

Harlan Cleveland Oral History Interview—11/30/1978
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Biographical Note

Cleveland, Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization Affairs (1961-1965) and Ambassador to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) (1965-1969), discusses the relationship between John F. Kennedy, Adlai E. Stevenson, and Dean Rusk; Stevenson's role as U.S. ambassador to the United Nations; the Bay of Pigs invasion; the Cuban missile crisis; and the Vietnam War, among other issues.

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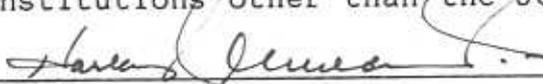
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Oral History Interview

with

Harlan Cleveland

November 30, 1978
Cambridge, Massachusetts

By Sheldon Stern

For the John F. Kennedy Library

STERN: I'd like to begin with the background of your appointment as Assistant Secretary of State for International Organizations. I know that Ambassador Stevenson [Adlai E. Stevenson] pretty much chose his own people at the U.N. [United Nations] and I wonder if you could give me the background of how that occurred.

CLEVELAND: Yes. When he agreed to do the U.N. job, which, of course, was a disappointment and a comedown from what he really wanted which was Secretary of State, he made a deal with Kennedy [John F. Kennedy], which was actually announced at the time, one part of which was that he would really be an advisor across the board for foreign policy, not just U.N. affairs. Another part of it was that he would get to nominate, to propose in effect, his backstop in Washington, which, of course, was the job I eventually went into. As it happened, the person I knew best in the group that was going to Washington was Dean Rusk. He had already asked me to work for him at the Rockefeller Foundation but I had decided that I was having so much fun at the Maxwell School spending foundation money that I didn't want to be on the other end giving it away for other people to have fun with. So, there was also a group, I guess, led by Chester Bowles [Chester B. Bowles] who thought that I would be the right person to be head of the AID [Agency for International Development] program.

Stevenson I had not known well—it was always on sort of a first-name basis but in that vague way that one is—and I had been in the campaign. I had been the head of Citizens for Kennedy for the upstate central New York area, Syracuse. And I had known the President a little bit. I had sort of squired him around when he came up for an honorary degree two years before and gave the commencement address at Syracuse [Syracuse University]. I'd done a little bit of writing for the campaign, most of which didn't survive the speech writing meat chopper. And I had had a

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slight falling out with Bobby Kennedy [Robert F. Kennedy] which was quite easy to do. And so I knew somewhat, you know, the cast of characters. Stevenson, at one point, called me up from Chicago and asked me to come out and see him in Chicago which I did. We spent most of the day in his office talking. It turned out he'd read almost everything I'd written.

STERN: Was this after the election?

CLEVELAND: Yes, it was after the election. This was already the beginning of December, or the very end of November, I think it was. And I kept getting calls and rumors that I was under consideration for U.S.I.A. [United States Information Agency] or that I was under consideration for this, that, and the other. The talent search was a real talent search, as you know, in those days.

STERN: Yes, sure.

CLEVELAND: They really did reach out for a lot of people even if they were not known during the campaign. Unlike the Carter [Jimmy Carter] thing. So, I had the impression when I left Stevenson that I was probably his leading choice. But I still had the question as to whether, if I had an alternative, that's what I wanted to do, or something else. And I told him about that. He then apparently proposed me to Rusk and the President. So, at one point I got a telephone call from Dean Rusk, who was down in a kind of interim office getting prepared, saying, "There seem to be these two ideas and also two people, Henry R. Labouisse [Henry Richardson Labouisse] and you, both of whom, we think, would fit in either one of these jobs. You're Stevenson's first choice and it would settle our problem with Stevenson if you took that job. On the other hand, the A.I.D. program is something you know about and Bowles thinks that's the right answer and it's a high-ranking job. It's sort of Under Secretary rank job." And I said, "Well, I didn't realize that the Kennedy operation ever asked anybody what they wanted to do." But if he was asking, I would say that, from the Administration's point of view, they ought to put me in the A.I.D. job because I'd spent ten years in that business and knew where most of the bodies were buried. But if he was asking me what I wanted to do, I already knew what that terrain was like and I hadn't ever been on the political side of diplomacy and I thought it'd be more fun to be in the I.O. [International Organizations] job. So he said, "Well, I'll try to make it come out that way." And I don't know the process by which it was made to come out that way, but anyway I finally got a call saying that that was it.

And I came down as a consultant three days after the Inauguration. And I was there as a consultant for about a month while the appointment was going through and they had the nomination hearings and all that which was

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pretty pro forma actually because everybody was being kind of rushed through. There was a slight flap about the fact that Rusk had given exempted security clearance to quite a number of people so that we could get to work. And that later became a *cause celebre* when a fellow named Otepka [Otto F. Otepka], who was a kind of a...

STERN: Yes, sure.

CLEVELAND: Kind of left over from the McCarthy [Joseph R. McCarthy] era...

STERN: Otto.

CLEVELAND: Otto Otepka tried to campaign against me on that. There was sort of a burbling in the radical right literature for years after that about this. But, in any case, it didn't seem to bother Rusk and it didn't bother me and so I went to work. The first meeting I attended was one of those delightful situations where I found myself chairing a meeting because it was sort of in what was going to be my area. It was on the Congo which was pretty much the first big flap. And there were four ex-governors who were members of the meeting. There was Harriman [William Averell Harriman] and Soapy Williams [G. Mennen Williams], who was the Africa Assistant Secretary...

STERN: Yes, right.

CLEVELAND: And Adlai Stevenson and Chet Bowles. Well, it seemed like quite a concentration of domestic power. So that's the way it came out and I worked, of course, very closely with Stevenson for the whole time that he was there.

STERN: Right.

CLEVELAND: I was appointed to NATO [North Atlantic Treaty organization] shortly before he died. I was sort of a perennial candidate. I was actually Dean Rusk's candidate to succeed Stevenson if, as, and when he resigned, which he kept saying he might do but didn't. But it seems to me now that it was much better, from my point of view, to have already been appointed to NATO when he died because the President then felt—as presidents always seem to feel about that job—that they had to make a spectacular appointment. And taking Arthur Goldberg [Arthur J. Goldberg] off the Court was more spectacular than promoting somebody from inside the bureaucracy.

STERN: Sure. Did you at any point in your early period discuss with Ambassador Stevenson his expectations for the job? The degree to which

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he expected to be consulted on policy making?

CLEVELAND: Yes, sure. He went over the whole deal with me, of course. And it was part of my job to backstop him—that's what we called it: back stopping. In fact, 90 percent of the instructions under which he operated never got above my desk in the executive branch. That's the normal course. But, in addition to that, he would come down to NSC [National Security Council] meetings and to meetings of the Cabinet, special crisis meetings. The President was quite good about cutting him in. But he didn't really have a staff up there that could tell him where the Berlin thing stood or anything like that.

STERN: Right.

CLEVELAND: Or there were other issues that were not actually being handled at the U.N. Usually there was some kind of U.N. angle. For Berlin there wasn't, but on almost everything else there was some little tag end of U.N. involvement.

STERN: Right.

CLEVELAND: The Bay of Pigs, for example. We had to sort of defend ourselves at the U.N. at the same time the thing was coming apart in Washington.

STERN: On that, sure.

CLEVELAND: So it was part of my mandate to get for my client whatever he thought he needed or I thought he would need for his non-U.N. function. That made it, from a personal point of view, a much more interesting job because it meant that I intervened in the internal affairs of all the other bureaus of the State Department on behalf of my client, you see. Even if there wasn't an I.O. angle, there was a Stevenson angle. I tried never to answer exactly the question that was always sort of hanging in the air as to whether I was working for Dean Rusk or Adlai Stevenson. Obviously I was part of Rusk's staff. Dean Rusk made it easier by not competing with Stevenson.

STERN: Apparently he was very sensitive on that issue. He understood Stevenson's...

CLEVELAND: He understood it very well. For example, I was concerned about the

opening U.S. speech at the General Assembly in 1961. For other countries, it was typically the foreign minister's speech in the U.N. Rusk headed that potential problem off at the pass *very* early by just saying, "Well, since we have the world's greatest megaphone up there, it would be ridiculous for me to go up and preempt that stage. That's what he's there to

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do." So Stevenson would make the opening speech and then Rusk would turn up there the next day and start talking to foreign ministers bilaterally. But Stevenson handled all the multilateral, up-front, out-in-public business.

STERN: Did Stevenson appreciate, I mean understand, what Rusk was trying to do?

CLEVELAND: Yes. But I think he thought it was no more than his due, also. I mean, I think he regarded himself as a major public figure.

STERN: Justifiably.

CLEVELAND: Justifiably so, and Rusk had not been. Of course, he became so as Secretary, but Stevenson regarded Rusk as more of a professional, someone in the diplomacy business and less of a political leader. So, I think he probably would have been astonished to realize there had even been a discussion of this subject. But there didn't need to be because Rusk was very sensitive about it from the beginning. Of course, Kennedy did come up and make a presidential speech in that year...

STERN: That was in September of '61.

CLEVELAND: In '61 and also again in '63.

STERN: Right. And Stevenson was, of course, involved in planning those presidential appearances. I'm sure he was.

CLEVELAND: Yes. But most of the input on what would be said, and so forth, was provided by our shop. I had a full time assistant, Tom Wilson [Thomas W. Wilson Jr.], whose primary job was to write stuff for Stevenson to say. I did some of that, too, and, of course, Clayton Fritchey and Barbara Ward [Barbara Ward Jackson] and various other people did it for him. But we also provided the guts of most presidential declarations that touched the U.N., including the opening speech that time. In fact *that* opening speech was the occasion for the launching of the World Weather Watch. Let me tell that story because I'd like to have it on the record anyway.

I date the World Weather Watch—which is, of course, now the basic worldwide system for date collection and forecasting—from the luncheon that I had with Bob White [Robert M. White], who was then at the Weather Bureau, and with Herb Hollomon [J.

Herbert Hollomon], who was Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Science and Technology. I was sort of bugging them about how you scientists and technologists are never telling us institution builders enough about what's going to happen, so that we can build institutions in parallel with what you're getting from the

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idea of the hardware instead of "in series" as the engineers would say. In the case of the Manhattan Project, of course, there was—from that point of view—a disastrous state of affairs. There was nobody in the Manhattan Project whose task it was to think about the implications of the project if it were to succeed. There was nobody working on arms control. Only afterwards did all the guilty physicists decide that they had a problem. Many of them had a problem at the time and they discussed it at lunch, I am told—Robbie Oppenheimer [J. Robert Oppenheimer] and so on. But in the case of the weather, something very important was happening and that was a combination of picture-taking satellites and communication satellites and fast computers making it possible to think of the weather as an envelope around the globe for the first time in history. Previously, you had looked at the clouds from underneath and then exchanged information with other countries and put together a jigsaw puzzle called the world weather map. But now you were able to look at the atmosphere the way it really is in nature, which was an envelope around the globe.

So it became obvious by the end of that lunch that we needed to have a social and political and financial and administrative system that also was global. So we planned to have the World Meteorological Organization [W.M.O.] which was really rather a small technical organization producing a dictionary of meteorological terms and that sort of thing, and blow it up into a major agency. We were planning to launch it just at the W.M.O. level. And during that period, nobody much was interested in these international technological cooperation issues so they tended to fall into I.O. because they had to do with big global organizations. There wasn't anything like the present oceans, science, and so forth bureau. There wasn't even a scientific advisor for a good part of the time. When there was, he didn't ever learn how to get around in the bureaucracy, so he wasn't very effective. So I tended to get involved very much in these things, and I was very much interested in them personally. Then we were trying to prevail on the President to go up and do something at the U.N. because we thought it would be good for our U.N. policy if he turned up, his first General Assembly. His reaction was, "Well, all right, but it's a great forum and all, and I don't want to just go up there and say what everybody always seems to say in U.N. speeches. Have you got something new for me to say?" "Well, Mr. President, we just happen to have here the World Weather Watch." Well, he was fascinated by this, interested in it. He was interested, of course, in space policy anyway.

STERN: Right.

CLEVEAND: He was aware that the space policy that had been made so far was to go to the moon and that there was some criticism about we can't even

fix up our slums, what are we going to do going to the moon? So the opportunity both to make the point that the space program is going to have important usefulness here on earth and to launch a global initiative, you know, was irresistible. So, in that speech, one of the main points was the World Weather Watch. The General Assembly bought it with instructions to the W.M.O. to get on with it, so we didn't have to work out the politics at the technical level. We could work it out at the political level, which was great. That was an example of this sort of input. The words in which it got expressed were, of course, always fashioned by Ted Sorensen [Theodore C. Sorensen]. And once when I went over to the White House anyway, on something else, and I dropped into his office to find out how he was coming on a speech where it was mostly to be on U.N. affairs—and therefore we had provided the substantive input—he was quite, well, he really had pride of authorship, and his reaction was, “Well, all I'll say to you is that your material will be on my desk while I'm writing the speech.” That was, I'm afraid, sort of the way things were. His book doesn't reflect the inputs from the departments. You would almost think that he'd started from scratch with each subject.

