

Timothy Naftali

Hi, I'm Tim Naftali. I'm director of the Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum in Yorba Linda, California. It's May 20, 2008. And I have the honor and privilege to be interviewing Daniel Ellsberg for the Richard Nixon Oral History Program. Dr. Ellsberg, thank you for doing this.

Daniel Ellsberg

It's an honor and a pleasure.

Timothy Naftali

Let's start. How did you -- when and how did you decide to give the Pentagon Papers to -- first of all, to photocopy the Pentagon Papers, and then to make them available to a wider audience?

Daniel Ellsberg

Well, it was crucial -- one of the crucial elements in my decision to do that was my understanding of where Nixon was in his Vietnam policy, which, in retrospect, was somewhat mistaken, but also, in a broad outline, correct. I understood from my friend Mort Halperin, who was still at the point in the summer of 1969 a deputy to Dr. Henry Kissinger, who was the national security assistant to the president. And I'd known Mort for many years when he was a RAND consultant, going back to 1960. I had been a consultant to Henry Kissinger in December of 1968, through February of 1969, first in the Hotel Pierre when the transition team was working, and then, in his office in the Executive Office Building where Mort was his assistant. And I had worked on options, an options paper, which I directed a team working on that at the RAND Corporation, in November and December of 1968, on alternative options in Vietnam, trying to cost them out in a rough way, and to say the pros and cons and the possible consequences of following these different policies. And I was in charge of that at the suggestion of the president of RAND, Henry Rowen, and Henry had agreed to that. I spoke to Kissinger about my options paper on the day after Christmas, I recall. We traveled on Christmas Day in 1968, to the Hotel Pierre, and discussed the options with him. And he suggested some changes. I had a talk with him and Tom Schelling, an old friend and mentor of mine, who'd actually supervised my thesis at Harvard on decision making. And he was a friend of Henry's and we discussed the options, at that time, in late December. And Schelling, in particular, suggested a couple of modifications. So, I did a second draft of that. But then, instead of doing the final draft, which was assigned to Freddy Clay, my colleague at RAND, Henry asked me at breakfast to do a study for him, to lay out questions for the different government agencies dealing with Vietnam, which came to be known as National Security Study Memorandum One -- the first NSSM, N-S-S-M-1 is how it was designated. And these, actually, at my suggestion, imitating something that McNamara had once done in 1961, the questions were to be given to all the different agencies involved, the same questions. And they were not to coordinate the answers, which was quite unusual. If you had an interagency study, usually you'd get an interagency result, that would result -- show a lot of compromise, and concessions, and back scratching of various kinds. He said, rather, get separate answers from the Joint Chiefs of Staff, from MACV -- the Military Assistance Command in Vietnam -- from the Office of the Secretary of Defense people, from INR, and State, and so forth. Get six or seven different branches, without coordinating, so you'd be able to see where they agreed, and where they disagreed. And you'd get a

sense of what the real uncertainties were, especially when you saw real controversy. And the questions I chose -- I wrote all the questions, actually, with some suggestions, actually, from Mort Halperin, who was soon to be on the NSC staff, and Les Gelb, who was still in the Defense Department, who had been in charge of -- both of them had been in charge of the Pentagon Papers study. Mort was in charge of it under the assistant secretary. And Les Gelb was -- directed the study, under Mort, both old friends of mine. So, they're very knowledgeable of Vietnam. And with their help, and a few other people, I drafted questions which I knew would evoke controversy. Each question was designed, really, to go at a point where I knew the Joint Chiefs were likely to disagree with, say, intelligence, and research, and state. So, the president would, for the first time that I knew of, a first president, would be made aware of where there was real disagreement, something that's usually kept rather carefully from the president. They try to solve these things, if possible, in a mutually acceptable way below the level of the president, and as a result of which he isn't really necessarily made aware of how controversial some of these answers may be within a system. Then, I was called back from RAND in February to go over all the answers of the different agencies, since I had written the questions, with one or two exceptions of questions. And so I -- Mort Halperin had the job of pulling this all together. He asked me to go over all the questions, all the answers, there were about 500 pages. Winston Lord, under Mort -- later a high staff member under Kissinger, later, eventually, president of the Council on Foreign Relations -- but he was, then, a young foreign service officer who was given the job of collating all these for the president, writing a summary. And I worked with Winston on that summary. We both wrote parts of it. And I was one of the few, if not the only person, who read all of the answers to get a feel for the general trend. And we tried to highlight for the president what the agreements were, and what the disagreements were. Now, it will become, in our discussion here, of later importance -- as was common, I copied for my files the questions I'd written, of course, but also the answers, knowing that there were people doing research at RAND who would be very interested in this.

This was as far as I knew the first -- as far as I know -- the first study directly done for the White House by the RAND Corporation. Generally, they worked for the Air Force to start with, and then to some extent, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, but, in particular, the secretary of defense, under McNamara. And I had done that. And then, I'd worked as an employee of the Defense Department under McNamara, later. And then I went to the State Department for Vietnam. So, this was the first study that we'd really done for the White House. It was quite important. And I thought the answers of these various people would be, certainly, of great interest to my colleagues at the RAND Corporation. Now, I'll tell a -- this may be -- well, it's a funny story in a way. At one point Mort came to me, and said, "Dan," knowing that normally I would -- anybody doing work for the Joint Chiefs or whoever would make a copy for their own files, if possible, so that they could discuss with selected people. This is against the regulations of the classification system, to show something like this to somebody who's not directly authorized. It's done constantly, not just daily, but hourly, in effect. In other words, those rules are broken within the system in order to get the job done. You show it to people who have not been directly authorized by the boss, to get their input, help them in their work, and so forth. This is the way the system actually works. On this occasion, then, Mort told me, "Dan, don't copy this. A copy of this should not go to the RAND Corporation on this. This is White House material, now, and you shouldn't do it." So, I understood that to mean that I should not tell him that I was copying this for the RAND Corporation, so that he would be able to say he had given me these instructions. And, if it came out they'd been violated, it was without his knowing. And when I took them -- so I copied them myself -- I didn't have a secretary do it -- in the White House Xerox machine. And when I took them back to RAND, convened a group of people who would be very interested in these answers, and said, "Now, here's the understanding under which I got it. It's very important that no one say to Mort, or the White House, or anyone, that we have these documents. It's my understanding that Mort doesn't

want to know that we have it, or wants to be able to say that he doesn't know that we have it." And so, people were used to this kind of operation, and all understood it, and as far as I know never broke that. Later, because I'm a close friend of Mort's -- and just to understand for future reference that I was on the same track here -- much later, I think after he was out of the White House, "Mort, this is what I did. Was I correct in understanding that this is what you meant, expected me to do?" Not that he wanted me to copy it, but that he expected that I would and did not want to be told. He said, "Of course." It had all gone as he had expected. If he had really wanted me not to put it back, he could have conveyed that and I would have obeyed it, if he'd said, "Dan, this, really" -- it would have been a matter of tone of voice and intonation, reiteration, and various things -- "this, really, can't go," you know, and so forth. I would not have handled it that way then. Would I have copied it myself? Possibly, but I wouldn't have shown it to other people.

Timothy Naftali

How was RAND supposed to do this work without getting these? --

Daniel Ellsberg

Well, you can't. The government can't operate, or, if you're using a RAND Corporation, it can't operate without having better information than it reads in the paper, or what's, you know, officially given to it. So, the government operates this way. And if you're used to the system, you have a good sense of what can be shown to what person with what instructions. And you're disciplined, and you don't blurt it out, and you don't try to buy influence with somebody by telling them something they really shouldn't know, from the point of this other person. You have to have a memory for this that's capable of tagging each piece of information with the information: who gave this to me, under what conditions, who does he not want it to go to, why, so you can judge that better, and so forth. A lot of information has to go in there, which I couldn't do now, at 77. I can't remember adequately who told me what, or who is not to be told something. So, if it's important, I have to warn people: I can't be as discreet as I used to be. I'm not capable of it. But in those days I was very good at this. If you're not good at it, if you can't lie to someone effectively, and convincingly, who asks you, "Do you know whether this report exists, or what it says, or is it at RAND?," or something like that, if you can't lie to them effectively, you will be excluded from access to this very quickly. That'll come out. It'll come back to the person who gave you the information, that you have been indiscreet, you're not disciplined, your judgment is not good, or you priorities are not right. And they won't give you that information anymore. Thus, you won't get into the meetings; you won't read the stuff yourself. You may lose a clearance, if it's a higher clearance. And, as you may know now or not, top secret is almost a cover set of classifications. Real secrecy is higher than top secret. It involves compartmented clearances, which are very well kept, very well managed, in the way of secrets. And if you have a clearance higher than top secret that your colleague, whom you normally -- your best friend -- normally used to sharing everything with, and comparing notes, and getting their view of things, and helping each other, if they don't have that clearance, they can work with you for years and not know that the clearance exists, not know what it covers, not know the information that you have. You just don't give it to them. It doesn't -- that doesn't happen. That system works quite well, and unlike what is merely top secret, or secret, or confidential. So, these secrets can be very well kept. Compartmentation, in other words, works very well. And, on the other hand, below the level of compartmented security, if it's merely top secret -- and NSSM 1 was largely secret, and some top secret -- that flows quite broadly within the system, but not to outsiders, not outside the Executive Branch, not to Congress, above all not to the press, not to your wife, generally. I was quite good at that. Other people at RAND would sometimes tell their wives what

they were doing, though they weren't cleared. I didn't, and that sort of thing creates problems in your marriage. My wife, my first wife, had very little understanding of what I was doing. And that turned out to be a problem, ultimately.

Timothy Naftali

Dan, tell us --

Timothy Naftali

Go ahead.

Daniel Ellsberg

I'll tell you why I've gone in such detail in this particular episode. First, of course, my work on NSSM 1 was a critical element in Mort Halperin's confiding in me, later in the year, what Nixon's real option was since I had written the options paper. And he was able to relate what he understood the real strategy to be to the options we'd talked about earlier. Also, I was in the game. I'd worked under Kissinger and Nixon -- he told me some things that he didn't tell very many other people. A more important thing to move ahead here is, had I not copied NSSM 1, National Security Study Memorandum Number One, and the answers to that, and had I not given it to Senator Matthias, a Republican senator who was anti-war, later, in 1971, I believe Nixon would have stayed in office through his term, would have renewed the bombing. The bombing of Vietnam would have continued, at least through his term, in other words, through 1976. The war would not have ended in 1975. And it might well have continued for some years, thereafter. Nixon would have actually achieved his goal of keeping General Thieu, President Thieu, in office in Vietnam through '76, and thereby achieve the appearance, at least, of having achieved a success in Vietnam of not having betrayed, or let down, the South Vietnamese government, and not having Saigon become Ho Chi Minh City. All of these, I would say, might well have happened. He might have achieved all this had I not in fact copied NSSM 1. Or, to put it another way, if I had only copied the Pentagon Papers, I think there would have been no Plumbers operation, no operation into Fielding's, Dr. Fielding's office, et cetera, efforts to shut me up, efforts to assault me, on the steps of the Pentagon, on May 3, 1972, to tap me, and so forth. I think the various crimes that emanated from the Oval Office against me, and which were crucial to his impeachment hearings and his resignation, would not have been necessary, and probably would not have occurred, had I not, in fact, copied National Security Study Memorandum One, in addition to the Pentagon Papers. So that's why I've gone into this.

Timothy Naftali

Please explain why.

Daniel Ellsberg

May I ask --

Timothy Naftali

Yeah, no.

Daniel Ellsberg

Is the reasoning obvious to you? Or is this familiar to you? I would not expect so.

Timothy Naftali

No, it's not. Please let us -- explain why.

Daniel Ellsberg

Okay, I do go into this briefly in the last two chapters of my book. I had really not intended to go beyond, just for space reasons, to go beyond my being arraigned in 1971, in my book. And then, at the last moment, I decided, well, I should say something about how the trial ended, and so forth. So, I dealt quite briefly with this in there. And it didn't give all the reasoning. I have to go back, though, and say to your first question -- having done the options in hopes that Nixon would choose to do what the public expected him to do, and that is, to negotiate his way quickly out of Vietnam, to get out of Vietnam in '68 -- and I did hope that, as did, I think, most people expected it to happen in '68 when they voted for him. I learned, in the summer of '68, that Nixon's first offer, which Mort Halperin and I had both favored among the options, to offer a mutual withdrawal of North Vietnamese and U.S. forces, and make that offer to the North Vietnamese, I learned that that had been quite strongly rejected by the North Vietnamese by April and May. The offer, I think, was made as early as -- it was presented to them in early April, and in possibly early May. But that by May and June, it was clear they were not just bluffing. They were not going to pick up that offer as things stood. Now, as I say, I'd favored that approach up until that point. The question was, what do you do next? And my own feeling, at that point, and for that matter, Mort Halperin's, who was still working for Kissinger, was strongly then that, all right, you in effect went for unilateral withdrawal, make a deal that we would get our troops out, and get the best terms associated with that that you could get. But end the war, and get out of there. By mid-summer, Mort had informed me that, that was not the direction he was taking. He actually told me over the phone that it was something -- in terms of the options, I think he said option C. I could have it wrong as to which option it was. But he was able to communicate, in terms of the options. He was staying in. He had no intention of getting out, which would in effect look like a defeat, an end to the war, a failure in the war. And as I talked more to Mort, both over the phone and in person, toward the end of the summer, the understanding I got was that Nixon was determined that, at that point, that Thieu should remain in office so long as he was in office. And that meant not only until '72, but until '76. He had eight years in mind, of course. And that he was basically -- he was still hoping for mutual withdrawal, even though it had been rejected by the North Vietnamese. And that his hope of getting that was based on threats that he was making. I should say, my understanding at the time was a little different, but that part of his -- from what it turned out to be, the real strategy, but that a part of his strategy was to threaten the North Vietnamese with a devastating escalation of the war. My understanding at the time was that, that would happen if the North Vietnamese actually launched an offensive, that he was determined to prevent an offensive like the Tet Offensive from occurring, and that he was going to deter that by threatening, even nuclear weapons, but, even short of nuclear weapons, mining Haiphong, hitting the targets close to China, the rail routes and other routes into China, between China and North Vietnam, and hitting dykes in North Vietnam, a massive escalation. As I say, my thought at the time was that, that would be a retaliation to a North Vietnamese offensive, in order to deter them. And that was part of the strategy, it turned out. Notice that it did fail. There was such an escalation -- an offensive in 1972, which certainly Kissinger and Nixon hoped and

