The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training
Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

PETER W. RODMAN

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy
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INTERVIEW

Q: Today is May 22, 1994. This is an interview with Peter W. Rodman being done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and I am Charles Stuart Kennedy.

I wonder if we could start off kind of at the beginning. Could you tell me where and when you were born and a little about your family.

RODMAN: I was born in Boston, November 24, 1943. My family is a very small family in the Boston area. My father is in the insurance business. I went to schools in the Boston area.

Q: Which schools did you go to?

RODMAN: I went to a prep school called Roxbury Latin, a private day school, very academic, which did me a lot of good. So I went to Harvard. This is relevant to my later career because Harvard is where I linked up with Henry Kissinger--he was my tutor in my senior year.

Harvard has a sort of limited tutorial system modeled after the Oxford system. But whereas at Oxford most of your education is in tutorials, at Harvard one of your course credits in your senior year consists of a tutorial--a one-on-one relationship with a very senior professor. The most senior professors in the school have to do this, whether they like it or not.

Kissinger, of course, was one of the more senior and popular professors there. But I had a pretty good record in the Government Department and he was the one I wanted. So I sought him out and he took me on. This was in September of 1963. In 1963-64 I worked with him and I did an honors thesis on the Cuban Missile Crisis, which had just happened so the research material wasn't at all that extensive. But it was great fun working with him.

When I graduated in the summer of '64 I was going to Oxford. I had an Knox Fellowship. I spent a couple of years at Oxford.

But in the summer after I graduated, I went to him and said, I don't have a summer job; is there some research I can do for you? He was very cagey. He said, Well, I'm working on

a book. It was a book called The Troubled Partnership, a book on NATO. But he said, Well, I have a few things that maybe you can do for me.

So he gave me an assignment to collect some material on a certain subject. He wanted to see how good I was. I guess I did a good job because he has kept me busy for 30 years, on and off. So I spent the summer doing that for him. Overseas at Oxford, I did other research for him, in my spare time, for another book that he was planning--a kind of magnum opus on international politics which he never did. Although he turned some of it into his recent book Diplomacy, which was just published.

Then I came back to Law School. I was at Harvard Law School from '66 to '69. Even there in summer vacations instead of working for a law firm I helped him with research--things he was doing, articles he was writing.

Q: I would like to go back to during the time when you were in class as an undergraduate with Henry Kissinger. Did he have a particular thrust? How did he seem?

RODMAN: That's a good question. He was somewhat conservative, to the right of center, and to that extent out of step with the prevailing fashion at Harvard. That was before Vietnam so it wasn't quite as passionate. But he was a very popular professor. He gave a very popular elective course, Government 180, which was about "principles of international politics," a semester course. It was one of the most popular courses.

Every year there was a student guide to courses published by the Harvard Crimson--a "confidential guide," what the students really think about their professors. Kissinger, even though he was out of step with the fashion, always got very high marks for being a very stimulating lecturer, and for being provocative and engaging with the students in the class even if there were disagreements, which there often were. He was very well regarded.

I remember very exciting things. When the Cuban Missile Crisis was going on, the whole world was wondering what was happening. Kissinger was one of the people who spoke on it some evening. In fact Brzezinski came and then Kissinger spoke. He was talking to the students about what it all meant and what was going to happen. He was quite young, at least by my present standard--he was certainly younger that I am now.

On the personal level, he was rather shy. Our one-on-one sessions were a little bit awkward because he wasn't quite as gregarious as he became later. When he became a celebrity he developed a little more self-confidence in that respect.

As a professor he was outstanding. I learned a lot from him. This personal relationship obviously made the difference in my career.

The other interesting experience with him was in the summer of 1968, which was between my second and third year of law school. Again, most law students get a job at a law firm. Well before that I was thinking of working in Washington and he had said at

one point that he knew some people in the Johnson administration and that he could help me get a job there for the summer. I came in to see him in late '67 and asked him about this. He said, Why don't you wait? Nelson may run for president.

Q: Nelson Rockefeller.

RODMAN: What ended up happening was that the summer of '68 I spent with him working on Nelson Rockefeller's presidential campaign. We went to the convention in Miami Beach trying very hard to stop Richard Nixon. But Rockefeller had a very tiny staff. Kissinger had basically me and the woman whom he later married, Nancy Maginnis, who also worked for Rockefeller.

We had a great time. We wrote the speeches, we thought of wonderful foreign policy initiatives. We just didn't have any delegates when Rockefeller got to Miami Beach. It was one of the most bungled campaigns ever, but it was a great experience.

If Rockefeller had won the presidency, Kissinger would have had a key position and Henry had said to me at some point, Certainly, you would come with me.

We lost Rockefeller along the way. By a quirk of fate, Kissinger ended up there anyway and invited me to come down.

Q: Going back to get a feel, where were Nixon and Rockefeller when you were working on this? Obviously you're trying to work out differences between the Nixon of 1968 and the Rockefeller of 1968. Were there any sort of major foreign policy differences?

RODMAN: No. There weren't any big substantive differences on the Republican side. Both Nixon and Rockefeller were moderate. This is at the height of the Vietnam issue-- we re talking about the summer of '68. We know what was happening in the Democratic party at that time at their convention in Chicago.

The Republicans had come together, more or less. You could see this in the Republican platform on Vietnam even, which was saying: If we re not going to win this, it's time to get out. So it was the whole idea of Vietnamization, or, as they called it, "de-Americanization" of the war. Republicans at that stage were not saying: let's bomb Hanoi to the Stone Age. They could read the polls as well as anybody after the Tet offensive. So the Republicans were saying that it was time to disengage from this in some honorable fashion.

All the Republicans united on a platform plank on Vietnam with surprising ease. In fact, Kissinger and Rockefeller engineered this compromise on the Vietnam issue in the platform. I helped with that. That's one of the things that we did.

There were just no real divisive issues. Rockefeller and Nixon had had their encounter in 1960 when Rockefeller had briefly challenged Nixon for the nomination. If anything,

Rockefeller was then slightly more hawkish. Rockefeller was then reflecting the view that was very fashionable among academics -- that we needed to build up conventional forces. This was the Harvard critique of the Eisenhower administration--that there was too much emphasis on nuclear retaliation and not enough on a conventional buildup.

This is the program that the Kennedy administration came in with and it was the program that Nelson Rockefeller pushed on Nixon in 1960. So there were no significant philosophical differences. I think Rockefeller, had he been president, would have had the same creative foreign policy--playing the Chinese off against the Russians; exploring arms control. Kissinger was one of the pioneers in the whole field of arms control.

The Republican party was sort of serenely united in those days--on what I'd consider a solid but subtle policy of dealing with the Soviet Union and somehow disengaging from Vietnam. It was the Democrats who were tearing themselves apart.

Q: This is oral history trying to get your thing. You're a young man teamed up with a very bright, at that time, professor, adviser and well-thought of man, working on a Republican campaign, one sector of it. What were you doing?

RODMAN: I was a research assistant, basically. We re talking about the Rockefeller campaign that summer. There were speeches. Rockefeller liked to give thoughtful expositions on policy. I think he had an exaggerated view of the benefit of doing these things. Henry was being somewhat naive in those days himself, as a professor who delighted in formulating policies.

I was sent out to talk to people on defense issues, different policy issues, and then work with Kissinger and Rockefeller's speech writers on crafting substantive speeches. A lot of thought went into them, just like a government doing a speech for a senior official. You're very careful about what you say. You try to say something intelligent and say it clearly.

We went to the convention and there the work was on the platform negotiating this Vietnam compromise. My job, I remember, was keeping tabs on what the different candidates positions were. Rockefeller was there, Romney had been in the race, Reagan was flirting with the race. We had all these personalities in the Republican side. We made a point of finding out what everybody's view was on Vietnam and trying to craft something that we thought would get a majority.

As I said, it turned out to be easier than we thought because Nixon wasn't fighting it. Nixon was smart enough to know that it didn't make a whole lot of difference what the platform said. He was out there rounding up delegates.

So I helped Kissinger with that, keeping track of the substantive views of people and helping draft language. That was it.

Q: Were there any Nixon foreign affairs counterparts?

RODMAN: No, not that I worked with. I think Dick Allen was the person. I think Henry may have had some interaction with him; I didn't. Richard Allen--he's still a friend to this day. But when Nixon won the nomination, that same evening, when Rockefeller called him to congratulate him, Nixon asked if Henry would work with him.

At that point Henry was fairly disgusted, and didn't want anything to do with Nixon and begged off. Although later in the campaign I think that Henry was being approached by both the Humphrey people and the Nixon people and he did talk to them both. But Nixon understood that he didn't have anybody of that caliber. Dick Allen is very capable. But the Republican Party in those days did not have a vast army of people with experience. Now there is a whole community in Washington, people of both parties; when they're out of power they hang around the think tanks, like me.

But the Republicans then seemed to be short of major talent. Nixon, I think, largely realized that Kissinger was really the outstanding person on the Republican side. I was not surprised, frankly, when Nixon named him after the election as his Security Adviser. I had no inside knowledge; I just knew that Nixon had wanted him and I figured that Nixon would come after him again.

Q: What were you doing after the campaign?

RODMAN: I was at law school. I was in my third year of law school, '68 to '69. Of course, then there was the election and Henry did come down to Washington and I was asked to join him. I finished law school in June of '69. I took the bar exam in New York on the theory that I might someday practice law. I studied for the bar exam on the night of the moon landing, which is 25 years ago at this moment, which is why I'm thinking of it. (I passed.) But then I came to Washington August 1, 1969.

Q: At that time, Henry Kissinger was the National Security Adviser. What was your impression when you walked in there. How things operated, what you were going to do and all?

RODMAN: I was 25 years old. I was a very junior special assistant. First I was in the EOB, the old Executive Office Building, and was given miscellaneous tasks. They were short-handed on this and that; there was some writing. They started producing what they called the Foreign Policy Reports. Nixon, for the first four years of his term, produced a report to the Congress on foreign policy--a rather long substantive document about policy. I helped do the drafting of that.

But I did a lot of personal things. After a while he asked me to help keep his papers together, his CHRON file, as they called it, so that they would be in order. Being a professor he figured that someday he would write something about his experience and he

wanted his papers in some order. So I kept an eye on that. I made sure he had copies of everything that was important. So it was very miscellaneous.

In those days, at the beginning, the Security Adviser's office was in the basement of the West Wing. The big corner office upstairs was the press lobby. Journalists used to hang around there. At some point in the summer of 1970, Nixon and Haldeman and his guys decided on rearranging the East Wing. They didn't want the press hanging around there so they put a floor on the swimming pool, the place where Jack Kennedy and LBJ--it was actually the swimming pool that FDR had built for his therapy and JFK and Johnson used to use it for other purposes. But Nixon didn't swim.

They turned that into the press area, which it is now--the press briefing room. They turned the front of the West Wing into a very nice lobby and reception area which it is now. So the front is where the presidential guests are received, and most visitors. The corner office became the National Security Adviser's office. So the basement was opened up and divided into smaller offices for special assistants.

So I was invited over about August of 1970 to be in the West Basement. At that point Winston Lord was Special Assistant replacing Tony Lake. Tony had this job for a year and was having complexes about it, and didn't want to stay around, so he left. Winston went over and I came over as a junior assistant. A third person there was Navy Commander Jonathan T. Howe, now a retired admiral who went on to very important jobs of various kinds. The fourth person there was someone who changed, somebody who dealt with the press liaison, with the White House press office and the NSC. So there were 4 of us special assistants in the basement.

Geography does make a difference. If you're right in the West Wing and somebody upstairs in the main office, Kissinger or Al Haig his deputy, and there's something they want you to do, they could buzz you downstairs and you could run upstairs in 10 seconds. Proximity makes a difference. So all of us were in on all the most interesting things. If Kissinger needed somebody to draft something or to keep track of this or that--we were there.

West Executive Avenue--the street that's between the White House and the Executive Office Building--is a small street but it is kind of a big gulf. The people on the NSC staff who were across the street were a little bit removed from the more exciting things, the gossip of the White House and that sort of thing.

Kissinger's style of operation in a sensitive negotiation was to have both the substantive experts--the NSC staffers--and one of his special assistants, one or more of us, to be sort of his private secretary. That was how he put together a team for any of his negotiations. But it was very exciting to be over there in the West Wing because you were always a part of the action.

I had a personal relationship with Kissinger that preceded the whole White House thing so I was in an extraordinary position.

Winston Lord was the primary special assistant, so he was very much involved in preparations for the China initiative; and in the diplomacy with China; and with the Vietnam negotiations that were going on. They actually had begun. Tony Lake went to some of the early meetings, the secret talks in Paris.

So I was a junior version of Winston. I didn't go on the first trip to China, but I went on some later trips to China. The Vietnam talks, when they heated up in '72 and they got busier, I was called in just to be there, to keep the records and to do some drafting. So I got involved in the Vietnam talks after awhile, as I said, and the China stuff after awhile.

On Russia and the Middle East, I tended to do what Winston did because I spoke Russian, I was always interested in that. So in a lot of the secret diplomacy with the Soviets I did Winston's function of being the confidential assistant. In the Middle East especially, Henry had his secret meetings with Golda or with King Hussein--all these things that Secretary Rogers wasn't suppose to know about--Henry would bring me along to take notes, do the follow-up and be the special assistant.

There was a kind of division of labor between Winston and me. He was the senior special assistant but I was the junior version.

Q: To get a little feel for the atmospherics of this. Here you are, Henry Kissinger picked you at that time, the Secretary of State was William Rogers. There was not a disguised power play that was going on. It seemed to all be one side which was in the National Security Council. Did you feel a part of this, you know, keep it away from those guys over in the State Department?

RODMAN: That was the essence of it. It was Nixon who did this, from the very beginning--even before the inauguration--when there were some organizational questions to be decided, the structure of the interagency process. It was Nixon who wanted the reins to be in the White House.

Nixon did not trust the State Department. There were a number of issues. Whether it was Vietnam or relations with the Soviets, where the first few things that Rogers did were the exact opposite of what Nixon wanted to be done. It was cumulative but it was rapid.

Nixon decided that he would rather do these things himself. He had Henry there to do it. Henry and he had an ideological affinity. They both looked at the world in the same way. It was Nixon who decided that he didn't trust the State Department to do it right. So more and more they pulled things into the White House. Or, let the State Department do its thing, and then meanwhile developed over the years "back channels" of their own with other Heads of State, or even negotiations. We were all part of this conspiratorial atmosphere.

