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Matloff: This is an oral history interview with Mr. Paul H. Nitze held on October 3, 1984, in his office in Rosslyn, VA. Participating for the OSD Historical office are Dr. Roger Trask and Dr. Maurice Matloff. The interview is being recorded on tape and a copy of the transcript will be sent to Mr. Nitze for his review.

Mr. Nitze, we will be concentrating in this interview on the various roles that you played in the DoD in the 1960s. First, by way of background, what lessons did you draw from your service as Director and Vice Chairman of the Strategic Bombing Survey of 1944-46? Did your findings and the report's conclusions have any influence on your post-war thinking about strategy and policy concerning the atomic bomb, its buildup, use, and control?

Nitze: Yes, it did indeed. Those of us who were the original directors of the U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey were selected basically on one criterion; that was that we knew nothing about war, bombs, the Air Force, or strategy; that we were totally innocent and therefore unprejudiced. What they wanted was an unprejudiced board to look into this matter. So that when we became directors one of the first things we did was to try to understand something of our task. The two of us who addressed ourselves most directly to that were Fred Searls--who, I guess, was on leave from his positions of president and chairman of the board of the Newmont Mining Corporation, and was a very distinguished geologist, and, I found, a most intelligent person--and I. Before I went to Europe with Fred to try to learn something about the operations of the Air Force and about strategic air attack, I spent some time with General Muir Fairchild, who was the Air Force member of the Combined Chiefs of Staff. I found him to be a most wise and intelligent person. I have run into very few

strategists in the Air Force who made a greater impression upon me than Fairchild did.

Matloff: Muir Fairchild of the Joint Strategic Survey Committee in World War II?

Nitze: Yes, that's correct. I got a sense of strategy from Fairchild but knew nothing then about air operations. So we went to Europe; I devoted myself to trying to learn something about air operations from everybody that I could, including, in particular, the Eighth Air Force, which was operating from England. I spent some time with then Colonel Fred Castle, who was the commander of the 3rd Air Division of the Eighth Air Force. He had three squadrons and three airfields under his command, and had 40,000 people doing the maintenance and so forth. He would fly every other mission with his people in the lead plane and he supervised all the detailed planning of every mission. I lived in the same little cabin with him during that period and picked up as much as I could about the actual operations of a bombing force. The average casualty rate was about 8 percent per mission, and the number of missions that each person had to fly was thirty, so that it was a pretty horrendous kind of environment. After that I worked on doing the actual investigations in the field in Germany as to the effectiveness of the strategic attack campaign, and, in particular, was the principal person conducting the interrogation of Albert Speer, so I learned a good deal about it from the German standpoint. Then in Japan, I was vice-chairman and Mr. [Frank] D'Olier the chairman. Since he wasn't interested in doing any of the basic work, I

ran the substantive operation. The President had given us some additional requirements and tasks. One was to report on the reasons why the Japanese had attacked at Pearl Harbor and why they had surrendered when they did, but not earlier. Another was to do a detailed assessment of the effect of the nuclear weapons at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Another was to assess the Air Force and Navy claims with respect to the sinking of Japanese ships. The final task was to recommend on the post-war organization of the defense establishment, having in mind nuclear weapons and modern technology. These five tasks were added to our mission of reporting on the effects of air power in the war in the Pacific.

Matloff: That's a good point for me to ask you the second question about this early period. Did you play any role in the movement for unification of the services?

Nitze: The summary report of the Pacific War for the U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey included a section dealing with that task--recommendations with respect to the post-war organization of the forces. We recommended that there be a Department of Defense and a strengthened Joint Chiefs of Staff organization. We recommended that there be three services under this Department of Defense--Army, Navy, and a Third Force. But all four of these organizations would be oriented to modern weapons and modern concepts of warfare. The Third would be given a particular role with respect to the strategic use of nuclear weapons. The roles and missions that we suggested were that the Army should have the task of defending, occupying, and exploiting control of the ground. In so doing it should

have whatever weapons it considered useful for that role. The Navy should have the task of defending, commanding, and exploiting command of the surface of the sea, the air above it, and the waters beneath it, and it should have whatever instruments it found useful to carry out that role. The Third Force should have the role of strategic, that is, deep attack, as well as that of defending against deep attack, and should have whatever instruments it needed and felt useful in carrying out its mission. The upshot was, of course, that no one other than Mr. Forrestal agreed with these recommendations, although Larry Norstad understood them and, I think, was sympathetic. Admiral Forrest Sherman also understood them and, I think, was also sympathetic. But the rank and file of the upper echelons of all the forces were violently opposed to every part of the recommendations. The Army didn't want to have tactical air support under its own command. It wanted to rely on the Air Force for it. The Air Force didn't want to give to the Army tactical air support. It didn't want to see the Navy have any land-based planes to help it with its sea control mission. The Air Force didn't want to have anything to do with civil defense, passive defense, active defense, or any part of the defense against strategic attack. The Third Force was also to have the role of achieving command of the air; the Army was to have the tactical support role; the Third Force was to have both the strategic air role, deep interdiction, deep attack role, plus achieving air command; i.e., control of the air.

Matloff: With this background, were you then drawn in on the movement to get the passage of the National Security Act of 1947? Studying your

background, it looks like you got over on the State Department side and possibly were not drawn in then on the movement for the first Act.

Nitze: No, I wasn't.

Matloff: Do you recall your reactions to the passage of the Act? Were you happy with it when it finally came out?

Nitze: The roles and missions were not satisfactorily worked out and I was very much disappointed in that.

Trask: Steve Rearden [Mr. Nitze's research assistant] just handed me a note with a question about the offer from Forrestal via Norstad to serve as the first Secretary of the Air Force.

Nitze: I didn't know that Forrestal was involved in it. I thought it was just Norstad who was recommending it. My present recollection is that Norstad asked me whether I would be willing to be his candidate to be the first Secretary of the Air Force; I said that I would indeed.

Trask: Even though you didn't agree with the roles and missions that were rigged into the system?

Nitze: It's better to fight these things from the inside than it is from the outside. The problem was that Norstad took it up with Mr. Truman and Mr. Truman asked what my politics were. I said, "registered Republican." So he reported that back and Truman said, "My goodness, are there no worthy Democrats available to function in this role?" Finally Symington was selected. But then Norstad insisted that Symington hire me to be his personal adviser. I said that I would serve for as long as it took, because Symington didn't know anything about the Air Force or any of the problems involved. For six weeks I occupied the same office with Symington.

I managed to persuade him that the crucial thing was for him to have a personal aide who was an Air Force officer of the highest integrity and knowledgeable about all these things who would be loyal to him and who would not be the tool of the air staff. My reasoning was that if his principal military officer was not his, but the air staff's, he would be ruined. He would not be able to serve as an effective secretary. He agreed, and I found an officer who had been, in fact, the first commanding general of the 20th Air Force prior to the time that LeMay took it over. At the time he was a colonel, because it was kind of a holding job until the 20th Air Force was deployed. He became General Montgomery; he was a very good person and helped Symington a great deal.

Matloff: Let me draw you into the '50s now, into the two problems on which, I am sure, you have been interviewed ad infinitum--NSC 68 first, and then the Gaither Committee report. In connection with NSC 68 in the early spring of 1950, how did you get drawn in on that? What were its origins, and what role did you play in connection with it?

Nitze: To summarize it, at that time the Joint Chiefs of Staff had a special group of three colonels who advised them on all things having to do with nuclear weapons. We called them "the nuclear colonels." Colonel Zimmerman was one; I forget the other two. In any case, they came in to see me--I was Kennan's deputy in the Policy Planning Staff during '49. They described to me the technology which they thought could lead to a thermonuclear weapon and this, in their opinion, would increase the power of a nuclear weapon by a factor of a thousand. It was their view that the AEC was not prosecuting this technology with the speed and energy

that it should and that somebody ought to look into this and see whether or not it should be promoted. So I said that I would look into it because at that point I was basically handling liaison between the State Department and the Defense Department for not only the Policy Planning Staff but for the Department as a whole. The first thing I did was to get hold of Oppenheimer, who was the consultant to the Policy Planning Staff on nuclear matters. He advised me that there were those, including Teller, who thought that such a device could be developed, but that he had gone into it and had concluded that it had three defects. The first was that it was highly unlikely that the thing could be made to work; secondly, if it could be made to work, it would be a vast piece of machinery and could not possibly be weaponized; thirdly, that the requirement of nuclear material would be so great that its effects would be less than those one could get with fission weapons using the same amount of material; fourthly, the real problem was whether the Russians would ever have this technology. He thought it obvious that they would not get the technology, unless we had first demonstrated that it was feasible. They were far behind us; if we didn't develop it, they would never be able to master it. If we did develop it, they would know it could be done and in time would be able to do it; this would be a great tragedy. I went into all four of these points that Oppie was advancing and came to the conclusion that none of them was necessarily true. I got hold of Teller and he explained to me on a blackboard how he proposed to make the thing work. I'm not a physicist but I understood enough about it to be persuaded that he was correct, or might be correct. Secondly, it was not clear that it couldn't be weaponized.