STERN: That's very interesting. I wonder if we could talk a bit about the whole question of the conflict between—well, maybe conflict isn't the right word, let's say tension—between the White House, the U.N., and the State Department, and to what degree this was complicated by the peculiar relationship between Ambassador Stevenson and President Kennedy and Secretary Rusk. I mean, there was a personal dimension to all of that as well as the rather, I think, expectable institutional kinds of problems, and how you deal with that. I think that's probably one of the biggest difficulties you could have.

CLEVELAND: Well, that was the constant job. I was sort of in the middle, as if I was trying to administer that triangle from below, as it were.

STERN: You saw the President and Secretary Rusk and Ambassador Stevenson together on many occasions. I wonder if you could also describe the way they...

CLEVELAND: Yes. Well, they were all grownups, so the inherent web of tensions that the thing was didn't really come out too much, on such occasions as that. But there were, of course, a number of instances, some rather dramatic, where Stevenson had a very different view of what we ought to do. And that was, of course, true on Vietnam. But he was never—and he was not when he died—on the point of resigning over it despite Eric Sevareid [Arnold Eric Sevareid] and others who said so afterwards. But Kennedy

was very much aware that Stevenson was the leading figure in the liberal wing of the party. And he was also aware that he hadn't won by very many votes and that, therefore, it was important to keep Stevenson on board. And rather early in the game, he assigned Arthur Schlesinger [Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr.] to that task. It's one of the reasons why Arthur Schlesinger deals so fully, and I think very well, and perhaps because—favorably, from my point of view, with the whole U.N. side of foreign policy in his book about Kennedy. Because he was assigned as a sort of a Stevenson watcher, to keep in touch with him and so on, and also to handle with him some things that weren't really appropriate or couldn't be effectively handled through my channel. For example, he was regularly consulted about judgeships in Illinois, still.

STERN: That's interesting.

CLEVELAND: It was almost as if he were the Senator from Illinois. And, of course, there was the possibility that he would run against Dirksen [Everett M. Dirksen] when Dirksen died, and so on. But he was still an influential Illinois politician. Arthur and I had a little bit of a problem right at the beginning of that because Arthur thought that his mandate was all sorts of U.N. affairs, which would have complicated my life a good deal and been constitutionally difficult for the Secretary of State. A lot of things were being handled on the staff of the White House that really ought to have been handled on the staff of the State Department. We were at that time talking about a two-China policy, and one day I really had quite a discussion with Arthur about it and I said, "Arthur, we can have a two-policy but we can't have a two-I.O. policy." [Laughter] And he agreed, and the relationship worked very well after that. On some things he pitched in and became a part of the U.N. affairs staff almost. Well, for example, he and Tom Wilson together wrote most of the opening Cuban Missile Crisis speech that Stevenson gave. And somewhere we ought to get on the record the story of that moment in history, part of which I've written down.

STERN: Sure.

CLEVELAND: This you perhaps know.

STERN: Yes, I know.

CLEVELAND: So Kennedy was very much concerned to keep him on board. And Stevenson liked Jackie [Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy] very much, and Jackie liked Stevenson. And when Jackie would go to the theatre, Stevenson would be her escort in New York and that kind of thing. Those two glamorous people didn't exactly go secretly. So there was that personal relationship. But,

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they were on very, very different wave lengths, just as in the way they talked about it. Schlesinger tells in his book about the moment when the U.S. government decided to come

out in favor of general and complete disarmament in the U.N. context. We went down to Cape Cod for a weekend in August, shortly before the General Assembly.

STERN: The '61 meeting in Hyannisport.

CLEVELAND: The '61 at Hyannisport, and the meeting was mostly held on a boat, the *Honey Fitz*. It was really quite an experience for me because when we came to disarmament, Kennedy said, "Oh, this disarmament. Well, that's really just a propaganda thing, isn't it?" And Adlai really just looked stricken.

STERN: Do you think Kennedy perceived that Stevenson was upset or offended?

CLEVELAND: Well, yes, because then Stevenson gave him a big lecture about "Well, now, you know, Jack, you've got to have faith," and so forth, which was exactly the wrong way to talk to Kennedy about any subject. Mr. Pragmatic, you know; it wasn't selling, obviously. And I finally intervened and said, "Look, the problem is that for a decade or more the Soviets have been getting away with murder by coming out in favor of general and complete disarmament, which they can't possibly regard as a practical proposition. And we've been coming out for 'let's take next steps.' And we're not getting anywhere this way, and if we were to come out for general and complete disarmament, too, then there wouldn't be anything left to talk about at that level of abstraction. We'd have to talk about next steps together," which is what we did. And the next step we then began talking about together was the first test ban. So it was an important, I think, an important moment.

STERN: I think it's true that Kennedy moved closer to Stevenson's position in the next two years.

CLEVELAND: But I think he began to see how to play—this is a new kind of politics after all, a different kind of politics. And I think he got interested in this different kind of politics. And Rusk, of course, had been interested in this different kind of politics for a long time. He'd been the first occupant of that Assistant Secretaryship for what was then called U.N. Affairs before he went into the Far Eastern Bureau in the Truman Administration [Harry S. Truman]. And he was fascinated with U.N. Affairs. I had very, very good access to him because he always wanted to know what was going on. He would call me up at home in the evening and say, "On that thing in the Security Council, I wonder whether we could

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work an arrangement like this..." And he would produce some highly ingenious piece of procedural gimmickry, you know, usually very well thought out. He was in many ways much more interested in the mechanics of the multilateral diplomacy than Adlai ever got. Of course, Adlai had some superb help in that.

STERN: Do you agree, for example, with some of Stevenson's—Phil Klutznick [Philip M. Klutznick], for example, who says that Stevenson tended to be more interested in these issues in an abstract, general way?

CLEVELAND: Yes.

STERN: And he rarely got into the nitty-gritty kind of thing.

CLEVELAND: That's right.

STERN: Some who have been a little more harsh, like George Ball [George W. Ball] said he was essentially *shallow* when it came to these things.

CLEVELAND: No, I wouldn't say that. I would say that he was interested in the rhetorical side of things. That's what he was best at. But he was also interested in the people and in the relationships—particularly the Chiefs of State and some of the top people. He regarded himself really at that level, not at the ambassador level. He was always somewhat restive at all the mixing that you had to do with the ambassadors because I think he regarded himself, with some reason, as a different kind of person from most of them. And, of course, he had known a number of the chiefs of government and chiefs of state who came, and they all wanted to see him when they came, and so forth. But Rusk took a great interest in just how to do things in the U.N.

STERN: Did Stevenson regard that as interference?

CLEVELAND: No. But partly because that was almost always screened through me, you know. That is, he didn't very often call Stevenson and make a suggestion or that kind of thing. He'd do that through channels. Stevenson would sometimes call him, but he did not regard Rusk as having a better judgment on the substance than he had, and, therefore, if he had something to say, he was more inclined to want to get it to the President. He was always a little restive about being a subordinate officer in a big Cabinet department, even though he had Cabinet rank in some symbolic sense. It was more than symbolic; I mean, when they sat in a row in the House of

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Representatives when there was a State of the Union message or something like that, Rusk, as the senior Cabinet member, was first in the row but Stevenson was second. He wasn't at the end of the line after the Postmaster General [J. Edward Day]. He was second. And that was very important to him—but, again, it was important to Kennedy to keep him on board. So, Kennedy's concern had to do with Stevenson's morale; he wasn't terribly interested in the U.N. as such. He, and all the White House staff by and large, regarded the U.N. as sort of marginal. They were never terribly creative about using international organizations.

STERN: Was that, essentially, actually a good thing for Stevenson in the sense that it gave him more initiative or...

CLEVELAND: No, because I think that it meant that some things that could have been handled better if they had been internationalized weren't. And there was a certain amount of impatience in the White House with suggestions that something should be internationalized. For example, the night of the Dominican Republic intervention, Ellsworth Bunker and I suggested—and I still think it was the right way to do it, which was the Lebanon, 1958, way...

STERN: Under Eisenhower [Dwight D. Eisenhower].

CLEVELAND: Yes. That is, you slosh ashore but you announce while you're sloshing ashore that you're just going to try to hold the line for the international peacekeeping force. It took the U.N. about three months to get organized on one of them, but that still went down in history as an international operation. With the Dominican Republic, we proposed that we do that, but the President was not interested in it, and Rusk, reflecting that, didn't buy it. That was about the middle of the week. By Sunday, somewhat to my surprise, I was listening to the radio and heard the President, at some downtown businessmen's meeting, say, "Of course the reason we're in there is for peacekeeping. What we want is an international peacekeeping force." He was actually using some of the language from the memo that I'd put together in a great hurry and gotten over there that night. But that was three or four days too late.

Stevenson could have made that come out differently, maybe, because he was there all through that business when they were hearing from Tap Bennett [William Tapley Bennett Jr.], and so forth. But it never occurred to him to try to internationalize it. And he unfortunately didn't call me or Charlie Yost [Charles W. Yost] or anybody. So he didn't get the input that we were developing.

STERN: Do you have any idea why he didn't act at that

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point?

CLEVELAND: I don't know. I think that Johnson [Lyndon B. Johnson] was—well, We'll want to get to the Johnson period later.

STERN: Right.

CLEVELAND: Johnson was kind of an overwhelming character even when you were alone with him and he already knew what he wanted to do. The occasion for discussion was not visible to the naked eye. [Laughter] I think that he probably felt that it wasn't his thing, it wasn't a U.N. thing. Of course, it was

going to *become* a U.N. angle, as we pointed out that night. But we pointed that out in the State Department building, not in the White House. Well, my point is just that, that the President, Kennedy, was interested in keeping Stevenson on board and in keeping sort of a good face on things, but not particularly interested in working through the U.N., in general. He *came* to be interested, on particular subjects, whereas Rusk was more of a formulator of strategy and tactics in the U.N., and interested.

STERN: Do you agree, essentially, with John Bartlow Martin on his assessment of the relationship between Kennedy and Stevenson, and Rusk and Stevenson?

CLEVELAND: Well, I'm not sure whether I would.... It's done rather from Stevenson's point of view.

STERN: Yes, it certainly is.

CLEVELAND: And, so, the fact was that Stevenson never really cottoned to Kennedy and had difficulty getting over thinking of him as an upstart. That was—after all, another generation—comes through, but it didn't come through in the professional relations.

STERN: I see. I was about to ask if, for example, Stevenson had ever...

CLEVELAND: It came through when he was talking to other people, you know.

STERN: ...if he had ever, for example, to use Martin's word, 'belly-ached' to you about Kennedy or complained about him or that sort of thing?

CLEVELAND: Not really, no. But, yes, he would denigrate him a bit, but that wasn't a serious problem. But he said something that I vividly remember

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after Kennedy's assassination. Johnson was in. And he said, "You know, Kennedy, I was never able to get quite on the same wave length with him, but, after all, Johnson and I are both politicians, about the same age and generation, and it's going to be a very different relationship now." How wrong he was!

STERN: Yes, indeed. Johnson sort of led him to believe that, but...

CLEVELAND: Yes. And he took him, you know, down to the ranch every few weekends just like Arthur Goldberg at first. Arthur Goldberg went down to the ranch almost every weekend and then when he started asking some of the Emperor-doesn't-have-any-clothes-on questions about Vietnam, he was practically cut off at

the ankles! From then on. And I think that Rusk's restraint and professionalism and his great interest in the U.N. doesn't really come through in the Bartlow Martin book.

STERN: No, it doesn't. Definitely doesn't. I agree.

CLEVELAND: But, John Martin never came back. He had one interview with me which was only very preliminary. And he was going to come back and have the full range and he never did. So some of what I might have put into that interpretation, he never got.

STERN: Do you feel that some of the people around Kennedy may have complicated that relationship as well? It was clear that the Attorney General had no great love for Stevenson.

CLEVELAND: No.

STERN: Nor did Bundy [McGeorge Bundy] or people like that. So that...

CLEVELAND: Well, they did a number of things that were very anti-Stevenson, for example, after the Cuban Missile Crisis when it came to be a very important matter to wrap the thing up. That's the part of the Cuban Missile Crisis that Bob Kennedy left out of his book entirely because he wasn't an actor in it. That was the...

STERN: The Kuznetsov [Vasily V. Kuznetsov] talks that went on. Right.

CLEVELAND: ...McCloy [John Jay McCloy], Kuznetsov, and so forth. They got McCloy back from Europe and assigned him to go up and do this.

STERN: What was Stevenson's reaction to that?

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CLEVELAND: Well, Stevenson thought that *he* should have been asked to do it because it could be done in the U.N. context. The U.N. was the cover for it, in fact.

STERN: Was he offended?

CLEVELAND: Yes.

STERN: I would think he would be. The sense of it was that Stevenson was not to be relied upon.

CLEVELAND: Right. But McCloy, McCloy was *extraordinarily* skillful at handling

that inherently sticky situation. It was arranged that they would jointly work on it.