It was always a question that Nixon or Kissinger faced: Should they tell the State Department about this or that? Sometimes they did keep them informed but usually less than the whole story. There were a number of things that were going on that the State Department wasn't told about until it was almost finished. Like the overture to China.

We were part of it. Kissinger has made his own judgments about this in retrospect. Having been Secretary of State himself, he has a little more balanced view of this. It was a bizarre way to run a government. I think we all knew it was bizarre but this is how Nixon wanted it.

There was no way Kissinger could have done this by himself. That is the one point that I want to make. Kissinger was an obscure Harvard professor whose standing in the White House was not all that secure. Dr. Brzezinski tried to parlay that position into some equally dominant role, couldn't do it because Carter had a different view: Carter balanced Brzezinski and Vance off against each other.

Nixon knew Rogers very well and he knew that Rogers didn't know foreign policy. Nixon just decided that he'd rather have a little power center in the White House. He had a strong staff; the NSC staff was very strong. The White House started conducting diplomacy on its own without reference to the State Department. This was all Nixon's doing, Henry didn't object, obviously.

I don't have anything more to add to what Henry has written about it. Even Nixon has written about it.

Q: Did you have any feel for maybe this is something that one should check because there might be other, you know one of the problems of concentration is, in foreign affairs, there are ramifications beyond the immediate one. Was it really a staff that was so centered on the White House, that looking at the big and major picture it was almost, I don't want to say oblivious but not very concerned about other effects?

RODMAN: Two things. I was then a special assistant in the West Wing so I did not deal with the other agencies; that was not my function. The senior NSC staffers were in a much trickier position because in all these things, the NSC staff person was a part of Kissinger's team--the China experts, the Vietnam experts--so it was their job to be interactive, continually, with the State Department, the Defense Department, CIA. They were the ones in the very tricky position of having to keep a lot of the most important things secret. So you might ask them how they managed it.

Kissinger himself has looked at this in his memoirs. The advantage you got was extraordinary flexibility. You had a president who could act very quickly, who could do very risky things without fear of leaks. Leaks have a habit of undermining policy initiatives. These were the most sensitive, politically deadly issues of the day, and he could do these things with just total flexibility, finesse and consistency. You never had

before, or since--a US foreign policy that was as coherent, as disciplined, as flexible, and as subtle. I think all of these negotiations would still be going on if we had left it to the normal bureaucratic procedure. In any negotiation you have to raise it to the political level whenever there's a deadlock. You have to go to the higher authority to appeal to break a deadlock. So this was being done on a continuing basis. That's what you gain.

The price you pay is a demoralization of the rest of the government. I am prepared to concede that there was a substantial price paid. I think it was done very well, substantively. Other people may disagree. But it is a bizarre way to run a government.

Nixon and Kissinger used the interagency process to get what they thought was the best of the wisdom of the bureaucracy. They used formal interagency meetings and policy studies. They would just find out whatever ideas the State Department had. Then Nixon and Kissinger would take it and shape a policy in their own way.

For example on China, there was an interagency process which developed all sorts of ideas about things we could do with the Chinese--concessions you could make like opening up trade or lifting passport restrictions. There was a whole menu of steps that was developed. So you had the best of the technical knowledge of everybody.

What Nixon and Kissinger did is that they decided on their own kind of initiative, on their own schedule for doling out these little concessions. As for lifting passport restrictions, for example, they would do it in response to some message they had gotten about the Chinese willingness to have a meeting. They kept it all close to their chest. They would use the rest of the government to get ideas from them. Then the strategy they would form themselves, the two of them together, then decide how to play it.

When Kissinger became Secretary of State he came to the conclusion that really the most efficient way to run the government is to have a Secretary of State who has the confidence of the President, who could have the same power as he had as NSC Adviser. But to have the same person also running the machinery of the Department, because then you'd have everything working in parallel. You'd have the cable machine and all the people in the Department being brought in under the authority of this same person rather than have them off on their own, spinning wheels or doing their own thing.

Q: I was at a recent roundtable conference where it was mentioned that, with Dean Acheson and Harry Truman, they had this real walking-in step business.

RODMAN: That's right. Particularly when Gerald Ford was President. The relationship between Kissinger and Ford was the most normal, healthy, uncompelled relationship because Ford thought Kissinger was the greatest. The two of them met all the time.

I saw Kissinger as Secretary of State; he used the Department. Most of the assistant secretaries were career people. The team he operated with in the Middle East or Southern

Africa included some special assistants, as sort of personal assistants, plus the assistant secretaries and the people in the Department.

In fact, there's an interesting contrast between Kissinger and Jim Baker. Baker seems to have come into office with a sort of paranoia about the Foreign Service. Kissinger came over there not being sure that the Foreign Service liked him at all since they had been the victims of the previous procedures. But once he was there he found that the Foreign Service is loyal to the Secretary and that they were absolutely loyal to him. He found the people he liked, the people he chose to work with, whom he thought were the best of the Foreign Service--Phil Habib, Joe Sisco, Roy Atherton, Bob McCloskey, people who were good. He came away very pleased and proud of the Foreign Service and how well it worked. It was in a way one of the best periods, I would have thought, for the Department. They were in the center of the action because their man was the boss and they were the action.

Kissinger didn't have any insecurities about being overrun by the Foreign Service. He knew that he could provide intellectual leadership; he found that they provided a lot of expertise. It was a very healthy situation. In retrospect, Kissinger has said in his memoirs that this is clearly the best way to do it.

The problem at the beginning of the Nixon administration was, I think, a highly politicized environment in which Nixon was dealing with some very deadly issues on his plate. He didn't really trust the State Department. The center of gravity in the Department on Vietnam, for example, was much more dovish. There were people signing petitions and wanting to get out.

On arms control, similarly, the sentiment of the rest of the government was to make concessions. Whereas Nixon and Kissinger came in with the idea of linkage. They wanted to be very stingy on arms control for awhile. They wanted to test the Soviets on some of these issues. They didn't want to make concessions on arms control right away.

So if you read, particularly, Kissinger's memoirs, you see how the Department got everything wrong in the first few months. They made policy towards the Soviets, they made policy towards Vietnam. They did a lot of things that Nixon and Kissinger thought were just totally wrong, just sort of willful disobedience of Nixon's instructions. They just didn't seem to get it. Because Nixon had a strategy towards the Soviets and the Department seemed very caught up in the Zeitgeist of arms control, which was very fashionable; there was a sort of emotion to get the hell out of Vietnam.

Nixon was trying to impose some discipline, and he found it very hard to do it. Rogers didn't have any background on this and certainly no ideological sensitivity in this regard. So Nixon and Kissinger ended up, more and more, just doing it by themselves--just opening up their own channels and saying to key leaders--We re the ones you should talk to, and don't pay much attention to these others.

Partly it was the prejudice that Nixon came in with and partly the Department really blew it in the first few months and just confirmed all of Nixon's worst suspicions of the State Department.

Q: I think of course you're probably talking about, it's true in almost any bureaucracy, that there's an inertia that goes on and people are doing it the way they've been doing it. Maybe in the mindset a new administration comes in, it takes a while to grab control.

RODMAN: There was a lot of congressional pressure since the Department has to go up on the Hill. They re very conscious of the congressional pressures, which were all very dovish pressures, you know--arms control, Vietnam and popular pressure.

Nixon and Kissinger had an approach which didn't really have a whole lot of allies but they had their own judgments on how they wanted to deal with the Soviets. They wanted to be tougher with the Soviets and try to keep the Vietnam issue under some discipline.

I don't have anything to add really to what Henry has written on this. Henry has written about this with a certain amount of regret and as much detachment as you could expect of him.

Q: I must say, although I'm a retired Foreign Service Officer, I don't come with any particular baggage. I was' t in this; I'm interested in the process.

RODMAN: It had its advantages and disadvantages.

Q: How did you view some of the--Haldeman and Ehrlichman--were they able to, they were very powerful Nixon aides but was the NSC off balance with them or not?

RODMAN: That was very interesting. Again, that's a very good question.

I respected Haldeman. I thought in a way, it may seem shocking to say, but I think he was a model of a Chief of Staff because he didn't interfere in foreign policy. There are different kinds of meetings. I think the most important substantive discussions were between Nixon and Kissinger--just the two of them were there. Occasionally Haldeman was called in. Sometimes they would talk about some of the political aspect of things--you can see some of this in the Haldeman diaries which looks kind of bad. But as I said, the most serious substantive discussions between Nixon and Kissinger were usually just alone.

Haldeman never presumed to interfere in the foreign policy process because first of all Nixon was the master in foreign policy; Haldeman had no claim to know the foreign part. Even on the domestic politics of it, Nixon was the master. So Haldeman had a kind of deferential view, unlike say Donald Regan or a lot of other people I've seen who somehow think their job is to second-guess the foreign policy person.

So Henry had direct access to Nixon, to put it mildly. He and Haldeman were equal. Secondly, Haldeman backed Henry up. When there was a fight with the State Department, as there often was, because the State Department was resisting the White House instruction--the State Department had convinced itself that this was Kissinger and not the President. Haldeman would sometimes ring up Rogers and say--The President wants this.

So Henry would very often call Haldeman, complaining about Rogers, and Haldeman would grumble. But Haldeman was someone who would crack the whip with the government, make clear that Henry really was speaking for the President on such and such a thing. Those two things which to me reflect what a Chief of Staff is supposed to do.

It was also a bizarre and unique combination of people. As Henry got to be a celebrity I think that Nixon and his cronies did things to keep Henry off balance. There would be leaks to the press that Henry was out of control. So Henry would grumble at Haldeman. But again, Haldeman was not doing this on his own either. Haldeman was a totally loyal person who did things because of what the boss wanted. So Henry had his problems. Again, it wasn't with Haldeman, it was with Nixon. Often, Henry had brought it upon himself. As I said, Haldeman was somebody that Henry could appeal to.

Now, Nixon himself had his peculiarities. There are a lot of stories in various memoirs of Nixon spouting off and saying--Get rid of this guy!--or--Do this!--or--Bomb the hell out of this! This was the President letting off steam. The job of the assistant is not to go implement these things without making sure some adult thought about it. So Henry and Haldeman, I think, who knew Nixon very well between the two of them, were allies. Haldeman was somebody that Henry could appeal to for advice, or to make sure that Nixon didn't really mean something he had said.

So I see Haldeman as kind of a neutral figure in that sense--strong, he protected the President from a lot of things. He was a gatekeeper which always incurs resentment but is always essential. Nixon was a very introverted person, who didn't like a lot of people streaming in and out of the Oval Office. So you did have Haldeman as the gate-keeper. There was a lot of resentment at him because of that. Again, Nixon was not like most politicians who loved to have people floating around. Access to the Oval Office was very controlled. Nixon didn't like big meetings, he preferred a minimum number of people. So the job of the Chief of Staff is to say no to a lot of people. That always makes enemies.

I'm kind of nostalgic for Haldeman. An odd thing to say.

Ehrlichman didn't figure in this in the same way. Ehrlichman was doing domestic policy so he wasn't involved. But I do remember vividly that the impression that Henry always had of him was of somebody very thoughtful and highly intelligent who was a moderate Republican who cared a lot about issues. The moderates now look back with a lot of nostalgia on a lot of things Nixon did--environmentalism, economic. He wasn't right-

wing, he was a centrist in the social policy. It wasn't an accident that you had people like Pat Moynihan working as a White House staffer for a while.

So Ehrlichman presided over this area of policy, I think, with some great intelligence. Henry found Ehrlichman a lot of fun. The tragedy was in '73 when Haldeman and Ehrlichman were fired. It caused great bitterness. Both of them were destroyed. Ehrlichman for some reason has had a grievance against Kissinger ever since, for reasons that I kind of forget.

Ehrlichman wrote some books and novels about the White House where Henry is a megalomaniac. I'm not sure what this comes from since they were not competitors. They were not rivals, in fact, they were friends. I think it is part of Ehrlichman's trauma that he went through.

Haldeman, on the other hand, I think his relationship with Kissinger was quite decent. When I was working for Henry during the Carter administration, I remember Haldeman came to pay a call on Henry after he was out of jail. I don't know what the subject was but I remember I went out to say hello to him myself. Haldeman was a gentleman, a surprisingly gentle person, at least at that stage of his life, mellow and mature. Whereas Ehrlichman had never really recovered from the experience. Henry is still a target of his bitterness, for reasons I don't fully understand.

Q: I'm sort of skipping around. In negotiations that you would sit in as sort of note-keeper, with the King of Jordan or Golda Meir or whoever it might be, what was your impression of the way Henry Kissinger would deal with this? Here you've got a very bright, articulate person. Sometimes this does not add, because this kind of person is not the greatest person to deal with. They want to say their piece and don't listen. I mean, how did you find him?

RODMAN: Kissinger?

Q: Did Kissinger listen?

RODMAN: Let's talk about the Middle East which is the issue on which often it'd be Henry and just me. Henry would often not include his other NSC staffers. That's an important point. Another point is that the State Department was not supposed to know about it. But another key point is that all of this was done with Nixon's authorization.

But on the Middle East, Kissinger was in a delicate position throughout these years because Nixon did not want him to deal with the Middle East. Nixon, more often than not, would let Rogers implement a proposal that Rogers wanted to do. Henry did not have the mandate to conduct any kind of independent diplomacy on the Middle East.

On the other hand, Nixon had his doubts about some of the things Rogers was doing. Henry was not above feeding some of these doubts. But Nixon would let Henry do his

own talks, for example, with Golda and the King, partly to let these people know they had a direct channel to the White House. There was a Nixonian purpose here.

So Henry did not have freedom of action to wheel and deal, or to conduct an independent diplomacy. Henry was on his good behavior. He would report back to Nixon. It would be a source of intelligence for the White House for Henry to have his own talks. You could tell the Israelis or the Jordanians what the White House, what Nixon really thought. That wasn't necessarily competitive with the State Department, except--well I'll leave it at that.

Partly because Henry was Jewish, partly because Nixon wanted Rogers to have something to do, Nixon let the State Department conduct a certain diplomacy. But, every once in a while, the State Department diplomacy would run aground and there'd be some monumental blowup. Either the negotiation would fall apart, there'd be a crisis with the Israelis, or something and then, most of the time, Nixon would pull Rogers back. Nixon had his own doubts about what Rogers was up to but Henry did not have any mandate to do a lot of wheeling and dealing.