expected to avoid by their threats. In retrospect -- and I really didn't learn this until considerably later -- Nixon's aims were far more ambitious than that. His threats were directed not only -- would be carried out not only if there was a North Vietnamese offensive, but if they failed to accept his terms, which were mutual withdrawal. In other words, even without an offensive, if they failed to be willing to withdraw their troops along with ours, they would be hit. The bombing would renew on a larger scale than had happened under Johnson. Now, I had considered the option of an escalation, not including nuclear weapons, but of an escalation among the options that we'd presented in December and January, without having in myself any belief that, that would win the war, that it would be effective. As I put it to Kissinger directly, "After all, we've been bombing them. We were bombing them from '65 to '68, on a massive scale, that had no effect on that. I do not believe that a heavier bombing program would affect them either." And I did mention at the time -- actually Tom Schelling had asked me, "Do you have a win strategy in the options?" And I said, "No, I don't believe there is a win strategy." I said to Tom, "You could bomb them more." "I don't think that will win." "You could use nuclear weapons and destroy them all." "I wouldn't call that a win." You know, it's simply annihilating them, or, as Hillary Clinton has recently put it, in connection with Vietnam, obliterating them. I wouldn't call that a win. And I don't think it would cause them to surrender. Schelling also suggested that I put in a threat strategy. And I was abashed at having not included that, because Schelling and I were collaborators on theories of threats. And it was surprising. I had to be reminded by my mentor, here, that specifically, a threat strategy was possible. I said, "Well, I should have included that as a possibility." And I did so in the second version of NSSM 1. But I said again, "I don't think a threat strategy has any promise. We've actually been bombing them, and that itself," so... When it came to using nuclear weapons, I refused, at RAND, to let that be considered an option, the actual use of nuclear weapons. I said, "I will not be associated with any planning document that suggests that nuclear weapons in Vietnam could be a legitimate policy for the United States, a legitimate initiative -- I don't want to give it that sense of realism or legitimacy." And so, we didn't include -- there was no included mention, even though when Kissinger's office apparently leaked out that there had been an A to Z strategy -- options study -- and that that was everything from extrication to nuclear weapons, I knew that was wrong. I had not included nuclear weapons. And it didn't get included in the final version.

Timothy Naftali

You're a man that studies -- you're a man that's sensitive to probabilities.

Daniel Ellsberg

Yeah.

Timothy Naftali

Putting yourself back in the mindset of 1968, '69 --

Daniel Ellsberg

Yes.

Timothy Naftali

-- what was the probability that a non-Communist, southern Vietnam could survive?

Daniel Ellsberg

Well, survive indefinitely -- by the way, what they were after was an anti-Communist Vietnam, such as had existed under Diem, in which people who were open to Communist coalition, let's say, or open to Communists or members of the anti-French front, the movement against the French, even if they weren't Communist. To let them into the government, or even be free, was forbidden under Diem. And that was U.S. policy; we didn't want that possibility. We wanted an anti-Communist policy. And for that, it was almost essential to have a Catholic regime. The Catholics represented about 10 percent of the population, but the 10 percent that could be called anti-Communist as opposed to non-Communist, who were prepared in other words to suppress them, imprison them, torture them, expel them -- Communists, or people associated with the Communists. And that was the degree of security our government wanted. They didn't want the possibility of a coalition, in which, ultimately, the Communists might prevail. They didn't want Communists to be in an open society, open to participating politically, or putting out newspapers, or recruiting in any way. So, our policy was anti-Communist -- pro-U.S., anti-Communist. And for that we backed Diem, and later, General Thieu, who was also a Catholic, keeping in mind that we trumpeted these regimes as democratic regimes. And very few Americans noticed the peculiarity that a Catholic, who represented an ethnic group 10 percent of the population, should be -- happen to turn out to be the president in elections. We're still debating whether a woman can be president in this country. They represent 50 percent of the population. Maybe the point would have been clearer if Diem had been Jewish, or Muslim. Maybe Americans would have noticed something odd happening there, the point being that every Vietnamese understood that a regime headed by a Catholic in Vietnam was a foreign imposed regime, either by the French or the U.S. It could not have resulted from a free play of politics.

Timothy Naftali

Was political reform one of the options? [off camera voices and talking simultaneously] I want to talk about --

Daniel Ellsberg

Yeah, I'll get on your point of the reforms. What I'm saying is that given the U.S. requirement, here, that -- and remembering that South Vietnam is a creature of U.S. policy essentially. It would not exist except for U.S. policy. It would not have survived the elections that were promised in the Geneva Accords of 1954, for nationwide elections. That would never have resulted -- well, not even thought of as resulting in two different regimes in Vietnam. There were to be elections for a national regime. All Vietnamese, essentially, thought of Vietnam as one. And, in fact, in the two regimes that did result, in the North and the South, each one had in their constitution the statement "Vietnam is one," there's one Vietnam. In those elections, then, we would not have had a South Vietnam. But it was U.S. policy that there should not be those elections, since they would have resulted in one Vietnam, and almost surely a Communist-dominated Vietnam, since the Communists had both the best organization, the only really nationwide organization in the country, and the prestige and capabilities associated with driving the French out of the northern part of the country, the liberators from French empire. So, they would almost surely, over time, if not immediately, have dominated this nationwide government. So, Eisenhower's policy was that there should be no elections. And one of Diem's advantages to the U.S., as a leader, was that he was anti-French, anti-imperial -- that gave him considerable credentials as a politician in Vietnam, even in the north -- but was anti-Communist, and was determined that there

should be no elections, and refused to take part in any discussions for elections. So, his role, then, as a leader of another country, of South Vietnam, was a result of U.S. policy. Now, part of that policy, then, was that South Vietnam must remain non-Communist. And for that benefit, our intelligence and our politicians, political analysts, believed it must be headed by an anti-Communist, because if the Communists are allowed to compete democratically with others, they will prevail. That might have been exaggerated in the south, that belief. They did have some serious competitors in the form of the Buddhists and some other nationalists. But it was understood that a coalition government would lead to Communist domination, eventually. And moreover, even before it led to that -- Nixon, after all, had made his career, and others, in denouncing the idea of a coalition government for China. Marshall was denigrated for that reason, for having allegedly favored a coalition government with the Communists. And the coalition in Czechoslovakia, of course, had proven fragile. So, the idea was, there must be no participation of Communists. Now, nearly all Vietnamese with any kind of a representative government, or a democratic government, open government, would have permitted Communists to participate, with their prestige, with the exception of two factions: the people who had worked directly for the French in their army in the north and the south, and in the administration during the French administration. They believed themselves, you know, very threatened by a Communist regime. They'd be punished or excluded. So, they were happy to be anti-Communist and to exclude Communists. Likewise, the Catholics, you know, for general ideological, religious reasons, tended to be quite anti-Communist. And there was quite an overlap between those two. The French had favored Catholics in their administration. And there was an overlap between them. So, you had a faction of perhaps 10 percent of the population all together, 10, 15 percent, that would exclude Communists. That meant an unrepresentative, undemocratic government. It had to be essentially repressive, repressive not only of Communists, but of anyone who would tolerate Communists, who would open the government to Communists. Keep them out of the government. Keep their influence out. So, we backed perforce -- wanting to maintain a non- and anti-Communist, pro-U.S. South Vietnam -- we backed a dictatorial regime under Diem, and later, under the generals, that used assassination, death squads, deportation, imprisonment, quite widely. It was a police state, of course, as was the north in a different framework.

Timothy Naftali

Dan, I want to stop you for one moment and ask about the --

Male Speaker

Okay, so it's not -- we definitely hear it --

Daniel Ellsberg

Just stop for a minute. I can do that.

Timothy Naftali

Okay.

Daniel Ellsberg

If you want to say stop --

Timothy Naftali

Sure, we'll do that if it gets too --

Daniel Ellsberg

Okay, so, on the reform then -- we still going? In other words, you could not have a real -- we talked about having a broader government. But since people who had really been against the French were essentially excluded from the government, who would have been, in any democratic system -- and -- in the government in various ways, they were excluded. You couldn't have a really democratic, or open, or representative government, and keep it from being frightening to us in terms of the likelihood it might go Communist some day.

Timothy Naftali

It's been a long time, but it's really important for us to understand your state of mind in this period. What you're saying about the dictatorial nature of the Thieu government, was that clear to you then?

Daniel Ellsberg

Well, it was unmistakable while you were there.

Timothy Naftali

But then, in a sense, were you already concluding then, by 1969, that this effort -- that the United States was tethering itself to an ultimately unsuccessful and unacceptable government? Do you reach this --

Daniel Ellsberg

Oh, no, pardon me, you're making a leap there that I wouldn't make, then or now. You asked whether -- I think you asked whether a non-Communist --

Timothy Naftali

Yes.

Daniel Ellsberg

-- or anti-Communist government could survive. The answer is, I would say that it could for a very prolonged period. Who can say indefinitely? But with a dictatorial government, with sufficient repression, it could maintain itself in Saigon, probably, as long as it had adequate and perhaps escalating U.S. military involvement, financial support, material support, training support, and combat support, especially air, especially air support. You could keep Saigon non-Communist, anti-Communist, I think, very long, perhaps you could almost say indefinitely, with sufficient U.S. air power. That's what I would say now, and would have said then essentially. Of course, they hoped for better than that somewhat. The various hopes were better, that you could actually do it, perhaps eventually, without air support, U.S. air support. I think that was illusory. But it could have kept on

much longer than it did. It was not fated that the -- remember, the regime did survive for 30 years, an anti-Communist regime in South Vietnam, from '45 to '75. And could it have gone on, I would say, a year longer? Yes, definitely, getting it through Nixon. How about seven years beyond that? Quite possibly, maybe not, but definitely possibly. I don't think indefinitely that, that would have worked.

Timothy Naftali

What was your preferred option back in '69?

Daniel Ellsberg

Back in '69, remember, I'd been in Vietnam two years at that point, or a year longer than most Americans in the military, they had one year tours. So, I'd been there long enough to know that what we were doing would not succeed in the sense of winning. And let me define a win a little better than I -- what I've just called is, staying in, stalemating, staying there. That's not exactly winning if the war continues. Prolonging the war, it's not ending the war; it's not winning the war. Winning the war would really mean, and was sometimes hoped for in this time, would really mean that the other side gave up, accepted an anti-Communist South Vietnam, or at least that the major cities were to be indefinitely -- all cities to be indefinitely non-Communist, no coalition government, run by generals, or people selected by the U.S., that the other side would stop resisting that violently. Either the North Vietnamese troops would go home -- ideally, the Viet Cong would lay down their arms, and perhaps join -- or join the Saigon government army -- would quit fighting. A little less than that would be that the North Vietnamese would go. There would be no further big offensive where you needed U.S. air support, but that the NLF, the southerners, might continue fighting, but at a lower level, which was containable by the forces we trained and equipped fighting for Saigon, the Saigon government, that they could handle it -- you could have different levels of this -- without U.S. air support, or without U.S. direct ground combat -- with air support, but not ground combat -- and perhaps without U.S. troops at all, but with air support. And, finally, you could imagine their doing it without air support at all. Now, the Joint Chiefs never foresaw -- this was one of the answers in NSSM 1 -- when asked directly in the question I'd phrased, when will they be able to do without U.S. air support, essentially, the answer was: never. You will never get a point where they can confront North Vietnamese troops without U.S. air support. And the North could always come back. Even if they left, they could come back. So, to deal with them, you'll always need U.S. air support. The Joint Chiefs, as I recall, went beyond that. They implied: you'll always need some U.S. ground troops against North Vietnamese. But, if you can get the North Vietnamese out of the picture, back in the North, then perhaps you could arrive, within five or 10 years -- not quickly -- to a situation where Thieu's troops, then the general, the president, the Saigon government troops -- I hate to call them the South Vietnamese, because of course the NLF was staffed largely with people who were also South Vietnamese. And to call it the South Vietnamese government is misleading. It was our South Vietnamese government. But anyway, the Saigon regime, I'll call it that, which was backed by us, perhaps they could get to a point where, without U.S. air support and without U.S. troops, they could handle the remaining southern NLF troops, the southern guerrilla troops, by themselves with our material, our financial support, and so forth. All of these would not end the war, but they would, from the point of view of the American public, would end the war, because they would end the U.S. combat involvement. U.S. casualties would be not only lower, but perhaps, zero. And U.S. direct ground combat would be zero. U.S. television would no longer be there, and would be on -- from our point of view, the U.S. point of view, the war would be over, even though from a Vietnamese point of view it might continue indefinitely. So, there's two levels of winning. One would be, the other side really gives up. And various people in America,

from time to time, entertained that possibility, mostly not. But sometimes they thought of that as a possibility. A much more practical, and what seemed like achievable capability, was something that the Saigon regime can handle with a minimum of U.S. involvement. That looked much less ambitious. I would say, in answer to your question, that was not achievable either, but really, though it looked more practical. A third, still less possible, was a much lowered U.S. involvement on the ground, but U.S. air support -- U.S. air support, both in the north and the south, which meant very low U.S. casualties and prisoners, much lower cost for the U.S. taxpayer. Pretty much, again, essentially, for the U.S. the war is over, although, in fact, the U.S. is still fighting in the air. This actually happened. In 1972, late '72, U.S. bombers were still flying, in Cambodia for example, and in South Vietnam, but -- I'm sorry, let me -- I made that mistake. I mean in '73, is what I meant to say. The U.S. public was willing to believe that the war was over. And that's what they were told by the media, and by Nixon. And I was quite conscious of the fact that we were still bombing Cambodia directly, and we were about to renew bombing in the North immediately. We were supplying the South Vietnamese. The war was still on, on a very large scale. Refugees were being generated on a very large scale. Vietnamese were dying on both states on a very large scale. But the American public was in fact ready to accept the idea that the war was over, because American ground troops were out. Well, Nixon did achieve that. And he got re-elected in '72. In '69, I would not have thought that Nixon could go through four years of war, with as many, or more, U.S. casualties as had occurred under Johnson, and be re-elected. And he was re-elected in a landslide. Now there's another dimension to that, how he achieved that. But, certainly, I would not have thought that was possible.