STERN: It's getting...

CLEVELAND: Yes. Let me just finish this point.

STERN: Okay.

CLEVELAND: That they would jointly work on it. So McCloy and Stevenson were kind of the joint negotiating team—like Ellsworth Bunker and Sol Linowitz [Sol M. Linowitz] recently on the Panama Canal. And McCloy, of course, saw a good deal of Kuznetsov, had him up to his home in Stamford and so on. But all the communications were handled through U.S.U.N. [United States Mission to the United Nations in New York]. All the reporting cables came in over Stevenson's signature. I was the action officer on our end. So the whole thing was handled as much as possible as if McCloy wasn't doing it, except he *was* doing it. And everybody knew he was, and also the reason which was that Bob Kennedy and others didn't think that Stevenson would handle it to their taste.

STERN: I've seen transcripts of the meetings.

CLEVELAND: Yes.

STERN: Although McCloy certainly had a lot to say, so did Stevenson. He was very much of a.....

CLEVELAND: And, I think that it was done, in a way unfairly, on the basis of an unfair assessment that Stevenson wouldn't be tough enough. But also on the basis of what probably was a fair assessment which was that no matter how tough he was, well, there would be a lot of people in the country who wouldn't *think* he was tough enough. So it was partly reality and partly image, as

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it always is, of course, in White House business. You're always dealing with the combination. So, there were a lot of problems about that.

STERN: Stevenson certainly pursued the Russians in those meetings on the I.L. 28's. And on the counting of the warheads as opposed to the missiles.

CLEVELAND: Oh, yes.

STERN: The whole inspection issue. In fact he was so tough that Kuznetsov at one point accused him of issuing an ultimatum.

CLEVELAND: Yes. [BEGINNING OF TAPE 2] It was that they thought Stevenson had a soft image and probably they thought—some of them, at least—that he was likely to be more lenient, and that the U.N. environment induced...

STERN: Right.

CLEVELAND: ...more accommodation to the Soviets and all sorts of Third Worlders and generally all sorts of foreigners than looks appropriate if you're sitting in the White House.

STERN: You are referring to *To Move a Nation*?

CLEVELAND: Yes.

STERN: I wonder what you thought about Stevenson's commitment to the Third World. Some of his U.N. associates feel that it was not really very deep and that it did not involve a great deal of real understanding of the Third World. It was just something he sort of fell into.

CLEVELAND: Well, I think that's partly right. He had a feel for Latin America, I would say. Not so much for Africa or the Far East which had not been important in his experience. Europe had been, of course, but I think he looked at the Third World as Latin America.

STERN: Yes.

CLEVELAND: And also he had a deep sense of the importance

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of racial nondiscrimination at home and abroad, that carried over into his feeling about foreign policy issues. Of course, at *that* time the dominance of the Third World in U.N. matters was only just sort of beginning to become obvious. I remember, for example, we had a memorandum or rather a whole study in which we proposed associate membership for some of the tiny islands and so forth, correctly predicting that if everybody got their independence—under the one country, one vote principle which we, of course, had planted on the organization—it would make a shambles out of things. It had not made a shambles out of it up to then. That is to say, we did an analysis of fifteen different kinds of weighted voting, everything you can think of—population resources in various combinations and so on. And we found that on all of the historic issues so far, on the main votes in the General Assembly, that we had come out better without weighted voting—with the one country, one vote system—that we would have under

any of the fifteen systems. So that, by and large, we were doing better that way. But as more and more countries came in, of course, that became less true. But I think it was part of Stevenson's role in the government in a sense, to represent the Third World or at least to represent the point of view of the Third World, to make sure that it was taken into account and so on. And it was part of my task too, so in that sense everybody who had that task also got tagged for being soft on the Third World.

STERN: Do you think the Angola resolution in the spring of the first year helped to contribute to that?

CLEVELAND: Yes, I think also that the Angola resolution was a way of declaring our independence from feeling that if our European allies wanted something then we had to obviously go with him. That was a very important departure, but that was a policy in which Kennedy personally participated very much. As he did on the Congo thing. The Congo thing was partly a European issue, the Belgians and the Union Miniere [Union Miniere de Haut Katanga] and a little bit the French. But, most importantly it was really a question of trying to hold the country together when the North was kind of splitting off around a Communist-oriented leadership and the South was splitting off under Tshombe [Moise Kapenda Tshombe] and the center was sort of in a mess.

STERN: Well, from my reading of the documents on the Congo, it impressed me as the most unbelievably complicated issue I've ever seen.

CLEVELAND: Yes, it was very complicated.

STERN: An absolutely incredible issue.

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CLEVELAND: But there was something very interesting and important—for the Kennedy record very important, I think. This was the very first thing that we touched in my area of responsibility, the Congo thing. I told you about that first meeting with all the governors there. And, it was a preoccupation for a good many months and then a major responsibility for about two years in the U.S.U.N. and in 10, in the African Bureau. But because the issues were arising in the U.N. rather than in Africa, it was my client that needed the answer. Therefore I tended to get right in the middle of these so-called African problems. And, Soapy Williams, who was a wonderful guy, was not as interested in the sort of professional issues involved from day-to-day. He was more interested in establishing a general relationship with the Africans that was favorable and friendly, which he did very effectively. But he was just not as interested in the day-to-day business. So, also nearly every issue that came up on the Congo and also on Angola, and a few other issues like Bizerte [Tunisia] and so on, you had ranged the European Bureau, acting for its clientele against the African Bureau. And somebody had to do the coordinating and there were several occasions on which the Secretary, Secretary Rusk said to me in effect, "I'll deny it if you say so, but you are in effect acting as the Deputy Under Secretary for this

subject, to coordinate the other two bureaus.” And since they were also laterally related to me and they weren’t working for me, I obviously had to act rather carefully in that relationship. But in fact it was not very difficult to serve as the coordinator because it was my client in New York that needed the answer. And since he needed that answer tomorrow, you wrote the thing tonight whether the other bureaus were there or not and cleared it with them, and so on. And each of them would prefer to have us write the message than to have the other bureau, the original bureau, do it. So, everything sort of conspired to put us in the middle of the picture.

STERN: Do you feel that the Congo situation, the nature of the situation, was such that it gave Stevenson a fair degree of, well, let’s say a policy-making role more than he did in a lot of other issues?

CLEVELAND: Oh, yes. I think that he was very much in the middle of the policy-making on that. But even there, of course, it’s hard to make the policy from two hundred miles away.

STERN: Sure.

CLEVELAND: Because in fact it’s the day-to-day Washington process that grinds out the answers to the specific questions. And even once the U.N. peacekeeping force was in business—he was very

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active in developing that and Cyprus too. The headquarters for watching what the U.N. force was doing in the Congo tended to be Washington because, for example, there was an Air Force attaché in Leopoldville who had an airplane stuffed with modern communications equipment. I could go downstairs in the State Department and talk to that Air Force officer, a Colonel, I think. I could talk to him on one of the single side bands directly and with little time not going through teletypes or anything, just talking to him. And, so, we had it set up that when time was really of the essence that I would even occasionally call Ralph Bunche [Ralph J. Bunche] directly. I tried not to abuse that because it was much better to have the people in New York, especially since they were first rate, working through Charlie Yost, which was working for the best professional in the Foreign Service.

STERN: I just interviewed him a few weeks ago, by the way.

CLEVELAND: What?

STERN: I just interviewed him a few weeks ago.

CLEVELAND: Oh, really. Well, you got a slightly different optic but I think probably a more or less consistent sense of what the policy was used for. But I remember one time when the Indian troops working for the

U.N. were *not* supposed to go across a particular river. Now our man reported on the single side band that he could see them across the meadow, crossing the river. So I called Ralph and said, “Hey Ralph, do you know your troops are crossing”—whatever this river was, I can’t remember—And he said, “No, my God, no. I won’t get a report on that for twenty-four hours.” Because they had to go through Leopoldville and so on. Well, the Indian troops were taking advantage of the fact that there was a clogged communication line and so they were fixing the line and in the end they handled the problem very well, I think. And very much in our interest, we thought.

The fact that these African issues were very important at the very beginning of the Administration made for an interesting problem with the White House which might be worth mentioning. When the President first came into office, he would sit up in bed reading the newspapers and especially the *New York Times*. He found that three or four articles on the front page of the *Times* would have to do with what *he* was doing in Washington. They would have his imprint on them. But that two or three stories at least would be on the front page of the *New York Times* about what Stevenson was doing, Angola and the Security Council and something else in the General Assembly and V.I.P.s that Stevenson was seeing and this kind of thing. And it was reported by Mac Bundy and others that he was quite

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restive about this. Saying things like, “What do you mean we voted, the U.S. cast a vote on Angola yesterday? I didn’t even know about that! And I’m supposed to be in charge of the United States!” [Laughter] So I was kind of concerned about this because it looked as if we might get into a situation where the White House would insist on reviewing the kinds of decisions that typically weren’t even worked on by the Secretary in the State Department. They were being handled at my level. So, with Rusk’s full approval, I made an arrangement with Mac Bundy—Arthur Schlesinger was involved in it, too—that at the end of each day, I would write a one page summary of what we had done in New York. And bypass the Secretary, which he had agreed to, and send it over directly to Mac Bundy. This would go into the President’s evening reading. He liked to do some reading toward the end of the day in his own quarters. So when he opened the newspaper in the morning and found these actions on the front page, he would be able to say to himself, “Oh, yes, I knew that!” And it wasn’t that he really wanted not to be surprised by something that was on the front page because the front page is sort of a symbol of importance to anybody in public life. The reason, of course, that they were on the front page was that the *New York Times* a little bit more, quite a lot more than now, correctly regarded the U.N. as local news. So they were covering it the way they would cover the city government. It was something going on in New York. And so, if the U.N. had been in San Francisco or someplace it probably wouldn’t have gotten quite the same prominence even with somebody of Stevenson’s star quality in charge. But we managed to get past what could have been a major procedural crisis with the White House resulting from what looked like competition for attention, you see. And Stevenson could hardly help attracting a lot of attention. *A*, he was a world figure. But, *B*, he was doing things that were controversial all the time, and a lot of them were being done in public. Well, some of them. And, at that time, at least, the U.N. was being covered very closely. There were a number of correspondents there and so on. It’s less so now.

STERN: Of course, there were a lot of other issues that came out of the whole Congo crisis, especially after Hammarskjöld [Dag Hjalmar Agne Carl Hammarskjöld] was killed and with the troika business and then, of course, the Article 19 struggle which really did come out of the whole question of paying for the Congo.

CLEVELAND: Essentially yes. Though it was larger than that. It was all part of a large constitutional issue.

STERN: That.... Right.

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CLEVELAND: But the basic money part of the problem, what it gave rise to, was essentially the over-spending on the Congo.

STERN: It seems to me that Stevenson was probably as much concerned about the impact of the Congo crisis in that sense on the U.N. as he was about the Congo itself. He was very concerned about the U.N.

CLEVELAND: Well, I think that's right but that was very much our common doctrine between him and his staff and those of us in Washington, including the Secretary. I used to say to my staff that a part of our criteria of judgment as to whether we're doing right or not on *anything* ought to be whether the U.S. government handles each crisis as it comes along in such a way as to leave a residue of strength in the U.N. for handling future crises of the same type. Otherwise we'd be in a situation where every time you have a crisis you have to reinvent the same wheel. So, we deliberately saw the Congo and later Cyprus, as an attempt to build the U.N.'s peacekeeping role as well as to handle the Congo problem. And those two objectives converged—you didn't cross wires having those two objectives in your mind. So that was very much in Stevenson's thinking and very much in mine too.

STERN: One of Stevenson's aides, his press aide, Clayton Fritchey, argues that the people who were insisting that the Soviets pay were really making a covert move to force them out of the U.N. A move by hardliners. That strikes me as rather fanciful.

CLEVELAND: No, I think that's far fetched. Especially since the hardest liner on that particular subject was probably myself. And that certainly wasn't my objective at all. I assumed that the one thing you could depend on a sort of parliamentary body to do was to protect its own prerogative. You remember Joe McCarthy; everybody was letting him run wild in Washington until he insulted the Senate. Then he was through all of a sudden. But it wasn't because of what he had done to anybody else. It was because he had insulted the Senate. And it brought it into

disrepute and so on. And the taxing power of the General Assembly was almost its only power, real power. And we bet on the willingness of the Assembly as an institution to defend its taxing power. We were wrong and we were duped. And it's a very important lesson because what it really showed was that the Assembly isn't a parliamentary body; although it looks like one and was set up in the image of one in the charter, it's a committee of sovereigns and in the end it was possible to flout it with impunity as far as the Russians were concerned.

STERN: The compromise that was offered would have

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allowed them to make a private contribution, wouldn't it? Which would simply have accomplished the same end without forcing them out.

CLEVELAND: A voluntary contribution.

STERN: Right.

CLEVELAND: Yes. But they were not about to make a contribution at all.

STERN: I understand. Yes. Sure.