So Henry would just talk with these people and listen. There was nothing unusual in his discourse. It would be a way of finding out what was really on the other person's mind. It was a chance to give the other person some assurances about the American commitment and what the President's view was. He tried to work things out if there was some dispute. It was useful for Henry to find this out; maybe he could help smooth things out.

Q: On these types of talks, what was the input that you were getting from the Israeli lobby in the United States, which has always been very powerful?

RODMAN: Henry didn't deal with the lobby, I don't think. We re talking about the period when Henry was just in the White House; he was not Secretary of State. For this long period when he didn't really have the authority, he kept a low profile.

His interlocutor was Rabin who was the Israel Ambassador. He met with Rabin frequently--again, with Nixon's authorization. He didn't need the lobby.

Nixon and Rabin had a relationship of great mutual respect. Nixon respected Rabin because he was a tough military guy, no nonsense. In fact, they had the same strategic view. Rabin supported Nixon's Vietnam policy. He agreed that it was important for the United States not to be defeated.

So again, it wasn't just Henry wheeling and dealing on his own here. Henry had this relationship with Rabin that Nixon was a part of. I think it was all above board, even if the State Department was not involved.

Q: Within the NSC, we re talking about, you were there from '69 to '77, is there any feeling about whether any divisions within the NSC, on how to deal with things. Israel, of course, is one. The Soviet Union is another one. Obviously, Vietnam.

RODMAN: Within the staff you mean?

Q: Within the staff.

RODMAN: The Middle East is a sensitive one. Hal Saunders was the senior NSC staff person. I think Henry respected Hal but didn't want him in on all of these intimate conversations with the Israelis. Whenever there was some practical business to be conducted or some work to be done on some arms sale or some follow-up that was important, the NSC staffer had to be involved. This was over my head, there was no need for any special channel.

But there were a lot of times when Henry wanted to have an intimate conversation with Rabin where he didn't want to have the staff person around. Sometimes I would be there. There were other times when Henry and Rabin would talk alone for a few minutes without anybody.

But I think Nixon was aware of this. Nixon was aware of Henry's point of view. Nixon could take it or leave it. Nixon had his own little balancing act that he was conducting between Rogers and Kissinger. This is up until as long as Rogers was there. It was delicate. But, again, I think Henry conducted himself honorably vis-à-vis Nixon at least.

Q: You would be taking notes, I assume, on these meetings.

RODMAN: To be specific: For a while Henry used to meet with Rabin and Al Haig, his deputy, would go along to take notes. I wasn't used for a couple of years. At the end of '71, the beginning of '72, he started taking me, probably because Haig was too busy. Haig was the deputy and had a lot of other business so he didn't need to go to every meeting, I would go with Henry and I would do some notes and Haig would see it. Beginning about the end of '71 was when I started doing it.

Q: How did you find Alexander Haig? What was your impression of him at that time?

RODMAN: I liked Haig. I want to start with that. I think he did a superb job as Kissinger's deputy. In other words, he had the fortitude to take a lot of the temper tantrums, the grief. Henry would let off steam among his immediate entourage and Haig was a big boy--he would just sit there and take it, then try to extract from Henry some practical guidance on what it is we were suppose to do, how to do it properly.

Haig was very disciplined. He's the one who was there until late hours at night doing the paperwork; making the machinery work; making sure the decisions got made; dealing with the staff because Henry had less and less contact with them. A lot of people on the

NSC staff hardly ever saw him, particularly the junior members of the staff. So Haig was the manager of the staff when Henry was doing his fancy diplomacy.

I have two things to say about Haig. One is when Henry was off dealing with the Vietnam negotiations, Haig was back as acting National Security Adviser. So Haig and Nixon developed a relationship which became very close. Henry was very sensitive about it. In the end game of the Vietnam negotiations, Haig and Nixon were very uneasy about what Henry was doing. Henry, to this day, had doubts whether Haig was being loyal to him.

Sometimes I was off with Henry on these trips, other times I stayed back with Haig. In fact when they all went to China--Nixon's trip to China in February 1972--I stayed back with Haig. So I saw Haig up close too. I think Haig did as heroically as anybody could do. Haig was an active duty military officer who obviously owed his loyalty to the President as well as to his immediate boss. I think he did as good a job as he could do to be loyal to both, I mean appropriately. He was caught in the middle because Henry and Nixon had some differences of view over some tactics. I think Haig probably agreed with Nixon more.

But I don't think Haig was disloyal to Kissinger. Nixon was frustrated with some of the things that Henry did so I think Haig handled himself with great finesse.

The second point is about Haig's later problem when he became Secretary of State himself. I just want to say that I was surprised that he showed such poor judgment because he had been such a master of the bureaucratic process. He smoothed over Henry's rough edges. Henry would have a tantrum. He'd say, Laird can't do this, I tell you to call Laird and tell him he's a son of a bitch. Haig would then call Laird's executive assistant and smooth it over.

Q: Not the Secretary of Defense.

RODMAN: Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird.

Haig would call up Laird's executive assistant and they'd smooth it over.

So Haig was the one who was calm, who knew how to smooth the rough edges. Who got things done. He was super-dependable and, again, I think, loyal. So I thought of him as someone of great bureaucratic finesse.

I was surprised during the Reagan period when he made a very clumsy grab for power when they were drafting the basic documents on the interagency process. I think he was thinking of something that had happened in the Nixon transition. But he misjudged it.

When Nixon was elected, between the Nixon election and the inauguration 1968-'69, there had been a battle over the interagency process. Who was going to chair the key committees and so forth. Henry ended up being the chairman of the key committees,

which was a crucial step in Henry's ascension to power. But it was Nixon who wanted it that way. Nixon came in with this mistrust of the State Department just as I said.

Now Haig tried to pull a stunt. He gave Nixon a memorandum saying, Sign here. Mr. President. Revamping the interagency process making the Secretary of State the vicar of everything. It just showed no sense. The people around Reagan were smart enough to realize that this was a power grab and it was not what they had in mind.

Haig did himself a lot of damage. If Haig had just kept quite and just done his job as Secretary, he would have evolved very rapidly into the dominant figure. Just because he was the one with the most substance. Of all the people around Reagan, he clearly had the most experience.

Q: Reagan had, in foreign affairs, a very weak operation.

RODMAN: Yes. So Haig by making this power grab before inauguration, just queered it with everybody on the White House staff who then decided that Haig was a maniac. If Haig had just shut up at the beginning and had done the job he would have, I think, been the dominant figure just because he was substantively very good. He would have been in-charge. But he provoked his own worst nightmare.

So I was just surprised at how little judgment he seemed to have on the bureaucratics.

Q: I was just on a recent interview with somebody who was in the Executive Secretariat, who was Executive Secretary of the State Department, saying how Haig was an extremely useful person. Sort of acting as a bridge with the Executive Secretariat from time to time during the Nixon time.

RODMAN: Ted Eliot.

Q: It was Ted Eliot.

RODMAN: I knew Ted. Haig was the guy who would fix the thing, who would smooth it. I forget who the counterpart was in the Defense Department, some military guy. Haig was also very calm. He would chain smoke. I would change the description a little bit: Haig showed enormous self discipline, but you could see him doing it; it was visible because he was chain smoking. You could see the pressure he was under working for Henry in doing all these things. There was a kind of volcano there that he was keeping under control but he kept it under perfect control.

He had a sense of humor about him. Obviously there's a lot of pent-up energy in this man. It may be that when he got to a position of responsibility himself, the energy was less disciplined.

Q: I heard somebody say, I think he had some heart surgery which sometimes can cause...

RODMAN: That's a cliché. I don't know whether it's true either, that it is because he had bypass surgery. I just have no idea whether that's true or not.

It is different being the deputy from being the senior person yourself. The restraints are off and you're tested in a different way. As a deputy I thought he showed enormous self-discipline in a difficult environment.

Q: How about Larry Eagleburger, was he there when you were there or not?

RODMAN: We overlapped a little bit. By the time I arrived in August '69 I think he had already left. I met him briefly during the transition. He was at the Hotel Pierre. He was assigned by the Department to go help the Nixon people at the Hotel Pierre in New York. I met him but I didn't really deal with him until later when he came back in '73.

For a brief period he came back to the NSC as a deputy. In fact they had a 2 or 3 deputy system and he came back to handle operations. I didn't deal with him that much. He's a good guy. Henry adored him; he's another workaholic who had been killing himself all these years.

Q: He's still going.

RODMAN: Still going and overweight.

Q: Smoking.

RODMAN: Smoking and he has his aspirator in one hand and his cigarette in the other hand but anyway, that's a different story. He was just somebody that Henry adored.

Q: Going back to some of the policy things. You were involved in the Vietnam negotiations. What was your view of how the North Vietnamese were operating?

RODMAN: Just for the record, I was aware of the secret negotiations. I used to read the transcripts of these occasional meetings in 1969, '70, '71. I didn't get involved in it myself until the summer of '72 when they started being very active and it started turning into something real and they needed extra help. I don't have a lot to add to what Henry has written.

I think the North Vietnamese were very stubborn and they were manipulating our domestic situation. Their demands on us were unacceptable. The deal was not possible until the fall of '72 when they started dropping off their political demands. They were insisting on a political settlement of a different kind. They were insisting that we dismantle the South Vietnamese government as part of the deal.

We were saying that we were ready to withdraw. They were saying that American withdrawal is not enough: Before you go, you have to dismantle the South Vietnamese government for us. Including a "tripartite coalition" which was to be totally dominated by the communists. And that tripartite coalition would negotiate with the Viet Cong! It was outrageous, it was laughable.

Our domestic situation: there were people pressing us into either accepting it or getting out unilaterally. The North Vietnamese didn't want that. It was bizarre. We were under enormous pressure just to get the hell out. The debate at home was emotional and not really rational.

We would make the point that the North Vietnamese wouldn't accept this or that. The answer was: We don't care, get out, get out, get out. It was a very difficult environment in which to try and maintain any kind of discipline in a diplomatic position or in a negotiating position.

The North Vietnamese respected power. They were at their most intransigent when they thought they were winning. They were flexible when they were suddenly under enormous pressure, like when Nixon escalated in some way, especially in '72.

Q: On the NSC staff, can you say there was any feeling about how things were happening after all these years?

RODMAN: I don't know what to say. A few things that occurred to me.

Kissinger came in with a very pessimistic view. He had visited Vietnam during the Johnson administration and thought the war was not winnable and that we weren't doing it right. So that's where this "decent interval" idea came about. This phrase that all we were trying to get was a decent interval before the South Vietnamese collapsed. There was some of that at the beginning.

But then came the Cambodia operation in April 1970, when we went in on the ground and cleaned out the North Vietnamese sanctuaries. Henry was very depressed about that because there was such a reaction in this country. But after the military results of that operation became better known, I think Kissinger's view clearly changed. He was much more confident that the South Vietnamese could make it.

Because that operation basically ended the war in the southern half of South Vietnam. Because not only did we clear out the sanctuaries, the new Cambodian government closed the port of Sihanoukville to supply. The base areas opposite the southern half of South Vietnam were no longer available. That's why the next North Vietnamese offensive two years later was across the DMZ.

So that was just an observation.

I remember Henry spending a lot of time in the early years on pacification and all of this. He was gloomy most of the time about pacification and all that stuff. But all that became beside the point, as it became more and more a war with the North Vietnamese regular army and less and less with the Viet Cong after Tet; Tet plus other developments.

I remember Henry relying a lot on smart people on the staff studying the pacification question.

Q: Who were some of the Vietnam specialists on the staff?

RODMAN: There was someone named Bob Sansom. At the beginning it was Larry Lynn. Lawrence Lynn who went off to the Kennedy School. Wayne Smite was a systems analyst. John Negroponte was a staffer in '72-'73 when the agreement was reached. He was one of the people who were very nervous about how South Vietnam was treated. There was a bit of a rift, I think; even Nixon and Haig shared it--that maybe we had put South Vietnam at risk, in a way, that all this was handled very badly. John left the staff after that point. I think it was amicable. In fact I'm sure it was quite amicable. He was exhausted but there was a little bit of disagreement in the staff on things.

But Henry could take it. Henry was a big boy. It was the doves earlier on, with Winston and with Tony Lake and Roger Morris in '69 who left, who were always arguing with him that we shouldn't be doing this, arguing against the Cambodian operation.

Henry was secure enough not to mind being challenged and to have these people whom he respected and argue it out with them and disagree with them. Henry was difficult, he was temperamental and he could let off steam. It was not always pleasant to be there. He did this with his immediate entourage but if you stood your ground you realized that most of the time it was just steam.

He respected people who stood up to him. He was capable of debating with people on his staff who, I think, were the most valuable to him. People like Hal Sonnenfeldt who he had a very tempestuous relationship with. Sonnenfeldt would stand up to him, speak his mind. You know most of us, particularly if we were part of his team, knew him well enough not to be afraid to give our opinion. He could grumble or something and bite off your head but he respected people who just stood their ground. He did not respect people who didn't stand their ground.

So there were often disagreements and debates. Negroponte is one example; the Cambodia group.

Q: There was this movement of young Foreign Service officers who signed a petition against Cambodia at the State Department. Was there any reflection of that at NSC?

RODMAN: There was no mass movement, it was a very specific thing. It had to do with the Cambodia incursion before it happened. You had Winston Lord who was by then the special assistant. You had Tony Lake and Roger Morris who were phasing out, who had already told Henry that they wanted to leave. They had told Henry they wanted to leave long before the Cambodia incursion.

At the end of 1969 Tony had asked to be relieved of his duties as special assistant. That's when Winston came in. Tony and Roger were still there on the staff in the spring of 1970. The 3 of them wrote a memo to him explaining why it was a bad idea to go to Cambodia. Henry writes about this. These were 3 very different guys. It was a powerful memo but Henry didn't agree with them.

To the credit of these guys, they didn't make a big deal out of it. They didn't go public. Morris and Lake left, which they had already planned to do. They were leaving partly for reasons of conscience because they were not comfortable in this administration; partly because of the Vietnam policy in general. Winston did not see it as a resignation issue. He stayed on because he became part of the negotiating team.

But that was it. There was nobody in the White House resigning en masse.

Q: On this thing, one perspective, I was Consul General in Saigon at the time. I thought it was great. I was all for it.

RODMAN: For what?

Q: The Cambodia mission.

RODMAN: The issue.

Q: Well no, nobody was talking about that. All of a sudden they were going ahead. We thought it was fine.