Let me come back to what I think Nixon and Kissinger had in mind in '69, which was much more ambitious than that. I think they were happy with the result in '72; he got re-elected. But it was not what they had planned on in '69. What I think -- now I understand, after 30 years of memoirs, and tapes, and new documents coming out -- is in line with what Mort and I believed in '69, but different in detail, and more ambitious. Nixon was threatening, actually, the possible use of nuclear weapons, and certainly all the other escalations, the mining, the hitting the dykes, hitting targets close to the Chinese border, and perhaps even over the Chinese border, and possibly invading the southern part of North Vietnam, along with the so-called sanctuaries in Laos and Cambodia. But he was threatening those, not just in response to a North Vietnamese escalation, but to a North Vietnamese failure to accept his terms, a failure to get their troops out of South Vietnam as early as the fall of 1969. In July and August and September, Nixon was actually expressing to the North, directly through secret talks, and indirectly through the Russians, that on November 1st, they should expect this escalation. It was an ultimatum, a dated ultimatum, threatening escalation, which Nixon himself refers to in his memoirs as "my November ultimatum." Now, heads of state, very rarely in their memoirs, or at the time, will ever admit that they have made an ultimatum, partly because it's thought of as an act of war, and because it makes it harder for the other side to give in to an ultimatum if it's publicly known that they're facing an ultimatum. And third, if it should happen to fail, it's very embarrassing. Here was a case where Nixon actually refers to it in his memoirs as an ultimatum, quote, "which failed." Very unusual, I'm not sure you'll ever find that in memoirs. I put it to you as a historian, I'll bet that's unique. And the ultimatum was of this major escalation, including, as I say, nuclear weapons. I did not, and Mort Halperin did not, know that any such threats, dated as early as the fall of '69, were being made, or that they contemplated a change in the war that early. The point was that Nixon hoped by those threats to get the other side to capitulate to his terms, which in his eyes didn't look like a surrender by then. It was kind of a compromise; he saw it as a compromise. We'll get our troops out, you'll get your North Vietnamese troops out, and I think that would not result in any immediate victory by Saigon. The North, I should - - or the NLF, controlled most of the countryside of South Vietnam, but the less populated part. The Saigon regime controlled all the cities, and the most populated areas on the coast and around the cities.

So, in effect, Nixon was prepared to make, as he saw it, a compromise with the NLF. The Communists would continue de facto control of much of the countryside, even most of it in territory, but of a minority of the population, whereas we and the Saigon regime would continue to control the coast, most of the population, all the major cities. And it would not look like a capitulation. He saw -- in other words, it was a split. He actually, in his mind, thought of it, I believe, as a Korean type solution, where the split between North and South Korea, this was now to occur within the South Vietnam. They called it a, kind of, "leopard spot solution," where the division was not a clear demarcation line between the northern controlled part and our part, but where we had cities here and there, and the coast, and they had this irregular area outside, which did mean that our anti-Communist regime would be exclusively in power in Saigon, and Hue, and Nha Trang, and Da Nang, and all the other major cities. So, from the point of the U.S. public, U.S. troops would be out. Northern troops would be out. Thieu could maintain his position with U.S. air support. But as far as the public was concerned the war would be over and Thieu would still be in power. It would look pretty much like a victory. Johnson or Kennedy would have seen that as a victory. And Nixon saw it as a victory, but as he said to Kissinger, "We can't call it a victory," you know, various reasons.

Timothy Naftali

But why was that more ambitious than what you expected U.S. objectives were? You said that that was a more ambitious --

Daniel Ellsberg

Oh, no, it was the strategy.

Timothy Naftali

Oh, the strategy was more --

Daniel Ellsberg

The strategy was more ambitious in that -- -- good question. I thought, from the point that they refused mutual withdrawal, and made it clear they were not open to doing that -- we're talking now in May of 1969 -- Nixon would have to recognize that -- oh, I'm sorry. Your question is a very good one. And it forces me to rethink my exposition here a little bit, as to what I thought when, and various points. As of the time I copied the Pentagon Papers, which was August 1st, essentially, 1969. First, I was under the misimpression that Nixon was not yet committed to the strategy I've described, that that was his bent, and where he intended to go, but it might still be possible to persuade him to give that up and to go for extrication. That was mistaken. In retrospect, he had no intention of extrication. That was off the table, as they would say now. And so, what I'd hoped by putting out the Pentagon Papers initially, when I started copying them in October 1st, was that if they came out in October, before I hoped he had committed himself publicly to this strategy, he might actually be persuaded to take the Pentagon Papers, which dealt mainly with the Democrats, and blame the war on the Democrats. It would help him, blame the Democrats for failure in the war, and for incompetence and incoherence and whatnot, and say, "I would not have done it this way, and I very much regret going this direction, but the war is hopeless thanks to my predecessors." The Pentagon Papers would make a strong case for that. And it would make it easier for him to blame the Democrats, and get out. I felt then, from reading the Pentagon Papers, which covered from '45 to '68, I'd concluded: no president will get out of

Vietnam if he's going to bear the blame of the defeat and the failure, entirely himself. Unless he can share it with the other party, he won't get out. And, in fact, another thing I was doing in October was trying to persuade Democrats, high level Democrats -- we could go into that -- but I was trying to persuade them to assure Nixon publicly that they would take the blame, or at least share the blame, and urge him to get out. And they would help him do it; they would cooperate; they wouldn't blame him. And they would take the blame on themselves. They weren't willing to do that. I can be specific, but as Paul Warnke put it, "We would be accused of losing the war, that we got into the war, wrongly, and now we're losing it," stab in the back, and pulling the rug out, all these metaphors, "and it would destroy the Democratic Party, basically." Or as another -- as Harry McPherson, another high Democratic policy advisor, an aide to Lyndon Johnson, put it, he said, "There would be a political bloodbath such as you and I have never seen, Dan, if we did what you say."

Timothy Naftali

Is this when you approached George McGovern?

Daniel Ellsberg

No, that was later. That was in '71, this is '69.

Timothy Naftali

Who did you approach -- which Democrats did you approach in '69?

Daniel Ellsberg

In '69, it was not a question of the Pentagon Papers -- I approached them then in hopes -- what I precisely -- it was Harry McPherson, Paul Warnke, who were both members of the Democratic Policy Advisory Committee, a name close to that, which was a high level policy advisory. And Warnke had just ceased being assistant secretary. And then I got the word into Vance, who had just ceased being deputy secretary of defense under Johnson, a little earlier. And I put this to others, like Mort Halperin and others. And what I was putting to them was a message something like this: "Mr. President, this is not your war; this is our war." This is October now -- September, I was actually putting this, September of '69. "This is our war. We made the mistakes that got us in. Don't make the same mistakes. Get us out." That was basically the message. And each one said, we can't do that as Democrats, we can't do that. Or, it's not the right time; it's too early. And by that, they meant, in effect, "Let Nixon make it his war. Then perhaps we'll help him get out." And my feeling was, by the time he makes it his war, you can't help him get out. He won't get out because it'll be his war. Sharing responsibility will not be good enough. So, it has to be done right now, before he's made it his war. Well, on November 3rd, which was to have been the deadline for his ultimatum, he made it his war. He effectively said, we can't afford to get out without the acquiescence of the North. They've got to stop doing what they're doing. They've got to lay off, in other words. Or, we can't get out without the acquiescence of Saigon. They have to agree, you know, to our getting out. Well both of those said he was telling the public, "I'm not getting out." That's what he was saying. Neither of those would ever happen. He said, "We've got to stay unless either of those should come about, that the North desists and the South agrees." And neither of them ever did come about, and they weren't going to. So, in effect, he was telling the public, "I'm staying in." And again, something that I had not realized until much later, Mike Mansfield, the majority leader, who had been for not getting in, and for not escalating, throughout the Johnson years

and the Kennedy years, Kennedy and Johnson, went to Nixon himself, and made, essentially, as Senate Majority Leader of the Democrats, said almost the same words that I had wanted to put in the mouths of public Democrats. He said, you know, "I'll help you, if you should get out. And I'll make it as easy as possible for you with the majority party." And Nixon had told him, "But that would be wrong. I'm not going to do that; it's not going to happen." So I was quite mistaken in thinking that the Pentagon Papers would have made the difference.

Timothy Naftali

Dan, why didn't you -- you began the Xeroxing in the summer of '69.

Daniel Ellsberg

Pardon me, you want to focus on what my --

Timothy Naftali

Yes, I want to know why you didn't -- why didn't you leak them then?

Daniel Ellsberg

When, what?

Timothy Naftali

In '69, why didn't you leak the papers then?

Daniel Ellsberg

Are you -- you're not aware of what -- you mean leak to the press?

Timothy Naftali

Yes.

Daniel Ellsberg

Oh, well --

Timothy Naftali

-- to try to push this strategy that you were talking about.

Daniel Ellsberg

Right from the beginning, and until late in '71, when they came out -- so for -- what was that, '77, two years, couple of years -- I always thought for the Pentagon Papers to have any effect, they should be the basis for Congressional hearings, precisely because I knew they didn't tell the whole story, or an

adequate story. I knew a lot of what was excluded from them. And what you needed was oral testimony, preferably under oath, of people who really knew the decision making at the time, and could explain what was the implications of these papers were. The documents themselves didn't tell the whole story. I knew that very well. For example, they gave a very misleading impression of what John McNaughton ever thought, my boss, the assistant secretary of defense for international security affairs. When he wrote anything down, it was a briefing paper for McNamara to use, to argue with other people, to present McNamara's preferred policy. It didn't usually express what McNaughton thought was appropriate policy, or what he thought to expect, or considerations. He was writing lawyer's briefs for McNamara to present. That was just one example. But I knew that in many other cases, it didn't answer many of the questions. So, what you wanted was testimony, in light, and to keep people honest, and to jog their memories, you needed to be able to show them, "Read, read these documents, and tell us now why you wrote this, or what is not said in this document," you know, and so forth. So, I always wanted Congressional hearings, and I had the mistaken belief, then, that Congress was more likely to hold those hearings if they had the documents in the first instance, and were not scooped by the press, that they could present, you know, dramatic material. In retrospect, you know, 40 years later, that's not the way Congress works. In the end, it was very important that they appear in the newspapers. Congress reacts to what the public is concerned with, and if you don't have a public concern, they don't investigate, and they don't press things. And Neil Sheehan, later, in urging me not to give it to a congressman first, but to let the "Times" do it, which I was skeptical about, I thought, well, they just want a Pulitzer Prize or they -- that's not -- I didn't really think that was the way to do it. But he was right. The "Times" had a greater potential for getting those hearings done than simply giving the documents to Congress in the first place. I was wrong about that. I might note, the "Times" didn't do it either. The hearings never took place. Both Fulbright and Mansfield, when the Pentagon Papers came out said, "Ah, we must hold public hearings on this subject."

They both said that publicly right away. They were in charge. No hearings happened. And Nixon wanted them; Nixon wanted them. And they didn't happen. They both understood each other. The hearings would mainly have incriminated the Democrats. And Fulbright and Mansfield and the other Democrats had no interest in pulling McNamara in front and confronting him with lies that he had made to the public, and mistakes that he had made and that the Democrats had made. So, the Democrats held no hearings even when there was public interest in the thing. Nixon, on the other hand, was very anxious. He, on the tapes, is always saying, "Oh, we can't wait to get McNamara answering these questions. It will drive him crazy," and so forth. Didn't happen, because the Democrats were in control. If the Republicans had controlled Congress, there would have been hearings. And I would have been happy with that; I wanted the truth out. But in short, both in '71 and '69, what I believe Hubert Humphrey said -- I keep forgetting whether it was Humphrey or Walt Rostow, one or the other, both speaking to Haldeman and to Haig and to Nixon's people about the Pentagon Papers. One of them made the comment, "No good Democrat could have released these." Now, I was a Democrat, and I am a Democrat. But I wasn't a good Democrat, nor am I now, I must say. I am kind of a self-hating Democrat, at the moment. But in '69, I wasn't a good Democrat. I was prepared to see the Democrats get the blame, which they richly deserved. I didn't want to punish them, or do anything, but in terms of ending the war, I thought, it will only happen if the Democrats accept the blame that is rightfully theirs early on, before Nixon has planted his flag on this war, quickly. And, as I say, the Democrats I talked to were good Democrats, and they rejected that idea. And if I had given them the Pentagon -- they would not have wanted to put out the Pentagon Papers. And so, in answer to your question, my thought on the Pentagon Papers was this: that, if they are the basis for hearings before Fulbright -- -- they may -- and Fulbright's initial reaction was very favorable to put them out, until he thought better of it. But at first, he promised me that he would put them out. And

my thought was that, if he gets them out in time, then Nixon will perceive that he has the option of blaming this war on Democratic deception, Democratic incompetence, Democratic lily-liveredness, or what, from his point of view, whatever, and say, "All right, the war is hopeless. I have to get out." My mistake was to imagine that Nixon would have picked up that opportunity. Nixon -- Mansfield did give him that opportunity, privately, and Nixon rejected it. He was determined not to get out. And on the other hand, Fulbright, it turned out, was much more -- when he thought about it, when he saw what the Pentagon Papers were, could see that there were real dangers in it for the Democrats.

Timothy Naftali

Now, Dan, you tried this in the fall of 1969, it didn't --

Daniel Ellsberg

'69, so, I gave them to the Senate.

Timothy Naftali

So, so but you don't -- what do you do for the next two years, because nothing -- you don't get -- you know, what you want isn't --

Daniel Ellsberg

Yes.

Timothy Naftali

What you wanted to have happen doesn't happen. In fact, what you had feared would happen does happen.