CLEVELAND: On the substantive ground that they didn't agree with the Congo operation and didn't like the idea of developing the peacekeeping capacity to act of the U.N. At that time they were very clear about the U.N. They wanted it to be a *talk* body but they didn't want it to *do* things. And everything that was suggested that represented action, you could almost count on them being against. At that time my line—and if you've read any of the stuff that I wrote at the time as you probably have....

STERN: Right, some of it.

CLEVELAND: I repeatedly used the phrase "capacity to act." Our criterion of judgment as to what we were doing about U.N. affairs could be sweated down to were we developing the U.N.'s capacity to act as an international organization? And, as you say, the Congo thing was a good example, In fact, we were trying to do just that.

STERN: I wonder if we could turn to the Bay of Pigs and that whole extraordinary day on which Stevenson got the briefing from Tracy Barnes of the C.I.A. and then.... I believe you had lunch with him later that day.

CLEVELAND: Yes. I was in the briefing.

STERN: Oh, you were at the briefing? I wasn't aware of that.

CLEVELAND: I came up on the plane with Barnes in fact.

STERN: Oh, I wonder if you could just...

CLEVELAND: Well, it was arranged that we could be briefed. Arthur Schlesinger also came up.

STERN: Right. I was aware of that. Fritchey was there too, wasn't he?

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CLEVELAND: Fritchey was there. I guess probably both Francis Plimpton [Francis Taylor Pearson Plimpton] and Charlie Yost who were essentially in on everything. Well, we were briefed, not, as it turned out, very candidly. They didn't tell us when it was going to happen. They also didn't really tell us *what* was going to happen. They made it look as if it was essentially a non-American operation that we were helping with. Which sort of was the cover.

STERN: The cover story. Right.

CLEVELAND: Close to the cover story. I think we did a little better than the cover story partly in the briefing but.... But the impression that Stevenson had at the end was that it was not wholly decided whether to do it. That if it were done, it would be done, not be attributable to the United States. And that it wouldn't be a very large operation because we were counting—I think here the C.I.A. was saying what it thought—we were counting on uprisings in Cuba. As the first dissidents hit the shore everybody would rise to help them and so forth. A complete miscalculation, of course, of the military situation.

STERN: Were you given the impression, were you given an accurate impression concerning the degree to which the United States had been involved in training these people?

CLEVELAND: No.

STERN: No?

CLEVELAND: No, they were sort of, you know, conceding that some of our people had been involved in training and so on, but the impression we got was that there was much more initiative by some groups of refugees.

And that we were helping them and training them and prodding them but that there was something there to work with. You did not get the impression that the something there was our puppet, in which our fingers were up acting for them too, as well as for ourselves.

STERN: Yes.

CLEVELAND: And nothing was said about the particular scenario that later got Stevenson into such trouble.

STERN: I was going to ask you about that.

CLEVELAND: That is to say the business of alleged Air Force defectors flying out of Cuba. Well, we'll

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come to that! So, at the end I think Stevenson had the impression that the question was still probably moot. He considered whether to weigh in against it, and was quite negative about it. But on the other hand he didn't know at that time—and neither did I—how far it had gone. Nor was there any discussion, by Tracy Barnes, of the fact that the operation was scheduled for a day that just happened to be the day on which the so-called Cuban item was coming up in the General Assembly anyway, that Monday. The thing started, I think on late Sunday or something like that.

STERN: Yes. On the weekend.

CLEVELAND: And the Cubans had already accused us of intervening. And that accusation was going to be debated in the General Assembly of that very Monday! Now you really have to be a genius to...

STERN: The timing couldn't have been better! [Laughter]

CLEVELAND: So, that was the only real contact with the Bay of Pigs operation until almost a week later. Then, I guess it was probably on that Monday—you could check the record as to what day of the week—when the news came out that this defector had landed in Florida, and since we were debating Cuba anyway in the General Assembly, we had to be right on top of the news. So we were watching the tickers and so on. And, so they called—I don't remember whether it was Stevenson personally or Charlie Yost probably who called—and said, "Hey, what's going on? Let's get the story straight." So I asked the Inter-American Affairs Bureau to find out since it was their area and this was the way we normally worked. Not directly with the C.I.A. They asked the C.I.A. The C.I.A. gave them the cover story. They gave us the cover story and I gave Stevenson the cover story over the classified telephone. He then went out on the floor and used the cover story. He then compounded it because his very alert staff was watching the ticker and they saw on the ticker—it was an A.P. [Associated Press] dispatch—

reporting what the pilot himself had said after he arrived. So they tore this bulletin off. Brought it in to him while he was speaking. And he said, "Well, I just have here confirmation, you see!" All he had was the cover story all over again instead of another story. So he took the A.P. thing to be confirmation of what I had told him, you see. So in a way the pit was dug even deeper than I had dug it for him.

STERN: Then there were the photographs, of course.

CLEVELAND: Well.... then some alert journalists started scraping away, you know, at the plane and found that there were Air Force markings underneath. And started asking questions and the cover blew off inside

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of twenty-four hours. Stevenson, who was a man who did not get mad easily at all, I have never seen him so sore. He was absolutely fit to be tied because his government had used his credibility, had *abused* his credibility. Not telling him and so on. I must say that I was always impressed and astonished at the fact that he never complained either to me or about me to anybody else for having been the proximate source of the lie that he gave, which I was. He knew we had both been duped and, you know, a lesser man would have just taken the nearest target and flailed at him. But he didn't. That created a great crisis, of course, inside the government, but it partook of the much greater crisis in the fact that the operation itself was coming apart at the seams very rapidly. It may be a case for economists not running wars. Dick Bissell [Richard Melvin Bissell, Jr.] whose deputy I had been for two years in the Marshall Plan, so I knew him very well at the at time, was in charge of this operation and things hadn't been done like they should have. The President had never really asked the Joint Chiefs of Staff what they thought of the venture as a military operation. One of the Joint Chiefs told me later when I asked him, "Well, why didn't you tell him that from a military point of view this was for the birds, this C.I.A. operation?" And he said, "Well, you won't believe this, Harlan, but he didn't ask us. He just never asked us. And we were sort of holding back at that time—he was the bold, new, young political hero and we were sort of waiting to speak when we were spoken to, even though some of us were old enough to be his father."

I've since thought that that was a very important clue to what was wrong with Kennedy as an executive in those first few months and how fast he learned after that. The experienced executive knows that you mostly administer by asking questions. People sort of get the idea of the drift of your thinking from the questions you're asking. He hadn't quite learned that, so he wasn't asking all the questions that he needed to ask. Later, the Cuban Missile Crisis which he handled, I think, brilliantly, showed how much he'd learned in the year and a half that he had been there. The last executive operation that Kennedy had run before becoming President of the United States was a P.T. boat, and then he had been a legislator and so on after that.

STERN: Right.

CLEVELAND: So, in a way, it shouldn't be surprising that he needed on-the-job training. But it was a rather distressing form of on-the-job training.

STERN: Did Stevenson blame Kennedy personally for it? Was he personally bitter about the whole affair with the photos and everything?

CLEVELAND: He was just bitter about the whole business.

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STERN: Did he consider resigning?

CLEVELAND: No, no. He talked about resigning about every week. But I don't think he had ever really considered resigning in the whole time that I knew him. There were times when, in the first few months, somebody would come into my office and close the door and say, "My cousin was just sitting next to Stevenson at a party last night and Stevenson was really griping and complaining and saying he was going to resign." The first two or three times this happened I took it very seriously and I would go up to talk to George Ball who knew him very well. And Dean Rusk. And George from the beginning said, "No, he's just, it's part of his style. That kind of griping is just part of his style."

STERN: Right, which tended, by the way, to drive him further away from the President who was very curt about these things.

CLEVELAND: Right, exactly, yes. And so George said to pay no attention to it and don't get ready to propose a new appointment or anything of that kind because there's not going to be a vacancy.

STERN: Did you feel that Stevenson—there's an important distinction here—that Stevenson was opposed to the specific action that you were told about that morning? And opposed because he had not been consulted or that he was opposed in principle to the whole concept of acting against Cuba?

CLEVELAND: I think it was a combination of those things plus the fact that insofar as we had been let in on it, it sounded like a pretty amateurish operation. I mean, the disclaimers of U.S. responsibility or air cover or anything indicated that it would all be in the hands of the refugees. And that didn't sound like something that was going to upset Castro [Fidel Castro], from the outside. So it was a combination of distaste for this kind of clandestine operation plus a sense that it probably wouldn't work anyway. Plus it would be just terribly troublesome to handle in the U.N. You know, you could see all the problems.

STERN: Right, well, of course that was the perspective that Kennedy didn't really think about very much.

CLEVELAND: No. And that was one of the many perspectives that wasn't really staffed out ahead of time. They never really asked very many good

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questions. I mean, during the Cuban Missile Crisis there was all kinds of staff work about what would happen in the U.N. if we did this, that, or the other thing. Zero. Nobody ever asked me beforehand to do any piece of analytical staff work on the subject of the Bay of Pigs. It was too secret. Well, these two days in which the operation came apart were two extremely interesting days in my life because we were in the midst of this imbroglio in the General Assembly. And Stevenson had to be talking every few minutes, answering people on the floor and so forth. And at the same time the President was having to tell Pierre Salinger [Pierre E.G. Salinger] and others what to say or occasionally issue a statement himself. There obviously needed to be very close coordination between what the President was saying and what Stevenson was saying, you know, because the two things would be married on the same A.P. wire. In real time. So I was over in the Cabinet room most of those two days. The only other person from the State Department who was in the Cabinet room during that time was Chip Bohlen [Charles E. Bohlen], because the President was asking questions about what, how will the Russians react if. *Those* questions he was asking. He wasn't asking questions about the rest of the world but he was asking about the Russians. The White House was so down on the Latin American Bureau, felt that it didn't know anything and didn't have any good people and didn't appreciate the importance of the Cuban problem and so forth. And, as you remember, Adolph Berle [Adolph A. Berle, Jr.] first and then Arthur Schlesinger were kind of missionaries to go down and do things in Latin America in connection with the Bay of Pigs. I don't even think there *was* an Assistant Secretary. I think there was just an Acting Assistant Secretary.

STERN: Stevenson went after the Bay on Pigs too, to Latin American.

CLEVELAND: Yes, afterwards.

STERN: Yes, right.

CLEVELAND: But I mean this was before.

STERN: To mend fences, Right.

CLEVELAND: Yes, for mending fences afterwards. And, which by the way, I think was partly a Kennedy-Stevenson relations problem. In other words, "we still trust you and we still think you're a great guy and you're a world statesman and you're not just the U.N. guy, you're our man for foreign policy in general and you understand Latin America and you go on this trip." It was that kind of thing.

STERN: I see.

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CLEVELAND: And partly aimed at Latin America and partly aimed at Stevenson. During that period, I was constantly on the phone with New York dictating suggested language for things or reporting what was being said on the floor so I could report back to the Cabinet and so on. But, as I say, Chip Bohlen was the only other State Department person who was there, in one of the intermissions in this sort of continuous meeting that was going on with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs [Lyman L. Lemnitzer] there and the Chief of Naval Operations [Arleigh Albert Burke] who was Acting Chairman, I guess, at that time. And with big maps showing where all the destroyers were and so on. In one of the intermissions Chip Bohlen and I compared notes. And he admitted that he had never been in Latin America except once to go to a meeting in Montevideo and he hadn't seen anything except the meeting room. And I had to concede that I had *never* been in Latin America at *all* except on my honeymoon trip when my wife [Lois Burton Cleveland] and I walked across the bridge from El Paso to Juarez so we could say we'd been in Latin America. So we were the two State Department representatives on a thing that was, after all, basically a Latin American problem. [Laughter] It struck me as grotesque at the time and still strikes me as grotesque. But it was interesting because I had a chance to watch the President at close hand for two days. He recovered psychologically before anybody else in the room. He absorbed the fact that this was an enormous boo boo. And, he was already going on from there while everybody else was still saying, "Well, maybe we can still save it with one move, with an air strike or with something." And he kept saying, "Well, it's too late, it's over." But his psychological recovery was one of the most impressive pieces of executive psychology I ever saw because it wasn't put on. It was really that he just recovered faster. He recovered much faster than Bobby Kennedy who was in a terrible snit about it, and made sort of very insulting remarks to everybody else, you know, "Now we've all got to rally behind the President, and we don't want anybody saying they thought this was a bad idea," and so forth. Bowles, of course, violated that afterward and got fired.

STERN: Right.

CLEVELAND: Got fired for being right and for saying so, *especially* for saying so. I also saw a wonderful example of what modern communication does to traditional military leadership. There was a moment when the Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Arleigh Burke, was explaining what the situation was and where our forces were, we had some Navy down there off shore. And the President said, "Well, don't you think we ought to get our forces out over the horizon?" And he got up and went around—it was sort of a metallic thing so that the little destroyers stuck to it, magnetic.

STERN: Magnetic, yes.

