Gualle was only looking for a pretext and that this was

not his real reason. Whereupon Kennedy said, "Well, that may be the case, but I am having this matter thoroughly investigated."

O'CONNOR: Okay, one other question and then we can end this, I suppose. Another matter that came up in 1963 that the Kennedy Administration pursued rather vigorously was the MLF [Multi-Lateral Force]. And I wonder if you have any comments on what you think was the motivation of the Administration's putting forth very strongly in that year the MLF. The Kennedy Administration has been accused of imagining a demand on the part of West Germany for participation in nuclear control where one did not really exist. I'd like to know whether you or the Dutch government feel one really did exist, or whether this was an intelligence strategy to pursue, or whether it was a realistic strategy perhaps.

VAN ROIJEN: I've often spoken about this matter not only with our own government, especially with my own minister, Minister Luns, but also with the leadership of the State Department, and my feeling is, and that is true of my countrymen in general, that there was no real demand for participation in nuclear control on the part of the German people. There were certain German leaders who wanted it. And the State Department undoubtedly felt with absolute sincerity that although that demand was not in existence at that moment, yet that it could not fail to come, that Germany would never acquiesce or be satisfied with a position of inferiority, vis-a-vis France and England, in the nuclear field and that, therefore, this idea of the MLF was being put forward in order to give the Germans an idea that they were participating in the ownership and in the control of a nuclear weapon without actually being in a position to press the button themselves. At the State Department it was hoped that this would satisfy them at any rate, as some of the people said expressly, "for the time being." Because eventually the Germans would demand equality, and then they would probably, just as they did with

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armaments after the First World War, push through their demands by just taking some shortcut in order to be in a position of possessing nuclear weapons. You know, there was a feeling at one time that possibly, although they had obligated themselves by treaty never themselves to manufacture nuclear arms -- nor biological nor chemical arms, for that matter -- yet nothing prevented them from possessing them, and that they might come to some agreement with the French whereby France would allow them to participate in the manufacture in France of nuclear weapons, in which case they could indirectly possess them themselves.

O'CONNOR: Well, could you tell me, if you remember, who it was in the State Department that thought this way, that this should satisfy the Germans for the time being or that it was necessary to satisfy the Germans for the time being?

VAN ROIJEN: I think this was true largely of the top leadership of the State Department, in other words, of Dean Rusk, of George Ball, Averell Harriman, and I'm sure also a man like Bill Tyler [William R. Tyler], who at that time was Assistant Secretary for Europe and who later, as you know, became Ambassador to the Hague.

O'CONNOR: I wanted to ask you about Mr. Tyler. Did you find him any more sympathetic? He was really an old European, in a sense, in the State Department. Did you find him more sympathetic to your position?

VAN ROIJEN: Well, if he was, he certainly didn't show it.

O'CONNOR: Alright then, we can end this unless you have any other comments or any other issues you would like to comment on.

VAN ROIJEN: Let me just say this, that Tyler may in his heart have felt that we were getting a rather raw deal on this New Guinea thing. But I'm

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sure that he also, quite understandably, felt that it was against American interest to become in any way involved in a conflict between the Netherlands and Indonesia in that part of the world.

O'CONNOR: Okay, as I say, we can end this unless you have any other comments.

VAN ROIJEN: No, I have no other comments. Thank you very much.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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