Thirdly, it wasn't clear that it would require so much nuclear material that it couldn't be a useful weapon. But the most important question was whether or not the Russians would get it if we developed it, but wouldn't get it if we didn't. On that issue Oppie advised me to talk to Dr. Lawrence of the Lawrence Livermore Laboratories. The whole essence of Oppie's case was that you needed free publication of scientific information in order to make real scientific advances, and that's why we could do things and the Russian couldn't. Lawrence said that this was absolute nonsense, that the only people in his laboratory that were working in this field were all working in the utmost secrecy. He said that he had passed the age where he could make advances in the field, that nobody beyond the age of 24 was really able to help in this field, and that all of these fellows who were making the great advances in the field were young and relied upon interchange with their peers in the laboratory and the respect of their peers and the stimulus of breaking the frontiers of past knowledge. He was sure the same was true in the U.S.S.R. and there was no reason that he could see why, if it were technically feasible, the Russians couldn't do it--that it didn't depend upon publication and it didn't depend upon what we did. The upshot was that I came to the conclusion that it would be disastrous to U.S. security if the Russians had this weapon and we did not, and that therefore as a minimum we must undertake the research to see whether the technology was exploitable or whether it wasn't. Otherwise we could be left in a disastrous position, if they had it and we didn't. I then went to Lilienthal and told him my conclusions. Lilienthal didn't so much disagree with my attitude on the four points,

because it was hard to argue conclusively against them, but he said that it was his conviction that no one in the U.S. government had given sufficient thought to the questions of the impact upon the world and upon policy, strategy, and "what do we do next," of weapons this powerful--in effect a thousand times more powerful than the weapons used in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. I said that I could not agree with him more. I thought that was correct, and that what the government should do was to conduct a basic review of strategy in light of these potential developments. So I drafted a decision paper on this issue as to whether or not the U.S. should proceed with research and development work on the "super," as it was called, and attached as the last paragraph a directive from the President to the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Defense that they undertake a basic review of strategy in light of these facts. That was the origin of NSC 68. The President signed that piece of paper on Acheson's recommendation. That directive went to Johnson and Acheson, and Acheson asked me to head up the work on behalf of the State Department. So that's the origin of this work.

Matloff: You were dealing in the course of this work with people in OSD, I take it. Whom in particular were you dealing with? Did you have any contacts with Louis Johnson in the course of the work, and after the report came out?

Nitze: Louis Johnson had laid down a rule that no one in the Pentagon was to have any contact with anybody in the State Department without his personal permission. That obviously didn't work, so he then appointed General James Burns, whose desk was in his outer office, to be the person who

would work with Doc Matthews in the State Department. All contacts between the two organizations would be cleared between Doc Matthews and Burns and nobody could see each other without approval through that contact. So I talked to General Burns and asked how we should go about fulfilling the directive. He said that he had consulted with Johnson and the Joint Chiefs and it had been determined that General Landon, a member of the Joint Strategic Survey Committee, would be the person who would work with me in organizing the work. Gen. Landon came over and we discussed it. I found that he had a minimal view as to what this was all about.

Matloff: You mentioned George Kennan--you were the deputy at the time?

Nitze: I was his deputy during 1949.

Matloff: Then from '50 to '53 you became the director?

Nitze: I became the director on January 1.

Matloff: Did you agree with Kennan about the nature of the Soviet threat and how to meet it? This is, again, still related to NSC 68. There were assumptions, I take it, being made about the nature of the Soviet threat. What were the assumptions, and were your reactions to that threat the same as George Kennan's, or somewhat different?

Nitze: At the time I didn't think that they were different, because George was one of the first who thoroughly recognized that this was a very serious threat. He had been the principal author of a paper, NSC 20/4, the recommendations of which finally were reaffirmed as the bulk of the recommendations of NSC 68. So I really didn't think there was much difference between our viewpoints. The main difference was how do you react--what should the United States do in relation to that threat?

There was one element of the threat where both factors were really involved, and that was whether there was a military element in the threat. Kennan didn't really disagree that there was a military element; the policy of containment implied being willing to contain the military element if there were such. But Kennan's view as to what was adequate to contain it was different from mine. He had had no experience with military strategy or military forces or what it takes to win or lose a battle or a war. One time in the spring of 1949 we discussed this matter. It was his opinion that two well-equipped and well-trained elite marine divisions were all that were required to contain any threat that the Soviet Union would be expected to mount. That was not my view. There was a difference of day and night between what I thought the military requirement in a nuclear age was and what his view was. So that's where we really differed. He from that day to this has thought that I overestimated the threat, which I think is an unfair accusation. My view is that he underestimated the response which was necessary in order to contain that threat. He had no appreciation of it.

Matloff: Let me ask you to comment on a statement made by Mr. Acheson in his memoirs about NSC 68: "The purpose of NSC 68 was to so bludgeon the mass mind of 'top government' that not only could the President make a decision but that the decision could be carried out." Do you agree with that statement?

Nitze: No. It is my view that what was necessary was as clear and as precisely and as thoroughly stated an analysis of all the issues as we

were capable of; we had no intent to bludgeon anybody. Mr. Acheson uses colorful phrases.

Matloff: In the writing on the post-World War II period, NSC 68 is usually regarded as laying the groundwork for rearmament, which followed. Do you feel that its long-range impact was as important as the short-range? Was there any enduring legacy of NSC 68? What was its significance, and your part in it?

Nitze: We were faced by a number of important policy issues at that time--'49-'50. After all, in 1949 not only had the Soviets detonated their first nuclear device, but also Mao Tse-tung had established his dominance over the entire Chinese mainland so that the size and power of the Moscow/Peking bloc at that time had grown immensely. The threat, prospect, and certainty that the Soviet Union would build large quantities of nuclear weapons was before us. A number of problems faced us then, in the spring of 1950. One of them was that whether the principal focus of our defense effort should be on nuclear weapons or conventional weapons. Mr. Acheson and I had come to the conclusion that we had over time to switch the emphasis from nuclear weapons to conventional weapons, because with the Russians building nuclear weapons, the benefit of any margin we might be able to preserve would decrease. Therefore the cutting edge of our defense would have to shift to the conventional field. On the other hand, it seemed to me that the time that would be involved in getting sufficient conventional capability really to do that was quite long. Therefore, it was necessary to maintain as much of a nuclear margin

concurrently as we could. To sort all that out was a very important intellectual exercise, which we did, and which I think has continued to be useful to this day. There has been a lot of argument about it, but I think the essence of it has maintained until this day.

The second problem was whether it was true, as Truman, Johnson, and the Director of the Bureau of the Budget thought, that the U.S. economy could only maintain a defense budget in the range then of 12 1/2 to 13 billion dollars, or was it true, as some of the rest of us thought, that the U.S. could maintain, even in peacetime, a defense budget as large as 5 to 10 percent of the GNP. I think that we came out right on that particular issue as well. What we thought was needed in order to do that prudently would be to increase taxes whenever you needed to, which one president and congress after another has shied away from, but I think our economic analysis has been demonstrated to have been correct.

The third issue was the question of the nature of the Soviet threat-- was the Soviet interest primarily defensive, was it primarily oriented toward maintaining control of the Soviet regime within the U.S.S.R. and dominance over its then satellites; or was the external drive important? We came to the conclusion that the prime interest was maintaining control over the U.S.S.R. itself. The second priority drive was with respect to its satellites. But the third was not inconsequential; it was a concomitant of their doctrine, and it was hard to get rid of that. This was not necessarily a short-term problem, but it was an important long range one.