RODMAN: I think it was militarily quite rational, particularly if you're doing a strategic retreat. It makes sense to lash out once in a while to keep the enemy off balance. Particularly something like this which could have lasting effect if we did it right.

There was one other staff issue which I could mention which is Mort Halperin who was, again, a friend of mine. Mort Halperin was my tutor in my junior year at Harvard. So I've known him for more than 30 years. He did something which is a bit of a stunt, I have to say.

He had been on Kissinger's staff for the first 9 months of the term and he had left in the fall of '69. Everybody felt that the reason he left was he had wanted to be deputy and Kissinger had all sorts of people who told him that it was not good to have a civilian

deputy. Mac Bundy had told Kissinger that Carl Kaysen had been a pain in the ass, wheeling and dealing on his own. He said, Don't pick a civilian deputy.

So Halperin wasn't being made deputy. There wasn't a shadow of a thought that there was a substantive disagreement, but after he left he was kept on the rolls as a consultant which very often happens. If you were on the staff and your friends are still there, they may keep you on the rolls as a consultant. Once in a while they'll call you in for advice. I don't know whether they ever called him in or not.

But in May 1970, when the Cambodia thing started, Halperin "resigned" his consultancy and made sure this got on the front page of the New York Times and Washington Post. Saying, Kissinger staff aide resigns over Cambodia. Which all of us were kind of appalled by. We thought this was grandstanding of a high order. First of all he had left the staff before, for reasons that had nothing to do with the Vietnam policy. The press didn't focus on the distinction between a staff member and somebody on the consultant roll which, again, we thought was ridiculous.

But Mort is somebody I kept in touch with over the years. I don't agree with a lot of other things he's done over his career but he's a very smart guy.

So you had a spate of newspaper stories after Cambodia saying Kissinger's whole staff was in open rebellion but referring to this Halperin letter and that Lake and Morris had left. But they had told Henry at the beginning of the year, that they were going to leave. It wasn't specifically geared to Cambodia though, I grant, that it might have been related to Vietnam policy in general.

Q: Talking about the staff, there was, I can't remember the issue now, the problem of supposed telephone taps.

RODMAN: Again, the facts have been gone over by the Senate Foreign Relations committee and Henry deals with this in his memoirs. This is a very painful episode; he wishes he hadn't done it.

Again there are a few things I would emphasize. There were leaks, there were leaks including about Cambodia. There was a secret bombing campaign going on and some of this was leaking out and we were very worried that this was going to have very dangerous consequences.

What was done was done through the normal established channels of the US government. Namely Nixon had a meeting; the Attorney General and the Director of the FBI were all there. They had said, We can do lawful wire taps here on the basis of national security. So what you had was a request that went from the Attorney General, signed by the Attorney General and the Director of the FBI and so on, in what were then the normal channels.

Henry's role in this was first to have agitated a lot that this was a horrible thing and we had to do something to stop leaks. Secondly, he was asked to contribute names of people that he knew, that could conceivably have been the source. So he did offer up the names of some of his staffers. He wasn't the only one who offered up names.

I think Bill Safire, who had a gripe against Henry for years, ended up on the list. I'm convinced that there is no way Henry would have volunteered or offered the name of Safire. I suspect it was Haldeman or somebody who put that name on the list. One of the criteria they had was who talks to the press a lot. There's no way Safire's name could have got on that list other than by Nixon and Haldeman deciding to put him there.

Henry did offer up some of his staffers and there were a few journalists whose names got on this list so there were about a dozen people who are on what is called the List of the Kissinger Wiretaps.

As I say, the names, I think, came from different directions. They had started out with people who might have leaked, people who might have had access to the information, people who talked to the press a lot, a few journalists whose names popped up one way or another, and names that came up on these other taps. So it wasn't a big total.

The stuff that came up on the taps was garbage--none of these people were leaking. In fact, Winston Lord was on this list and Betty Lord; of course they were very offended when this became known. Betty Lord's conversations with her mother in Chinese--I'm sure a lot of man-hours at the FBI were spent translating this and wondering if this was some channel to Mao Zedong or something.

This was not something that Henry is proud of. The only thing I can say in his defense is that he was not a major figure. This is 1969 when he, again, was very insecure about his own position. In fact, the very fact that there were all these liberals on his staff had put him in a very delicate position in this White House. The fact that he had people like Mort Halperin, Win Lord, Lake and all these doves and intellectuals. Henry himself was, in a sense, the target of all this suspicion. He was under pressure to show nobody on his staff was doing it.

Later when he became a big superstar he was sort of in a position to order things. But here he was in this room with J. Edgar Hoover, John Mitchell, Richard Nixon and they re saying, Let's do some taps. And J. Edgar Hoover and John Mitchell say, Yeah, we can do that. Bobby Kennedy did this all the time. I think Kissinger's share of the responsibility--he has a part of the responsibility but he didn't come in and say, I want to wiretap people. He was led to believe that this was legal and that this was going to be done in an appropriate channel.

What has happened since then is the law changed. In 1972 there was a Supreme Court decision which said we need warrants for taps even in the national security area. Everybody reasons this is a perfectly wise and better way to proceed. That was 1972.

Before then there's a long history of national security wiretaps that were done through regular channels like this.

I have to say that there were other periods when there may have been taps done through even less regular channels. FDR wiretapped political opponents. Bobby Kennedy wiretapped everybody in sight including Martin Luther King. A lot of this was Hoover. The Kennedy brothers, through some degree Hoover had his hooks into them. I don't even want to assess blame among those characters.

These Kissinger taps originated in, I think, a totally legitimate concern over leaks which had a military significance. These were leaks that they really considered could have a direct impact harming our military operation. I'll say that much in their defense.

Q: Did you feel that the NSC staff, that you knew, was a pretty disciplined staff?

RODMAN: Oh yes. I consider Tony Lake a totally honorable person and he was very uncomfortable with the whole policy. He basically left the staff for reasons of conscience. But it would never occur to me that he would try to sabotage it by leaks or anything like that.

Hal Sonnenfeldt--all these people who were sometimes difficult and independent-minded--it was a staff of a lot of interesting personalities which, again, got Henry into trouble with some of the Nixon cronies, but I just don't think they were leaking.

Bill Beecher, who did the most damaging leaked press account of the bombing in Cambodia, later a friend of mine, was a journalist for the New York Times in those days. He didn't tell me exactly who his source was, but he says he pieced this together. There were a lot of people out in the field, who knew this was going on. He had all sorts of sources, Pentagon, whatever. Nobody that we had tapped, probably.

Q: Secret bombing is an oxymoron.

RODMAN: Exactly.

Q: Moving to another aspect that you haven't touched on. You said you had Russian, you spoke Russian, had taken it in school. What was your view of what you were doing on the Russian connection with Kissinger.

RODMAN: This was sort of compensation since I didn't get involved on the most exciting part of the China thing--the first trip. He said, "You can do the Russian stuff."

So we had a secret trip to Russia. In fact, this shows you how insecure the Russians were. Since Henry had made a secret trip to China, Dobrynin, the Soviet Ambassador, wanted Henry to make a secret trip to Russia. So we did in April '72 before the summit. The summit with Russia was already scheduled, but instead of a normal advance trip to talk

about substantive preparation, Dobrynin thought it would be great to go in secret. Again, the State Department was not informed about it until we were there.

This is one of the great, again, painful things to recall. I think Jacob Beam was the Chargé there. We were put up by the Soviets at a special Guest House on the west side of town; we were about to leave and somebody summoned Beam to come. To his surprise he sees the President's National Security Adviser there with Gromyko. It's hard to defend all this, but substantively this was a very important trip. Henry dangled in front of Brezhnev all the goodies that would come out of the summit. What Brezhnev didn't know was that we were thinking then of the mining and bombing.

Q: You're talking about the mining and bombing of Hanoi.

RODMAN: Yes. At the end of March '72, the North Vietnamese launched this huge offensive across the DMZ. We had this huge battle going on in South Vietnam. We had a summit with the Soviets scheduled for May. So in April Nixon decided to send Henry over. As I said, the Russians wanted Henry to come, so Nixon said, "all right, do it."

The value of it to us was that it made concrete for the Soviets the stake they had in the summit with us. For one thing, economic goodies. For another, they were very concerned about their German policy; Willy Brandt's Eastern treaties were hanging by a thread in the Bundestag. So when Nixon did the mining and the bombing of Hanoi and Haiphong on May 8th, the Russians then had to consider, did they want to cancel the summit or not? They realized they had a lot at stake. Most of all would have been the problem that Nixon had already been to Beijing in February, so they would have left the Americans in bed with the Chinese which was their worst nightmare.

So you had a lot of reasons why the Soviets went ahead with the summit with Nixon in spite of the mining and bombing. In the process they sort of guaranteed Nixon's Vietnam policy for the rest of the year. They blew away all our critics at home. Our critics had been up in arms; they were about to denounce Nixon for having recklessly jeopardized everything good that he was doing--arms control, etc. Yet, if the Soviets were going to receive him, the anti-war movement was totally neutralized. I mean Nixon's domestic situation was golden for the rest of the year on the most difficult issue of all. Here he had done the biggest escalation of the war and the anti-war movement was totally neutralized by the Soviets. Henry's trip had a lot to do with that.
My involvement was, as special assistant, preparing material, keeping the records. The Middle East was one of the subjects that we dealt with and Henry wanted me to handle all that material because not everybody on the staff was familiar with the exchanges. We had sensitive exchanges with the Soviets on the Middle East that only I knew about, and various other subjects.

I was aware of all the subject matter. We all took turns doing notes. I wasn't just a note taker at these. A typical meeting with Brezhnev would be either me or Bill Hyland or Winston or somebody would take the notes. Winston came along but he was there also as

the China and Vietnam wizard. It was just useful to have extra manpower when you had a lot of work going on. I could do my share of that.

Q: What's your impression of Dobrynin and Brezhnev.

RODMAN: Dobrynin is a very crafty guy. Another shoe is going to drop. Dobrynin's memoirs are coming out which I think is probably going to be embarrassing. Kissinger flattered him a lot but probably said a lot of things that he didn't want to see published. So I don't know. I don't trust Dobrynin in any case, never did.

Brezhnev was an interesting character. I've got a book of my own coming out where I talk about Brezhnev. More Precious than Peace: The Cold War and Struggle for the Third World (Scribner, 1994), Chapter 6. He was very crude, he was uneducated, he didn't know substance very well. Occasionally on economic issues he would launch into a monologue about some project--particularly building a railroad across Siberia--which he was very interested in.

But on most things he relied on his "talking points" that were prepared for him. If Kissinger asked a question, a complicated question, there would immediately be a huddle on the Soviet side because all of these guys jumped up from both ends of the table, and huddled around the leader, trying to explain what the issue was, how he should handle it. They would all sit down again. Brezhnev would say something vague or Gromyko would answer.

On the other hand, Brezhnev was a genius in understanding the one thing that was important, which was power. He had a real knack for knowing what the real negotiating balance was. There were times, when they were arguing with us on some issue, when the Soviets would have to back down. Other times they really had us over a barrel. So he had a really good instinct for when the Soviets should fold their cards and for when they shouldn't. It showed he had an instinct.

You didn't get to be General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union by being a pushover. He was a master of psychology. He said this to some aide once (Fyodor Burlatsky). They were trying to brief Brezhnev on something and he said, "I can't handle all this, my strength is organization and psychology." Which is exactly right. He had gotten to the top by being in charge of the patronage machinery which Stalin had done and Khrushchev had done. All these guys had done this, had been underestimated by their colleagues but had used their control of the patronage machinery to build themselves into an unassailable position.

Psychology, because he really did have a feel for people's weaknesses and he played all his colleagues off. All these people who were much smarter than he was--Suslov, Gromyko, whatever.

Q: Kosygin

RODMAN: Right. They all had their weaknesses. Kosygin and Gromyko were technocrats; they really weren't a threat to him. But people like Suslov, others who I forget, are people he squeezed out at various times who were I'm sure street fighters like himself. But he was very shrewd. He sort of oozed power. He wasn't polished. In later years he wore better suits. Somebody introduced him to an Italian tailor and he started wearing dapper suits and things but he was still a force of nature.

Q: As history continues its flow at some point we may have to talk about what is a Soviet and explain what a Soviet is. Can you give a feel for what we felt was a Soviet threat at your time at the NSC?

RODMAN: This was a period when there were 2 things going on. America was in an isolationist phase. I'm happy to say that we have recovered from it; at least I think so. Ronald Reagan had something to do with that. Vietnam was an experience that tore our society apart. The Liberals who had sustained American internationalism through the whole post-war period from 1945 up until Vietnam suddenly defected on Vietnam. They basically became isolationists. The slogan was that our domestic priorities were more important. George McGovern's rhetoric was, "Come home America." This was liberal isolationism.

So America was opting out of international engagement. We were cutting our defense budget. We ripped up our intelligence agencies with great investigations of our intelligence agents. So we were doing all this.

On the other side, the Soviets were just at the stage of becoming a military superpower. In the 1960s in the Johnson administration Robert McNamara had said, "Oh, the Soviets aren't even going to compete with us anymore in strategic missiles. They've given up." You see after the Cuban Missile Crisis we were very complacent about this.

This was total nonsense. After the Cuban Missile Crisis the Soviets embarked on a military buildup of enormous proportions in every single category of military power. They built an ocean-going navy for the first time in their history including missile-carrying submarines and attack subs, a good quality of those. And in strategic weapons, not only did they not stop building but they caught up with us in about 1970 in the numbers of strategic ICBMs and kept going. We had stopped at about 1,000 ICBMs but they just kept going.

They always had an advantage in heavier missiles. So when the technology of multiple warheads came along, they were able to deploy more multiple warheads than we. You had an enormous potential for strategic advantage in missiles. It was in the mid-1970s when they put the SS-20 into Europe, multi-warhead medium missiles in Europe. This was an expansionist power.

When Gorbachev came in, he talked about the "era of stagnation" because in domestic policy or economics, the Soviet economy was stagnant. But in military policy and foreign policy they were not stagnant at all. This was a superpower. They sent 50,000 Cuban troops into Angola to intervene in a civil war there. They tripped the balance of the war in Angola. The Cuban troops then moved on into Ethiopia and I forget where else. They were intervening all over Africa, and then South Yemen. Our Congress made it illegal for us to do anything in response. And not to mention what happened in Indochina itself.