Daniel Ellsberg

Yeah, now, here's where my mistake about Nixon's policy was -- had an effect. Had I realized that as I was copying the Pentagon Papers, Nixon was directing the Duck Hook planning, in connection -- military planning -- in connection with his November ultimatum -- in other words, that the war had the potential for exploding very quickly, even that very fall, or perhaps later, a little later, I would have felt more urgent about what I was doing. And there's a number of what-ifs that might have gone into that. As it was, I didn't know about Duck Hook, because he didn't carry it out, and the reason he did not carry out the escalation was, I believe strongly, because two million people walked in the streets, and were in demonstrations on October 15th, 1969 -- the October moratorium effort. And another demonstration was scheduled for November 15th, and again, was extremely large. And that led him to give up his escalation planning, because he knew that there would be perhaps ten times as many people out if he escalated. So, it was not the right time for that. I didn't know any of that at the time. The reason I didn't know was that Mort Halperin had been kept in the dark on that, working for Kissinger. It was what I was talking about earlier about compartmentation. Halperin had been identified by Kissinger as somebody who was working for him, but who thought we ought to get out, in the interest of the country, and of Nixon, who he was working for. He wasn't sabotaging anything; he just believed we should get out. Therefore, he wasn't told. And people -- he was working closely next them, Tony

Lake, Roger Morris, others, didn't tell him any of that, even though they were working side by side, essentially. And then, Halperin left for related reasons in late August, early September. I believe, if he had stayed in the White House even a couple more months, he probably would have learned of the planning that was going on. And if he had told me, I would have made every effort to get at that planning, and release it, with some hope of doing it. I knew all the people. I was trusted by them. I had worked with them on NSSM 1, and earlier. And if I had had -- the Duck Hook planning or the November ultimatum, I would not have copied the Pentagon Papers. That was only history. It ended in '68. I knew from the beginning that it didn't show what Nixon's planning was, and had only a small chance, a small chance of affecting Nixon policy. I described what I thought the chance was. But if I had had documents or information on his current planning, I would have put that out. Ten pages of that, or 30 pages, would have been worth more than 7,000 pages of history of the Democrats. I copied the Pentagon Papers only because it was all I had. It was the best I had, and I hoped that people would see that a history that showed four presidents in a row -- to some extent as early as FDR, but then Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy and Johnson, you could say five presidents -- had all planned escalation, or involvement in Vietnam, different from what they had told the public. Made secret threats, secret operations, with costs much higher than they ever admitted to the public, and with prospects much dimmer, much less promising than they ever admitted to the public. All of them had done that, as a pattern. Perhaps the public could believe what I was told by Halperin: that another president, the latest president, was doing the same. That's what my hope was with the Pentagon Papers. It didn't happen. My hopes there were not fulfilled. The public was impressed by how much lying had gone on by all these earlier presidents. They still wanted to believe that our current president was telling the truth, that there was a new Nixon, that he was getting out, which was, after all, very plausible. How could he not want to get out? In '68, and '69, everyone gave him the benefit of the doubt on that, because it was hard to imagine a sane person wanting to do anything else, other than get out -- if he wasn't burdened with it, like Humphrey or Johnson, but if he was a new person coming in. Now, so the Pentagon Papers did not, I think, really reveal to them what Nixon's -- or even make them very inquisitive about what Nixon's real policy was. At the time, and for a generation later, Nixon's policy has been summed up by nearly everyone -- journalists, academics, public. He was trying to get us out as fast as he could, and that was an extremely misleading description, although not entirely false. He was trying to get us -- get U.S. troops out, but not by allowing the Communists to achieve any kind of success, except to control the parts of the country they were already controlling, but not to control Saigon, not to have a coalition government. Nixon, as I understand it, and did in '69, never intended for Saigon to become Ho Chi Minh City while he was in office -- that is, through '76, if ever. He hoped to leave his successor, Republican or Democrat, with a strategy that could be persisted, that could be prolonged, with enough will. And I think had a good basis -- it turned out, he had a good basis for doing that. He hoped even more to make it easily sustainable, a cheap, sustainable war, because the North Vietnamese troops would not be there anymore.

Timothy Naftali

Dan, let me ask you, what -- tell us about 1970. What effect did Kent State have on you? What effect did -- what effect did the escalation into Cambodia have on your sense of urgency?

Daniel Ellsberg

There, I thought -- that did have a big effect, because it told me the escalation is happening sooner than I expected. Let me go back, now, to '69. I did not foresee it happening in '69, where we came very close, as close as two million people. If the moratorium had not occurred, I believe we would have

escalated and probably used nuclear weapons in the Fall of '69. Nixon intended, had plans done for nuclear attacks, as Roger Morris informed me, a mile and a half from the Chinese border, in a relatively unpopulated area -- I won't go into all the details here. The intention was not -- was actually to kill very few civilians, but to send a "very large signal," quote, to the Chinese, and to the North Vietnamese. So, I think he wanted to use nuclear weapons. And actually, an aide to Senator -- to Haig, who was later chief of staff, told Sy Hersh that Haig was amazed that '69 had ended without the nuclear weapons being used. Robert Ellsworth, later a NATO ambassador under Nixon, was also amazed that there had been no use of nuclear weapons by the end of '69. But that was because of the moratorium. I didn't know that. I thought escalation was likely to occur. Nixon didn't, and Kissinger didn't. They thought their threats would succeed. I thought their threats would not succeed. And therefore, there would be escalation, eventually. The North would launch an offensive. So, I thought the escalation would come when the North launched an offensive, which I thought was pretty sure to happen no later than '72, probably not 1970. A little more likely '71, probably not until '72, but they probably -- just as Tet was intended to affect our election in '68, probably '72 was a good year, maybe '71. So, there would not be an escalation until then, and so, there was kind of a year coming where there would not -- where things would go on as they were, a stalemate at a relatively low level. And so when you say, when Nixon didn't -- when my hearings didn't take place in '69, I sort of gave up on the Pentagon Papers being very important. I continued to copy them for a while and give them to Fulbright. Until I had given them all, I thought he should have them all, for his -- maybe he would eventually use them. But I didn't feel a great sense of urgency. And there were -- weeks would go by when I didn't copy, and then, something would come up, and I would copy some more. Then, Cambodia happened, and that said to me, wait a minute, there -- he is prepared to escalate. Actually, what I interpreted that was, was still part of the threat. He wants to make it clear that if they have an offensive, he will blow North Vietnam to pieces. What he really was trying to make clear was with the threat he had made in '69. If you don't get the Northern troops out, I'll blow you to pieces. But in either case, I saw it as a demonstration that would lead to further escalation.

It would not be effective, in my opinion, and I was right about that. The North Vietnamese did not ever concede what he was asking. So, at that point, I did become quite urgent, and Fulbright's people told me, and Norville Jones, that they would hold hearings now, and I began looking at the papers and saying, "Here's the witnesses you should call." I worked in the Foreign Relations Committee offices for a while, trying to prepare for hearings. And actually, unfortunately, the -- pressure, instead of going from a McGovern-Hatfield type bill, of getting all the troops out of Indochina, the pressure -- the political strategy by the Democrats was to press the Church-Cooper bill, to get them out of Cambodia only. And Nixon did agree to that, and did get them out of Cambodia, and the air went out of the large movement that responded to Kent State. I think the war could have been ended in April, May of 1970, if the -- what was it, 200,000 people, I think, in Washington then, for demonstrations after Kent State, had closed down Washington. It was the one time -- this is a what-if that I think is of some interest. Congress was, for once, furious at the executive, because they felt they had been totally misled by the escalation in Cambodia. They hadn't been briefed on it. I think the one person that's come out that they briefed was Ford, the person they expected to forget what he had been told. At any rate, would not tell anybody, and he didn't tell anyone. So, Congress felt totally blindsided on that. They were very angry. And had -- and I think if people had shut down Washington, which you could do with 200,000 people, Congress, for once, would not have been against the anti-war movement. They would have been sympathetic. And what you could have gotten, possibly, no guarantee, but there was a chance of cutting off funds for continuing the war. What finally happened -- this is 1970. What finally happened, three years later in 1973, when they cut off funds for combat operations in Indochina, instead of just in Cambodia. I think that could have been done. If I look back at what I could have done then, it would

have been a good time to put out the Pentagon Papers, to make an all out push. The war was illegitimate in the beginning; look at the papers of '45, '46, '47, '48. That's what made the greatest impression on me. But it was history that never did get published too much. Nobody read it very much. And what influenced me really never got to the public. The fact that we had begun the war in support of a French imperial re-conquest of a colony that had declared its independence, that meant, from American values, and American anti-imperialist ideals, it had no legitimacy from the beginning. It was not clearly illegal, by the way, I found, because the U.N. charter does allow for colonies and even, you know, for internal policing. And it wasn't clearly illegal for France to continue to claim ownership of Indochina, even though they declared independence. But from the point of view of American policy, you know, and what FDR was secretly agreeing to do, let the trench back in, and Harry Truman did do, and Eisenhower did do, all of these had to be very much obscured from the American people, because sustaining the French empire was not part of American ideals, or to me. So, it was illegitimate from the beginning. To me, that meant, in '69, when I read these documents, that it was unjustified homicide, which I saw as murder. Not just an error, not just a bad, incompetent policy, it was mass murder, to be killing people who wanted to be independent, in order to sustain an imperial control of them, whether it was the French, or ours. I didn't think we had any more legitimate right to run Vietnam than the Japanese, or the Chinese for a thousand years before that, or the French. And we had no more prospect of doing that.

Timothy Naftali

Dan, you mean when you went to Vietnam in the '70 -- in the mid '60s.

Daniel Ellsberg

This is '69 now.

Timothy Naftali

But in the '60s.

Daniel Ellsberg

I had a different perception in '64, '65.

Timothy Naftali

But, but, but everyone knew that Indochina was a French colony. I mean, that wasn't a secret.

Daniel Ellsberg

You know, as a historian -- how old are you, by the way?

Timothy Naftali

46.

Daniel Ellsberg

46 -- so, you have to be in your 50s to remember, I found, even the Pentagon Papers. And, I think -- I'm going to make a generalization, you know, obviously doesn't apply to you because I don't -- personally. I think historians -- it's very hard for historians to get a feel for what people's understanding was at the time, how they saw things at the time. You can get it from newspapers, to some extent. The public was almost entirely ignorant of the U.S. role in sustaining the French from '45 to '54, so, they didn't think of it as a U.S.-French war. All Vietnamese, all Vietnamese saw that war, not as a French war, which is what all Americans saw it as, but as a French-U.S. war. In fact, I talked to a Viet Minh, a man who later worked for Diem, Traun Yuk Chow [spelled phonetically], still alive. He'd be very interesting to interview, and he's in your area, by the way, that is, the Southern California area. He was, at that time, a Viet Minh regimental political officer, and he had been an Italian commander. So, he was telling me how all the -- this was after the war. He said every French peasant knew that the Americans were supplying 80 percent of the funding for the French war by the end of it. I said, "Chow, how can you tell me that illiterate French peasants -- Vietnamese peasants knew something that essentially no Americans knew?"

Timothy Naftali

I just -- no, I was just interested.

Male Speaker

Can we go off for a second because we've got a phone here.

Timothy Naftali

We're going to do this again, anyway so.

Daniel Ellsberg

Yeah, we'll have to do it again. What, are we going or something?

Male Speaker

We're rolling.

Timothy Naftali

We're rolling.

Daniel Ellsberg

Okay, yeah. Now, let me, let me think for a minute, take a minute. Stop here just a second. Because we -- where were we, on Cambodia?

Timothy Naftali

Well, I asked you about the effect on your sense of urgency.

Daniel Ellsberg

Oh, yeah. Okay. The fact is that, from the time of Nixon's speech on November 3rd, when he made it Nixon's war, the possibility of the Pentagon Papers having an effect didn't go down to zero, but it went close to zero, in my mind, very low. From then on, I thought that it was a small chance that the Pentagon Papers could affect Nixon, because showing what the Democrats had done didn't have much bearing on Nixon. I didn't think it would affect his policy. And leaping ahead, I would say it didn't affect his policy. When it did come out, in '71, his immediate perception was that it affected mainly the Democrats. And as Kissinger put it, "If anything, it helps us little bit." And Nixon saw the same. In fact, he wanted it out faster, the Diem part out, even before it came out, and other parts out faster. Why did I put it out at all? Because by the spring of 1971, I was feeling that -- -- with the attack -- actually, from the fall of 1970, with the Son Tay raid, I saw the escalation, which had been foreshadowed in Cambodia as speeding up, and moving toward, probably, an all out escalation, which I wanted to avoid at all costs, and that the smallest chance of having some effect on the war was worth my going to prison for the rest of my life. I probably -- I was urged to do that by Marc Raskin and Dick Barnet of the Institute of Policy Studies, to whom I had given about a thousand pages of the Pentagon Papers a year earlier for a historical project they were putting out, a book project. And they suggested that I give it to the newspapers. By that time I had just given up on Fulbright, not until then. Until then, I had hoped that he would put it out in hearings. I had that high hope in Cambodia, but it went away with the lapsing of political pressure to get out, after he took the troops out of Cambodia. So -- but in the fall, I became desperate. I was working in every way possible. I could go into a lot of activities I was doing that seemed -- all of which seemed more relevant than the Pentagon Papers. But I thought, all right, the Pentagon Papers, might as well throw them into the pot, too, and get them out, and -- for what it's worth. Maybe it will have some effect in discrediting the war, and that was especially true after the Laos, the Laos invasion. And so, I approached Senator Mathias; I approached Senator McGovern. This was in the spring, now, after I gave up on Fulbright. I did give them to Neil Sheehan, but without the expectation that the "Times" would put them out. And he didn't tell me they were working on them. He, for reasons still not clear to me, entirely, chose not to tell me that the "Times" was moving ahead very rapidly, though it took them several months, as they saw it, to get it in order. So, during that time I continued to see Pete McCloskey, a Representative in hopes that he would put them out. Senator Mathias, I tried out, Senator Gaylord Nelson, Senator McGovern. McGovern and McCloskey and Mathias were all very favorable to putting them out at first, but then thought better of it, and just delayed, or, I think, in retrospect, they all thought, "Let Ellsberg put it out and whatever negative facts that come out will be his."

Female Speaker

Dan, let me interrupt because I solved it. We're moving down to the porch; we're going to bundle up. And move quiet, so you have a good hour or more.

Daniel Ellsberg

Really, oh, really, okay.

Female Speaker

Yeah, sorry to interrupt but it's going to take me --

Timothy Naftali

Thank you.

Female Speaker

Ten minutes to just fiddle with the food --

Daniel Ellsberg

Shall we wait?

Timothy Naftali

Yeah, sure, let's wait for ten minutes.

Female Speaker

Just, just let me do that so I'm not trying to -- [unintelligible]

.