Another problem was the question of what were the prospects of negotiation? We thought that under those circumstances it was unlikely that

one could get a worthwhile deal with the Soviet Union; that they just weren't going to negotiate with us until they felt that the correlation of forces was more or less even and they could do as well or better. I think that turned out to be correct. We just couldn't get anywhere with them. There were a number of such issues which we dealt with, and I think dealt with correctly.

There are some issues that we did not have the foresight to deal with correctly. We did not foresee the split between China and the U.S.S.R. We had no evidence of such a split and did not project such a split. We weren't arguing against anything communist, because we could see what was going on in Yugoslavia. The problem was control by Moscow; that was the thing we thought was dangerous. I could go on with the issues of substance of that time and how we dealt with them in that report. Frankly, I think we did well, and some of the shortcomings of the report were corrected in subsequent BNSP (Basic National Security Policy) decisions. We, for instance, had concentrated primarily on the threat to Europe and the Far East. We had not emphasized the threat to the southern flank, the Middle East, Africa, and so forth. In the subsequent BNSP document, NSC 141, we went into that in detail and made the point that in NSC 68 we had underestimated the southern flank; that we thought that was going to be a question of increasing worry. In substance, I think that we dealt with the major issues which were before us at the time seriously, competently, and as well as we could, on the basis of imperfect knowledge. There obviously were things we didn't get right, but you can't do everything perfectly.

Matloff: In light of the assumptions about the Soviet threat, were you then very surprised by the outbreak of the Korean War? Did that war in any way change your thinking about the Soviet threat?

Nitze: I wasn't surprised by that at all. A friend of mine, Alexander Sachs, an economist at Lehman Brothers, whom I had known in my Wall Street days, came down to see me in February or March of 1950 and had with him three sets of papers. One was an analysis of Soviet doctrine, particularly their doctrine concerning the correlation of forces--what you do when the correlation of forces is favorable, what you do when it's negative, and what you do when it changes from negative to favorable. The point was that when the Russians see the correlation of forces as being negative to them, then, as they did at the time of the treaty of Brest-Litovsk, their practice is to retreat, to throw dust in the enemy's eyes, and to try to buy time so that they can change the correlation of forces. When the correlation has suddenly become more favorable to them, then they are duty bound by their doctrine to exploit and nail down advantages which can be achieved through that favorable change; if they delay and don't nail them down while they have the opportunity, they are delinquent. The second paper dealt with whether or not the changes in the last two years would be interpreted by the Russians as representing a dramatic and important change in the correlation of forces; it came to the conclusion that they must be. The consolidation by Mao Tse-tung of his control over the Chinese mainland and the development by the U.S.S.R. of a nuclear capability must be interpreted by them as an important change in the correlation of forces. The next question was where might they feel duty

bound to exploit that correlation? He had a map of the world and he analyzed each one of the vulnerable salients and he came to the conclusion that Korea was the place where they would attack through their north Korean satellite. He came to the conclusion that they would attack in the middle of the summer of 1950. So he hit it right on the button.

I didn't think there was anything silly about these three pieces of paper, I took the analysis up with John Muccio, who was our ambassador in Korea at the time, and he said, "I do not disagree with it. I think it is highly likely that there will be an attack by North Korea into South Korea. What should we do?" The Congress had just voted down military assistance to Korea so that the maximum we could get out of the Pentagon was \$10 million to buy PT boats to try to interfere with the infiltration of the North Koreans into South Korea. There wasn't much more that could be done about it. John Foster Dulles talked to me about this matter; he was very much disappointed in the fact that Korea and Taiwan had been exempted from the defense perimeter by U.S. policy. I explained to him why the policy was against our coming to the support of Korea, and why this had been so decided by the Chiefs. Dulles insisted that we had asked the wrong question of the Chiefs. We had asked if the defense of Taiwan and Korea was essential to the security of the United States and they analyzed it in the context of a nuclear war with the Soviet Union and said, "No." He said that shouldn't have been the question. The question should have been: Was it politically important to defend Taiwan and Korea? If the President were to decide it was politically important, can the Chiefs peel off enough forces to do so without undermining the

ultimate defense of the United States?

I took that problem up with the Joint Strategic Survey Committee, who took it up with the Chiefs. Finally they came back with the answer "No, we haven't enough forces to do it safely, regardless of the different question." So we did worry about it, but we only had seven divisions in being at the time. It was a very difficult thing to see how we were going to intervene successfully in defense of Korea. Dulles did go up to Korea and made a speech just before the attack in which he referred to the obligations under the charter of the U.N. and in effect told the North Koreans not to get us wrong, that we were going to abide by our commitment under the charter of the U.N. He did what he could to warn them; so it wasn't that we weren't aware of this risk.

Matloff: Before we leave that period of the Korean War, and during your capacity as director of the Policy Planning Staff, did you have many dealings with OSD during that period, and if so, over what issues? I recall your statement about Louis Johnson and his prohibition, did you have any direct dealings with OSD over any of the issues of the war, or other issues?

Nitze: My recollection is that Frank Nash succeeded General James Burns. Frank became a very close friend and collaborator with respect to all the issues of the Korean War as it went on; I kept working with Frank on those. We were involved up to our ears in the Korean War and in meetings with the Chiefs as well. When was Bob Lovett Deputy Secretary of Defense?

Trask: September, 1950, when Johnson went out and George Marshall came in--Lovett came in at the same time.

Nitze: I didn't have much to do with [Stephen Early], but I did a lot with Bob Lovett.

Trask: This defense perimeter became very controversial. Did you play any role in that? Mr. Truman and Mr. Acheson both talked about it in January 1950--exactly what were they trying to say?

Nitze: The Joint Chiefs made this decision back in the summer of '49, and the first public statement with respect to it was made on August 24, 1949, by General MacArthur. So that what Dean Acheson was saying was not a new statement. He was repeating what General MacArthur had said which was in fact a decision by the Joint Chiefs made some months earlier.

Whether that was wise to say or not, I don't know.

Trask: Did that reflect mainly thereafter in the military situation and the military capabilities of the United States?

Nitze: It was their estimate of what positions were in fact necessary for the United States in a war with the U.S.S.R. involving the use of nuclear weapons. They did not feel that Korea or Taiwan were essential to the defense of the United States in those circumstances and that any effort to defend them would involve a diversion of very scarce resources. If you have seven divisions, where are you going to put them? If you've got an inadequate number of ships, where will you put them? They thought that was too close to China and the U.S.S.R., and none of us doubted the close collaboration of China. As a matter of fact, I think the evidence since indicates that in those days the Chinese were more belligerent than the Russians.

Trask: When the North Koreans did invade, and Truman decided to resist, did the political analysis take precedence then, or was it because this was conventional rather than nuclear war?

Nitze: I was out salmon fishing in New Brunswick when the North Koreans attacked, so I wasn't in Washington for those two days. I came down right away, drove 80 miles an hour down through New Brunswick in order to get down. George Kennan was there, with Acheson and the President. It is my recollection from what they told me that there wasn't any doubt in anybody's mind that we should react. When you are faced with the actuality of an invasion you have to react if you can. The initial decision was to react with ground and sea forces. When I arrived, I don't think the decision had yet been made whether to react with ground forces, but it was made shortly thereafter. The first meeting in the White House of the NSC inter-departmental staff on this issue was one in which the Army had been asked to estimate how many divisions it would need if we did intervene. The answer was that we would need seven divisions and so and so many air squadrons; if the Chinese came in to back them, then we would need a larger number. That estimate of the Army and the Joint Staff turned out to be wholly accurate. That's what we put in there as long as it was just the North Koreans, and when the Chinese intervened we put in the additional two or three divisions and the additional air squadrons. This is one of the instances when the Army and the Joint Staff got it right within the first two days.

Matloff: Coming down to the fall of 1957 to the Gaither Committee Report, with which your name is indelibly imprinted--what were the origins of

that committee, how were you drawn in on it, and what role did you play? At this point you were out of government.

Nitze: I had gotten mad at General Eisenhower during the 1952 election campaign and had become a Democrat.

Trask: I wondered, when you said that you had made this analysis between nuclear and conventional forces and the emphasis of the Eisenhower administration's New Look on nuclear deterrence. I assume that was a factor in your thinking, at that point.