So this was a superpower in its most exuberant phase, at its most expansionist, its most self-confident phase. If you read the Brezhnev rhetoric, they were saying very proudly that the historical "correlation of forces" had shifted in favor of socialism. In other words, the world balance of power had shifted in their favor.

There were a lot of other people around the world who thought this was true. It was partly because of the Soviets exuberance and expansion compounded by our deep funk which was prompted by Vietnam. This was the strategic problem in the 1970s. This is all in my book. What happened was that fortunately 10 years later, if you look from 1975 to 1985, you see a reversal. You see an America that had recovered its bearings.

I'm a Reagan partisan but even on a bipartisan basis America had recovered by the mid-80s. We were willing to do things and we restored our military. Secondly, the Soviets went into decline. Brezhnev was old and then you had Chernenko and the series, beginning in the late ''70s and early ''80s, of decrepit Soviet leaders. Then finally you had a young guy that came in and said, "Wait a minute, our system is deeply flawed." So you had a reversal of fortune.

We're on a historical point, which I'm pleased to be able to speak on it, from a time capsule for people in the future.

Another thing in the 1970s. Remember the economic crisis, the energy shocks--the western world was reeling from all of this. The Soviets were energy exporters and so were making money off this. So for all these reasons it was a time when the Soviets really thought that the whole of history was in their favor and the whole balance of forces had tilted in their favor. That was a major problem.

Things reversed later with a combination of things. But I don't think it was any less real at the time. If the West didn't recover its balance and start resisting, who knows what could have happened? It would have been much messier than it was.

Q: Things seem to be inevitable and then not inevitable.

RODMAN: I think the West had to get its bearings again and show some resistance and compete in the arms race and make the Soviets know they couldn't win in an arms race. In Afghanistan we started to help the mujahideen. The Soviets overreached in the 1970s.

Maybe that's the only way to describe a lot of their Third World adventures. They overreached; they couldn't consolidate their gains.

In the 1980s, the West recovered its bearings and raised a cross to them in a lot of these Third World adventures and in the arms competition. Again, in our favor, we had the wit to negotiate with them, to engage them in some constructive diplomacy on a lot of issues, to make it a soft landing internationally.

The 1970s were a very grim period however.

Q: This is a broad picture but on the NSC what were you getting? What was our view towards the Soviets? Were we really concerned about what the Soviets were doing?

RODMAN: Kissinger was worried not only about what the Soviets were doing but about America's ability to stand up to it because we seemed to be hobbling ourselves. He was very gloomy about our future as a superpower.

So a lot of our diplomacy was to maneuver, to try to keep the Soviets from just running away with the game. Bringing China into the game was the great coup of this period because suddenly the Soviets faced this coalition of all the other major powers lined up against them, which I think was the greatest success for us. Another of the blunders of the Brezhnev foreign policy was Egypt and the Middle East. We split off Egypt from the Soviets, which is another story of great importance, which you can read about in Henry's memoir or in my book.

The other attempts to engage the Soviets in arms control or economic discussions--the strategy of these in the Nixon period was calculated. It was detente with not a naive idea of just good will but part of a calculated strategy to give the Soviets a stake in a relation with us. In fact, in Vietnam, the story I mentioned about why they went ahead with the 1972 summit, illustrates what Kissinger called "linkage." We were able to accumulate enough leverage over the Soviets that they went ahead with the summit, which we used for the purposes of our Vietnam policy. We used the Soviets against the North Vietnamese.

The North Vietnamese saw their Soviet ally and also their Chinese ally clinking glasses with Nixon right at the height of our campaign to squash the North Vietnamese. It was a strategy maneuver, at least as Nixon and Kissinger saw it. But there was also a certain uneasiness on their part that we were dealing from weakness, that our domestic situation was so bad and the Soviets were so self-confident that we were really in danger of having the balance of power tilt against us, just as the Soviets were saying it was.

Later there was a reaction to detente. The American conservatives decided that detente was a sellout. This was astounding to Nixon and Kissinger because they thought they had been conducting the most hard-line policy that was feasible. These conservatives, after the fact a few years later, all decided it was a great sellout. Which is totally bizarre

because most of these people were nowhere to be found when we needed their help in the 1970s in the defense budget battle, for example, when we tried to save our defense budget on the Hill.

A lot of these conservatives voted against our Angola involvement. Here was an actual conflict with real communists on the ground, the Soviets and the Cuban army, and where were these conservatives? Ford and Kissinger were trying to do something about it and most of these conservatives were out there complaining about Jewish emigration.

So that's a huge issue. Again, Kissinger has dealt with this himself and he's capable of defending himself. This is sort of a capsule version of the history.

Q: August 31, 1994. This is a continuation of an interview with Peter W. Rodman.

We'd gone over a number of things but still going back to your time on the National Security Council, '69 to '77, a couple of questions. What was your view of the CIA and the information it gave to you. Did it differ radically from what you might say are the more traditional sources from the military or from the State Department or from newspapers? How did you find it?

RODMAN: The CIA, of course, produces many different products--specific focused analysis and reports on things which are often very illuminating. I'm a generalist and I would often learn a great deal from some paper on whether it's a radical movement or some issue or some weapon system. I took them at face value as a summary of the best factual information and analytical judgment in the government.

The estimate process, the community product, I found not very illuminating. I found estimates generally are a consensus product. I tended to think, even at the time, that they would be of interest to future historians as a summary of the conventional wisdom of the period. They were always cautious. They didn't tell you anything you didn't know really; they would cover all sides. I usually didn't learn anything from the estimates. I stopped reading them after a while; I would skim them.

With other kinds of intelligence products, I usually found that the quality was very good even if I disagreed with the conclusion. There were other kinds of papers that did reach a conclusion on a subject I knew about, say the Middle East. I would often have my own analysis, my own assumptions, my own way of weighing the different factors. But I would often find that these intelligence reports might be a good statement of the facts or different arguments. I could even learn something from a paper even if I didn't buy all of the conclusions at the end.

So I always thought CIA was very good. DIA stuff I thought was much cruder. The DIA product--the people working on it didn't seem to be of the same, you know, candle power. Maybe the stuff I was seeing was the wrong stuff. It was day-to-day reports of

movements of weapons down the Ho Chi Minh trail or something, but even the daily or weekly intelligence summaries were not as sophisticated as the CIA stuff.

The State Department analysis I thought was usually less sophisticated than CIA. The State Department seemed to be the most conventional of all. I have to distinguish, I guess, between the INR stuff and the normal State Department analysis. INR, in those days, tried to be clever. Occasionally they would come off with something interesting but I thought the CIA had a higher quality analytical product.

Q: As a practical matter I think the way the system was then, and the way it is today, the CIA had a more permanent staff.

RODMAN: With some academic level specialists, INR occasionally had interesting things, but the Foreign Service political analysis was often not that persuasive. INR--just to liven up this record--went through a phase where they had clever titles of papers. They did a paper on the impact of having China in the United Nations, in 1971 when this finally happened. The title of the paper was "China in the Bull Shop," which I thought they deserved some credit for.

Q: Turning to South America, Henry Kissinger, I used to use it when I gave on the Board of Examiners a question, Henry Kissinger used to say that South America is a dagger pointed at the heart of Antarctica.

RODMAN: He said that about Chile. It was a joke once on the subject of Chile, under Allende.

Q: You know to signify that it was of very little importance. How did you feel about that? This period when Henry Kissinger was the head of the NSC, what was the viewpoint on Latin America?

RODMAN: It’s unfair to say this was off the screen. It’s not true at all. In the first year they had Nelson Rockefeller involved. He made a trip to Latin America. He was someone who had great interest in the area. He did a report which was considered a very enlightened perception of the kind of policies the United States ought to follow, like open our doors to trade. More important than foreign assistance was trade, which has always been the bailiwick of the Congress. It was not unenlightened. It was a respectable policy.

Now the first crisis was in Peru, in '69 or '70, where military thugs, a Nasserite regime, nationalized a lot of American property. Instead of going to war, or whatever, we ended up settling. We announced a doctrine with respect to expropriation which was a far cry from 1920. It said that countries had a right to nationalize property as long as they paid compensation, which was a mature attitude to something which had provoked earlier Republican administrations to less enlightened reactions.

The big issue was Chile, of course. Kissinger has given his side of the story in his memoirs. Chile was regarded as a strategic problem. He can defend himself in that respect. I think it is in that context he made this remark that Chile was a dagger pointed at the heart of Antarctica, which was a kind of Kissingerian self-deprecating humor, exaggerating and making fun of his own paranoia about Chile. I think that's an issue itself which has been gone into elsewhere.

I think it was a sensible policy. Pete Vaky was his principal NSC person from whom he took advice and whom he respected enormously. It was not a right-wing policy in its general tone and diplomatic approach. Chile, again, has to be taken on its own terms.

It's interesting later, that beginning as Secretary of State and since he left office, he has become fascinated by Mexico. Kissinger's one of the leading experts on Mexico. He knows everybody in Mexico, has known all the last 3 or 4 presidents. He's written in his new book Diplomacy, in the last chapter a long discussion of how the relationship with Latin America may be the most positive part of our foreign policy these days for a lot of philosophical and practical reasons.

So his interest in the area has blossomed in the later period. I think some of this can be seen in his time as Secretary of State. He made a couple of trips down there. He had William D. Rogers as his principal adviser on Latin America who is a Democrat, if anything. There were overtures made to Cuba in 1975 which were terminated by the Angola venture. That's an interesting subject in itself.

Q: I was just wondering, in your position were you, as a generalist, helping to do the writing and all of this or did you have to bring yourself up to speed, say on Latin America, from time to time?

RODMAN: I was involved in one particular thing which educated me about everything, which was the foreign policy report. We began the practice of an annual report to Congress that Nixon produced for 4 years in a row. It was on the general state of foreign policy; it was a lengthy thing. It was February 1970, February '71, February '72 and May '73. There were 4 of them. I had a hand in them throughout and my role increased over time. I wrote parts of it.

It educated me because Kissinger spent a lot of time on it with his staff in shaping these things. We'd all be sitting around. He'd have these long academic seminars about what should be our approach, what is the philosophy of our policy in this area, what are our real goals and interests. With Kissinger's academic bent I think these reports were of a particular intellectual quality. So I would get exposed to what his thinking was.

Latin America was something that he was interested in. Usually it was crises that forced it on the front of the agenda. whether it was the Peru thing or Chile or whatever. As I said, with people like Pete Vaky this was a moderate policy. Chile again you have to take on its own terms.

I think it represents a break with a lot of Republican past including the Eisenhower administration. When Cuba nationalized property it was a much more reflexive Calvin-Coolidge sort of a throw-back to an earlier period--reflexive defense of economic interests. In the Nixon period, Nixon's view and Kissinger's view was more geopolitical and strategic. They did not react automatically to economic expropriations, as I said.

In fact, Kissinger had contempt for the business community; how they would never talk to the US government except the last stage of some crisis when they had screwed everything up and would come in and expect us to bail them out.

Nixon and Kissinger's problem with Allende in Chile was strategic and geopolitical. It had very little to do with expropriations of American companies. It was different. Even there there were interesting philosophical differences from the past. But in general, other than the Chile case, you had a Nelson Rockefeller kind of moderate, reasonably enlightened, I think, attitude to Latin America as to its right to its independence and self-respect. A recognition that intervention was a bad thing in general, that the best thing we could do for them was trade.

Q: Did we have any concern about this period was one where the majority of governments there, I think, were military weren't they?

RODMAN: I don't know about the majority.

Q: A significant number.

RODMAN: Brazil was always precarious. The majority of the population in Latin America were probably under military regimes. But some of those regimes were as nationalistic as any other. In fact, in Peru, basically underneath the left-wing rhetoric they were military thugs but they were the darling of the liberals here because they were anti-American.

Q: You're coming out of Harvard, you used the word intellectual community from time to time, and yet so much of the intellectual community of this period out of the universities was I won't call it Marxist but certainly of a leftist bent. It was partly the Vietnam war but it was more than that. Was this a problem?

RODMAN: The Vietnam War was a great divide because I graduated from Harvard as an undergraduate in 1964, which was the last pre-war class. It was almost like graduating from college in 1941. Kissinger was a very popular professor. Sure the dominant trend was liberal but I was reasonably sympathetic to the Kennedy administration and the Johnson administration. I thought there was a bipartisan continuity in foreign policy.

There was enough of a consensus. People could be a little bit on the center-right side like Kissinger or like Stanley Hoffman slightly center-left. There was no fundamental

bitterness. It was a kind of spectrum on which all was respectable and mutually respectful.

Vietnam came afterwards. I came back to Harvard at the Law School. I wasn't part of the undergraduate community but I could see it because there were riots and loonies took over the main Harvard building. It was the insanity of the period. There were strikes, student strikes and all of this crap. At the time discussions of issues became totally polarized whether it was Vietnam or anything else, especially Vietnam.

If I had any prospect of remaining sympathetic to the Democratic Party it evaporated because the Democratic party, the liberal community, went off I think in an anti-American direction. Maybe by accident but not totally by accident--I was with Kissinger and in my case had this association with Nelson Rockefeller and then with Nixon which was fortuitous. So I ended up Republican, but I think given how the Democratic party was going, even if I were out of government, I would have found myself having not moved but having seen the ground shift under my feet.

So the academic dialogue on these subjects just went up in flames, just went crazy because of the Vietnam War. We could not have rational discussions. I went to Harvard Stadium to watch the rallies about the time of the student strikes. I forget what provoked it; ostensibly it was the university buying land in the poorer parts of Cambridge for a gymnasium. But it was just the SDS and Marxist crap. It was the war and the left-wing. The whole agenda was all lumped together and it was all juvenile.

The university community has never recovered in this country. My impression is a lot of these student radicals are now tenured faculty. The only people left on the planet who take Marxism seriously are in American universities. Jean-Francois Revel made a crack about it. He wanted to organize some conferences in Europe about the decline of Marxism and the only place he could find real Marxists anymore were on American university campuses.

So that's a tragedy in itself. I may not be the most expert on it but somebody else described American universities as "islands of tyranny in a sea of freedom," with political correctness and all. But that's out of my area, I'm afraid.

Q: Although the NSC had a strong academic flavor you might call pre-war flavor.

RODMAN: This is more relevant to Kissinger's role in the government. His staff was surprisingly liberal and eclectic and moderate and intellectual, especially for a Nixon administration. He had the freedom of action to pick his own staff. He picked people who were suspect in the eyes of other people in the White House.