Timothy Naftali

It's okay.

Daniel Ellsberg

[Unintelligible] look right into the camera.

Timothy Naftali

Yeah, okay. Go ahead, you wanted to say.

Daniel Ellsberg

Yeah. Okay. I'll work backward a little bit, here. What people think of as Watergate generally -- like, the dirty tricks, the campaign contributions, the enemies list, the entry into the Watergate itself, these are things none of which has ever been traced conclusively directly to Nixon himself, partly because people like Mitchell and Haldeman did not talk, basically, or Liddy, about what they knew, and essentially took the blame for these, for these moves. And whether Nixon actually knew of them in advance, or actually directed them, is still not clear, certainly was not proven against Nixon. None of that would have forced him to resign, or could have led to his impeachment. As I understand it, what made him vulnerable to impeachment, and even to prosecution, and to conviction, were actions that were directed -- that were known to be directed directly from the Oval Office, and those were, in particular, actions that involved me -- little more generally, the anti-war movement, but in particular, against me. And it's often been understood that those actions were impulsive somehow, or somehow

reflected his psychology -- personal psychology, in some way -- were essentially irrational, or overreactions of some sort. And certainly, it's not understood that they were related to Vietnam. To say that is to say that Watergate is not usually seen as related to Vietnam. In fact, I would say that what brought Nixon to the point of resignation, or impeachment, was very much closely related to his Vietnam policy, his secret policy, and particularly, to how I fitted in, or I related to that policy. So, the Pentagon Papers was related to it. But it wasn't really so much the Pentagon Papers themselves, which dealt almost entirely with the Democrats, except for the Eisenhower period, of which Nixon had been part. What I think worried Nixon about me, was what I might -- or what he thought I knew about his secret policy in Vietnam, and what I could reveal with documents. In other words, my understanding is that he became very concerned about what I might reveal beyond the Pentagon Papers, about his own administration, and that I might well have documents to back that up that would very much undermine his ongoing Vietnam policy. From that point of view, the actions he took, or directed, which were in fact illegal, even criminal actions in many respects, were, I believe in his mind and with some reason, seen as national security matters. When he wanted to attribute his motivation to his national security, I don't think that was just a cover story in his mind, that he really did think of me as threatening national security as he understood it. Obviously, in going after me with the Plumbers, with the -- my doctor's office, obviously, that had nothing to do with his campaign, like so many other matters of Watergate. It clearly wasn't the campaign; it wasn't political in general. It was, I think, as he saw it, national security, which depended, as he saw it, and most presidents would, on his success, his ability to be successful, in carrying out his policy, his Vietnam policy. He, understandably, saw that as best for the country and best for our national security, and I threatened that by threatening to make it public. He understood, and Kissinger understood from the beginning, that his aims in Vietnam called for tactics that the public would be scared of at the best. They would see as reckless, and perhaps as totally wrong. And there would be, if not majority opposition, there would at least be major minority controversy and opposition, which he wanted to avoid. That would increase the political cost of his policy, would make it harder to achieve, at best. It might make it impossible. Very specifically, he had reason to believe that I knew of his nuclear threats to North Vietnam in as early as the spring of 1969 and the fall of 1969, and later, and of his threats to escalate in terms of the dykes and other matters. In other words, his threats to escalate. In fact, I did know of them, to some extent. I didn't have documents to demonstrate them, but I could have. The documents were available to people like Roger Morris who wrote a number of them, or Tony Lake, or Bill Watts, or Larry Lynn, all of whom resigned at the time of Cambodia. So, he had strong reason to fear that, in resigning, they might well have shared those documents with me, and passed them on, and that I might turn them up at some point. What I did do, was to give National Security Study Memorandum 1, the notes on that, to Senator Mathias who was, unlike the others I dealt with, a Republican senator, and who wanted to keep his credentials to some extent with the Republicans, even though he was a dissenter on the Vietnam War. What I learned in '73 and '74, was that on June 13th, the day that the Pentagon Papers came out in the "Times," or possibly June 14th, Mathias called up his colleague, John Mitchell -- his acquaintance, and said -- who was then no longer attorney general, he was the head of Committee to Re-elect the President. Let's see, '71? Perhaps he was still attorney general.

Timothy Naftali

It's early '72 that --

Daniel Ellsberg

Yeah, huh?

Timothy Naftali

Early '72, he was --

Daniel Ellsberg

He was still attorney general. And he called him up, and said, "John, there's something you ought to know," and revealed to Mitchell that he had top secret documents from me, from Daniel Ellsberg, in his office, and all of this turned out to be critical. He didn't agree immediately to turn them over, just informed them that he had them, and say that they could look at them in his office, which they didn't do right away. In retrospect, then, there was a period when Nixon and Kissinger understood that Mathias had documents, and other -- I should say that I had documents that I had not yet released. They were on Vietnam. They were on Nixon's policy in Vietnam, and they were from the National Security Council. That's what Mathias told Mitchell. That gave them -- but they didn't know exactly what they were. If they had known exactly what they were, Kissinger would have said, "Oh, that's NSSM 1; perhaps that's all he has." I had actually written the questions for NSSM 1. I had gone over all the answers, and I had written -- helped Winston Lord write the summary, for the president, of NSSM 1. So, it was very plausible that I had all the documents on that, and that that was all I had. That was the only project I worked on for Nixon. And it was all I had from Nixon. As it was, they didn't know what it was Mathias had. They had every reason to believe that there was a mole in the National Security Council, who was providing me with who knows what. It could have been anything. And, as they discuss on the tapes, Tony Lake essentially knew everything, and he'd resigned at the time of Cambodia. Mort Halperin knew a lot, but didn't know everything. Roger Morris knew somewhat less. Any one of them could have given me documents, even Bill Watts, or Larry Lynn, who also left.

So, I could turn up with documents on nuclear threats, on mining, on invasions, on any kind of thing, all of which was still totally secret from the American public, and from Congress, and from most people in the government. Great -- and the tapes show Nixon showing a great deal of concern about this. What do they know? What did Halperin know? What I might come out with. Now, all of this is coming out at the end of June, beginning of July, in the tapes, which is after, of course, the Supreme Court decision. After they have gone on ahead with the Pentagon Papers, which Nixon is basically fine to have out. In fact, he wants hearings on them, incriminating the public. But now, as he says to Kissinger, this changes the picture. We thought all he had was on the Democrats. This shows that he could -- so there was a lot of discussion. How closely is this held? Could Laird have had this stuff? Who could have had it, and so forth. What about Haiphong, which is mentioned specifically, and so forth, which hadn't yet happened. These were threats for plans that had been laid as early as '69, but hadn't yet been carried out. They weren't carried out until '72, a year later. To show them, actually, when they were carried out, '72, they were presented as an ad hoc response to the North Vietnamese offensive, which had just taken place. To have it come out, even that late, that these things had been laid in motion, you know, in process, had been planned out, with targets picked and everything, as early as '69, would put in question his whole strategy, and also what his aims were. In other words, things that implied: how long is this going to go on? How big can this get? In fact, let me go ahead, to '72. I had been on trial now -- under indictment for a year at that point. I called up -- with the mining of Haiphong -- I called up Mort Halperin in Washington, and said, "Well, Mort, what you revealed to me in '69 has now been played out," you know, "What's next? Is it over?" You know, and what's going next? And Mort said, "No, no, he hasn't bombed Hanoi yet." I said, Mort had said to me in '69 -- it was his judgment. This administration will not leave office after its first term without having bombed

Hanoi. They will have tried that -- tried that in order, in other words, to get his maximum objective, which was to get North Vietnamese troops out of Vietnam. If he hasn't tried that, he won't -- you know, he will try it if he hasn't done it yet. And that's what actually did happen. So I actually went to the Nixon convention, the Republican convention in Miami in '72, at a press conference sponsored by Pete McCloskey, who was running against Nixon and got one vote that week in Miami. McCloskey sponsored me at a press conference, at which I could reveal, I said, what Nixon's secret plan was and I said to the convention -- I should say, to the journalists, all of whom were present because they had very little news to report from that convention. Nixon was unopposed, essentially, except for McCloskey, and there was very little news coming out of it. So, they all appeared for Daniel Ellsberg's press conference, and I said, "Four years ago, Nixon implied -- he didn't use the word secret plan, but he implied that he had a secret plan. It's been widely believed since then that he did not have a secret plan." Most histories say that to this day, but he did. I said, "He did have a secret plan, essentially, for winning the war, or at least stabilizing it at a level that would represent an American success, and I don't think you should vote -- that he should be voted for again by the Republicans and the public without knowing what his secret plan was." By this time, I did have the outlines of it better. So, I proceeded to tell. And I said, "Part of this plan involves threatening, and if necessary, carrying out the bombing of Hanoi," which hadn't happened yet. I was reported on, respectfully, for one day. But essentially, no one believed me. I didn't have documents proving that. As I said earlier, if I'd had such documents in '69 or '70, I would have put them out then, but I still didn't have them, and without documents people weren't willing to believe that Nixon had a plan, had a strategy. They just couldn't imagine a strategy that would make any sense. If I can -- so they just didn't credit the thought that he actually had a strategy, and that the escalations that had actually occurred by that time, they still couldn't believe, reflected prior planning. They saw them as impulsive, as reactions to escalations by the other side, or they just didn't have an explanation. Generally, they hadn't -- they couldn't -- I think there were very few people in the country who could have answered the question: why are we still in Vietnam? Starting from the starting point that they all accepted, Nixon is trying to get us out. Well, why hasn't he?

They didn't -- no one has had an answer, and most people don't have an answer to this day, why it took as long. When Nixon died, his obituaries in "The Post" and the "Times" essentially said, "Nixon's intention was to get us out as fast as possible. Nixon ended the war." And then, they went on to other things, with very little attention to the fact that Nixon dropped much more bomb tonnage on Indochina than Johnson or Kennedy had all together. Johnson and Kennedy, 3.2 million tons of bombs. Nixon, four and a half million tons of bombs. Two World War II's, plus Korea. We dropped two million tons in all of World War II. Nixon dropped four and a half million tons on Indochina. About 30,000 people died -- somewhat less under Johnson. Close to that died -- 58,000 died in the end, about 28,000 under Nixon. If his policy was to get us out as quickly as possible, what went wrong? Why did it take these extra years, so long? Essentially, almost nobody has an answer. The answer I would give is this: Their initial hopes were that the threats would cause the other -- would cause the North to get mutual withdrawal, and with mutual withdrawal, Thieu would be able to control the situation with continued U.S. air support, that that was his objective. When Duck Hook was not carried out, because of the moratorium, they then went into a different gear that over time, their threats would erode the other side, and eventually they would get mutual withdrawal. That was a very unrealistic belief, but by now they were quite invested in this approach. It was Nixon's war, by this time. So, they should have just -- you know, from an American point of view, or even their own point of view, they should have turned around into an extrication strategy. But they were still hoping to get mutual withdrawal. They never did get it. By '72, however, they had -- they got the demonstration that American B-52s, in close air support of ARVN, the Saigon army, could in fact, hold off the North

Vietnamese regime. That was an experiment that had never been done in history. It was a duel between high altitude strategic bombers at 30,000 feet, and ground armies. There had never been anything remotely like that before. I couldn't predict how that would come out at the time. I was very uncertain at the time, how that would come out. But it did, in fact --

Timothy Naftali

Would you like to stop?

Daniel Ellsberg

That's all right, what?

Timothy Naftali

No, are you okay?

Daniel Ellsberg

It's all right.

Timothy Naftali

Fine.

Daniel Ellsberg

In fact, what they learned was, ARVN could hold off a North Vietnamese offensive. That was a success for Nixon, which, I think, by the way, the North did not foresee. The North was hoping, from '69 on, to break the Thieu government, either, because Nixon would not bring the bombing back, or if he did, it would not suffice, and they would be able to break the ARVN army without U.S. ground troops there, and get Thieu out of office. They failed. In fact, it was -- their thought that Nixon wouldn't come back was a very bad gamble. And the military effects of it, as I say, were hard to foresee for anyone, fully. But in fact, the B-52s, in particular, were crucial to holding the highlands and stopping them around Hue, from keeping Hue again. The North Vietnamese lost, perhaps, 50,000 troops, and gained nothing. It was a total failure for the North at that point.

Timothy Naftali

Do you think the B-52s played a role in the -- in the ultimate release of the POWs?

Daniel Ellsberg

Well, the -- the North, at that point, thanks to their failure in the spring of '72, had to accept the idea of leaving Thieu in office, and making a deal with us that left Thieu in office, at least temporarily, though they did bargain themselves into more elections. Whether they fully expected to get those, I don't know. They weren't going to get them, and they didn't get them. But they had some prospect of

getting Thieu out by elections, but they had to leave Thieu in office for the election, something they had said in the negotiations up until that point they would never do. So, Nixon's -- the B-52s in '72 did succeed for Nixon, given that he was willing to use them. Did succeed in getting the North Vietnamese to concede that Thieu would stay in office while they signed a deal. What was the deal? The deal was for unilateral withdrawal. They didn't get their troops out. Why did you even, you might say, have to have a deal on this? That was a great capitulation for the U.S., from Nixon's point of view, to have unilateral withdrawal, getting all the U.S. troops out, and none of the North Vietnamese troops out, something that, in '69, he was not at all willing to do. Why didn't the North Vietnamese propose that deal in '69, which they didn't? I think they should have, from their point of view, because they hoped not only to get unilateral withdrawal, but to get Thieu out, to get the regime out. And why did they want Thieu out so much? I'm expecting a -- Why did they want Thieu out so much?

Timothy Naftali

Why don't -- when we come back, rather than speculate --

Daniel Ellsberg

Yeah, yeah, okay.

Timothy Naftali

I want to get us back to --

Daniel Ellsberg

To me.

Timothy Naftali

I want to get back to Daniel Ellsberg for a moment.

Daniel Ellsberg

Yeah, okay, okay, except that, see, it's what he did against me. It's not what I was doing at this point, because I was on trial by this time.

Timothy Naftali

No -- Okay.

Daniel Ellsberg

Okay, one more. That should end it, okay.

Timothy Naftali

Well, let's --

Daniel Ellsberg

Go ahead, go ahead.