Nitze: Not really, no. I was mad at Eisenhower for not having defended Gen. Marshall, whom I greatly admired, against the McCarthy attack, and for accusing the Democrats for having improperly withdrawn the forces from Korea. I had insisted they not be withdrawn and Eisenhower had insisted that they be withdrawn, and I had been backed by everybody all the way up to the President of that administration. Then for Eisenhower to say that this caused the Korean War, when he was the one who had done it himself, seemed to me to be the most despicable lying kind of an accusation. Then he attributed the difficulties on access to Berlin to the miserable Democrats. He was the person who wouldn't back us who were arguing not to withdraw the forces from Leipzig and so forth until we had nailed down the question of access to Berlin. He withdrew them right away and was the one, in my estimation, who was effectively responsible for that. Then to say that this was a gross error on the part of the Democrats revolted me. He also made a speech in which he called the preceding administration a gang of crooks and carpetbaggers. Frankly, I had worked in Republican and Democratic administrations since 1940, and I

considered ours to be the most honorable and least corrupt government that the world had ever seen, and that still is my view. I had never once in all those years, from 1940 to 1952, seen more than a minute number of instances of improper activity, only about two or three. Harold Talbott had been a friend of mine--I was shocked to learn that he had acted improperly. I had a man working for me in the procurement of strategic materials during the war who had taken bribes with respect to the purchase of Chinchona bark in Colombia, and I couldn't think of anybody else. I personally had spent billions, and I had seen other people spend much more, but never once had I run into anybody in authority not dedicated to the national interest and honorable. And then to have this S.O.B. say that we were all a bunch of crooks and carpetbaggers. I was revolted.

Excuse me.

Matloff: Coming back to the Gaither Committee, how were you drawn in on it and what role did you play in connection with it in the fall of 1957?

Nitze: Frankly, I don't remember how I was drawn in on it.

Matloff: Somebody has indicated that perhaps your relation with James Phinney Baxter might have had something to do with it.

Nitze: No, I knew him slightly and had high admiration for him, but I'm sure he wasn't the one who brought me in. I think it must have been Bill Foster, or one of the deputies.

Matloff: Colonel Lincoln?

Nitze: Colonel Lincoln was drawn in at the same time I was. He was also persona non grata to the Eisenhower administration.

Matloff: George Lincoln?

Nitze: Yes, little Abe. He was drawn in at the same time I was. They had organized a big advisory committee with McCloy and other prominent names. I didn't know Gaither. But they got together a lot of competent people, and somebody said, "Two people that you ought to get in addition are Abe Lincoln and Paul Nitze." Abe was out of favor, I guess, because he had worked closely in previous administrations with the Executive Branch.

Matloff: He was very close to Marshall.

Nitze: That's right. I was out of favor because I had switched to being a Democrat, had supported the Democrats, and had written articles castigating Dulles and so forth. So I was a suspicious character. They appointed the two of us merely to be consultants to the group. I think that Abe and I probably knew as much about the business as anybody else on the committee, and we worked hard in connection with the subject because we cared about it. Then when it came to writing a report, Phinney Baxter was asked to write it, but he was not experienced in these issues and so he asked me to help him write it. I guess that many people attributed the style of the report to Phinney Baxter, which was excellent, but the content of it they attributed to me.

Matloff: Had the assumptions about the nature of the threat and the future of war by this time changed from those of NSC 68?

Nitze: I don't think that there was any change in the broad nature of the threat. There was a change in an appreciation of the strategic situation. The Gaither Committee was originally asked to do a study on civil defense. But the members of the committee came to the conclusion that that was not

the primary problem. The primary problem was the growing vulnerability of bombers--B-52s, B-47s, and maybe a few B-36s left at that time. In any case, the number of airfields we had on which B-52s were located I think was 12, and the number of fields on which our tankers were located was less. The tankers were on different fields. I think there were five or six of the tanker fields. None of those crews was trained to take off on warning, because there wasn't any warning. There weren't any radars, or at least the radar network was totally inadequate. The Russians could weave through the interstices between the radar fans, and there were whole parts where there were no radars at all, such as the Gulf Coast. Albert Wohlstetter had done a study indicating what the Soviets could do with 8 attacking aircraft--that those 8 in fact had the prospect of being able, in surprise attack, of taking out 90 percent of our bombers in the United States.

Matloff: Just for the record, Wohlstetter was working at Rand at the time. Was he drawn in as a consultant for the committee, too?

Nitze: No, he had written a report on SAC vulnerability for the Air Force, working for Rand.

Matloff: You had access to that?

Nitze: Yes, and so did others. This seemed to be the main problem, particularly after Sputnik--the prospect that the Russians might have missiles which could attack our bomber forces and then we would only have 30 minutes of warning.

Matloff: That came while the committee was at work. I understand this had an impact upon the committee.

Nitze: I think Wohlstetter had written this report for the Rand Corporation prior to that time. But the problem was this prospect of primary reliance upon our strategic deterrent and the enormous vulnerability of our strategic deterrent. Something had to be done about it, and so the main part of the Gaither Report dealt with that. All the Class I (we divided the recommendations into Class I and Class II) recommendations dealt with the necessity for an adequate radar network to give us early warning, training the bomber crews so that they could get off within the warning, and diversifying our deterrent through building silo-based ICBMs and SLBMs.

Matloff: In connection with the work on the Gaither Report, there was a great debate going on among the strategic theorists at that time and, of course, later as well, particularly in light of the Korean War, about what that war meant for the future of warfare, strategy, policy, and the like. To cite just a few examples, William Kaufmann, at the time writing that the Korean War argued for a strategy of limited war and conventional buildup. On the other side, John Foster Dulles advanced the concept of massive retaliation and reliance on nuclear weapons. There was a debate about the use of nuclear weapons on the battlefield. Brodie apparently at this point changed his mind and agreed with Kaufmann that conventional defense probably better fitted the problem ahead. There was also a debate over civil defense. Do you recall your position on these questions at the time?

Nitze: As I said, Acheson's and my view in 1949, when we first got word of the Soviet explosion of a nuclear device, was that in the long run one had

to move toward a conventional buildup. That had to be the cutting edge of policy. It couldn't be nuclear weapons when you had roughly comparable nuclear forces; they'd be too destructive. What Kaufmann was saying, I think, was on the right side of the issue. You don't want a general war; if you have to have a war, for God's sake keep it limited. If you can possibly keep it limited to conventional weapons, for God's sake keep it limited to conventional weapons. Kaufmann was dead right, and Foster Dulles was dead wrong, and I think that is just as true today as it was then. Brodie was an incompetent strategist on this issue from the beginning, in my view.

Matloff: How about on civil defense? How did you come down on that question?

Nitze: In connection with the U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey, in a summary report of the experience in the Pacific, we came out strongly for civil defense. It is probably more important than anything else you can do.

Matloff: The same concept was incorporated in the Gaither Committee Report, as you wrote it, that that too was a vital necessity?

Nitze: Yes, but second to having an adequate deterrent, one that is survivable. Dollar for dollar, if you're beyond the point of deterring a war, to what will really pay off in a war, civil defense is by far the best thing you can do.

Matloff: How did you view the work and arguments of some of the civilian strategists of the time? You've already spoken of Brodie. On Kaufmann, I think you have indicated a more sympathetic view. How about Herman Kahn

and Wohlstetter? I take it you were dealing with these people while you were working on the Gaither Committee report.

Nitze: Herman Kahn was one of the members of the staff of the Gaither Committee Report, and I had known him earlier. Wohlstetter's work was important to it, as was the work of others in the Rand Corporation.

Matloff: You were dealing with these people, I take it, fairly frequently in connection with the report?

Nitze: I was dealing with them frequently in connection with my work in general. I didn't have much to do with Brodie.

Matloff: Do you recall, during this period in the late '50s, when there was talk of the Soviet ICBM arsenal in the near future and different estimates were offered by the intelligence agencies on what the size of that arsenal might be, on what estimates the Gaither Committee was basing its report? Did it reflect the basic assumptions, for example, of the Air Force, particularly of SAC intelligence, or Army and Navy estimates?

Nitze: I think that it was the CIA estimate. It was their function to come up with a consolidated, inter-departmentally vetted estimate.