Mort Halperin was on his staff. Mort Halperin was somebody who Henry and I both knew from Harvard. He had been in the Johnson Pentagon as a brilliant planner. He still is a brilliant guy.

There were a lot of career people but people who stood out as unusually thoughtful and bright, whether it was Pete Vaky or Hal Sonnenfeldt and Bill Hyland. Sonnenfeldt brought in Bill Hyland from the CIA, a Soviet analyst. These are all people of intellectual depth. In the defense circle he had Larry Lynn who went on to Harvard Business School or teaching other subjects. Jan Lodal, who is now back in Defense. Walt Slocum was on the staff. He had Win Lord and Tony Lake.

And people who didn't agree with him on everything that was going on. But Henry wanted to have all this sort of diversity of opinion--let a hundred flowers bloom. He liked to have debates. He liked to have all of these bright people arguing with him. Contrary to the usual image of him, he liked this. That's what he wanted. He argued back, and when he made up his mind, he was the boss, but he was stimulated by having people who stood up to him and argued.

He was very sad when Tony Lake didn't want to stay around, that he was not comfortable with the whole place. Henry was very sad that he left, begged him to stay. It was an intellectual center.

In the Johnson administration you had ISA at the Pentagon play this role, a lot of bright people. Then Mel Laird came in and closed this down because the right-wingers disparaged the "whiz kids" and the ISA. Our NSC inherited some of these people. Refugees from the Johnson Pentagon ended up on Kissinger's staff. The State Department seemed to be intellectually dead. The Policy Planning Staff in those days was not at one of the high points.

Q: Did it play any role at all?

RODMAN: Which?

Q: The Policy Planning.

RODMAN: It was renamed in those days the Policy and Coordination Staff. People there were given a certain role in the interagency process but they were not known as people who were intellectually powerful or influential. It just seemed to us, obviously in a self-centered way, that a lot of the bright people were with us.

Laird, in the Pentagon, was a different kind of Defense Secretary. He wasn't one of the McNamara type or Aspin or Bill Perry type, who would want bright academics around to fertilize his thinking.

So a lot of that was Henry's job. It got him into trouble in the Nixon White House when the leaks started. Henry was on the defensive. I don't know if we talked about the wiretapping before but part of what really was happening, was all of these people who were staring at Henry saying, Your staff, we told you so. Your staff may be a source of

the leaks. He went along with the surveillance of his own staff partly, I'm sure, hoping that nothing would be found. But this was part of the price that was paid for his having all these people and protecting them on his own staff.

Q: I'm trying to get the picture of the process. Here you've got very bright people, many of them coming from the academic world, some others have area experience, and you have a foreign policy vision unlike most administrations which are just dealing with the day to day. I mean, there's a vision there. Was there a problem with what the Foreign Service has called "localitis." In other words, the Ambassador or the embassy would report in, This was all very good but it won't work in this country, or something like that. Did you find that it was difficult to take, you might say, the vision and put it into what was considered the reality out in the field.

RODMAN: The foreign policy report could be an example. We did the draft, then it was sent around to the agencies for comment. We got a lot of squeals from different constituencies for our saying things that were thought to provoke or irritate some friendly government.

For example, one of the first essays on the relations with Japan, that reflected Henry's view, was that Japan is a very nationalist country and that may some day be asserting itself again. It was a very somber and unromantic view of Japan. There were great squeals from the State Department that you shouldn't say this. We toned it down a little bit.

I don't know if this is what you're getting at. Henry wanted to state things a little more honestly, a little more candidly, a little more provocatively.

In the Middle East, for example, in the first foreign policy report, we wanted to say that the Middle East problem is "intractable," which is a way of saying that the problem is much harder to solve than people think. You also wanted to, I think, separate Nixon a little bit from some of the diplomatic efforts which were going on which Henry was convinced would not get anywhere.

The State Department kept saying, Oh, you can't say this. This is defeatism. You're casting dispersions on our diplomatic skill. It looks like we re not committed to solving the problem.

So we ended up watering this down in some fatuous way like the Middle East has elements of intractability but we still are committed to trying to solve it.

Q: We re talking about how policy things can be watered down.

RODMAN: You're asking about localitis. I think these episodes were examples of localitis. The State Department was worried about how their constituents would react. Henry was trying as a professor, academic, to be more candid and say something that broke through the formulas and the cliches of discussion of policy.

What was written about Japan I think stands up very well. I forget which report, if it was the 2nd or 3rd one, but it was a fairly sober cold-blooded description of Japan and its prospect of its future. Henry has had this view of it, rightly or wrongly, for 25 years: that Japan is likely at some point to break loose from its relationship with us and move in a very nationalist direction if ever it loses confidence in us. It'd be much more assertive of its own point of view and not be docile forever. The Department did not think this was a good idea to say.

The Middle East thing about "intractability;" again, Henry was trying to say something that he thought was intellectually respectable and honest. The Department didn't want to rock the boat or say anything too candid about how insoluble the Middle East problem was at that time.

Q: There is the other side too, by saying this, this has a life of its own in the place.

RODMAN: That's true.

Q: It's absolutely true but you know if the son of a bitch is a son of a bitch, and you know he's a son of a bitch and you tell him he's a son of a bitch, something starts happening.

RODMAN: There's a division. It's easy being in the White House. In those days, we didn't conduct diplomacy on our own, at least not at the beginning. It was the Department that had to deal everyday with the foreign governments that were being discussed in these terms. So our Ambassador would have to go in and explain what the hell the White House was saying and why it was said. We had the sort of Olympian detachment. We didn't have to deal with the broken crockery from these provocative statements.

In the role of the Congress, too, there's a difference of perspective between the President and the State Department in that respect. The Department is up there testifying everyday and has to face congressional pressure. The President who is trying to, let's say, resist congressional pressure which often happened, particularly with Republican presidents and Democratic congresses.

The President enjoys a sort of Olympian distance from the fray. His immediate staff don't have to go on the front line and face the barrage from the Congress complaining about our outrageous policy. It's a little easier if you're in the NSC, or the President, or the White House to be stubborn and provocative and stand your ground knowing that these poor people in the State Department have to defend a policy which they may be uncomfortable with themselves and then face the hostile audiences.

But you know, that's a division of labor that is inherit in the system. I have to think--particularly since I'm a creature of the White House--that often presidents have to resist congressional pressures, even foreign governments. Everybody says presidents are insulated from reality. To some degree, they should be because they often need to stand

their ground and not be bowled over by all the pressures. They re lucky that they have these buffers of other institutions in the government who feel the pressures much more painfully. That's the division of labor.

Q: What happened during Watergate to the NSC operations? Did that have much of an effect on you?

RODMAN: The main effect of Watergate was to make Kissinger eager to become Secretary of State as fast as he possibly could. Because he saw presidential authority crumble and the platform he had had, which was Nixon's authority, presidential authority, was crumbling. He didn't see how he could function in any way at all. I don't think he would have stayed around at all if he didn't get the Secretary of State job. He might have been fired, in fact, for a lot of other reasons.

He didn't think he could survive, or the policies he believed in could survive, unless he had the institutional base of the State Department. Then when he became Secretary the center of gravity shifted to the Department.

I stayed at the NSC. I don't know if we discussed this or not. I had my choice. He and I were very close. He said, come with me, or stay, whatever you want. I decided to stay in the White House basement as a sort of liaison between him and his deputy who was Scowcroft. I still traveled on all his trips during that period. I was over at the Department everyday at key meetings. So I had this relationship with him anyway.

I kind of valued having this NSC role. A lot of business he still did through his NSC hat, whether intelligence matters or other stuff that Scowcroft handled, and on that I was in the action. I would be a special assistant to Scowcroft, where I would have been lost in the crowd if I were at State. I would have been put somewhere on Winston's staff at S/P and would be lost in the crowd.

But the center of gravity definitely shifted and most of the NSC staffers were no longer at the center of the action. If Kissinger went on a trip, he did take the substantive NSC staffer along as well as his State Department team. I always went along, but his substantive NSC staffer for the Middle East or whatever, would be part of the negotiating team. So they were there, but the center of gravity was in the Department, in the bureaus, on the issues that Kissinger was handling as Secretary of State.

Q: How did Kissinger use you on these trips?

RODMAN: He always worked with professional people, experts on the one hand and some special assistants on the other. In British terms, you're a private Secretary, a personal aide.

Let's go back to the time when he was just in the NSC job, say the Vietnam negotiation. He had his team which included people like Winston Lord and myself, who were his

personal assistants, as well as the Vietnam specialists. There was a lot of business he would transact using only us, I mean the most sensitive messages: he was sending back messages to Nixon which he would dictate only to Winston or to me--stuff that was very sensitive that he didn't need his other staffers to be involved in.

A lot of the work was joint. Everybody helped out. Winston and I did note taking but other people did note taking. We would all take part in drafting a cable or a statement. If he came back from a meeting and had to draft a report to the president on a meeting, cables to Saigon, cables reporting or soliciting information, or a follow-up to something that happened, we would spread out the work.

The special assistants were there to help. We knew his immediate needs, whereas the other guys on the team, the Vietnam specialists, provided a different kind of expertise to the process, a substantive expertise. So he always had this mixture. I think probably every Secretary of State does this or every senior official--using both people who are his most trusted aides who deal with him and know his needs of a certain kind of politicized nature, and other people who know the subject matter with more professional background.

That was true in the NSC and to some extent it was true when he was Secretary of State, if you want to get to that.

Beginning with Europe, he had the bureau--this is as Secretary of State--but he also had some of his cronies, if you will. There was Hal Sonnenfeldt and Win Lord, who were the kibitzers perhaps but who provided their own kind of advice to him. By then we all had quite a bit of knowledge. Lord and Sonnenfeldt in the Department were very well steeped in the history, the previous 5 years of the Nixon policy towards Russia or China or Vietnam, having been at the center of it.

So at the State Department there was a professional team, all the assistant secretaries, but also these other types. In the Middle East I got involved. You had the professionals, the NEA people, the NSC people and myself as a personal assistant. I accompanied Henry on some of the more sensitive meetings but he certainly worked with both. I have a feeling this is typical of senior officials.

Q: Was there a difference in trips on these Middle East meetings, how things operated? Were you getting a feel for both the Israelis but particularly the Arabs, they don't react the way maybe would a European or something like that, when you're working with them. Was this a problem or not?

RODMAN: Say that again, I'm not sure...

Q: Did you find, particularly was there a difference--the Arab form of negotiation or discussion--different from let's say the European one, from your observation.

RODMAN: In Western Europe, there's a huge foundation of common policy and the daily interaction of our governments at every level in our societies. So the issues tend to, I was going to say narrower issues. The consultation with our allies have habitual, sort of standard forms. It was comfortable because it was against a background of intimate association.

The Middle East was a jungle. The Israelis were an ally but we had kept them at arm's length for much of their history at that stage. War broke out in 1973. The Arabs were an unknown quantity. We had relations with them in a formal sense but obviously they didn't trust us. It was wild. It was uncharted territory.

The Arab negotiating style is a subject of many books. The Arabs had a romantic streak. In Henry's book they needed to be brought down to reality, which is a painful process that has taken a number of decades.

Much more was at stake in every conversation because it was sort of life or death, war or peace, hanging in the balance. You're asking about before the October War or after?

Q: The October '73 War.

RODMAN: We had a big problem with the French after '73. The French, Jobert. But, you know, relations with Europe had a real depth to them because of all of this history.

In fact, the "Year of Europe" is the example of this. Henry launched his initiative to move our attention to our European allies early in '73 after we had finished these breakthroughs with Vietnam, China and Russia. The whole idea was finally to turn attention to our allies whom everybody had been saying we had neglected.

But the way he launched it, he did it through a lot of back channels with heads of government--Willy Brandt, Pompidou, Heath and so on. We had it wired with the heads of government and Henry was in the White House with Nixon. Then he launched it with a speech--and immediately it was nit-picked to death by the bureaucracy of every allied government.

It was a flaw in Kissinger's style. He didn't realize that when you're dealing with European allies our relationships are not just wired by heads of government; they re the product with this sort of intimate relationship among all the several layers of bureaucracy. So you couldn't engage in this enterprise of the Year of Europe unless you engaged the Foreign Ministry of every country, including your own. We got this sort of cynical reaction at first from various foreign ministries, including our own, because they had not been involved in the planning of it. It'd all been wired like it was a classic back channel with some foreign government usually of less than democratic political structure.

Part of the problem was simply that Kissinger was in the White House. If Kissinger had been Secretary of State at the time he launched the Year of Europe, he would have

understood that the first thing you have to do is engage all the foreign ministries, make them all participate in this great new initiative. So Henry learned the lesson, the hard way. When he became Secretary of State, our policy was managed from then on in a much more normal way because the State Department became the main actor and dealt with its counterparts in the classical way.

Q: Did you find any difference when Ford became President?

RODMAN: There were certain differences. Let me answer what I think may be your next question.

Henry lost his other hat, if that's the question you want to ask. I think it made no difference at all that Scowcroft became his successor instead of his deputy. Still the center of gravity was the State Department. Nothing changed in the way the place worked. Scowcroft was still deferential to Henry because Scowcroft knew that Henry was the President's main adviser, especially during the Ford period.

To go back to your first question, Henry's relationship with Ford was one of the best, the healthiest. It was a model relationship between a President and a Secretary. There were no complexes. There was none of the paranoia of the Nixon time. There was none of the mutual jealousies where the Nixon White House was worried about Henry, or at least Nixon himself.

Ford himself just thought Henry was the greatest thing since sliced bread. Henry was delighted to have a President who dealt with him very openly, respectfully; they really liked each other. They met often, whether it was everyday of the week or several days of the week. Scowcroft took notes of these meetings and I would help transcribe them. So I saw on a regular basis what Henry and Ford were talking about in those Oval Office meetings.

Every initiative that Henry was thinking about he would check with Ford. He would get Ford's political judgment and authorization. You know, is this okay? He knew that Ford was walking into a very difficult political season, whether it was arms control or Southern Africa. Everything Henry was thinking he would lay out. In fact, these Scowcroft notes at these meetings are going to be invaluable records someday because really the essence of the policy we were carrying out was aired in these meetings.

Ford supplied, you could see from these meetings, a very shrewd political judgment and also an incredible knowledge of the Congress. Ford knew the Congress like the back of his hand. For parts of these meetings Henry would give a little seminar on what he thought about some issue. On other parts of these meetings Ford would give a little seminar on what was going on in the Congress, in the country. Ford was someone of much more sophistication than people realize particularly when it came to understanding what was going on in the Congress.