Timothy Naftali

I want to go back to a couple before we --

Daniel Ellsberg

Yeah.

Timothy Naftali

That's very persistent.

Daniel Ellsberg

Wait, why don't I just -- let me, let me disconnect that thing.

Male Speaker

-- start clean.

Male Speaker

And, rolling.

Timothy Naftali

Okay.

Daniel Ellsberg

Go ahead.

Timothy Naftali

This concern about what you might give away, would help explain the -- the real alarm when there were reports that the Japanese and the Soviets were getting copies of some of the Pentagon Papers. The Nixon administration was very concerned that a -- that some of the Pentagon Papers had made their way to the --

Daniel Ellsberg

No, okay, that's a by-play. That's bullshit, basically, but we can go into all that, but they weren't -- the administration wasn't concerned. Liddy and Hunt picked up on that as a big deal. The Soviets got the

Pentagon Papers. They all came out. What the fuck difference did it make if the Soviets had the Pentagon Papers? It's about the Democrats. Nixon wanted the world to know. There was nothing in the Pentagon Papers that Nixon was concerned about getting out, nothing.

Timothy Naftali

Okay. It was --

Daniel Ellsberg

It should have concerned him, or it could have concerned him. The -- of course, that had an implication to Liddy and Hunt, that I was a Soviet agent, which, you know, they were very interested in. But that has nothing to do with Nixon's policy.

Timothy Naftali

Just, just --

Daniel Ellsberg

And, by the way, the Japanese, that's a new one. I never heard of that. What are you referring to there?

Timothy Naftali

I am referring to a transcript that I read. When you asked to see the Pentagon Papers in '69 -- you had worked on one volume, but asked to see the entire collection. Did you do this knowing that you would ultimately want to get them to the -- to [unintelligible]?

Daniel Ellsberg

Oh, no, no, no, no, no. The thought of actually putting out the Pentagon Papers did not come to me until, essentially, almost the day that I did it. Tony Russo, who did not know that I had the Pentagon Papers, or that I had worked on them, when I mentioned that I was working on some studies that revealed a lot of lying, had said to me in -- toward the end of September, you ought to put those out, which was a very amazing thing to say. It's not somebody who had, had a clearance and he no longer had one, didn't say -- didn't make such a suggestion to anybody, or if he thought of putting anything out, wouldn't tell anybody else. But he was left -- he was gone from RAND, and was relatively radical, but that didn't mean to me that I would do it. Up until that point, I was now, as you may know from my book, I had come to a point by the example of Randy Keeler and Bobby who were going to prison. I was ready to do anything to -- that would -- in terms of self-sacrifice, going to prison or whatever, to help end the war. But putting out the Pentagon Papers did not look to me like a very plausible way of doing that, because they dealt with the Democrats. Then, a week later or so, when I became very struck by the lies that were occurring over the special forces -- this goes into my immediate motivations for putting them out at the moment, which is a long story. But the -- when I became aware that so much lying had gone on, I thought that, whether it has a big effect or not -- it may have some effect, as I have described to you, on blaming all this on the Democrats, that may be helpful. And anyway, this history deserves -- I was sick of the lying, in part, and I was ready to see those documents put out, along with the other things I was doing, in terms of trying to end the war. But in terms of putting them

out through the newspapers -- -- that didn't come to me -- well, first, as I said, I didn't even think of copying them until this point. Then, I was going to give them to the Congress. I don't know if that's what you are referring to --

Timothy Naftali

Yeah, and --

Daniel Ellsberg

Here's what I now understand happened. Nixon, pursuing a policy in 1971, which -- -- now, which involved the possibility of continuing to escalate the war in terms of mining Haiphong, possibly even using nuclear weapons, various escalations. A policy that would be quite obstructed and undermined if the public understood the ambitiousness of his aims, which were to keep Thieu in office indefinitely, and to keep the major cities under his control indefinitely -- had to shut me up, and keep me from revealing documents that I might still have, or he assumed I probably did have, that would reveal his planning going back to '69. The Plumbers, at this point, which had earlier been contemplated just to put out more documents, to undermine Ted Kennedy, and various things, now, I think, had the task of neutralizing Ellsberg, not simply in terms of my credibility. I was, after all, already on trial. I was accused, ultimately, of being -- having been guilty of 12 felony counts, basically, which challenges my credibility, you might say, already. I had to be influenced, coerced, into not putting out any more documents that would deal with Nixon. Basically, the first step they took there was to try to get information from my former psychoanalyst's office, Dr. Lewis Fielding in Beverly Hills, that I would not want out. It was not information, in the main, to be given out immediately to discredit me, but to threaten me with being put out if I didn't cooperate by shutting up, by ceasing to describe what Nixon's policy was, and by not putting out any more documents. So, they wanted to get information they could blackmail me with, and a psychoanalyst's office seemed to be a logical place to do that. They didn't find information there that they could blackmail me with, and there wouldn't have been any. They wouldn't have succeeded in that anyway. I wouldn't have -- I don't think I could have been blackmailed, but it was a good try that made sense. Later, when they were about to mine Haiphong, which took place on May 8th of 1972, when they were planning for that in the midst of the North Vietnamese offensive in 1972, they knew that I was now putting out more documents, and probably all that I had. They knew that because Senator Gravel attempted to put into the Congressional record NSSM 1, which I had given him, and was blocked by doing that by Republican senators, and there were two sessions, closed sessions in the Senate to consider whether they could legitimately receive such documents, and publish them, or whatever. Meanwhile, I had arranged for Gravel to give them to Representative Ron Dellums, who did put them in the House record, these 500 pages of secret and top secret documents. They knew, then, at the end of April and early May, that I was now apparently foreseeing the mining of Haiphong, which I was openly predicting, and they wanted to stop me from that. So, they brought 12 assets of the CIA, Bay of Pigs veterans, including all the people who had been involved in the break-in to Dr. Fielding's office earlier, '69, and a number of others, all the ones who were later involved in the Watergate break-in. They were all brought up from Miami on May 3, 1972, with orders to, quote, "incapacitate Daniel Ellsberg totally." And again, this was not a matter of pique on his part, but a fairly rational, though criminal, attempt to silence me, to put me in the hospital, at least, or as the prosecutor thought, William Merrill, the prosecutor thought to kill me. I don't think the intention was to kill me, but rather to make sure that I was silent for the next couple of weeks, during which they were going to mine Haiphong. These were orders passed on by Charles Colson to Jeb Magruder, to Hunt and Liddy, to the Cubans, with Colson telling Magruder that the orders came from

the man upstairs in the Oval Office. And as Magruder put it to his aide, "When Colson says that, sometimes he's telling the truth. It really is from Nixon." So they carried it out. I think it was from Nixon, in fact. So these were orders to assault me, at least, if not to kill me, on the steps of the Capitol on May 3, '72. They didn't do it for reasons we could go into. They thought they were being set up to be caught, as one of them put it, "Like Oswald." Instead, they blew the attempt; they did not assault me. They got into assaults on the edge of the crowd of other people, and were led away by police, giving them an excuse for not attacking me, and were -- and spent that night, several of them, Barker and others, reconnoitering their next objective, which was the Watergate. They went into the Watergate three weeks later, and then, on a second attempt -- for reasons, by the way, we still don't know. Anyone who feels confident that they know exactly what the raid into the Watergate offices were, or what the second raid was for, does not have an adequate basis for confidence, as far as I know, yet, as far as any documents we know. That remains something of a mystery, with various hypotheses going at it. How much Nixon knew and so forth remains somewhat unclear. But the people who did it did know of the physical attempt to assault me weeks earlier on the Capitol, and of the burglary of my psychoanalyst's office. As I say, both of those had a very rational motive, connected to Nixon's Vietnam policy. I actually believe that any president we've seen who had that policy, which was threatened to that extent by an insider who was threatening to release new documents, would have done pretty much the same. It wasn't just Nixon -- Tricky Dick, Dirty Nick, and so forth. This administration, of course, would have done it in a minute. But I think also, really, Johnson, and possibly even Kennedy, would have done much the same, certainly in terms -- I was overheard on wiretaps, warrantless wiretaps during this period.

The use of the CIA against me, the sort of thing Johnson had done, before Nixon. The use, as I say, the FBI wiretapped, break-ins, certainly done under earlier presidents, and later presidents -- they're being done right now. In other words, it wasn't -- I don't see it as Nixon's pathology. It was Nixon's political White House reaction to a threat, to his secret, and very controversial, potentially controversial, foreign policy at that point. So, now, he had people arrested who knew of these earlier White House crimes, and they had to be kept from talking, first before the election, and then, after the election. They were successfully kept quiet by various bribes during the election under Dean's direction. But as Dean pointed out, more and more people were learning about it. Hunt was demanding large amounts of money to keep quiet about the other crimes, "the Ellsberg affair," as Nixon put it, and he had to be paid off. Again, any of the presidents, in this situation, would have done this. These were new crimes of obstruction of justice, and as Dean described it, "a cancer on the presidency" because they had a tendency to metastasize. The more people knew, the more people had to be kept quiet, and had to be paid off, and these were new crimes, so it was metastasizing. In the end, it was Dean himself who, trying to avoid having the

entire responsibility for the cover-up loaded on him, which was the Nixon-Haldeman- Ehrlichman plan, to blame Dean for the cover-up. Dean was willing, he said, to go to prison for the president, but not for Haldeman and Ehrlichman. Also, he was not willing to perjure himself. He was a fairly unprincipled person at that time. He's learned a lot of principles, I think, since then, I like him a lot now. Dean is a friend of mine, and I believe he is a great truth-teller now. At that time, he was still a White House man, as he put it, "blind ambition." But he was not willing to perjure himself, and he revealed, in the course of plea bargaining with the prosecutors, the break-in to the doctor's office that -- I'm going to condense here, very greatly -- Nixon did his best, which was pretty good, to keep that from going to my trial. For thirteen days or so, from the 13th to the 26th, Nixon kept the knowledge of the Fielding break-in from going to my trial, where it clearly was his responsibility to inform the judge of this break-in -- also the NSA, the FBI wiretaps against me. He ordered the material not go. Finally Kleindienst and Peterson on, I believe, April 24th or 25th, went in to him and implied that they

would have to resign, because they would be guilty of obstruction of justice if they didn't pass that material on. Nixon, on the 25th, then authorizes Kleindienst to give the information to my judge, to tell the judge that it was national security, which I think he believed, meaning, he doesn't have to give it to the defendant. It should be kept under wraps, if possible. He hoped the judge would obey that hint, because he was offering, at that time, Judge Matthew Byrne, another obstruction of justice, he was offering the head of the FBI, something that Judge Byrne had wanted since he was a little boy. It was his boyhood ambition, someday, to replace J. Edgar Hoover as head of the FBI. He was offered that on April 4th, I believe it was, and again on April 5th, and again, April 7th, in meetings during my trial, which was -- Byrne was going on and was discussing possibly becoming head of the FBI without telling us. That leaked out in the "Washington Star", I think it was, apparently by some FBI man who didn't want Byrne to be head of the FBI. Almost surely, Mark Felt, who we now know as Deep Throat, was the one who leaked that to the "Washington Star." So, gradually, now, you had a whole lot of leaks coming out, first from Dean -- oh, Byrne did have to give it to us in court on April 26th, I think. And -

Timothy Naftali

Tell us about your reaction.

Daniel Ellsberg

What, well, tremendous. You know, I mean, Byrne offered to keep it secret. He looked at me, for the first time, he looked me in the eyes, for two years. The first time he addressed me, in court, for two years -- he always talked to my lawyers, or to the prosecution, or whatever -- and he said, "Mr. Ellsberg, I don't have to put this out." Meaning, I don't have to reveal to the world that you had a psychoanalyst, which was not a real stigma in Los Angeles, actually, at that point. And anyway, the White House had done a burglary of my doctor's office. I said to him, "Are you kidding? Put it out." So, he announced it in open court, and there was a rush from the journalist booth, for the first time, a front-page scene, where they dashed to the phones to get out the word that, as they put it, "Watergate Meets the Pentagon Papers Trial." They'd been having a very dull trial most of the time for months at this point, and suddenly -- they were all envying their colleagues in Washington who were covering Watergate -- and suddenly, they were covering Watergate. So, they were very excited by it, and that led, now, to a wonderful ten days for us because -- if you want to know my mood -- the rest of the trial was, extremely, a combination of boring, and tedious, and stressful, and frustrating, and a time that I didn't want to look back on or relive in the slightest. The last ten days were glorious. Each day, there was a new revelation. Hunt reveals the CIA profile, and the Plumbers, and the break-in to the doctor's office. Then the tapes come -- the taps come out, and, I said, then, the CIA profile, the fact that Gray had destroyed material relating to me -- the head of the FBI -- in his home fireplace. It was just one wonderful revelation after another, and we would have been glad to see it go on, but it was leaked out the offer of the FBI to the judge, who had not revealed it to us. The judge dismissed that as a grounds for dismissal. We made a motion for dismissal of the trial at that point. He said no, that had not affected him as judge, that offer, and he said he had not discussed the trial at all, or had not discussed the FBI directorship. That was not true, as Ehrlichman, who had been part of the conversation, revealed. So, lying, criminality, obstruction was just tumbling out at this point. And, these were essentially the crimes that put Nixon in great trouble, a vulnerability of going to prison, because they were crimes that directly involved him. After impeachment, there was every reason to expect prosecution. He needed that pardon, which Ford gave him, as a condition of becoming his vice president, it turns out. So, a pardon, which, of course, Ford gave him as a blanket pardon for whatever crimes he might have committed, not knowing what the crimes were at all. He knew these by this time,

but who knows what else? I believe that Charles Colson could give you a dozen other crimes that were involved. I could hypothesize some of them quite specifically.

Timothy Naftali

Dr. Fielding had not told you about the break-in.

Daniel Ellsberg

No, no, he had not.

Timothy Naftali

Did you have a chat with him about this afterwards?