Matloff: Were you entirely satisfied with the collective views of the committee when you came to write up the report? Did you agree with everything in the report, or did you disagree with some of the findings and recommendations? For example, a writer, Fred Kaplan, recently has written in the book called The Wizards of Armageddon that while many of its members were critical of Dulles's massive retaliation doctrine, "their collective view on the use of nuclear weapons was no less oriented to massive retaliation than the Secretary of State's."

Nitze: He is an unreliable commentator. He once interviewed me and nothing that he has ever said since about that interview has been correct. I have zero regard for Mr. Kaplan.

Matloff: Then that part of the report did not disturb you, disregarding his view of it?

Nitze: All of us were convinced that relying solely on massive retaliation was a bad thing. Maybe what Kaplan has in mind is that all of us thought that it was not excluded that a war might occur in which nuclear weapons might be used.

Matloff: Looking back on that report now, how do you view its significance? NSC 68 obviously had a great impact in terms of the rearmament that followed. How about the Gaither Committee Report?

Nitze: I recollect reading someplace that President Eisenhower took a rather dim view of it and thought that he was already implementing many of the recommendations. With respect to its concentration upon doing something about the instability inherent in having the major portion of our strategic forces vulnerable to a surprise attack, there I think we made an enormous impact upon everybody's thinking. That was the main thrust of that report. Today great attention is paid to what is called "crisis stability"; that's what we were talking about. That was a supreme example of a situation in which crisis instability existed, even though we had a large superiority in the power of our forces, but they were excessively vulnerable. But what today people miss is that there are two criteria to an adequate deterrent. One of them is that the major portion

of your offensive forces should not be vulnerable to a surprise attack; the second one is that you need adequate volume and power in your forces. One wholly invulnerable missile is certainly crisis stable; there's no temptation to anybody to attack it or for you to use it. You can always use it, but it is totally inadequate to give you deterrence against a full panoply of Soviet arms. You have to have both adequate quantity and adequate survivability. It's hard for the public to maintain two criteria in mind concurrently. It will either switch to one or the other, but the idea that one is a necessary condition but not a sufficient condition is hard for the public to understand. It is hard for the Pentagon to understand.

Matloff: The title of the report that eventually came out, "Deterrence and Survival in the Nuclear Age," reflects the broadening of the thinking about civil defense as you went along.

Nitze: Even the deterrence part has two parts.

Matloff: You have had such a long career that has taken so many facets that I'm having trouble getting into the Department of Defense part of your career, but I've finally arrived at that point. Let's concentrate for a while on your role as Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs, from January 1961 to November 1963. First of all, the background of the appointment--what were the circumstances, who recommended you for it, and what instructions were you given and by whom about the position?

Nitze: Briefly, after President Kennedy was elected and had chosen Dean Rusk to be his Secretary of State, he called me up and asked me which of three positions I wanted--adviser on national security in the White

House, Deputy Secretary for Economic Affairs to Dean Rusk, or Deputy Secretary of Defense. I asked, "How long do I have to make up my mind?" He said "Thirty seconds." So I responded, "All right, if I've got thirty seconds, I want the job as Deputy Secretary of Defense, because I've done the economic work, I want to get into the strategic work and the interface between foreign policy and Defense, and I don't think that can be done without someone who understands the problem being in the Defense Department. You can't do it from the White House unless you can work with somebody in the Pentagon who understands it." He said, "Done." Then later he asked McNamara to be Secretary of Defense, and McNamara had accepted on condition that he could choose his own staff. He decided that I was too prickly, had too many ideas of my own, and that he and I would fight if I were his deputy, which was quite true. But he did want me in his organization; he wanted me to be Assistant Secretary for ISA. I called up Jack Kennedy to protest, and he wouldn't answer my call. So I knew what I had to do.

Matloff: You had obviously known Kennedy before this.

Nitze: I had, indeed.

Matloff: In what connection, may I ask?

Nitze: I had known his father, Joe Kennedy, and had known Jack Kennedy when he was a Senator and Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on African Affairs. At that time I was devoting myself to African affairs. He, I think, valued my testimony before his Subcommittee on African Affairs. Then one of his staff members decided that I was the person she should consult on those sections of his speeches dealing with

Defense matters. So for a couple of years, prior to his running for President, I was more or less his speech consultant on matters having to do with Defense.

Matloff: Had you met McNamara before this?

Nitze: No.

Matloff: Had you been drawn in on that Symington committee that was set up to deal with the reorganization of Defense, by any chance?

Nitze: No, I was asked to head a different committee, which would deal with foreign policy and national security affairs. Symington's was to deal only with organization. Ros Gilpatric was a member of both committees. The other members on my committee were David Bruce and Joe Fowler. The four of us wrote the report on foreign and national security policy and Ros participated in the organizational report. I thoroughly disagreed with the organizational recommendations of the Symington report, we had a contra-section in our report.

Matloff: What in particular did you object to in the organizational proposals?

Nitze: I did not believe in Symington's doctrine of unification. I thought that what was needed was coordination and decision through the Secretary of Defense, but that you needed three separate services and you didn't get anywhere with this Air Force pitch for unification of the services, which was merely a pitch for the Air Force to get dominance over the Navy and the Army; it thought it worthless.

Matloff: Once you got the position, were you briefed by the President, the Secretary of Defense, or the Deputy Secretary of Defense--that would be Gilpatric? Did anybody brief you?

Nitze: I think that I briefed them. My report on foreign and security policy was accepted by Kennedy; he sent it to all members of the cabinet. It was, in fact, the initial guideline for the Kennedy administration on foreign and national security policy.

Matloff: The ISA has often been referred to as "the little State Department." How would you compare your positions in the two departments? Did this one differ?

Nitze: I think the point is that in various administrations the focal point for staff work relating to the interface between foreign policy and national security policy shifts from one organization to another, depending upon a lot of accidents, personalities, and so forth. During World War II the focal point was the International Section of the Operation and Plans Division of the Army, that's where the staff work on the interface between foreign policy was done under Col. Abe Lincoln. After the war it couldn't quite find its locus for a while, and for a time it was in the State/War/Navy Coordinating Committee. Then it shifted from there to the Policy Planning Staff in the State Department, both under Kennan and under me. The NSC staff under Admiral Souers did not want to do the job of doing the staff work; it wanted to see that it was done but did not want to do it itself. Then when President Eisenhower and Dulles came in, they were somewhat confused about it. Dulles was sure that he didn't want it done in the State Department. He thought that it ought to be done over in the Executive Office Building under Cutler's staff, but he didn't really approve of the work done by Cutler and his staff. So it wasn't well done, in my opinion. I stayed on in the Eisenhower administration

for a while. I saw how it was being done and I do not believe that it was well done. When Mr. Kennedy came in, he was advised by Dick Neustadt that it would be a bad idea to have a basic national security policy document, that this would restrict his freedom of action. So, for a while, it just wasn't done by anybody in the Kennedy administration. Certainly the Policy Planning Staff in the State Department, originally under George McGee, wasn't doing it. I didn't think that Mac Bundy was doing it. Therefore there was kind of a vacuum. It seemed to me, that where there's a vacuum somebody fills it and why shouldn't we in ISA fill it. I was close to President Kennedy and he had confidence in me. We dealt with all kinds of issues which normally would have been done by the State Department. For instance, after the Bay of Pigs, the problem came up of how do we revise our policy toward Cuba, the Caribbean, and South America. What kind of a new policy could we undertake after the disaster of the Bay of Pigs? He looked around the oval office, pointed his finger at me, and said, "You'll do it, Paul." I replied, "You know, this is a job that ought to be done by the State Department." He said, "I don't give a damn where you do it." I replied, "All right, I'll move over to the State Department, but I don't think it ought to be done from the Pentagon."

Matloff: I get the sense then that some of the same functions that you had performed in State you were now doing in Defense. Was there a difference in working in the bureaucracy in Defense from that in State?