So I think a lot of the paranoia and the gothic quality disappeared from the relationship between the President and the Secretary of State when Ford came in. You had some problems with some of the people around Ford, some of the Ford people--White House staffers who felt they had to knock Henry down a little bit to build Ford up, which is kind of crazy. I don't think Ford really liked this. Secondly, as Ford got into trouble with the right wing of the Republican Party you had a little more tension between the White House and Kissinger. But that's a different story.

In that area Henry was overruled on a number of issues. Henry had been hoping to have a more forthcoming arms control position to present to the Soviets. He and Ford had even thought it would be to Ford's political interest in the general elections to have achieved a SALT Agreement. But because of the battle in the primaries and the Reagan challenge, Ford basically backed off. Ford was under pressure from first Jim Schlesinger then Don Rumsfeld, the Secretary of Defense.

So Henry didn't get his way in a lot of these issues and yet Henry took it like a man. I'm impressed by the fact that Henry understood that Ford decided he couldn't rush this. So Henry grumbled a little bit privately but there was no leaking, no harassment of Ford. But any time Henry got his way, there was constant sniping in the press from either White House staffers or other parts of the government attacking Kissinger. I was impressed by this unconditional loyalty that Henry showed to Ford, his understanding that it was Ford's head that was on the block. So even if Henry didn't get his way he was a team player and loyal to Ford.

Q: Were you aware that Kissinger was becoming a target for the right wing of the Republican Party?

RODMAN: Oh yes.

Q: This is a peculiar thing, here was somebody who was really well regarded by most circles and then all of a sudden he becomes a non-person and this carries on to the next Republican administration.

RODMAN: My theory is that it was a kind of displaced reaction or transferred reaction or sublimated reaction to the humiliation of Vietnam. The reaction to détente was, I think, a reflection of a country that didn't really like being humiliated. Nobody wanted to really fight the Vietnam War, nobody really wanted to assert a "stab in the back" theory about Vietnam. So, a lot of this humiliation was transferred to the US-Soviet relationship, the issues of SALT and Arms Control, from the Committee on the Present Danger to the attack on the Helsinki Conference in 1975 which was regarded as a great sellout of the free world. Solzhenitsyn attacked it about 2 months before it took place.

Reagan seized this issue as part of an assault on détente which actually began a few years earlier but it reached its high point under Ford and Henry was the target. It was a complete surprise because Henry had been the right-winger. If you looked at Nixon's first

term, all the great contests, battles, whether it was Vietnam, Chile or anything, the Cambodian bombing, Henry was the great bloodthirsty type and here suddenly he's being denounced as a great dove, Neville Chamberlain.

Something was going on in the country, a mood. A lot of it is the function of the collapse of the presidency. I think Nixon would have managed this transition better. If there had been no Watergate, Nixon would have had the prestige to somehow manage this turbulent transition and diffuse some of this right-wing unease.

But then you had Nixon collapse and a President come in who didn't have the personal authority or the political authority, and then whatever it is that provoked Reagan to challenge for it, you had a vacuum here, and it was very difficult for the President or the executive branch to defend its own policy. In fact they lost control over their policy, because you had the Jackson-Vanik Amendment which took away the economic carrots towards the Soviet Union. You had the Angola votes in December of 1975 which took away the sticks--this blatant case of Soviet-Cuban military adventurism and we were blocked from doing anything about it.

So, a lot of the debate over détente should be analyzed not on just the intellectual level but as a function of a political climate and institutional breakdown and the weakness of the Presidency--the Presidency losing control over its own policies. It was a bizarre, wild environment in which Henry was the target of the right-wing, who decided all of a sudden he was Neville Chamberlain, which would have been a surprise to a lot of people who had been around him for 5 years.

So there was some deeper psychological and institutional causation here.

Q: These things happen.

RODMAN: It's not totally a matter of rational arguments.

It's an interesting debate. In his new book Diplomacy Kissinger takes, on an intellectual level, Scoop Jackson and describes this interesting debate between two different strategies towards the Soviet Union. There were respectable arguments on both sides and Henry analyzes that in his book Diplomacy.

My own view is there was some deeper sort of turmoil that explains a lot of the debate; a lot of it was not rational.

Q: We re at a hump because it's just a matter of time here. Carter was elected, you were moved out and you came over to the Center for Strategic International Studies. Reagan was elected, he came in '81. You were brought in 1984-86 where you were with the Director of the Policy Planning Staff.

RODMAN: I came into the Policy Planning Staff in March '83 as a senior member of the staff. I was working with Henry on his memoirs and those weren't finished until '82. The second volume of memoirs were published in '82. At that point I was interested in going back in the government.

At the beginning, when the Reagan people came in, obviously I would have been interested as a Republican. A lot of my friends were going in, but I had the sense that as long as they were in office, I would have some opportunity as soon as the book was done, because Al Haig was a friend. But ironically Al Haig was gone by the time I was looking for a job.

In the summer of '82 I started looking; by then Shultz was in office. I did not know Shultz very well but Kissinger knew Shultz very well and I was recommended to Shultz by a lot of people. So this was worked out in the fall of '82. I didn't actually get on board until early '83 working for Shultz which was a great pleasure. After a year there, I became head of the Policy Planning Staff when Steve Bosworth left.

Q: How was the Policy Planning? You mentioned before that the Policy Planning Staff under William Rogers had fallen into disrepair or wasn't working very much.

RODMAN: A lot depends on where the locus of power is and whether the person at the locus of power is intellectually inclined to want and to value this kind of input. In the Rogers period I think both things were negative, sort of like Warren Christopher's time. People sense that that's not where the real power is and that the person in-charge isn't of an intellectual or a strategic bent anyway.

Kissinger I think was his own policy and planning staff. He had his little circle of people and it wasn't so much S/P institutionally as it was all of us who were lucky to be around him. Kissinger had a pretty good Policy Planning Staff. Mike Armacost was on it. There were good people but I had the sense that nobody would have said that S/P was the intellectual center. The Secretary himself was the walking S/P.

With Shultz, I think it was a good moment for S/P because first of all Shultz did particularly over time become more and more the dominant figure. He had all his squabbles with the other people in the administration but he became the dominant figure in a lot of things.

Secondly, he was open to this. He valued getting advice, he valued getting a second opinion. I had some influence on some issues though not every issue. I think I had a good run particularly on Middle East matters. I think I had a lot of influence. He had this running debate with Cap Weinberger on the use of force, this series of speeches. I and my staff drafted those speeches. In fact it was my idea. Shultz was grumbling about Lebanon, about this bureaucratic stalemate, about the use of military power. I'm the one who encouraged him to say something about it and I drafted his first speech on the subject.

Q: What was the issue?

RODMAN: It came out of Lebanon. Reagan pulled US troops out of Lebanon in February '84 which was the end of a year and a half of futile diplomacy. We had reached an agreement between the Lebanese and the Israelis in May '83. The Syrians declared war on it and we didn't help the Lebanese government very effectively as a great battle took place around Beirut. We ignominiously pulled our marines out.

There was a report by something called the Long Commission. Admiral Long, who studied the Lebanon fiasco, decided it was all the fault of the diplomats who didn't try hard enough. Shultz was just furious. I said you ought to answer it back. Our view in the State Department was that our military force there was not being used in any effective way, because the military actively in our view were on the edge of insubordination and refusing to use our naval guns and naval air power to affect the battle that was going on.

So I encouraged Shultz to give a speech on it and a speech which I did a lot of drafting on--his speech to the Trilateral Commission in April '84 on the use of force. Then he gave a number of speeches on terrorism. Terrorism became the vehicle for the very assertive Shultz posture on the need to be able and willing to use force against terrorism.

Weinberger wanted to answer it. Actually the White House blocked Weinberger from answering it during the election campaign. After the November election in '84, Weinberger gave his own speech on the use of force where he set up 6, in my view, unfullfillable criteria: unless you have a guarantee of long-term popular support, Congressional support, you should never do anything.

So S/P had a major role in that whole philosophical issue.

It's hard to say. Dennis Ross obviously had a much more powerful role under Baker. On the other hand, S/P was kind of a command staff where Dennis was a one-man command staff rather than a planning staff. It's not clear to me that S/P had an intellectual influence as much as it just became the main actor and operational arm of the Secretary.

S/P usually, particularly when it's doing well, gives the boss a second opinion so he can judge what the bureaus do. If the bureaus say, Mr. Secretary sign here. This should be your policy, then one of S/P's functions is to say, Well, let's look at it from a different perspective.

Give the boss a second opinion. Not to nit-pick every tactic but to have a view of strategy, an overview of how this part of the world interacts with things going on in other parts of the world. It's to have a longer-term perspective and a broader strategic perspective. And in the name of that, to offer an alternative sense of strategy.

Under Dennis I think it seems to have become the main operation. There was probably no second opinion coming anywhere because the first opinion on a lot of issues was coming from S/P.

Q: Under the Baker administration, there seemed to be a real disconnect between the sort of the regular apparatus and the group around the Secretary. This may be wrong but this was an issue.

RODMAN: I don't want to get into it because I wasn't there, but one thing I can say is that it was probably the high point of S/P in one sense because Dennis was enormously influential and a very capable guy. It was not the typical role of S/P as such. I think his strength came from being a key adviser. It isn't necessarily a model for what S/P ought to be doing because I think S/P's role is not to be the operational agency but to provide a perspective and an input into the Secretary's thinking. So he can judge what is coming from the operational parts of the bureau.

It's not necessarily a criticism because I think it was a unique and to some degree successful moment for S/P but it's not the classical model of what S/P is doing. It's not to be a command staff but to provide a kind of judgment and different kind of input.

Q: George Shultz--did you find that he would use this in the way you're saying?

RODMAN: I had access to him. I had access to almost everything that was going on. I could intervene freely. He valued our input because of I think the quality of what we produced. On a number of issues, we would send in a memo raising a question about something, where he would call a meeting because we had provoked in his mind an issue that he wanted to have debated. Some in the European area, different kinds of things.

So I could get to him. Sometimes he accepted my views, sometimes not. I would win some and lose some. So I had a lot of battles with the bureaus, which I think were healthy sorts of things. Where sometimes I would raise an issue that the Secretary would listen to and say, All right, I want Peter involved in this. He would take my view. Other times he would not follow my recommendation but that's the way things work.

There were other issues in which we provided an overview, things that cut across bureaucratic lines. For example, the regional discussions with the Soviets. At the beginning Shultz wasn't quite sure what the talks were about. EUR wanted to trade away a lot of chips. EUR wanted to make new proposals in every area--Cambodia, Central America, whatever--in order to further US-Soviet relations. Whereas the other bureaus didn't want EUR telling them how to run Central America policy or didn't want EUR playing with their chips.

So they would come to me, these other guys--Elliott Abrams or Paul Wolfowitz--and say, What the hell is going on here? This is a classical area for Policy Planning because we could provide a global overview. In fact, this is a subject that was part of my portfolio for

a number of years and I just finished a book on the subject of this part of the US-Soviet relationship. So I did a lot of memos for Shultz and umpired a number of meetings with Shultz in Shultz's office between EUR and other bureaus. And we'd argue what should be the content of these different discussions with the Soviets. So that was a classic S/P kind of issue.

But I had access, I had great relations with Shultz. I won some battles and lost some but I think the morale was good on the staff. I came in and I fired a lot of people and picked what I think was a very high quality staff. So we had access. The rest of the 7th floor understood that Shultz valued my input and therefore S/S was responsive to my interests. S/P can't survive unless S/S...

Q: That's Executive Secretariat.

RODMAN: The Executive Secretariat, the paper flow. If important things are going on in the building that S/P doesn't know about, S/P is marginalized by definition. But if the Secretary wants your opinion and the Executive Secretariat knows this, then they will be an ally in making sure that the bureaus can't bypass you. The bureaus would love to send their memos to the Secretary without having anybody kibitz or interfere, and yet if S/P is to have a role they have to be aware of the policy process. They don't have to be an operational player but they have to be aware if they re going to express a view.

I don't think Policy Planning can get too far out of the policy process or else it becomes irrelevant. They have to have some hand in the policy process and they have to be aware of what's going on so they can make their contribution. As I said before, their contribution should not be as just another tactical kibitzer but they should offer a broader strategic perspective. I think "planning" is a misnomer; I think "strategy" may be a better word.

But they need allies because bureaucratically you are not in the chain of command. You can be bypassed, and the Department can work quite smoothly without you. If you're going to be involved, you have to fight for this everyday because the bureaus will work to exclude you. You need allies. The Secretary of State himself is the most important ally. And then the other people around the Secretary like S/S.

Ideally, say you have a Middle East issue, it will become known that the Secretary values my contribution. Then NEA would routinely include us in the formation of its deliberation which is probably the best way that we would have our input, very smoothly. Shultz would know that we had had our input and that's the normal way. Other bureaus, as I said, would be less cooperative. A little bureaucratic struggle goes on all the time.

S/P, if it's going to be relevant, has to have access, first of all, at the top, and I had it. I was involved with a lot of Shultz's meetings with the assistant secretaries, either one-on-one or in bigger meetings, but even in the daily morning staff meetings with one of the assistant secretaries, I would always be included. And also at lower levels where my staff

had to have access to what the bureaus were up to. My staff was my spies. Their job was to make sure I knew what was going on in the bureaus at the formative stages so that we could either have input or express our own opinion. So these little games go on all the time.

I thought generally that we did pretty well. I think my staff enjoyed things. They felt they were part of the policy process and they really did have an input.

Q: How about the NSC? You'd come from a power center and now it's the Reagan administration, what role...

RODMAN: Reagan's NSC was in an ambiguous position because you didn't have an activist President. I think everybody understood that NSC staffers had a point of view but they didn't always have the President on their side in every bureaucratic battle. Whereas in Kissinger's case he did. If there was an issue being fought out, Haldeman would call up Rogers at some point and make it clear that this is Nixon's view. Then the NSC staff really did speak for the President; it really was following these issues.

In the Reagan case, you didn't always have that. So the State Department often ignored the NSC. In fact I think they often ignored what the President really had in mind. It's amusing to me. A lot of work goes into Presidential speeches, but I don't think anybody at the State Department ever bothered to read Presidential speeches. That's not completely true, because in a lot of cases there were big battles over the drafting but if the State Department didn't really like the way it came out they certainly would never refer to these speeches as guidance. They certainly didn't have them up on the wall as sacred text. They just sort of pretended it never happened and regarded the President as an interloper.