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[BEGINNING OF TAPE 3]

CLEVELAND: And, he took this thing which was a little mental destroyer, and pulled it back over the horizon. And, Admiral Burke—I've never seen such a stricken look on a man's face. He was kind of shaking his head as if to say, "My God! Has it come to this? That the President is going to be redeploying individual destroyers in the new Navy?" And, of course, the President, being an old, young navy man himself, I think rather didn't feel bashful about it, about playing around in the Navy's business, of course.

So, it was a stirring couple of days. But I was ambivalent at the time and I still am in my own feelings as to whether I wish that I had been involved in it earlier. In a way it was better self-justification to be able to say to myself and anybody else that might ask, "Well, nobody really told me the straight dope beforehand and I was pitched in and I professionally handled what I had to handle while it was going on. And I had a chance to observe the whole thing coming apart and it was a very educational and interesting personal experience." But that I didn't feel any moral responsibility for the debacle because I hadn't endorsed it, I hadn't even been in a position of deciding whether to abstain or not. Not state my reservations, something like that. But that was the biggest crisis, I suppose, in Stevenson's life with Kennedy. Maybe *that* plus the famous Charles Bartlett article about what Stevenson alleged to have said in the National Security Council about the Cuban Missile Crisis. The business of giving up...

STERN: Turkish missiles.

CLEVELAND: Some Turkish missiles. Not only Turkish but there were some other.

STERN: In Italy too.

CLEVELAND: Yes, Italian missiles. Missiles that we had already decided to take out. So it was not great evidence of softness to make such a suggestion.

STERN: Plus the President already, well, ordered them out, if that's quite the right word. Suggested that they be taken out.

CLEVELAND: Well, he had thought that he had ordered them out and nothing had happened! And he was sore

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when he found that it hadn't. But Bob Kennedy particularly felt that it was very bad form to be proposing to take something out when the Soviets should never have had missiles in Cuba to begin with. Therefore we shouldn't trade anything for them. And there was something to be said on both sides of that argument. But in a way the argument never

became important until it was later used by Charles Bartlett who had to have gotten it from somebody interviewed in the White House, the President, or Bobby Kennedy or somebody.

STERN: Did Stevenson believe ultimately that it was the President who leaked that information?

CLEVELAND: Yes, or Bobby. Which amounts to the same thing. And, he was extremely distressed at that. And, I went up there to talk to him about it. And we wrote a memorandum right afterwards which may be in your records. If not, it's in my forty boxes at the Library.

STERN: Which I've been looking through.

CLEVELAND: Have you been?

STERN: Yes.

CLEVELAND: I hope somebody's organizing them.

STERN: It will be done, I've, I've...

CLEVELAND: Because I'd like to use them myself but I'm sort of appalled at the task of going and organizing them all. But I wrote a memorandum about that and how Stevenson just had to be vindicated. A vote of confidence had to be put forward.... And the President was somewhat reluctant about it, and certainly his staff was. You know, they were on the firing line every day and they didn't feel that it was all that important. The close relationship between Bartlett and the Kennedys, and Stevenson's feeling that he was being shafted by their special friend among the columnists required something. And in the end a very good statement was issued which I helped draft.

STERN: Did you speak to the President personally about this?

CLEVELAND: No, never.

STERN: I thought you did.

CLEVELAND: But it was very late. No, but I spoke to everybody else. I spoke to Rusk and Mac Bundy and so on.

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STERN: Did Stevenson have any, express to you any concern, concern is not the word I want—any doubts about whether the President had handled the

crisis adequately or correctly, if that's the right word? There are.... in recent years a number of historians have begun to criticize Kennedy's handling of the crisis. Of course, this is inevitable that this would happen. For example...

CLEVELAND: No, I think Stevenson thought that it had been handled very well.

STERN: He did.

CLEVELAND: I think that he thought—and I believe—that some of the early meetings took more seriously than they should have the Air Force view, of General LeMay [Curtis E. LeMay]...

STERN: Right.

CLEVELAND: ...who believed that we could handle this with “surgical” air strikes.

STERN: Right.

CLEVELAND: And, in fact, my own interpretation—only slightly self-serving—is that that kind of nonsense began to be pushed off the edge of the diving platform only when they got a second tier of people, including myself, to come in and so some real staff work and scenario building and analytical thinking, instead of just kind of sitting around and talking about it at a high level.

STERN: Did you ever have any sense of what the President's attitude was toward some of the claims that were being made by Republican senators, for example, Keating [Kenneth B. Keating] of New York who gave an extraordinarily accurate—as it turned out—a very accurate statement on how many missile sites there were.

CLEVELAND: Yes.

STERN: And the assumption—there are those who *do* assume—that he found out something and that perhaps the Administration knew. Although I've seen no evidence to prove that. I think there was a political dimension. That's what I'm really getting at in this whole thing.

CLEVELAND: Well, yes, sure there was a political dimension. But, I think that it was an almost classic case of a screen through which you read

or hear something. You have a kind of construct in your mind. And in this case it was a construct that excluded the possibility that the Russians would do anything so silly.

STERN: It *was* a silly thing! Yes, the intelligence analysis said to the President they would never do that. Period.

CLEVELAND: How could they do such a silly thing? So then you hear a lot of refugees saying they're doing it. And you say, "Ah, well, you know, refugees are all the same. The Poles are always saying that things are in a terrible state in Poland. The Ukrainians are all.... And we know about refugees, come on." And I think that was sort of the attitude about this. Now, Keating, on the other hand, had enough evidence from refugees. But first of all, I think he was honestly convinced. And second, it was a great way of getting into the newspapers, to be against the Administration. In a sense, he didn't have anything to lose if it didn't turn out to be a big deal. It was just yesterday's headline and at least people would think of him as somebody who was trying hard. And a fellow who didn't have the whole intelligence apparatus at his command. But, if by any chance there was something, then he'd hit the jackpot. So I think his *political* judgment in doing it was very good. I don't think he had anything that the government didn't have. It's just that they were reading different words in the same sentence.

STERN: There was a photographic analysis group in the Pentagon, a colonel by the name of John Wright [John R. Wright, Jr.], W-R-I-G-H-T, who a few days before the pictures were actually taken, guessed from the configuration of construction—well, at that point there *were* no missiles. I mean nothing that was absolutely clear—but he guessed from the way they were placed that they were offensive as opposed to defensive. And I suspect that he may have been talking to Keating. But that's just...

CLEVELAND: That's interesting, he was the Deep Throat of the time? [Laughter]

STERN: Just a hunch I have.

CLEVELAND: That's interesting.

STERN: Or that somebody in that office may have leaked this material to Keating because his claim was too accurate.

CLEVELAND: Yes. I don't remember about him. Was he in Abel's [Elie Abel] book?

STERN: Yes. As a matter of fact, it was through Abel's

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interview for the Library that we got a copy of the—Wright calls it

his diary. He is a little, I think, overly impressed with himself. But essentially he related the story, very, very self centered.

CLEVELAND: Is he still around?

STERN: Yes, he is. And he related the story of how he had figured this out. And Abel does indeed, and others, credit him with the fact that.... I mean, it was a great hunch, based on some expertise and some luck. He did suspect that because of the way they related to each other, they were meant as opposed to defending against incoming attack, that they really were being planned as offensive. And, obviously he was right.

What do you think of some of the more recent interpretations which claim, for example, that Kennedy pushed the Soviets too hard? For example, that he could have contacted Khrushchev [Nikita Sergeyeovich Khrushchev] privately and said, "Look, we know what you're up to. You've got forty-eight hours or whatever before I make it public. And you don't have to suffer a public humiliation. But if you don't get them out, I mean, all bets are off." I mean, make it very clear to him what we would do if he did not take them out but give him a chance to do it secretly so that he would not be humiliated and pushed into that *very* difficult position. Some people are saying now that Kennedy should have done that. The timing was not so critical. He could have waited. The missiles were not yet armed. Others say that the timing *was* critical. It's a very...

CLEVELAND: Well that's a hard judgment because they pay off on results.

STERN: Right. Sure.

CLEVELAND: And the results worked out all right.

STERN: But it is kind of scary to realize that if the Soviets had not backed down...

CLEVELAND: I think that was an option. But, on the other hand, I think, I have an even more exotic interpretation. Which is that it really wasn't necessary to keep the missiles secret as long as they kept them secret. That the main purpose of keeping them secret was so that nobody would scoop the President when he went on television. And, the Soviets already knew they were there. So who were we keeping the secret from?

STERN: Well, theoretically we didn't want them to know that we knew.

CLEVELAND: But why?

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STERN: That was the issue. To give more time for discussion and planning a

response.

CLEVELAND: To do what?

STERN: That, I mean, that's the explanation.

CLEVELAND: Well, they're grownups. They can plan a response overnight just as we can. And anyway, they presumably had contingency plans—you can't really assume that that thing would hold them forever. And they must have assumed that at some point they were going to tell us about them. Okay, so...

STERN: Well, sure.

CLEVELAND: So we tell them about them. But, as to whether it was pushed too hard, I think as things turned out there was a bet on two hairy but probable calculations. One was that this is, after all, our backyard. And one superpower doesn't tamper around within other people's backyards.

STERN: In a way it was as fundamental as the Monroe Doctrine [James Monroe]. In this instance.

CLEVELAND: Well, and as fundamental as our reluctance to do anything after all our talk about Hungary. It's the same kind of thing.

STERN: Sure. Exactly. The parallel was clear.

CLEVELAND: And later Czechoslovakia. In fact, *twice* Czechoslovakia. So, that was one bet. The other bet was that Khrushchev was a real person, but that if you could reach him with the message that *A*, he would take it seriously and *B*, he was in a position to be the mover and shaker. Now, what I think was revealed in the outcome was that the first of those calculations, namely that it was our backyard and in the end they'd have to withdraw, was correct. And that half of the other calculation was correct. That is Khrushchev was a real person and if presented with the full enormity of what he might unleash, he would have to change course. What I guess we *didn't* know at the time was that he wasn't, that he must not have been fully in charge of the situation.

STERN: Yes, the telegrams certainly indicate that.

CLEVELAND: Because there were the two...

STERN: Not telegrams. The cables.

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CLEVELAND: The famous two messages, one of which was very hard line. And you

just had the feeling this was what the boys in the back room were writing while he was asleep, you know. Either because he was tired or because he was actually asleep, you know. And sent to us. And then on the next twelve hour period you get the sort of ranting but obviously personal message.¹ And the judgment to answer the second message and not the first one, which Bob Kennedy takes credit for in his book—he was not the only person to whom that occurred as a matter of fact. I was up in New York and telephonically transmitted a suggestion to that effect, also. So, you know, a lot of people had thought of it. It was not that exotic a ploy. You answer the mail you want to answer. The other reason for answering that one even though it came later was that it obviously came from the boss and we didn't know who the bureaucracy was that had written the turgid prose in the other one. [Laughter] But the outcome was certainly in doubt. There was one moment in which—about one or two o'clock in the morning—when we were about to leave the State Department to go home to bed for a few hours. And I said to Secretary Rusk, "I'll see you in the morning." And he said "I hope so." [Laughter] Which in a way brought home to me—I'd been so busy, you know, handling tactical problems that in a way the full enormity of the thing hadn't hit me until that moment.

STERN: Particularly coming from a reticent individual like Rusk. Yes.

CLEVELAND: Coming from.... Yes. Exactly. For him that was the equivalent of screaming.

STERN: Yes. That's what I mean. I remember it well.

CLEVELAND: Where were you at that point?

STERN: I was in graduate school.

CLEVELAND: Oh really. Where about?

STERN: Here in Massachusetts. In Cambridge. And I remember taking a walk that night with my wife and looking up, wondering if we would see, whether you could see the missiles before they struck or not. Or whether the explosion would come before you could see them.

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CLEVELAND: Yes. They would be too fast.

STERN: And I remember watching the skies. I remember that vividly.

CLEVELAND: Yes.

¹ Note from the interviewer: Order reversed: "conciliatory" message from Khrushchev came first.

STERN: Wondering if there would be another day. And it turns out, of course that there was a legitimate fear, to say the least.

CLEVELAND: Yes, it was.

STERN: And I think the more I've gone into this, the more I realize how close we did come.

CLEVELAND: Yes. Of course.

STERN: And it has not been exaggerated at all.

CLEVELAND: And you can see why, the Soviets having had to swallow it, they later determined to catch up with us—the famous discussion sitting on the fence there at McCloy's Stamford estate—Vasily Kuznetsov says, "Never again. We're never going to let this happen again."

STERN: Although ironically something, of course, came out of that which Ambassador Yost pointed out. In the exultation at the success, successful conclusion of the Crisis, of course no one could have foreseen that the Russians would then turn to a massive build-up of their arms.

CLEVELAND: Well, that's what I mean. I think that they decided, "Okay, we got had this time. And we'll never be had again."

STERN: That's right. So...

CLEVELAND: But we'll be...

STERN: One can date really the enormous expansion of the arms race from the conclusion of the Cuban Missile Crisis.

CLEVELAND: And the determination to achieve essential equivalence.

STERN: Right. It may yet do us in.