Nitze: Yes, because, as I say, I thought that the interface of foreign policy and defense policy should be done in the State Department. My view was that the NSC staff was too close to the President and too close

to the hard political trading on the decisions that the President makes, because once the President makes it it's for keeps. If you want to have decisions based upon objective analysis, you have to remove it a little distance from that snake pit at the White House. It can best be done, I think, under the chairmanship of the State Department. But the people who do it have got to have an instinct for it, otherwise they don't get the respect of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and of the various sections of the State Department, the Pentagon, and so forth. You need a group that really will address itself seriously to the problem and is backed by the Secretary of State and by the President--that is the proper place to have that staff work done. I always felt uncomfortable about doing it from the Pentagon, and so did McNamara. His feeling was, "Dean Rusk is the Secretary of State. Paul, you and I shouldn't be insisting upon these things." I remember when the issue came up about the "multilateral force." Some in the State Department had the misbegotten idea that eventually the finger on the trigger would be turned over to the Europeans and we would remove our finger from the safety catch. My view was that the State Department paper was so complicated that you really had to study it to see what its effect would be. I thought it was dishonestly presented, that it was wrong in policy, and that the Congress would never tolerate any such thing. McNamara agreed with me on it. Dean [Rusk] agreed with us, but he wouldn't overrule his staff. So for years that concept stayed around with its ambiguity. When Johnson found out what this really amounted to, he fired everybody connected with it.

Matloff: On the question of the staff that you had in ISA, how much leeway did you have in selecting and organizing it? Did you make any changes in personnel, organization, or procedures?

Nitze: I believed in continuity. Jack Irwin had the job before me, so I consulted with Jack. He had a deputy by the name of Knight who I thought was first class. I asked Knight whether he would stay on and be my deputy, and asked a lot of the other people to stay on. Most of them did. Some of them I got rid of and replaced with other people that I thought were better. Some of them I lost and had a hard time getting people to replace them.

Matloff: You didn't bring in any of the Rand people?

Nitze: Yes, I did. I brought in Harry Rowen, but I also brought in new people from the military, particularly Admiral John Marshall (Squidge) Lee, and then later, when he left me, I brought in Johnny Vogt, an Air Force General. I talked to Zuckert, who was Secretary of the Air Force, and said that I wanted the best officer he had for this role (the Services were prepared to give me good people because they knew ISA was important) and he recommended Johnny Vogt to me. I inquired from others about Vogt and was told that he was the strongest, most difficult infighter in the Joint Staff that anybody had ever seen, but that, if he worked for me, he would be loyal to me. So I hired him and he was loyal, impartial, and absolutely first class. I got a lot of very good people from the military. Admiral Zumwalt came in when he was a captain. He had given a speech at the National War College. I gave one the next day and found everybody

talking about his speech, not mine; I felt humiliated. I found out who this captain was, called up the Chief of Navy Personnel, and said, "I've never met this Captain Zumwalt, but he's going to work for me." So he did.

Matloff: About the working relationships, first with the top officials in OSD, people like McNamara and the deputy, Gilpatric--how often did you see them, and how close were you with them?

Nitze: With McNamara, two or three times a day. I'd see Ros Gilpatric less often. They acted as a team. McNamara's view was that his deputy should be his alter ego; he generally had lunch with his deputy every day. So you could work with either one of them but McNamara was the decisive one. Sometimes to get something done, Ros was the right fellow to get it done through.

Matloff: Did you enjoy working with McNamara in this post?

Nitze: I differed with him on a lot of things.

Matloff: Any serious differences on matters of policy or administration?

Nitze: Yes, we had serious differences.

Matloff: Do you recall what those might have been?

Nitze: By and large I thought that his sense of strategy was not good. His sense of numbers was absolutely fabulous. But I thought that he let that get the better of him. You can't imagine the amount of detail that he kept in his mind. As for policy differences, I thought that despite the fact that Mr. Kennedy didn't want a basic national security policy document, such a document was necessary for the Pentagon. I proposed that State, JCS, and the Pentagon straighten out the serious policy issues

among us so that we could have a document. You can't run an organization of three or four million people without some degree of clarity as to what the purposes are and what the ground rules are, some guidelines as to what you're trying to accomplish. So I got the State Department people to agree with this, and so did the JCS. We got it down to a point where there were, as I remember, nine issues on which the Joint Chiefs of Staff and ISA couldn't agree. Andy Goodpaster was working in the Chairman's office, and he and I got up a paper outlining the nine issues on which we needed decisions from McNamara. I took it up with McNamara and he wouldn't make the nine decisions. He said that all we had to do was to read his and the President's speeches, and that would be an adequate guide. My point was that his and the President's speeches were full of internal contradictions and between each other; you could find quotations which would support any kind of a policy. The problem was what was policy. He said, "Well, the President doesn't want a BNSP and therefore we're not going to have one." I said, "Let's handle it another way; supposing I hire Bill Kaufmann and get him in to write a book on your views on policy, a selection from your speeches, and you can select those things that you really believe in." He got Bill Kaufmann in and that resulted in his book called The McNamara Strategy; that was the closest I could come to it. I could go through twenty different issues on which we had a different view.

Matloff: On the issues of strategy, were there any substantive differences?

Nitze: I didn't think that he had a very good sense of strategy. To raise another one: his view was that the U.S. can afford any defense requirement

that is necessary. I didn't think that was the right way to go at it. There were budgetary limits, both political and economic. The sky wasn't the limit, and you weren't going to be able to persuade the Congress to appropriate everything you asked for. His view was, ask for it, and we'll get it. It appeared attractive, but it didn't seem to me to be realistic at all. The truth of the matter is that you have an interface between requirements and availability and you have to deal with that in some pragmatic, practical sense. In order to adhere to his doctrine, he began to fudge on the requirements, in order to bring the requirements down to what we could afford, and that creates the wrong precedent. You fudge one thing and that causes you to fudge on a lot of other things. That was the cause of many of our disagreements. We really got along very well, because many things we agreed on and he enjoyed this interchange. I was one of the few people, I think, that could talk to him and not agree with him whose viewpoint he would still respect. I controlled a company called the Aspen Skiing Corporation. He loved to ski and became a director of the skiing corporation, so we had this bond of joint interest in skiing. We still have lunch together frequently. So these disagreements were solely on substance, not on personality.

Matloff: Did you have dealings with some of the assistant secretaries more than others?

Nitze: Yes.

Matloff: Charlie Hitch?

Nitze: I suggested Charlie Hitch to McNamara. I thought highly of Hitch.

Matloff: Runge and Paul?

Nitze: I recommended Runge, and that was a mistake. I made an error.

Matloff: Norman Paul? Thomas Morris?

Nitze: Thomas Morris I had the highest regard for, and so did McNamara. He was still there when I became Deputy Secretary. Any memorandum that came out from Tom Morris you could sign with complete confidence that the staff work had been well done and that it was sound.

Matloff: Did you have many dealings with the service secretaries in this position? Stahr, Vance, Connally, Zuckert--

Nitze: Yes, I did. As ISA, you have less to do with people in that position than you do with those in OSD and the Organization of Joint Chiefs, so I didn't have much to do with Korth, and very little with Connally.

Matloff: How about the JCS--did you ever get to sit in on any of their meetings in this capacity?

Nitze: Regularly, at least once a week.

Matloff: Lemnitzer and Taylor?

Nitze: We had a weekly meeting with the Chiefs to which McNamara, Ros Gilpatric, and I would go.

Matloff: How about with State--with whom were you dealing?

Nitze: I dealt generally with the Policy Planning Staff. I guess Rostow or McGhee was the focal person when I was in ISA.

Matloff: Did you go directly to them or did you have to let the Secretary know what was coming up before you went?

Nitze: No, I arranged a weekly luncheon, on Mondays. We would go over to lunch with the Director of the Policy Planning Staff, and also with

the head of current intelligence in the CIA, and Mac Bundy or somebody from his staff.

Matloff: How about with the White House--could you go directly to Kennedy or did you have to go through the national security adviser?

Nitze: That was a tricky business. I couldn't go to the White House without letting McNamara know.

Matloff: Did you usually tell McNamara?

Nitze: Yes, unless they wanted to see me.

Matloff: How about Congress--how did you handle problems of appearing before congressional committees if your views differed from those of the Secretary of Defense possibly? Did you ever have any problems of that kind? How much leeway did you have in appearing before a congressional committee?

Nitze: The rule was clear, and that was that you supported the policy as decided by the President, and that if you disagreed with it, if asked, you could state your disagreement but you had also to state what the government's position was and why. You would have to give it a fair shot. If they asked you about your personal view, you had to give your personal view of it, but then explain how and why it differed and what were the reasons for the government's position in the Executive Branch.

Matloff: Did you make much use of outside consultants in this position, bringing people in on a temporary basis from the outside, say from the think tanks, or universities, or any other sectors of society, or were you relying on your staff, basically, in ISA?