The NSC's power varied from issue to issue. Some of the NSC people were plugged in and well regarded, others were not. The people on the NSC were more of an ideological bent, yet even then they didn't always reflect the President's thinking. They were easily marginalized because they didn't know that much about how the US government worked and probably because Shultz managed to acquire a lot of the momentum himself and just deflected a lot of this interference.

You have conservatives who wrote books complaining about Shultz ignoring their wishes, Constantine Menges for example. There is some of this in my book. The NSC people were right on some of the criticism of the diplomacy that was being carried out. But Shultz very clearly had the President's confidence. He had the power to go into the Oval Office more often than not and get Reagan's okay for what he wanted to do. He would bypass any kind of interagency machinery. On Central America early on, there were a lot of these meetings. He would be dragged into a meeting and there would be Jeane Kirkpatrick and Bill Casey and Weinberger. They would all harass him. He would sometimes be overruled. Over time a lot of these people left and he would go into the Oval Office on his own and get the President's imprimatur. The others I'm sure would tear their hair out.

I'm always amused by the State Department's view on the interagency process. There were times when the State Department would come running to the NSC saying, You have to rein in the Defense Department or the CIA. They appeal to the President for reinforcement. Other times they don't want anybody else interfering with their own activity.

Again, I'm a creature of the NSC and I tend to think, from the President's point of view, it's very useful to have an interagency process. No agency should be totally independent of it because it takes away some of the President's control. That's a general rule.

Q: You were there at a time when the Soviet Union was sort of at its last surge before it collapsed. As a strategic thinker on this thing, how were we viewing, from about '83 to '86, the Soviet Union?

RODMAN: I think Reagan deserves credit for having it right. Almost everybody else thought he was wrong and I think he was vindicated. He thought the Soviet Union was basically dangerous and basically vulnerable, and the way to deal with it was to put it under pressure. So you had a policy, at least a declaratory policy, coming out of the White House. Our military goal was to catch up with them and to show them they couldn't win an arms race. A lot of other forms of economic pressure. We also met them in the geopolitical arena, Angola, Afghanistan, Central America. The so-called Reagan doctrine.

It was a very conscious policy of raising the cost to the Soviet Union of their foreign policy, of their mischievous foreign policy and their defense buildup. This was the beginning of the Brezhnev declining period. Brezhnev died, I don't know, '82 or '83. Brezhnev, Andropov, Chernenko and Gorbachev--you had a very decrepit looking leadership. The Soviet Union was still dangerous but you had this paradox. It looked like a regime that was losing its grip but here they were still having this colossal military buildup.

I think Reagan's instinct was right. If you look back at his speeches in '82, '83, he said, This is the terminal phase of the Soviet Union. He said things that amounted to that, that you're seeing the last sad pages of a tragic episode in history called Marxism which is discredited now.

In 1982 at Westminster he gave a speech saying, Marxist analysis was proved right in one case--the end of the Soviet Union. It's a case where the economic realities don't coincide with political manifestations. This is a system that is heading for some sort of collapse. Their economy is clearly not functioning.

The US, the West, had a rough time in the ''70s because of the oil shocks and Vietnam. The US was again in a great recession following the Iranian revolution, in the early ''80s. Reagan took a beating in the '82 elections because the recession was so bad. In '83 to '84 the economy revived and we had an incredible period of economic recovery and

everything changed psychologically. From 1975 to 1985 there was an extraordinary change in the mood, in the sense of which system was performing well, which system was indeed viable. Reagan not only presided over that but had the faith that this was going to happen, even in '82 when it wasn't obvious. This was clearly the NSC policy.

There's a new book out which liberals haven't given a lot of credit to but which deserves some respect. It's by Peter Schweitzer and is called Victory. He had access to a lot of the NSDDs, the National Security Decision Directives, of the Reagan period on Soviet policy. These are presidential strategy documents which laid out his policies--to deliberately tighten the screws on the Soviets, trying to frustrate them, trying to increase the economic pressure.

In fact, one of the things in the book is how we and the Saudis, when we talked to them about oil prices, one of the reasons we wanted to keep oil prices down was to deny the Soviets the foreign exchange they were counting on. We and the Saudis did that deliberately and a lot of other things we did to frustrate the Soviets getting credits. I don't know how much was done but at least this was the hope. In addition, the Afghan program which had been started by Carter and Brzezinski was expanded.

In some other NSDDs there was stated the explicit purpose of trying to defeat the Soviet army--this was in 1985--an extraordinary thing because nobody thought at that time that this could happen. They even had raids: the Afghans would launch some raids on Soviet territory from Afghanistan.

So you had a lot of very aggressive things. In the rest of the bureaucracy, everybody shared the general perception that this was very crude. Reagan made a speech in '83 about the Evil Empire. Everybody in the press said this was primitive. I think the State Department view was: "This was a lot of crazy rhetoric from these wild people in the White House. We re a little more sophisticated than that."

My book deals with the Third World issues. The conservatives had their own blind spots. I think that on the basic issue Reagan had it right. It's extraordinary how much skepticism there was about him and what he was saying. Yet if you read what he was saying, it's absolutely extraordinary what he foresaw. He said, This system is evil and rotten and is doomed. He said it. Maybe other people believed it but a lot of people thought it was wrong analytically. Other people said, You shouldn't say this. And yet he was right to say it; he de-legitimized the Soviet system.

I was involved in one side of it, the famous speech he gave in Berlin many years later, '87, '88. He said, Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall. I was on the NSC and I was sort of mediating between the speechwriters--the White House speechwriters and the State Department. The German types who would say, "You can't say this. This would put Helmut Kohl in a very delicate position. This would be regarded as very primitive." I mediated. I'm not all that proud of my role but at least I did defend that. I helped tone the speech down in some other ways.

Reagan's speechwriters insisted that the President wanted to say that, "Tear down that wall." I was quite happy with that, at least I hope I was. Now, in retrospect, this is one of the high points in western civilization! We had the self-confidence to say that this is evil and disgusting; it need not be tolerated.

It's amazing there was resistance to that. It's the sort of caution that is endemic to the State Department. I have to say I felt some of it too. You tone it down a little bit and avoid confrontation. Again, I think Reagan comes out looking like he was smarter than all of these great geniuses who criticized him.

Q: Why don't we quickly cover this period, it's a long period and you can always add more if you want. Basically your last position was you moved over to the White House again, the NSC.

RODMAN: In '86 I was lured back. I was lured back by the offer of a position as a Deputy Assistant to the President. What happened was John Poindexter became the Security Adviser the beginning of '86. I think he knew some of his limitations, and he decided to set up a 3-deputy system. There had been some precedent; Kissinger did this briefly in '73. The idea was he would have a principal deputy, who was Don Fortier. Then he'd have a deputy to watch over defense policy and arms control--the first one was Roy Lehman. And also a deputy to watch over foreign policy, which was me.

I was a full fledged deputy assistant to the President. I had tennis court privileges, a seat in the Executive Mess; that was big stuff! That was attractive to me and it was very painful for me to leave Shultz. Shultz felt very bad about it and thought I was deserting him but it was a promise of a more significant bureaucratic role, which it was. It was for a year.

What happened was that Poindexter went down in flames. Frank Carlucci came in as the new Security Adviser in the beginning of '87. Frank asked me to stay on, which was important, and I didn't really want to leave. But he went back to the traditional one-deputy system at the NSC, and his deputy was Colin Powell. So I was asked to stay, which I was happy to do because I didn't want to be leaving at the time of this mass purge of all these miscreants. But I was bumped down to Special Assistant to the President, which is a lesser rank and I didn't have the tennis court privileges anymore. But I decided to stay.

What I had left, was a kind of policy planning function. We sort of picked out of a hat the title Counselor. I just picked it out of a hat; it seemed to reflect what the role was. It was supposed to be a kind of policy planning function where you kibitz on everything else that was going on. I had my own access to the boss, to Frank and Colin, but I did not have the bureaucratic role that I had as deputy. As deputy assistant I was dealing at the Under Secretary level at a lot of important meetings including on Central America and other subjects.

But as I said, I stayed on because it was interesting and I didn't want to leave at a bad time. Of course, it was exciting in its own right. I stayed on and Carlucci went to Defense and Colin Powell became the National Security Adviser. I stayed on until into the Bush period.

I'm not sure I would have left the State Department if I was only going to a special assistant NSC job. I went because I was going to a deputy job. You know, you take your chances in this game. It had its own excitement. There is a lot of excitement being in the White House and being a part of that different environment.

I saw the Iran-Contra thing at close-hand, at least part of the terminal phase.

Q: Was Ollie North there when you were there?

RODMAN: Yes.

Q: What was your impression of Ollie North?

RODMAN: Ollie, I kind of liked him. He drove the bureaucracy crazy, which I thought was in his favor. He was very imaginative. He would come up with ideas to solve the Central American problem, most of which were wacky. It was his idea floating around to set-up a beachhead on the coast that we would recognize as free Nicaragua and give it foreign aid openly. I remember saying that this is not a great idea.

He also worked on some things like the Achille Lauro, which happened before I went there. I think he really was the guiding force.

Q: For commanding the hijackers.

RODMAN: I was there with him at the time of the bombing of Libya in April '86, in which he did a lot of the staff work for that both before and after it. He was up all night to finish a paper and took the leading role on some aspects. Under supervision he did good work; with somebody watching him he worked hard, he was energetic, he produced sharp papers with a lot of ideas. He was brimming with ideas; as long as somebody was there to vet the ideas...

I knew he had some connection with the Contras. He would go to talk with private groups who were helping the Contras, he would give speeches a lot. This was known and I think it was legitimate. He was going to hold the hands of the Contras and tell them we still loved them. So some of that was known. The part that was known seemed to be above board.

I didn't know about the diversion of funds. I knew about the Iran business, I knew that independently. I was briefed on it when I got there in March '86 and I told them it was

crazy. I mean, arms sales to Iran. This was not Ollie North; Ollie got into it a little bit later. I knew this when it was Bud McFarlane, Michael Ledeen and Don Fortier cooking this up; I told them it was crazy.

Ollie was given a major role in it only early '86. They kicked the Israelis aside. When McFarlane left the NSC at the end of '85 he had decided that thing hadn't worked, his initiative to Iran. After he left these other people revived it, Poindexter and North. They also severed the Israeli connection; they said that we re going to do this ourselves, we don't need the Israelis as the intermediaries.

Ollie was brought in to do a lot of the active work. I knew about it, as I say, even before then. Ollie North was not the major instigator of the Iran business. That was these other people, Poindexter's people, who thought there was a great strategic opening to be made, and even Bud McFarlane.

The diversion of funds was a wrinkle, as I say, that I didn't know anything about.

Q: Do you think the legacy of Henry Kissinger, being such an operator, was sort of almost perverted by lesser people in the NSC?

RODMAN: Bud McFarlane is a dear friend of mine. He has written about this. He wrote that he thought there was a great strategic opening to be made with Iran. If the rest of the government didn't agree with this, they probably thought that, given the precedent of what Nixon and Kissinger had done, it was legitimate for the NSC and the President to go ahead anyway--the President wanted to do it.

This is the decisive thing. The President wanted to do this, the Iran stuff. It was Reagan. They didn't bypass him on this. So they invoked the Kissinger precedent consciously. I think this is a case where they didn't know what they were doing. The diversion of funds was a separate matter which raised even grosser problems, but even the policy of selling weapons to Iran, I think, was a strategic blunder.

To answer your question. The NSC implementing its own policy when the President doesn't trust the rest of the government--the precedent for this was the Nixon-Kissinger case. Here this time the people were less competent and the policy was less justified.

I think the lesson of all this is if the President doesn't trust the rest of his government, he ought to either replace his Cabinet secretaries and get people he does trust. Or he better damn well know what he's doing if he is going to try to implement something out of the White House which is just not easy to do.

It is not what the NSC is for. It's supposed to be for policy coordination and monitoring; it's not for the execution of operational policy.

Q: One last question because I know there's a time thing. You overlapped into the Bush administration somewhat. Was there a difference? Bush is an old operator, he's been around for a long time, how did he use the NSC?

RODMAN: This is very different. I stayed on for about 2 years of Bush in the same function, same role. Scowcroft was an old colleague of mine from the Kissinger period. I knew Bush from the old days so I had a very nice position, but I left after a while because I wasn't doing anything that vital. I decided I wanted to write a book and I decided to leave.

That was a different presidency. Bush was more hands-on. The NSC staff--first of all you had people who were much less ideological. From Bush and Scowcroft on down, the whole team. You had a government that functioned very well together--you had Baker, Cheney, Scowcroft and Bush himself.

You had none of these great titanic stalemates, like you had with Shultz versus Weinberger on the use of force, which is a function of the kind of President you had. The Lebanon thing is a good example. The basic problem with Lebanon in '83 and '84 was that Reagan tried to split the difference. He had a choice between Shultz, who wanted to engage in this war, and Weinberger who wanted to get out. Reagan would split the difference and we engaged a little bit more at a time, and it failed.

What Reagan had to do was choose. Either we get the hell out or we intervene more systematically in a way that would have affected the battle on the ground in Beirut. So this was one of Reagan's weaknesses, particularly on the use of force. He hesitated to overrule his Defense Department. He was not willing to order the Defense Department to do something that it didn't want to do.

Bush was more self-confident; he was willing. Cheney was more cooperative. You had a team of people that were more cohesive. A lot of it was just the function of Bush himself. Panama and the Gulf War are examples where Bush, obviously, directed his Joint Chiefs to produce military options even though the Joint Chiefs didn't really want to do it. But Bush was willing to say I want to know what my options are, give me my options. So they did it.

So you had a more assertive President on issues like the use of military power.

The Bush NSC I think brought in very competent people and they had a role in things. You had people like Bob Blackwill, Condi Rice and Richard Haas, they were influential. Obviously Secretary Baker was carrying the ball on a lot of things but I think, given Bush's role, the NSC staff was not marginalized. The NSC staff could be marginalized by Shultz in the Reagan period. It wasn't that easy to marginalize the staff when you had Scowcroft and Bush in charge.

So Baker had a lot of freedom of action, Baker carried the ball on a whole lot of things, but you had a President who was very aware. In fact, the President was a lot more sophisticated than Baker on a whole lot of things they dealt with. So the staff had clout based on the fact that it was a Presidency with a perceived influence on strategy and on tactical issues.

End of interview