Daniel Ellsberg

Oh, yeah, I had much discussion. I'd seen him during the trial, not as a therapist, not as analysis -- and all he did was classical analysis -- but sitting up, and talking to him about what was going on, really because I wanted him to have a sense of how he felt I was doing. Actually, psychoanalysts don't give you much feedback like that. A different therapist could have. But I thought, "Well, I'm under a lot of stress here, and maybe there's signs of it that I'm not aware of," so, that he would note, and be able to caution me on. So I did see him, I think every week, or every couple of weeks, during the trial just to tell him what was going on, and he never told me. What he did say was, "I can't guarantee to you that this office is secure any more, that it might be bugged." I said, "No, I'm not paranoid, if I may say, no, I don't think they'd bug your office. Why would they do that?" I might say, by the way, when we moved out of our apartment -- at Bunker Hill, it was called, Apartments -- the weekend we moved out, at the end of the trial, a CBS crew came in to shoot a commercial in our apartment, which had a very good corner view of Los Angeles, and the plug, the wall plug was not working when they tried to plug their camera in, the lights in. So, the cameraman took apart the fixtures and found a bug in it. I said, "How did you know it was a bug?" He said, "Well, I was in counter-intelligence in Korea." So he looked around elsewhere in the apartment, and found another bug in the bedroom. So, we had, had bedrooms throughout the trial, in our living room and our bedroom. And Fielding -- could well have been true, there may well have been a bug that's never been mentioned in his room. But anyway, I didn't know why he would have such a suspicion. Well, when it came out that they had broken into his office, I, then, did discuss that with him, and he said that he knew that it was White House, and he knew that it was after me from the beginning, because -- now, this will tie in with some of your other interviews. It's almost always been said that nothing was found with my name on it, and they had photographed nothing in Fielding's office. Actually, Barker had mentioned that they had photographed documents in the office, and Martinez, I think, had also mentioned in one interview, I think it was his Harper's interview, that he had photographed things in the office. What did he photograph? Well, Fielding told me, a long paper that I'd written, a 68-page paper, called "Escalating in a Quagmire" -- it's the heart of my book, "Papers on the War" -- was lying out, from my file, on the file, the file cabinet which is now in the Smithsonian. The file drawers were open, and this document by me was sitting on top of the file, as if he were meant to notice who they were after. This document actually was -- could have been, potentially, of some interest to them, because it was a long study that I did of decision making on Vietnam, which was based on the Pentagon Papers and, in fact, it had quotes from the Pentagon Papers in it, and I had said -- without identifying that. And I had said, in the document,

very provocatively -- I wanted to see what would happen -- I wrote this in 1970. I had said in it that I had, had access to classified documents -- this is never said, you know, when people write papers on this stuff -- to see if people would pick up on that. I'd copied the Pentagon Papers a year earlier, you know.

Timothy Naftali

That's right.

Daniel Ellsberg

I'd tried to get them out through the Senate.

Timothy Naftali

That's right.

Daniel Ellsberg

I now wanted to put out a lot of the substance of what I'd learned in this document, and maybe the story will get out that way. But nobody was willing to publish it, because it was only history. It was turned down by everybody, even though I offered to shorten it.

Timothy Naftali

And you gave it to your psychoanalyst?

Daniel Ellsberg

I gave it to my psychoanalyst, but I gave it to lots of people, all over the place. I gave it to Henry Kissinger. I gave it to many Democrats. Everybody said, very, very interesting. Kissinger's office had it, you know, interesting stuff, and nobody commented on the fact that it obviously was based on classified documents, and although people were always writing memoirs based on classified documents, they never said that. That was fairly challenging.

Timothy Naftali

Dr. Fielding, did he explain why he didn't tell you that he thought the White House...

Daniel Ellsberg

Yes, he said that it upset him very much. He knew that -- he was sure it was the White House. I remember, this was '69, they had not come out yet, but he knew what I'd been doing. I'd told him what I was doing. I left him in -- Let me see, when I ended? When I went to Cambridge in, basically, July of '69, is when I ended. Is that right? '69 -- so, I'm sorry. Yes, he saw his -- the file cabinet was broken into, in Labor Day weekend, '69.

Timothy Naftali

No, Labor Day weekend of '71.

Daniel Ellsberg

Of '71, right. So, the Pentagon Papers had come out, that's the connection.

Timothy Naftali

That's right.

Daniel Ellsberg

Sorry, that's all 37 years ago.

Timothy Naftali

No, no, that's --

Male Speaker

Just hold up for, like, fifteen seconds here, and see if this phone goes away.

Daniel Ellsberg

Oh, the phone is still, wait --

Timothy Naftali

Here we go.

Daniel Ellsberg

I thought I'd disconnected -- yeah, okay. So, the Pentagon Papers had come out in June.

Timothy Naftali

Right.

Daniel Ellsberg

So, he knew all that. So, he now knows, you know, the White House is very interested in this. So, somebody has burgled his office. He was certain it was the White House. But I wasn't seeing him then, I was in Cambridge. He wasn't in direct touch with me. I called him -- something else happened. But let me come to this point. His lawyer -- he talked to a lawyer about it, and the lawyer advised him, "Don't get involved. Don't get involved. It's a White House operation on this, and don't tell." Well, he said -- he apologized to me. He said, "I felt guilty." He said, "I feel I wronged you," which, from a professional point of view, he certainly had, "and I apologize." I said, "Fine." Everything had turned

out fine by that time, of course. However, it bothered him so much that he got a bleeding ulcer, and at one point it hemorrhaged, and he went to the hospital, the emergency room, with a bleeding ulcer. So it bothered him enough -- he already had hypertension -- so it bothered him enough that it worsened his hypertension, and gave him a bleeding ulcer, but not enough to tell me. Not a wonderful performance, but it was pretty much like everybody else I dealt with on the thing. I could go into, you know, a dozen similar examples. They all acted pretty much the same. But in his case -- now, other analysts used to tell me, "You were blessed in your analyst that he didn't cooperate with the FBI when the FBI approached him. That's why they went into his office." I said, "Well, how could he cooperate? He's my psychoanalyst." And others told me, "Oh, other analysts would have cooperated."

Timothy Naftali

You stopped seeing him when you went to Cambridge. What year did you go to Cambridge?

Daniel Ellsberg

In '70.

Timothy Naftali

In '70.

Daniel Ellsberg

So, right -- so, I got, actually, an estimate -- many people came up with pretty much the same estimate of the odds. They said that about 90 percent of psychiatrists would have cooperated with the FBI, given that it was a national security matter, without telling me, and perhaps 75 percent of psychoanalysts, a smaller number. Everybody gave the same percentages, and so their hope that they would get something out of him -- now, people have thought that they were foolish to think they would get notes from a psychoanalyst. They didn't know much about psychoanalysis, of course. Hunt, and -- rather, Ehrlichman, Haldeman and Krogh were all Christian Scientists, as I had been and my father was, and I wondered what it meant for them to be going after a fellow Christian Scientist. There's a good deal of collegial feeling among Christian Scientists. So, when I asked Ehrlichman and Krogh, separately, I saw Ehrlichman later, and Krogh is now a friend of mine, "How did you feel about going after a Christian Scientist?" They had not discovered that I was a Christian Scientist, which was not a secret. That's why I gave the Pentagon Papers to the "Christian Science Monitor". My father had given me practically a life subscription to the "Christian Science Monitor". He was a big, very fanatic Christian Scientist. They had a whole room filled with documents on Daniel Ellsberg, and somehow never picked up that I was a fellow Christian Scientist, and I asked Krogh and Haldeman, how they would have felt if they'd known. Well, they would have felt very strange about that, you know, that would not have gone unnoticed. It was much easier for them to imagine that I might be a Soviet agent, not knowing that I was a Christian Scientist, than if they had known, but anyway... What they were after was information that could blackmail me, as I say, into silence. That was not likely to be in notes. In fact, Fielding now told me, now that I'm talking to him, I asked him, "Did you keep notes?" He said, "No, no, at the very beginning of an analysis, I would take down names of relatives and critical people to understand relationships, and then when I'd memorized those, I would tear up my notes, and throw them down the toilet." I said, "How did you get into a habit like that?" He said, "I

was General Patton's third Army medical officer, in the third Army," a little biographical detail that I didn't know, of course.

Timothy Naftali

Oh my -- now, there's a character --

Daniel Ellsberg

Since he was a blank slate, as far as I was concerned, you know. It would have given me something to think about that I was telling all this stuff I was doing to General Patton's medical officer.

Timothy Naftali

I was going to say, General Patton and Daniel Ellsberg, two rather interesting historical figures.

Daniel Ellsberg

Well, you remember that, after all, it shows how things connect -- six degrees of separation here. Nixon nerved himself up into the invasion of Cambodia by watching "Patton" about six times, possibly more than six times.

Timothy Naftali

Then, later, the administration breaks into Patton's military officer's office.

Daniel Ellsberg

Yeah, yeah, well, right. That would have given Nixon something to think about. So they were just as interested in getting information on Fielding, and they, in fact, I think Martinez, who was a CPA, was he not? Wasn't he the accountant?

Timothy Naftali

No, Martinez wasn't.

Daniel Ellsberg

Was not? One of them was. One of the people in the group was, in fact -- Barker? He was in real estate.

Timothy Naftali

Yeah.

Daniel Ellsberg

Anyway, they looked at his income tax returns, and Barker said, in the "Harper's" article, "I got the impression that the good doctor," quote "was not reporting all of his income tax." Now, why did they care about that? Fine, just as good as getting stuff on me. They wanted to be able to blackmail Fielding into telling them about what I'd told him, stuff that wasn't written down. Squeeze Fielding, who was one of that 25 percent of psychoanalysts who wouldn't cooperate, get him to cooperate. So, I think that's what they had in mind when they thought of going into his home. They proposed going into his home. Maybe he kept his notes there. But if he didn't keep his notes there, and he didn't have any notes, they could get stuff on him there that they could blackmail him with. Now, why did they put the document on top of the file? Why did they leave it in such a mess? Why did they make it so obvious that the place had been broken into? You know, broke the file open -- they jimmed open the door, I believe. Or, no, they broke a window down below. They scattered pills, supposedly to make it look like a drug addict was coming in to get pills, around the floor. There's another little mysterious point here. Martinez and Barker report. They come back to Hunt's and Liddy's suite in the Beverly Hilton and tell them what's happened. And Barker break -- and Hunt is waiting with champagne to celebrate the break-in. Well, he opens the champagne anyway, and pours it around to celebrate, as a celebration, and one of them says, "What are we celebrating? We didn't find anything," which was not quite true. And Hunt says -- I think this is in the "Harper's" article -- "We know that, but he doesn't know that," that they didn't find anything. Now, I'll give you something that's, essentially, never come up. A guy who was -- this is just for Watergate mavens, but it ties in with what this is all about -- a guy that I knew slightly from the anti-war movement, David Truong, the son of Truong Dinh Dzu, the candidate who came close to upsetting Thieu in the election in 1967, because he proposed negotiations with the NLF. He was a nobody, a businessman thought to be rather corrupt, and with no name recognition particularly. By offering to negotiate, he almost beat Thieu.

Well, he was then imprisoned, having done that, in Vietnam. His son was an anti-war person, very good guy named David Truong, who I'd met a few times. Later, imprisoned for giving, I think, official-use-only, or perhaps confidential documents, to some Vietnam anti-war group. You know the name? David Truong, you can look it up. But at this point, he was just an anti-war person I'd met a few times. He came to me. I'm now indicted, and he said, "I have something to say to you. I can't say it over the phone." And he said, "The White House has the tapes of your discussions with your psychoanalyst." And, I said, "Tapes?" I'm almost virtually sure there were no tapes. Certainly, I didn't know of any. And I said, "What makes you think that?" He said, "I was told this by a woman named --," I'd have to think of her name, I did know it -- Rose, Rose something -- who was very tied into intelligence circles. I'd met her through Ed Lansdale, a former CIA agent. She was a journalist who knew all the CIA people. "Rose told me that she had it, from CIA people, that they have your tapes." She'd told Truong, I think, not to tell me, but Truong was telling me. So, I called Fielding from Cambridge, and this is one of the taps that they do have. They have a transcript of this, so some tapping was going on at this point, apparently of Fielding. I asked him if he had tapes and he said, no, he had not taped anything. Well, all right. This is, remember, after the break-in, so, Fielding already knows this kind of thing that, of course, puts in his head right away, tapes, bugs of his office. I said, "Well, all right, I didn't think you had any." It ties in very much -- oh, there's one other thing. There was a break-in to Patricia's former psychotherapist that she saw when we were separated, partly because of her dismay at our being separated. We were totally apart for three years after we'd been engaged in Vietnam. So, she was upset about that. She saw a psychotherapist at the time, and he had taped -- he had taped their sessions, which she knew, and his name -- I'll think of it -- Akaret, he may still be alive. I think it's Richard Akaret, A-K-A-R-E-T. His office was broken into before Labor Day, I think, in July, and he had assumed that Patricia's tapes were looked at, or were misplaced somehow, dealt with. So, let's just say, I'm very close to certain that the Plumbers' operation in Fielding's office was not the only break-in they

did in connection with me, that Patricia's psychotherapist had also been looked at, and a third thing comes in. On Labor Day weekend, Hunt -- these are the kinds of details that I normally wouldn't go into, but for the Nixon Archives, why not?

On Labor Day weekend, Hunt and Liddy, after their unsuccessful operation in the Fielding break-in, go back to Washington via New York. They stay at the Pierre, I believe. No, it was the -- what was the hotel that Kennedy was famous for going into all the time? I associate it with Kennedy all the time. What's the one that --

Timothy Naftali

The Plaza?

Daniel Ellsberg

The Plaza -- the Plaza, I think. The one that the little girl, in the -- you remember, in the little lines?

Timothy Naftali

Madeleine?

Daniel Ellsberg

Madeleine, isn't that the Plaza?

Timothy Naftali

I don't --

Daniel Ellsberg

Anyway, just connected in my head. They stay at this hotel, a very fine hotel for them to stay at. That weekend, I think, on a Sunday, the office of Senator Goodell is broken into, and my memory isn't perfect on all the names here, but I believe the name of Goodell's assistant was Andrew Pierre [phonetic sp] -- I think that might be it, Andrew Pierre -- and he told me there's no question there had been a burglary of the files that weekend in Goodell's office. Now, my former wife -- getting very complicated here -- had told the FBI, back in 1969, that I had given -- I'm sorry, let me get that wrong. She had told her stepmother, and her stepmother told the FBI, her stepmother told the FBI, back in '69, that I had given the Pentagon Papers to Fulbright and Goodell. And of course, by this time, Goodell had actually already been almost written out of the Republican Party. He'd lost office by his anti-war [unintelligible], but he was also known to be very connected with me. From '69 on, I had been consulting with Goodell, but I had not given him the Pentagon Papers. But they believed I had. So, they exaggerated the degree of my intimacy with Goodell. The FBI thought I had given the papers to Goodell. So, Goodell's office is broken into on that weekend, and their office, and I went and visited it, is, as I recall, about two blocks from the Plaza, from where they were staying. So, I think Hunt and Liddy, on the way home, something that's never come out, made a little operation into Goodell's office, and presumably, with some others. They didn't do burglarizing themselves, but they probably had some other help on that. It didn't matter in the end.