Nitze: Much more on the staff than on outsiders. I'm sure that we had people that were letting contracts with think tanks, but, by and large, we had the illusion that we knew more about it than the outsiders did.

Matloff: To come back to the threat, was there any change in your attitude toward the Soviet threat as a result of your experiences in ISA, or was it basically the same view that you had before?

Nitze: Very early in my career in ISA it became evident that the missile gap problem and the Gaither Committee problem of vulnerability of our bombers had been pretty well cured. By 1961 we had a few Polaris submarines at sea, and some Titans, Atlases, and so forth deployed; we had gotten a radar network installed, and the crews had been trained to get off within the anticipated warning time. All those problems that had existed at the time of the Gaither Committee and Sputnik seemed to have evaporated, not wholly, but certainly we were in a general position of crisis stability rather than crisis instability. That made a lot of difference in your viewpoint; you could be more relaxed about the Soviet threat. I can remember once having lunch at Menshikov's request (he was the Soviet ambassador), and he began belaboring me about this, that, and the other thing. I found myself referring to the threats that Mr. Khrushchev had just been making about destroying England with three nuclear weapons, and about burning down the olive groves of Greece unless Greece did this and that. I said that we disapproved of that. We didn't make such threats against them. I went on to say that I had participated in, I thought, all, or most of, the studies with respect to what would happen in a nuclear war between the United States and the U.S.S.R., in which it was

assumed that the U.S. dropped a thousand megatons on the U.S.S.R.--2, 5, 10, 20 thousand megatons and that the picture was not very happy. But we weren't in the business of making threats to the U.S.S.R., and we didn't intend to make threats. He said, "Oh, yes, we don't make threats against you, because you're a nuclear power." I responded, "Am I to gather from that that you consider it perfectly fair to make threats against those who can't defend themselves, but not proper to make threats against those who can defend themselves?" He left in some embarrassment, because he didn't have a good answer to that line of thought. My point is that the problem switched from real concern as to whether the United States was in such an unstable position that we might be attacked and surprised to one of what the Soviets would do to others, to our allies, in the third world--that became the nature of the problem.

Matloff: Back to the question of strategic planning--did ISA and yourself in particular get involved in strategic planning during this period, '61-'63--either in formulation, or in coordination, or in any aspect at all?

Nitze: In part, yes. First of all, I was very much drawn into a study on the continuity of government in the event of a nuclear war, a tricky problem. Secondly, with respect to all those issues having to do with security in Europe and in Asia, for instance, we were at the heart of the work on those problems. That got us into the interface between our strategic defense and our theater defense. The result was that McNamara took me with him on all his trips to Europe where we would argue with Lemnitzer and his predecessors and successors in connection with NATO strategy. The distance between the two of us was not very great.

Matloff: Were you an advocate of flexible response?

Nitze: In a certain sense I was the author of it.

Matloff: Did ISA get involved in counterinsurgency planning?

Nitze: Yes, we did.

Matloff: I know that you are well read in the strategic theorists. We already mentioned Brodie, and I was tempted to raise a question about Brodie's notion that strategy had hit a dead end in the nuclear age. I should ask if you agree with that or not.

Nitze: That's part of my disagreement with Brodie. I rather think that my Russian friends are closer to the truth.

Matloff: How about the statement by Raymond Aron, whom you probably knew, that revolutionary war was the poor man's total war in conflicts with highly technological societies. Would you have gone along with that notion?

Nitze: There is certainly an element of truth in it.

Matloff: On the general question of strategy in the Kennedy administration, what and who were the dominant influences in this period in the making of that strategy? Was it coming out of the Pentagon?

Nitze: There were two streams. There was a stream of it that came from McNamara. There were several different inputs, there was bound to be. McNamara had his views; I had my views which were not too different, except in detail; and the NSC staff had its. In the NSC staff, Mac Bundy had a deputy by the name of Carl Kaysen, who I thought was a very bad apple--really a lemon, I still think.

Matloff: I take it that you went along with the changes that were introduced in the strategic field in the Kennedy administration on the whole?

Nitze: Such as?

Matloff: I'm thinking of more emphasis on the conventional option, on the limited war options.

Nitze: Those didn't originate then.

Matloff: How about the debate over counterforce vs counter-city? Were you drawn in on that at all?

Nitze: I was indeed. I was and am a strong advocate of counterforce and strongly against counter-city.

Matloff: The need for counterinsurgency planning that became important in the Kennedy administration, you were going along with that too?

Nitze: I thought they rather overdid it, but I was for it.

Matloff: My own reading would be that they were looking for a broader range of options for the president.

Nitze: It was an important thing to do.

Matloff: On the question of interservice rivalry during this period, did this become a problem for you sitting in ISA?

Nitze: Not that much, I saw all this, but it wasn't directly goading my ox.

Matloff: How about the changes in budget that were introduced in the McNamara administration, the internal management reforms such as program packaging and systems analysis--did they have any impact on the operations of ISA?

Nitze: Yes, with respect to the initial program, the increase in conventional forces necessary--I was head of the task force McNamara appointed to work on that problem. Hitch was head of the task force dealing with

strategic forces. As we got into the Berlin crisis, I did most of the planning with respect to the budget supplements which resulted from that. I thoroughly approved of McNamara's work in trying to straighten out the budgetary processing. I thought that he was making an important advance in that art.

Matloff: You mentioned the missile gap--did you play any role in connection with it, either in its rise or demise?

Nitze: I think not. At the time of the Gaither Committee Report I don't remember that we ever used the words "missile gap." What we did point out was that the CIA was estimating that the Russians would have X number of missiles by such and such a time and that at that time, unless we had an offsetting capability, we would have a dangerous problem, particularly with respect to our Air Force, unless we could get our radars in place and working and our crews on alert. So that was all interconnected.

Matloff: Let me focus a bit now on some of the area crises and problems that came up during this period, some of which go back to your various positions in Defense. First, with reference to NATO, did ISA play any role in connection with NATO policy, buildup, or strategy? Were you drawn in on that?

Nitze: We played a central role.

Matloff: What was the nature of the problems and what positions did ISA take?

Nitze: There were so many problems and issues that it is hard to answer that in general. One of them clearly was with respect to the German problem and Germany's exclusion from participation in the nuclear world.

That's what led to the suggestion for the multilateral force. Before that it had led to similar proposals in 1960 that Spaak, Gates, and Herter had worked up. The question of German participation went back to 1953-54.

Matloff: In connection with NATO, did you foresee NATO as a long term alliance and the American military role in it as permanent?

Nitze: "Permanent" is too long a word, but, yes, I didn't see how we were going to get along without it.

Matloff: Remember when Acheson was called upon to testify during the time the treaty came up and the Senate asked him if he viewed this as a permanent commitment, and he rather waffled. First he said, "No," but then he retracted that somewhat.

Nitze: I would have said the same. Ideally you'd like to get out of it but you didn't quite see how.

Matloff: Did you feel that the nature of the threat to NATO had changed from its origin? The original notion was that the big threat was a drive by the Russian army vis-a-vis the central part of the alliance. From the early '60s you're dealing with a very different period. The Russian threat had expanded in terms of their having a navy and an air force, and we had the flanks to be worried about, too.

Nitze: Certainly the flanks, as you suggest, increased in importance, but the central problem continued to be the central front as the heart of the matter.

Matloff: On the proposition for a multilateral force--you did not go along with that?

Nitze: I thought the better alternative was to deal with the problem through a nuclear planning committee. Kennedy made a concurrent decision. He put Livy Merchant and Gerard Smith in charge of exploring the idea of a multilateral naval force and put me in charge of exploring the alternate program that I had been advocating, to draw the Germans and the others into nuclear planning through a nuclear planning committee in NATO. I got that organized and that exists today.

Matloff: That was while you were in the ISA position?

Nitze: Yes.

Matloff: About the crises closer to home, with reference to Cuba and the Bay of Pigs--what role did you and ISA play in this one?