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CLEVELAND: Now, what is not clear now is what was clear to both Republicans and Democrats who think essential equivalence is okay. They've both said so in campaigns and so forth. It is not equally clear that the Soviets have decided that essential equivalence is enough. And that's what the S.A.L.T. [Strategic Arms Limitation Talks] ratification is basically going to be about in the end as you scrape away all the impossible technical stuff about I.C.B.M. [Intercontinental Ballistic Missile] vulnerability

and so on. The heart of the debate will come down to “What do we really think the Russians are up to?”

CLEVELAND: Yes.

STERN: I wonder if we could look for a minute at the question of your relationship with Stevenson in terms of the controls, the reins that you had to exert over the U.N. Constant telephone calls. He complained frequently about the fact that he was on the phone with you constantly. I assume mostly at your initiative as opposed to his.

CLEVELAND: No.

STERN: No, not really.

CLEVELAND: Often, often at his because he had to.... Well, there were just a lot of things he couldn't do without the department or Washington in general.

STERN: He once quipped, a reporter asked him if he knew what the State Department was thinking about a given issue. And he said, “How can I not know what they're thinking? I'm on the phone with them every half an hour.”

CLEVELAND: Yes. Well, that's right. And he was. Not quite that often but somebody was. Either Plimpton or Yost.

STERN: And yet there were times when I guess he surprised you. I was thinking, for example, of the incident, the speech, the anti-Indian speech on Portuguese Goa, when he *really*, really apparently exceeded what the Administration wanted him to say.

CLEVELAND: That's right. It was in the same direction though. I heard that because we, you know, had a monitor in our office.

STERN: Yes, I know.

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CLEVELAND: So, everything that was said on the floor of the General Assembly or the Security Council we had somebody listening to and, when it was important, I was listening to it myself. Yes. I can recall a few such occasions. One was in the Cuban Missile Crisis, the famous, “Don't wait for the translation.”

STERN: Oh, Yes.

CLEVELAND: “Answer yes or no!” That wasn’t in the script. But, it was in the direction of the script. It was a *better* script.

STERN: I see your point. Did he ever go in the other direction? Surprise you in the other direction?

CLEVELAND: The Goa thing was also in the same, in the right direction. He made it more dramatic and offended the Indians in the process more than had been the plan. But, on the other hand, we were all pretty sore at the Indians. And the Indians....Well, Krishna Menon [Vengalil Krishnan Khrishna Menon] and nobody liked him very much anyway. And, all this sanctimonious business and then they put the arm on Goa. We all felt pretty.... But, what happened that night was that there was one more round of speeches and rebuttals than we had anticipated and therefore prepared copy for. So on the last time around, he took off on his own. But he took off in the same direction, just more eloquently than the stuff that we had written for him.

STERN: Did he ever surprise you by going the other way?

CLEVELAND: Only once that I can recall. I don’t know what they were but I suppose there were other times. And that was on the Article 19 business.

STERN: Oh, yes.

CLEVELAND: Where at one point we was more conciliatory about—I can’t remember exactly what the issue was at the moment—but he was more conciliatory about it than was the doctrine. His instinct was in the right direction. History records, without considering what we later did. But he got us into trouble on that. But on the whole, the record of the relationship—although it was an inherently sticky and therefore, I found, professionally interesting relationship—was that Adlai was an extremely good soldier even on the things that he wasn’t all that enthusiastic about. He *never* had the illusion that some occupants of that office have had that it is another State Department. You know, there’s a book all about—called *The*

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Other State Department [Arnold Beichman].

STERN: Yes, right.

CLEVELAND: He never really had that illusion. And that book in that sense is quite wrong.

STERN: Didn’t he try in, I think it was late ‘61 when there was some talk

about that he might resign and run for the Senate in Illinois. And he tried to get from the President some increase in his autonomy vis-à-vis State and then Schlesinger, tried to work it out and the whole thing just, it was very difficult to get it down in terms of words.

CLEVELAND: Well, there's no way to get it into words.

STERN: That's exactly my point. Yes.

CLEVELAND: You can't make him an assistant president in New York. So, and I always said that, you know, whoever has that office has as much autonomy as he wants to work at. But that means that he really has to come down to Washington a couple of times a week and that makes it harder to do the job up there. We had a deal that I would go up there once a week and spend the day. I usually stayed with him at the Waldorf. And he would come down once a week. He had an office right near mine and so on. But he didn't get there once a week. I got there almost always once a week. Because I felt it was essential that we narrow as much as possible the distance, the physical distance between us. One problem was that there were so many subjects we had to discuss that were classified. We got the first experimental classified telephone in the bureaucracy. It was put into our office because we represented that we needed it badly and the communications people wanted to practice on somebody.

STERN: Yes.

CLEVELAND: It was extremely difficult to get him to walk across his office and go to the closet where it was and use it. Even when we finally got it on the desk he wouldn't use it. He was so, you know, it was just too much trouble. You just pick up the regular phone. And it made funny noises and, you know, sometimes it sounded as if you were under water and so on. So, that was another reason for getting up there frequently so we could discuss things that we really shouldn't discuss on the phone. But most of the time we were discussing classified stuff on the open telephone all over the place. But one way or another and despite or maybe even because of the grumbling which was a kind of a way of letting off steam without doing any great

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harm, I think that between us we kept the jurisdictional issues, turf issues between Washington and U.S.U.N. within tolerable limits. I don't say we solved all the problems but within tolerable limits. And partly that was because—if I say so myself—we has an absolutely first rate group of people in my bureau. Joe Sisco [Joseph John Sisco], and Dick Gardner [Richard Newton Gardner], my two deputies. Tom Wilson was a professional writer, Elmore Jackson, Bill Buffum [William B. Buffum] who's now at the U.N. as Under Secretary, was the head of our political division. Walter Kotschnig [Walter M. Kotschnig] who was sort of the grand old man of the Economic and Social Council and so on. You really would have been hard put to it to have a better team representing the U.N. mission in

Washington which was the way the New York mission obviously thought of us. And our relationship with Rusk was excellent and with the White House. It was my proudest boast during the first year that I was there when—the Kennedy White House was constantly deciding that something was wrong with the machinery and deciding the answer to it was to take hold of the problem itself and set up a task force with somebody from the White House in charge of the task force, such as Latin American policy and so forth—my proudest boast was that during that period, which was roughly the first year, the Kennedy White House never set up a task force on any subject that thought I was responsible for. So they were really looking to me to advise and so on. And Rusk was. And, except on really major things on which Stevenson would write letters directly to the President, which of course always got directly and immediately to him, that was part of keeping relations good, I think that he was able to perceive that we were quite effective *inside* the bureaucracy, dealing with the other bureaus, and getting information, working hard, working nights, having the stuff up there when they needed it and all this kind of thing. And so the sort of natural jurisdictional hackles which are always present in a field headquarters relationship anyway, and to some extent *should* be present—there's no point in putting an ambassador somewhere outside of headquarters if you don't expect him to develop a different point of view from the people at headquarters. But I in a way was constantly astonished at the fact that the relationship remained good and effective and professional on both sides. Charlie Yost had a great deal to do with that and he was really a professional's professional. And, occasionally we got into.... Well, we all had something which is probably in your notes about the U Thant business.

STERN: Oh, sure.

CLEVELAND: That was in the early Johnson period.

STERN: Right.

CLEVELAND: But, I think it contributed a good deal to it

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that I was up in New York as much as I was so that there wasn't a sense of physical distance really. It was those two days we could be together to work on something. And, also I guess one of the reasons why he originally selected me or proposed me for the job—as I say he seemed to have read a lot of the stuff that I'd written, so he liked the way I wrote and he always liked to have people around him who were writers. Because he didn't like to start with a blank sheet of paper. The whole time that I worked with him—almost five years in that relationship and formerly—I only know of two cases where he started with a blank sheet of paper himself, that is, where he wrote the first draft. All the other cases he was working on not one but often several perhaps.

STERN: Do you recall what those two cases were? Can you give me the instances?

CLEVELAND: Yes. A Princeton Stafford Little lecture which a whole lot of other

people contributed to in the end but he did quite a lot of drafting himself on it. And, the Churchill Memorial [Winston Churchill] address which was made in the National Cathedral after Churchill died.

STERN: That's, what, January of '65?

CLEVELAND: I can't remember just when it was.

STERN: Not long before he died.

CLEVELAND: Not long before he died himself. Otherwise his technique was to get, if anything, too much material. That is, he would ask four, five, six people to draft the same speech. And I came to know after a while who the other people were. Clayton Fritchey was one. Barbara Ward was a favorite ghost writer.

STERN: Yes.

CLEVELAND: And the real author of the phrase attributed to Stevenson about "this spaceship earth." And, he used many phrases of mine. The "revolution of rising expectations" I've seen attributed to him, although Bartlett's [John Bartlett: *Familiar Quotations*], I'm glad to say has it right. They have it attributed back to its original source which was a speech I made long ago at Colgate [Colgate University]. But after a while we had a kind of conspiracy among the people that he was asking to write things. We would call each other up and we would sort of decide who was *really* going to write it. [Laughter] Because it was sort of a waste for several people to be writing the same thing when there was so much to be written and so many bases to cover. And I think that the fact that I was able to

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write and was able to write, if necessary, under pressure very fast.

I should perhaps mention in that connection one previous relationship with Stevenson when I was with *The Reporter* magazine. I was executive editor and also publisher.

STERN: It was in the mid-fifties, wasn't it?

CLEVELAND: Yes, from '53 to '56. And, after he lost the election in '52 and when the question was building up as to who was going to run against Eisenhower the second time around, Max Ascoli and others, a whole group of us, conceived the notion that it would be great if he didn't have to run because then he would be saved—as we say at Princeton—for the Yale game. You probably say that at Harvard, too.

STERN: Yes.

CLEVELAND: The Harvard-Yale. And could run in 1960. But if he had to be a sacrificial lamb he was probably dead for 1960. And obviously no Democrat was going to win. So in 1955 Ascoli offered him the editor-in-chief-ship, which was the job he had himself. Ascoli was the owner. An *enormously*, an extraordinary thing for Ascoli to do because Ascoli was a great egocentric. And for him to be willing to step aside and have his pet baby, *The Reporter*.... I think he was planning to continue to run it a good deal himself but the arrangement was that Stevenson could stay in Chicago, that he would write a biweekly column. That I would help him write it. If necessary I would go out there, every couple of weeks and, you know, with copy we'd go over. We would make it as easy as possible for him to be the top figure on the masthead. And he would be able to say, "Well, I've taken this very important responsibility in political journalism and I think I really have to stay with that for a while." Well, he kind of reflected on that for quite a while, for what seemed to me at the time an exceptional length of time. And he finally said no. That he felt that he had an obligation to the party, that the party was in debt and so on and so on. But, although I didn't conduct the negotiations with him really, for the most part, that was one previous relationship with him that I think you should know.

STERN: I see. Were there any...

CLEVELAND: So my summary point on the relationship is that I think he found enough value in me perhaps and certainly in our whole shop, and we were we much on his side in all the Washington relationships and fights and so forth, and so helpful to him in getting him ready for, not only the U.N. things but for Washington things

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and providing so much of the copy that he was using, even in his external, speech making, that of course was used at the U.N., that he was willing to swallow the rather, sort of slightly *infra dig* fact of the situation which was that mostly he was getting instructions from a junior—from unquestioningly his point of view—a junior officer. I was in my late forties at that point. But he was uniformly cordial and nice and friendly and his grumbling about the State Department and so on was always in sort of general terms. And he rather carefully avoided, it seemed to me—of course, you know, I was always reporting back what he was saying—rather carefully avoiding pointing an arrow at me. I was always trying to so the same in reverse, although that wasn't as significant. And so a combination of sort of professional need plus a viable personal relationship made it come out all right, inherently between us two.

STERN: Do you think that his relationship with President Kennedy improved at all in the three years, almost three years, or don't you? [In response to negative nod from Cleveland] No? No.

CLEVELAND: I would say.... Well, I don't think it was *ever* very good. And, it was never very good with Rusk either.

[Interruption]

STERN: You were saying that you thought the relationship did not improve.

CLEVELAND: Between Stevenson and Kennedy?

STERN: And Kennedy. Right.

CLEVELAND: Yes, I think that's right. And I think it reached a kind of nadir on the Charles Bartlett thing.

STERN: There's a special cruel irony in that I think. Because this was the one time in his entire political career that he had won real national following in that speech at the U.N. With people, that he had emerged...

CLEVELAND: That's right.

STERN: ...as a popular political hero almost. And then suddenly to have it cut right out from under him.

CLEVELAND: Suddenly and to have it cut—it looked like—by the President.

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STERN: President. That's right.