Nitze: I'm not proud of my role in the Bay of Pigs. Knight was taken away from me and became Assistant Secretary of the Treasury. I got Bill Bundy to take his place. Bill and I made a tentative division of responsibilities under which he would deal with military assistance and various other special problems, including the Cuban problem. So I was really not dealing with Cuba much. But then we had assigned to us [Gen. Edward Lansdale] who had been associated with the CIA, and had been instrumental in developing Magsaysay in the Philippines. He was very able, but a loner and a difficult person to control. I found him to be working for me, at least I was administratively his boss. He came in to see me one day and said, "All this planning with respect to Cuba and this invasion of Cuba just won't work. I've been in it and know something about these things. It isn't being correctly planned and I guarantee it won't work." I talked to Bill about

it and he and those he was working with thought that it would work. I was busy and left it to them despite my doubts. Then a meeting was called in the State Department in Rusk's office. Kennedy asked that I be there as well as Bill Bundy, and he brought Senator Fulbright with him. Fulbright began to hold forth passionately about the moral impropriety of our trying to create a counterrevolution in Cuba. I thought that that was for the birds, and that if we could get rid of Castro, that was certainly the thing to do. So I got myself into an argument with Fulbright and never got around to making the point that I was doubtful the thing would work. So Kennedy, I think, was left with the impression that I had stated that I was for it, when I should have said that I was for the idea if it would work, but that I wasn't sure that it would work. So many of us, including me, felt very shamefaced about the Bay of Pigs.

Matloff: In regard to the Cuban missile crisis, how did you first learn that there was a crisis?

Nitze: We had weekly briefings in the tank in connection with our meetings with the JCS. They generally began with representatives of DIA holding forth on an intelligence summary. There was a very competent DIA naval officer who was keeping us abreast each week of all the bits and pieces of information which came in concerning Cuba. Having listened to those bits and pieces, I came to the conclusion that the evidence was overwhelmingly persuasive that the missiles were there. I was particularly impressed by information from the French that they had seen these missiles going through Havana in the dead of night.

Matloff: Were you drawn in on the work of the EXCOMM committee that was set up?

Nitze: I was part of it from the beginning. To continue my story, I told Bohlen a few days before the photographs came in that I was sure the missiles were there. I was having dinner with Rusk at the State Department on Sunday night, up on the eighth floor in his dining room, with Adenauer and some other Germans, when Rusk received word that we had obtained photographs confirming that they were there. He was called out of the room. He came back looking kind of pale. He took me out on the balcony, told me about the photographs, and asked me what I thought we should do next. Frankly, I didn't know what we should do next. I said, "Let's think about it. We can tell the President tomorrow and I will think about it overnight." So that was the beginning of the Cuban Missile Crisis.

Matloff: Do you recall what was the course of action you favored or recommended when you learned that there were offensive missiles in Cuba?

Nitze: The first thing to do was to try to figure out what the Russians were up to--what were their strategy, tactics, and probable maximum and minimum objectives. I wrote a paper on the first day on that subject and it was distributed to everybody. Then the debate turned to the issue of whether it was morally correct for a big country like the United States to attack Cuba, a small country. It was my view that that was the wrong question, that the question at issue was not Cuban responsibility, but Russian responsibility, and that we ought to make Russia the object of scorn, not Castro. That gradually came to be viewed as the correct way

of looking at the problem. Here we were spending hour after hour, day after day, just arguing the question of the morality of a possible operation. It seemed to me that somebody had to address himself to the question of who does what, when, to whom? Alexis Johnson and I worked up a scenario which all revolved around "S-hour," the hour when Mr. Kennedy would make a speech. If you wanted to carry out any military sanctions against Cuba and the Russians, you had to be militarily in a position to do it, know what preparations were necessary, and how long all the preparations would take. Clearly the one that would take longest to prepare would be an invasion. You didn't want to engage in an attack against the missile sites and the air defense sites until you were also in a position to invade, if you had to. You didn't want to conduct a blockade until you were prepared to do those other things, if the blockade failed. So there were a lot of things you had to do in the military field in order to get ready for all this. You had to get this so and so much done by S hour and know that you could get in so and so many hours or days after S hour, this done, that done, and so on. Then there were a lot of political things that needed to be done and some things you could do afterwards. We had all this S- and S+ by the hour and by the day worked out, but what we needed was a draft speech. I talked to Sorensen and asked him to write such a draft speech for us. He said, "But I don't know what the policy is." I said, "We'll tell you what the policy is. It doesn't make a G-D- bit of difference whether we're right or wrong because it is the President who's going to make the speech, when he goes over it and approves it." So he said, "How do I start?" So we laid out what we thought was

the right policy and Sorensen did a brilliant job of writing the initial draft of the speech. The combination of the scenario and the draft speech got people away from being way up in the clouds down to looking at the questions of what should the President say; what is the interrelationship among the ability to conduct a blockade (the name was changed to quarantine), to take out the air defense and missile sites, and to invade; which do you want to do first, in what order, and how do you time-phase all this? More people began to look at it in that way. It was an entirely different question than whether you favored one or the other, because the answer depended upon how the scenario evolved. If you started with the quarantine and the Russians then backed down, and their ships went back and ceased and desisted and the Soviets were prepared to pull out, then you didn't have to do anything more. If the quarantine didn't produce adequate results, then you had to take out the missile sites before they became effective and, in order to do that, you had to take out the air defenses. If that didn't work, you had to be in a position to occupy the island. You had to bring an end to this. So it wasn't a question of which one you were for. It was a question of the order in which you did these things and what the President said about these things. Once you put it into that kind of a pragmatic framework, then all the rest of these issues more or less went by the wayside.

Matloff: Was there a difference of views between the military and the civilians in the EXCOMM?

Nitze: Great. There were differences between everybody; nobody agreed with anybody else when we started.

Matloff: How closely were you in touch with both McNamara and Gilpatric during this crisis?

Nitze: McNamara, Gilpatric, Taylor, and I went to all those meetings together, and we talked about it before and going and coming. I was the one who had the task of seeing to it that whatever was decided at the EXCOMM, day by day, was in fact transmitted to the Joint Staff and was executed by the services, so that I was kind of a linchpin between the military decisions made at the EXCOMM and their implementation; Alexis Johnson was responsible for seeing to the implementation of the diplomatic and foreign policy decisions.

Matloff: What lessons did you come away with from dealing with the Soviets in this crisis--both their roles during the crisis and Khrushchev's retreat? For example, what made them retreat, in your opinion?

Nitze: What made them retreat, in my view, was that their strategic position was inferior, in that location, to ours. In the area of Cuba we had them a hundred to one. They had four submarines in the area and we made every one of those damn submarines surface. So there was nothing they could do in the area. They couldn't keep us from implementing a blockade and taking out their air defense sites and missile sites, and after we had done so, from invading Cuba. So the local situation was wholly in our favor and they couldn't do anything about it. The second thing was that in the strategic field, the intercontinental nuclear field, they were also inferior at that time, and so they were just in a position where they couldn't do anything effective about it. One thing that did worry us was what they might do in some other field. Could they resume the

blockade of Berlin, or attack Berlin? Could they attack Turkey? Could they do things in the Far East, and so on? Of course they could, but would they dare do that in the face of the nuclear superiority of the United States at the time? It seemed to me to be improbable that they would, although you couldn't guarantee it.

Matloff: How effectively did you feel the national security apparatus had operated in the case of the missile crisis compared with the Bay of Pigs fiasco? What was the difference and how effectively do you think it was operating during the Cuban missile crisis?

Nitze: During the missile crisis I thought it operated very effectively.

Matloff: Why do you think that? Why better in this case? Almost the same people were involved, weren't they?

Nitze: There was more high-level attention; the whole operation was really run by the EXCOMM, and nobody else had anything much to say about it. This was run by a responsible group at the top, whereas the Bay of Pigs was done by the CIA with some JCS and Joint Staff assistance through General Gray, but nobody at a high level vetted it in the same way. On this thing we had a chance really to work the problem, and we had a lot of good minds there--Acheson, McNamara, Taylor, Ball, Bobby Kennedy, Rusk, and particularly Sorensen and Alexis Johnson.

Matloff: Why do you suppose Kennedy turned to an EXCOMM rather than the National Security Council itself to handle this crisis?

Nitze: Every important thing was done by the EXCOMM and not by the National Security Council itself; the National Security Council action was holy water that you dropped on decisions already made. When you were

going to make a decision, you did it in an entirely different way.

Kennedy wanted to have present those who really understood whatever the issue was. He didn't want to have people there by virtue of the authority of their office and congressional mandate.