CLEVELAND: Presumably because of political jealousy. And, I don't know how Bartlett got the story. Bartlett was around enough so that he could have just picked it up. And, it is almost inherently incredible that he would have printed it without clearing it. If not with the President, more likely perhaps with Bob Kennedy. And I can more easily see Bob Kennedy having an instinct for the jugular on the political jealousy. It was, "Hey, now. We've got to watch this guy. He's going to become a national hero, coming out against the Communists this way. When the only real chink in his armor has been that he's a liberal and soft and so forth. He might be a real alternative to Kennedy in 1964. And we better cut him down to size, fellas." You know, I can just see that conversation. Bob and two or three of his sort of hatchet men that he liked to have around. And I find it much harder to conjure up the image of Jack Kennedy doing it on purpose. But he let his brother do a lot of things that were sort of in the cause as long as he didn't have to authorize them.

STERN: Yes.

CLEVELAND: Both during the campaign and later.

STERN: Well...

CLEVELAND: The wiretapping and some of the other stuff that's come out since.

STERN: John Bartlow Martin makes the observation—I'll quote it—that the afternoon of the assassination that many people who were with Stevenson said, quote, "that he did not look grief-stricken."

[BEGINNING OF TAPE 4]

STERN: We were saying earlier about the fact that Stevenson saw in a Johnson presidency more of a chance to come back to the center.

CLEVELAND: Yes. I don't know how he looked that afternoon and for several days thereafter because I was over my head in helping prepare for the funeral and so forth.

STERN: Oh, I didn't know you were involved in that!

CLEVELAND: Well, I drafted the proclamation by which the President declared the death of the previous

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president. You remember that was the first thing he did on the next morning, was to come out and read a proclamation on television. It was one of those funny incidents. Maybe it's not relevant to this, but I was making a speech downtown when a note was handed to me to call my office urgently. I called and they told me that the President wasn't dead—at that point they didn't know anyway—but that he'd been shot. So I came back and told them the simple truth of what had happened and immediately hightailed it back to the office. And we sat around figuring, you know, there wasn't anything for us to *do* about it, so here we were. I wandered up to George Ball's office who was Acting Secretary because Rusk was...

STERN: Rusk was on his way to Japan.

CLEVELAND: And several of us sat around trying to figure out—after all we were the State Department and we're the senior agency—that is constitutional agency—what should we be doing? By that time, of course, the death had been announced. So we got out *The Last Time*, we got a book out of the Library of the State Department, a loose leaf notebook that had all the record of what had been done at the time of Roosevelt's [Franklin D. Roosevelt] death when Truman came in. The last time that a President had died in office. And we sort of looked through the book to find out—in a sense for guidance—what do you do in a unprecedented situation. There are some precedents. Well, one of the things is that there's a proclamation that says formally that the President has

died and that there is a new President. So, the King is dead, long live the King! Formally, but with a democratic note. So George Ball said, “Well, Harlan, you’re supposed to be a good writer. Why don’t you go and write a proclamation?” So I went out to one of the secretaries’ desks just outside the office and batted out my idea of what a proclamation ought to be. This generally passed muster with George so we sent it over to the Budget Bureau, which, we observed, was sort of the protocol place for things like this. I didn’t know that any number of other people around town had a similar idea and were also writing proclamations. In fact there was quite a pile of them before they got through. And I heard this a little later and said, “Well, it may be wasted effort but, after all, if that was the thing to do, then that was the thing to do.” My mother [Marian Van Buren Cleveland] was in the hospital in Washington, and I was commuting to visit with her. She had a television in her room and, of course, she was terribly sad about it. She was watching the comings and goings, including a couple of times seeing Lois and me on, going by and filing by and so on. So, watching television with her, we saw the new President coming out on the White House lawn to read, to the battery of television cameras a proclamation, all of the substantive part of which was almost verbatim what I had submitted. I was really just

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astonished, and, of course, pleased. As pleased as you could be under the circumstances. Then we were all sitting around in the State Department in a meeting trying to decide the question whether chiefs of state should be invited to the funeral. And how can you invite them without their having to come and did we really want to put them in that position and so forth. And meanwhile messages were coming in of the most extraordinary sort, the impact of that day was so fantastic.

And, while we were sitting around in this meeting trying to decide this question, somebody came in with a message and handed it to—I can’t remember who—who looked at it and said, “General de Gaulle [Charles A. de Gaulle] has just decided this question for us. He’s announced that he’s coming.” So, of course, the dam broke and everybody came. And our problem was to make the protocol arrangements and set up the reception that was held and work it out so that each person got a few minutes alone with Johnson, and told all the various people in the government to be responsible for the various V.I.P.s. I was responsible for the U.N. contingent which was led by Ralph Bunche. But I had a certain amount of responsibility for the general arrangements and, in fact, for a little while I was meeting V.I.P.s at the door downstairs because whoever was supposed to be doing it couldn’t be found. So I had just got to the reception about that time so I took over.

STERN: How soon afterwards did you first [see] Stevenson? And get a chance to talk to him, I mean.

CLEVELAND: I guess at that reception probably. Of course I saw him quite a lot during the next week or two because we immediately arranged rather early in the game, I can’t remember just how many days or weeks it was but it was quite early in the new presidency. The General Assembly was going home, of course.

STERN: Yes, of course.

CLEVELAND: And we had a memorial service up there. And then we recommended to the President that he come up. Not make a speech but just come up and meet the delegates. We thought a speech would be sort of, maybe not quite right. But we did in the end have a sort of short speech. But the basic thing was to go off and meet everybody, because they didn't know him. And he was somebody out of the west and he wore sort of a cowboy hat, you know, and they had no sense of him. And yet it was very important for them to know who was president. It was also very important, we thought, and very good for U.N. building purposes, for the U.N. ambassadors to be able to report that they had shaken his hand and talked to him and so forth. As well as, of course, the Washington contingent which was there only chance to meet him. So we did go up and I went up

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on the plane with the President and briefed him about who these people were. And all during that period of arranging all this, in two or three different conversations, I got the firm impression of "Well, I wasn't really able to get along with Kennedy but I certainly will be able to get along with Johnson."

STERN: That's what I'm looking at, right. Right. So he was in that sense kind of upbeat about it. He thought this would be a new chance for him.

CLEVELAND: That's right.

STERN: Yes.

CLEVELAND: Very much so. In fact there was a long period, you know, in which he—I would say—kidded himself because I never thought it would have started. But he thought that he might really be on the list to be vice president.

STERN: Yes, yes. I've seen evidence about that.

CLEVELAND: And....

STERN: I was surprised that he would want to run for vice president.

CLEVELAND: Well, he always sort of hankered after—you know, that was the only way to be president any more, pretty nearly. And...

STERN: He was about sixty-four, at the time.

CLEVELAND: This was in '64? Yes, it was '64. Right.

STERN: And he was born in 1900.

CLEVELAND: Yes. But I think that was a kidding-himself operation. But that went on for weeks!

STERN: Yes, apparently. I've seen...

CLEVELAND: That illusion. And I never really said to him, "Well, Adlai, you're kidding yourself." Because I didn't really feel that that was what I was hired to do.

STERN: Johnson seems to have had an extraordinary capacity in those early years to tell many people what they wanted to hear.

CLEVELAND: Yes.

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STERN: And I think in Stevenson's case it was probably the most outstanding example. I think that if there was anything that Stevenson wanted to hear it was, "You will be my expert in foreign affairs and you will be very close. You won't be on the outside anymore." He even apparently gave Stevenson the impression that at some point he would be Secretary of State. That Rusk would go. He may never have said it outright but Bartlow Martin found evidence that Stevenson had thought it.

CLEVELAND: Well, he never said that to me.

STERN: He reopened all of those aspirations in Stevenson.

CLEVELAND: Yes, in a way he wouldn't say that to me because I was also working for Rusk.

STERN: Rusk. Sure.

CLEVELAND: But I think he was kidding himself about the whole thing. And, in the end, of course, he found—I can't remember—but he found a very clever ground on which to rule several people off the course at the same time.

STERN: Oh, Johnson, he said that he couldn't pick any member of his Cabinet.

CLEVELAND: That was it, yes. That would rule out Bobby, that would rule out Adlai, and what have you, you know. There were people who were

even talking about McNamara [Robert S. McNamara] at that point.

STERN: I guess inevitably, if we're into the Johnson period, we have to get to Vietnam, of course. Because the controversy over what Stevenson really believed about Vietnam is still *very* much alive. I guess on the one extreme someone like George Ball who said that Stevenson was desperately unhappy, desperately against Johnson's policy and had become almost a—I can't remember his exact words—but a useless, depressed, frustrated individual constantly thinking of resigning and all the rest of that. Clayton Fritchey, on the other hand, says, not true, he fundamentally supported the President on Vietnam. He was troubled by certain aspects of the policy, particularly the bombing, and had doubts about the whole Tonkin Gulf incident, about what had happened.

CLEVELAND: With good reason.

STERN: [Laughter] Yes, indeed. But that basically he supported it. As—of course, it's hard to say what would have happened if he had lived

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another year or two. A lot of people who supported it in '65 were very much on the other side by '67. But he died and so we don't know. But, I wonder what impression you got.

CLEVELAND: I think I would be more on Clayton Fritchey's side of that argument. To begin with, at that stage of the game, '64 and '65, early '65, I don't think any of us appreciated the enormity of the thing: how big it was going to become, how big an effect on our economy it would have, what a morale problem it would be for us as a nation. All of that was really a lot of people reading into that period their hindsight from later on, as you suggest.

STERN: Right. That is a very important point.

CLEVELAND: And I think—he was getting a good deal of pressure from people, of the Goodman [Paul Goodman] persuasion and Norman Cousins and others—that there is hard evidence that he was seriously thinking about resigning. He did discuss it a little bit but, but he wasn't close to doing it at the time he died. I spent the evening with him in Geneva—I guess about three days before he died, or two days. He had just made the speech at the ECOSOC [Economic and Social Council]. There was always sort of a big, last minute problem as to whether he was going to go to Geneva or whether I was going to make the speech. And, I had done it a couple of years and he had done it a couple of years. We always developed the speech anyway and if we could persuade him to go, that was better. And he had come and he was tired. But, he was always somewhat tired. And we spent the evening with the Director General [David A. Morse] of the I.L.O. [International Labor Organization]—I can't remember just who that was. You will

have records in your file on that. And an old friend of Stevenson's, and one or two other people. But, he was in sort of a reflective mood and we talked about the Vietnam thing some. It was not a mood of desperation. And, that evening he would have no reason not to come out and say what he thought because he was among close friends. We tried several times to get a U.N. angle on Vietnam, to see if...

STERN: Excuse me. I was thinking of bringing in the U Thant peace initiative for whatever you might know about that.

CLEVELAND: Yes, let me tell you that. But there were other occasions too on which we were trying to figure some way to let world opinion, let more of the light of world opinion into the dark recesses of Washington policy making. Because, even by that time, Johnson had narrowed the policy circle on Vietnam to a very few people, of which George Ball was really the only dissident, and he was kind of the House dissident.

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STERN: Yes.

CLEVELAND: I think that Johnson was kidding himself that he was getting the whole opposition story when he had only one person doing it. And it was only later in early '68 when he suddenly widened the circle.

[Interruption]

U Thant. Stevenson and U Thant were never really very much on the same wavelength, of course. Well, it was hard to be on the same wavelength when he was so sort of Buddha-like in his indecisiveness. But the famous case came about this way. Looked at from where I sat. Plimpton and Yost are in seeing U Thant sometime in early December after the election of '64. And they're in on something else, the Middle East thing. And U Thant says, "By the way, when am I ever going to get an answer to my question about having a meeting between the U.S. and the North Vietnamese in Rangoon?" Plimpton and Yost did a double take and...

STERN: Knew nothing about it.

CLEVELAND: Knew nothing about it. And Yost goes out to our outer office, you see our office is right there, and called me up in what was for him high dudgeon, you know, he was a rather mild person. And said, "Why don't you tell us things? How in the heck can we do our job if you don't tell us things?" "Well, what are you talking about?" Well, he told me what U Thant had just said and I said, "Huh?" [Laughter] "You can't mean it!" So I put it all down on paper, like hot off the griddle. And I tear the thing out of the typewriter and go up to George Ball who was again Acting Secretary at that moment. And I said, "George, for Christ's sake, why don't you ever tell us anything? How can we do our job if you don't?" Well, he says, "What's wrong?" And I tell him the story and he says, "Huh?" [Laughter] He had never heard of it. Stevenson is

down in the Caribbean on vacation. This was not too far before Christmas, I guess. And, so I got him on the phone, on an unclassified line, of course. And I asked him about it and he tells me the whole story without any reticence. He said he had gotten this thing back in the early fall, I guess.

STERN: September.

CLEVELAND: And that U Thant had cleared with U Nu the idea of having Rangoon as the venue and had checked with the North Vietnamese and they would be willing to try the idea. Would we be willing? [Interruption] Well, he reported that to Rusk not in a cable but personally. Rusk's immediate predictable reaction, was, "Well, we can't be in a position of talking to the North

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Vietnamese behind the back of the South Vietnamese who are our allies. So, it's a non-starter, Adlai, you know." I don't know to this day whether Rusk—maybe your record reveals—whether Rusk ever reported this to the President. This particular point. There were two or three dozen self-appointed initiatives of this kind going on in those days. Rusk was spending a good deal of his time batting them down and saying, "Is there any indication that the other side really wants to make peace or..."

STERN: There are those who argue that Rusk at this point—and I think there is some good evidence for this—still believed that a military victory was not only possible but likely.

CLEVELAND: Yes.

STERN: And therefore didn't want to negotiate.

CLEVELAND: Right. I think that's probably right. But, in any case, he took the correct position that unless we have some indication that there's someone on the other side, there's no point in starting to talk. So Adlai never reported that reaction to U Thant.

STERN: That's extraordinary.

CLEVELAND: Maybe because he regarded Rusk's reaction as casual. Maybe because he figured that after the election he'd get a better answer. In any case, he didn't. So, the first and really the only record of the U Thant proposal and of our attitude toward it, is in a memorandum of mine that was written at the time. So, I reported to Ball that all hell was going to break loose, that one of these days U Thant was going to blow and with good reason. And there would be hell to pay and it would be embarrassing for the President and so forth. And that everybody'd better know about this just in case, as soon as possible. And that we'd better at least answer U Thant's question *now*.

So Stevenson did come back and talked to U Thant about it. And *did* answer his question in effect. But the damage had been done. And U Thant was still, well, sore and he tended to take his soreness out while holding press conferences. Shortly after that he had a press conference and...

STERN: Made that remark about the government not telling the truth. Sure. Right.

CLEVELAND: Rusk talked, Rusk called U Thant personally.

STERN: I didn't know that.

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CLEVELAND: The only time that I've ever.... I have a record of that conversation. Well, it was done by Phyllis [Phyllis D. Bernau] in Rusk's office, Bill Macomber's [William B. Macomber, Jr., Assistant Secretary of State for Congressional Relations at that time]. Rusk really chewed out U Thant and it was really a rather uncomfortable.... I was on the phone just as note taker. Rusk in effect asked U Thant whether he thought he was a government. "You can't be criticizing a government like that," that sort of thing. Then when this hit the White House—the White House always feels it has to say something, you know. As soon as they would get any news they would comment publicly. Well, Pierre—I guess it was still Pierre at that time. No, who was it? George Reedy [George E. Reedy], I think.

STERN: No, he was out. He was running for the Senate in California.

CLEVELAND: Well, George Reedy, I guess it was, was told to say that U Thant had never made any proposal. And I rushed over to the White House—I couldn't even do it on the phone, I felt I just had to go over personally. I went over and said, "George, you *can't* say that! It's not true! The record is absolutely clear! U Thant made a proposal." "Well, I was told.... The boss told me that there wasn't any proposal."

Well, I finally figured what everybody meant by that. It was a beautiful case of ships passing each other in the dark. The President meant that nobody had made any substantive proposal for a starting of a new negotiation about peace. They'd only made a procedural proposal about where to meet and so on. From U Thant's point of view—who couldn't really presume to say how the thing ought to come out but whose task was to get people together—getting clearance for a meeting in Rangoon and so forth was an enormously important proposal that he making. So he had made a proposal—parenthesis, procedural—he had not made, from the point of view of the White House, proposal—parenthesis, substantive. [Laughter]

STERN: Well, there is a distinction.

CLEVELAND: And there is a distinction!

STERN: Sure.

CLEVELAND: But, of course, we got into a terrible imbroglio and the press didn't understand the distinction and the distinction was pretty abstruse anyway, under the circumstances. And it was a terrible mess. I didn't feel any great sense of guilt because nothing I had done had contributed to the mess. I had contributed to providing some early warning that there was going to be a mess. But...

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STERN: Do you think there was a genuine—a genuine possibility that this could have led to something?

CLEVELAND: No.

STERN: Ambassador Yost *doesn't* think so.

CLEVELAND: I don't think so. No. I don't think that the Vietnamese were in the mood. And I don't think that the U.S. was in the mood either. *But*, I think that it would have been much better the day after or two or three days after the original pitch to go back to U Thant and say, "Gee, we certainly honor you for doing what the charter says which is that you're supposed to be making peace in the world. And we'd like to make peace too. And we've got this problem of having an ally. We can't really do it behind our ally's back. But maybe we could meet with the North Vietnamese with the South Vietnamese. Why don't you try that on for size?" That would have sunk the ship probably on the other end but then it would not have been us sinking it, three months late.

STERN: What about the incident concerning the twentieth anniversary of the United Nations and Johnson's coming up to make a speech.

CLEVELAND: Oh, that was a...

STERN: Which apparently surprised Stevenson since he had expected some, at least *some* conciliation.

CLEVELAND: Oh, yes. Well, I'll tell you exactly what happened on that. It was one of those cases that often happens, I suppose, in every presidency where a president is scooped by the press and then decides not to do it. Johnson was almost pathological about that sort of thing anyway. The best way to make sure that some enemy of yours didn't get appointed to a job was to announce that he was under consideration. That would strike him off the list for sure. Because he would always assume that the person had announced it himself, leaked it himself. We had developed a speech that

settled the Article 19 thing because we felt that the anniversary session should be more than just a sort of a formality and should be doing some business. And we had some business to do which was to get out from the bind that we had found ourselves in. And that the U.N. found itself in as a result of Article 19. So, we developed a very good speech on this. It had all the hearts and flowers but also it had this important core of substance in it. And we were all going out to San Francisco early in the following week. The speech was more or less put to bed and cleared with everybody including the White House. And, Sunday night, I got back home after being away for the

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day, out of the house for the day—I can't remember what I had been doing at the time. I got back about ten o'clock at night or something like that. There was a message to call Scotty Reston [James B. Reston]. So I called Scotty Reston. And Scotty says, "Well, I was trying to get you earlier because we have a story running in the Monday morning paper about the speech in San Francisco and all and I wanted to check it with you but it's too late now. It's gone to press. Would you like to know what we're saying?" And I said, "Yes, I certainly would like to know what you're saying!" [Laughter] So he read me his story and I said, "Oh my God!" And he said, "Well, I hope we're not making too much trouble for you." And I said, "Well, you are but it's gone to press and it's a free country." And so that was the end of that.

So, the next morning sure enough in the right hand column of the front page of the *New York Times* was this big story that was *very* accurate about what the President was going to propose. I don't know where Scotty got it. I didn't ask. It was datelined Washington so he may have gotten it in New York. Usually that was the ploy. [Laughter] You would dateline it somewhere where you didn't get it. But anyway, he didn't get it from me and in the nature of things he couldn't have gotten it from me at least not *that* day. But in fact he didn't get it from me. Well, the next morning I'm in the Secretary's staff meeting at nine o'clock or so. And one of the girls comes in with a note asking me to come out and take the phone because the White House is calling. Well, it wasn't just the White House—it was the President! And he chewed me up and down for leaking the story to Scotty Reston. And I finally, when I could get a word in edgewise which was quite awhile, I told him about last night and so forth and that I wasn't there and that Scotty had called me but it was too late by then to do anything about it because it was already running. He didn't believe a word of it. And I began wondering when I should start packing. So he said, "Well, I've got to have another speech. Can't make *that* speech." So after the staff meeting I talked with the President and the result was that he wanted another speech that didn't have that substance in it. So, we kind of regrouped and tried to decide what else we could say and talked with Stevenson and company in New York. They were very much upset, of course, also. I then sat up for most of that night *with Rusk personally*, the two of us sitting in his darkened office, writing a new speech. He's quite a good speech writer himself. And passing drafts back and forth and then the girl outside typing and so forth. And finally by about two or three in the morning he's still there, serving as assistant speech writer. Really extraordinary, you know. He was as distressed as anybody else. He thought we should be saying what we wanted to say.

STERN: Did Stevenson know beforehand about this change in...

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CLEVELAND: Oh, you mean before...

STERN: Here.

CLEVELAND: Oh, yes.

STERN: I see.

CLEVELAND: Because we consulted with the mission about what we could say in the circumstances and so on. No, the relationship was that there was nothing important like that that ever was a mystery between those two offices.

STERN: Apparently he was very disappointed in the change.

CLEVELAND: He was. He was indeed disappointed in the change.

STERN: Yes.

CLEVELAND: And he was even more disappointed when he saw how disappointed all of his U.N. colleagues were. Because they all thought that...

STERN: They all read the *Times*.

CLEVELAND: They all read the *Times*. And anyway they thought it was about time we came off it. And it *was* about time we came off it. And the President just didn't like being scooped. And in the end we didn't really come off it until Goldberg got in and it was one of his first things.

STERN: The same story. What about the whole question of the intervention in the Dominican Republic? Did you have any close connection with that and did you ever discuss it with Stevenson?

CLEVELAND: Yes. Did I tell you about that this morning? No.

STERN: No, I don't believe so.

CLEVELAND: I was just mentioning that to somebody else recently. Stevenson was in the White House the whole time that that was developing. By accident he was down on some other business. And then the thing broke and messages from Tap Bennett came in and so forth. But he didn't call back to report that

this was a big issue that we would think hard about, the international organization aspects of it. He didn't call either Yost or myself which I think he should have done so we could put our

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thinking caps on. In fact I heard about it through the State Department. And Ellsworth Bunker and I got together and worked out a whole way of doing it.

STERN: Oh, yes. You're talking about the notion of internationalizing the issue.

CLEVELAND: The Lebanon thing.

STERN: That's right.

CLEVELAND: We then went up and presented it to George Ball and the center of things was in Ball's office where the Secretary came in fresh from the White House. And we presented it to him and he said, "Well, but the President regards this as a rescue mission." And I said, "Yes, it's a rescue mission at nine o'clock tonight or whatever it was. But by ten o'clock tomorrow morning it's a peacekeeping operation. And maybe we ought to plan twelve hours ahead, sort of for the following day." "Well, I don't know what the President wants to do." It was another of these cases where the President had already decided really what he wanted to do and everybody was accommodating to that and nobody was arguing with him. And, as you know, the Secretary took a very constitutionalist position about his role. His role is to advise the President but it is the President's policy, not his policy. I developed a memo based on Bunker's and my theory which was probably jointly signed. And it got over into the White House mill. But that was the way it was done. But then that memo was resurrected apparently and became the basis for a declaration on Sunday of the weekend after in a speech that the President gave to some businessmen's group downtown, at the Willard Hotel, a downtown hotel saying that we were just holding the line for a peacekeeping force. And eventually, of course, we did get an observer in there for the Secretary General. We also had to deal with inevitable U.N. angle. The rest of the U.N. wanted to have an observer there because this was a breach of the peace and an invasion and so forth. And we had quite a fight with the rest of the government convincing them that our obligations under the U.N. required us to accept an observer. Ellsworth Bunker, who was ambassador to the O.A.S. [Organization of American States], agreed with that and Stevenson was pushing it. But almost everybody else that was involved just said, "Oh, my God! Do we have to bother with the U.N. too? With all these problems? We're already having to deal with all of Latin America." But we finally did get an observer down there which didn't create all that much trouble that we didn't already have. And then Bunker went down on behalf of the O.A.S. with two other ambassadors. And, after a year of negotiating, finally negotiated us out of it. I regarded it as a classic case of how it's easy to get into a situation unilaterally but if you get into it multilaterally, it's much easier to get out. Because in

order to get out if you get into it unilaterally, you then have to multilateralize it before you can get out, it seems.

STERN: Get out of it. Right. Probably in the last—we just have a couple of minutes left—of we could just take a quick look at one highly speculative question, which is what your impression is of what the course of American policy in Vietnam would have been if Kennedy had lived. Do you think he could have done substantially what Johnson did or would it have been very different? I realize that this is really very difficult.

CLEVELAND: No, I think that he would have—I'm somewhat inclined to agree with Arthur Schlesinger on this. You remember; he did it in his book.

STERN: Yes. Sure.

CLEVELAND: I really believe that he—I think maybe Schlesinger overstated it—but I think Kennedy would have accommodated to opinion. Including world opinion. But especially including domestic opinion, more flexibly and with less sort of ideological fervor. He wasn't really an ideological guy, he was a pragmatist in everything and I think that his pragmatic side would have shown up later on. LBJ just got stubborn. It became a holy...

STERN: You're thinking of the coonskin on the wall?

CLEVELAND: Yes. Well, and also, "I'm not going to be the first President to lose a war," and soon. Let me tell you, if there's time on that tape or even if there isn't, one story that is really about Rusk in that connection. I happened to be back from NATO meeting with Rusk and McCloy at lunch on the Mansfield Amendment [Mike Mansfield] and that kind of thing, the day that Arthur Schlesinger's book came out and it was all over the front page of the *Washington Post*. And the most natural thing in the world, of course, was to ask Rusk—which McCloy did—what he thought about Arthur's new book. And Rusk could only say this. He said, "You know, I suppose I met with President Kennedy maybe a hundred times on the subject of Vietnam and Southeast Asia. And I don't remember a single time out of all those occasions when the President held up his hand and said, 'Wait a minute. We can't discuss Vietnam. Arthur Schlesinger isn't here!'"

[END OF TAPE 4; END OF INTERVIEW]

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