Timothy Naftali

Did you ever ask Bud Krogh about that?

Daniel Ellsberg

I think I did, and he did not remember, or did not know, but that's -- as to what he did know and didn't know, it's another story of interest. He didn't believe that he knew everything they'd been up to, by any means. He believed that he did not know. I mean, if we were unraveling all of this stuff it would be interesting. So, how did that bear? Oh yes, why would they be interested in my wife's analyst and so forth? The Plumbers were -- that is, the Cubans who worked for Hunt and Liddy -- were interviewed at great length by Taylor Branch and George Crile for a book they were doing on the Plumbers operation -- on the Bay of Pigs veterans, actually. Their book never came out because their publisher went bankrupt, and Branch and Crile had a fight over how they would split the royalties or something, if they found another publisher, and it never did come out, and I was very anxious to get the files from Branch but he -- they both -- that's a whole other story, but I didn't get it. However, Branch told me at the time a good deal about what they were after, what he had learned from the Cubans. And he said, Branch said to me -- and he confirmed this later, when I was writing my book, I checked it with him -- that the Cubans, and I think they talked to Martínez and to Barker and some of the others, and I can't identify who told what to what to what, but they learned from the Cubans that their objective was to find -- there were four objectives in this effort to neutralize me altogether. To get information, basically, that I didn't want known, blackmail type information. Their hopes were -- the highest hope was that I would commit suicide, which was what, rather than have this material come out, which was, of course, what the FBI and the Co-Intel program did exactly with Martin Luther King. They sent him a tape of his sexual escapades in a hotel room with a note saying, "You will know what to do. You have only one course of action." It was just before he got the Nobel Prize, and many others have discussed -- I can give you references on this, if you don't know it already.

Their highest hope was he would commit suicide, if he did that. Otherwise, they would put it out and discredit him, hopefully. So, their hope was that I would commit suicide. Second, that I would leave the country, go to Cuba like various other people had done -- Eldridge Cleaver, and so forth, Timothy Leary, Algeria. Obviously, again, putting me out of action, both of those keep me quiet very effectively. Third, that I will -- what was it -- one of the things was, I would not go on the stand, and interestingly, they had been told a story, which is very little known. Here were these Cubans, some of them hardly speak English, or very good English -- they'd heard it from Hunt, obviously, and Liddy -- that they had the anecdote in mind of the Hiss case, where Hiss' stepson was kept off the stand, and he was the only person who could testify to the critical question of how often Hiss had seen Chambers, you know, which was crucial to the question. Hiss admitted he'd seen Chambers, but how intimate was the relationship? And the FBI had threatened, informally, Hiss that they would let it be known in cross examination of his son that he was homosexual, and Hiss had not permitted him to be on the stand. The son himself was willing to go on the stand anyway, and Hiss said, "No, that would ruin your life," at that time. "I won't let this happen," so he didn't get that corroborating testimony that he had not seen -- his testimony, that he had not seen Chambers very much. This was a story that was in the minds of these Cuban-Americans, you know, a very esoteric story, which other people have testified to, and which may or may not be true. But anyway, they had it. That was the kind of information they wanted, so, Branch said, from the Cubans, "They were as interested in information that would be on your children or your wife, as on you." Anything that I wouldn't want told, that could, at the very least, keep me off the stand, which would mean that I would be convicted. It wouldn't, in itself -- and then, I

think, the other point was, keep me from telling. Now Krogh has told me, and it's in my book, I quote him, yeah, I quote him telling the judge, actually, his number one priority, as the man in charge of, quote, "neutralizing" me was, what other information did I have, and would I put it out, and who might I be getting it from? That's your critical conspiracy. Who might still be in the administration who was giving me or other people information about him, not about the Pentagon Papers. The concern of the Plumbers under Krogh and Hunt, and so forth, was: what else could I put out beyond the Pentagon Papers that would tell of Nixon's Vietnam policy? And that's what I mean when I say, the crimes of going into all these different, I think a lot of different little burglaries, and my doctor's office. Trying to shut me up, break my mouth -- Barker said to Lloyd Shearer of "Parade," the editor of "Parade," "My orders were to break both his legs." Well, that would put me in the hospital, but not keep me from talking. I think somebody else had orders to take care of my jaw, but all these different crimes, the purpose of them, that would not have happened had I given NSSM 1 to McGovern. He wouldn't have told Nixon that I had given it to him. He did say I put out the Pentagon Papers, for other reasons, because he was running for president, and wanted that publicity, but it was Matthias who had the incentive to confess to the administration immediately that he had documents from the NSC, from me, but, fortunately, from my point of view, did not tell them what it was. In fact, he hardly knew what it was. He didn't know the significance of it. NSC documents, which suggests that, immediately, a mole from the NSC, and the possibility that I had, the likelihood that I had, documents on mining, on Haiphong, on nuclear weapons, and so forth, and I had to be stopped. This led to crimes, which again, could have been kept secret if the criminals themselves had not -- CIA assets, they didn't think of themselves as criminals, of course, but as warriors, covert warriors, patriots. So, had they not been caught. Again, if they'd talked earlier, they would have come out. If Fielding had told me, against the advice of his lawyer, that his office had been broken into by the White House, we would, of course, have put that out, and the Plumbers would not have been hired to go to work for CREEP. The people who were, even though the police wouldn't have known who did it, but they would know -- they, I don't think, would have used those people again that the police were looking for, to go into the offices of the Democratic National Committee.

So, the people who did go in would not have had these earlier crimes to reveal. They wouldn't have had to be kept secret by the smoking gun, by pretending that it was a CIA operation -- altogether, that was the smoking gun conversation. Hunt wouldn't have had to be paid off \$100,000, or \$140,000, et cetera, et cetera. Now, none of this guaranteed that Nixon would leave office. A lot of other things had to follow, too. Butterfield had to reveal the tapes. The Supreme Court had to decide, as it was, that the tapes had to be given over -- the Saturday Night Massacre. A lot of things had to happen. Nixon was not terribly reckless to believe that he could commit crimes like this, and keep them quiet. Presidents did this kind of thing all the time, and nearly all of them they kept quiet, and more over, once they come out, George W. Bush has committed crimes like this right and left, and a lot of them have come out, and he's still there. I don't say he would get re-elected this year, if he was running, but he's going to live out his office. He didn't get impeached. None of his officials have gone to prison, even Libby, whom he essentially pardoned so, as he himself was pardoned, so he wasn't unusually reckless in doing this. He had bad luck. But he was vulnerable. There was a possibility, and he took that risk to preserve a Vietnam policy that he thought would work, foolishly, but not impossibly. He was wrong and, actually, did work up to a point. In fact, he did get re-elected in '72, despite the war still going on. I believe it was entirely -- there's a lot of evidence on this -- his intention to renew the bombing of North Vietnam as soon as American troops were out in March, April 1973. According to "Time" magazine in 1975, he had given the order to renew the bombing in April. But Dean, on April 13th, told the prosecutor -- 13th or 15th, there's a little confusion about that -- Dean told the prosecutors who promptly, illegally, told Nixon. Nixon keeps it quiet, from going, again, for another ten days or more,

but it does come out, and now he's in deep trouble. Byrne has to put it out, because he knows that, now that Dean is talking, it's going to come out, so, he can't sit on it any longer. He has to put it out, and Nixon lost all that.

Timothy Naftali

So, you believe this is the most important information that Dean told the prosecutors?

Daniel Ellsberg

Oh, it was crucial that Dean told the prosecutor. It wasn't -- it was crucial. He'd told them lots of stuff up until then, but it didn't involve the president. He deliberately kept from involving the president, I think, for various reasons, maybe loyalty, but also, a fight with the president, Dean knew very well, is a very dangerous process. In fact, by that time, he knew that he was dealing -- they were dealing with people who were assassins. Hunt had organized, managed efforts to assassinate Castro. One of the other operations the Plumbers were involved

in was a plot to assassinate Torrijos at that time. Do you know about that, yourself? Good for the Nixon Library. Come on, I can give you the references on that, but they were all involved in a plot to assassinate -- and they had done actions to further the plot to assassinate Torrijos, in order to get the Panama Canal through -- what was it, to have another canal, another canal go through, widen the canal, or something like that. I think there was some idea of a sea level canal. And Torrijos was in the way of that, so they were going to assassinate -- Torrijos did, of course, later die in a plane crash, an unexplained plane crash, but that's why, this seems to be why, for example, Hunt and Dita Beard were all involved in the break-in to Green's office in Las Vegas -- had something to do with Howard Hughes and the Torrijos affair. It's all complicated, but there are records on this. A guy named Jonathan Marshall did a very good investigation of this, in "Inquiry Magazine." I can put you on to that.

Timothy Naftali

I've got just a couple of specific questions. Tell us about your relationship with Neil Sheehan. You had actually given him something in '68. Did you --

Daniel Ellsberg

Yeah, oh, yeah, okay, now I've given you pretty much the, what I needed to get out here. We can, now, deal with what you came to get.

Timothy Naftali

Well, I got a lot of it, is what I came to get for historians. No, we're okay.

Daniel Ellsberg

Apparently they've made other arrangements for this phone call. They didn't do any -- what happened to this group out here?

Timothy Naftali

They went out on the patio, didn't they? They're on the patio.

Daniel Ellsberg

They must've rescheduled the phone call or something. There's a telephone over there? Okay -- okay, Neil, I had known slightly in Vietnam in '65, '66, and he left in '66, and then -- and so, that was why I went to him in '68 when I wanted to leak, for the first time, some information about Johnson's planning and Westmoreland's planning, at a time when I feared that it would -- that he was about to escalate. How much of this do you want?

Timothy Naftali

Oh I'm interested because your relationship with him, it's complicated and when we get to '71 --

Daniel Ellsberg

Let me, I'll give you, first, the brief version, and then, we can go back. In '68, I gave Neil a series of top secret leaks, including Westmoreland's year-end report, "eyes only" for the president, top secret, which -- this was right after the Tet Offensive that I was doing this, and his report, which was only a month or so earlier, it ended in late January, told the president that we have -- to paraphrase it -- "We have driven the Viet Cong out of South Vietnam to the borders, where we are pursuing them, or pursuing them on the borders." This was ten days or so before the Vietcong hit, simultaneously, every province capital in Vietnam, and Saigon, in a two day period, so it made Westmoreland look quite bad. And the day that that actually was leaked in "The New York Times," Westmoreland was told that afternoon that he would be replaced by Creighton Abrams. I was anxious to see Westmoreland replaced because I knew that he was likely to use nuclear weapons over Dien Bien Phu -- I'm sorry, over Khe Sanh, which they were afraid would be another Dien Bien Phu. So, that's another story. That's why I did it. But I foresaw the president giving Westmoreland a large part of what he had just asked for, secretly, 206,000 troops. You've read this story in my --

Timothy Naftali

Yeah, in your book.

Daniel Ellsberg

So, anyway, I had complicated reasons for wanting to get this information out. Mainly, I wanted the president, Johnson, to feel that his administration, at high levels, had suddenly become transparent, a goldfish bowl, that he would not be able to give Westmoreland secretly 100,000 troops, or 200,000 troops, and lie about what he was giving, as he had always done in the past. He had always given Westmoreland, until '67, more troops, a promise of more troops, than he revealed to the public. And so, to keep him from doing that in this case, which I thought would lead to the invasion of North Vietnam, which is what Westmoreland wanted, and thus, to Chinese involvement, and eventual use of nuclear weapons. To keep him from doing that -- to thinking he could do it secretly -- I wanted him to know that if he made that decision it would leak out, and the way I thought of convincing him of that, was to make a major top secret leak every day for a number of days. So, I gave him, Neil Sheehan, that. I gave him the new order of battle, which doubled the estimate of Viet Cong and North

Vietnamese we were facing, which otherwise would never have been revealed, and several other items that come out sequentially. And I felt that the "Times" had dealt with those quite well, and I trusted Neil's discretion on this, and he had taken efforts to cover me on this, in various ways, so, that was all in '68, when Neil was the Pentagon representative of "The Times." Now, I think, that in '71, when I went to him, he was no longer -- I can't remember this exactly, but I'm not sure he was any longer covering the Pentagon for the "Times," but, mainly, I had gone to him before, and I trusted him, and he was in town, so, when it came, a question of giving it to somebody on the "Times," Neil was the obvious person. McGovern got almost exactly the same number of votes and the same proportion of votes as Humphrey in '68. Did you know that?

Timothy Naftali

No.

Daniel Ellsberg

McGovern didn't know that. I showed McGovern the figures at a symposium on his birthday. I think it was his 75th birthday, at a symposium for him. He was quite amazed. As many Democrats, and as high a proportion of Democrats voted for McGovern as for Humphrey; the difference was entirely that the Wallace vote --

Timothy Naftali

Yeah, the Wallace vote went to Nixon.

Daniel Ellsberg

-- went to Nixon. Meaning that, if Wallace had run as an independent, Muskie would have won, Humphrey would have won, Ted Kennedy would have won, and even McGovern might well have won. McGovern would well have won, if Humphrey -- it was essential to Nixon, victory, winning, that Wallace be out of that race, and the fact that there -- with Wallace out, Nixon had a sure landslide from May 15th on, the day that Wallace was shot. He had a sure landslide coming. All this talk about Eagleton, and this, and the late convention, and everything else, had nothing to do -- didn't affect the result at all. Wallace voters were sure to go to Nixon, as they did, and Nixon had a landslide. With Wallace in the race, Nixon would probably lose.

Timothy Naftali

Dan, I want to get back to Neil Sheehan.

Daniel Ellsberg

It bears a lot on how Wallace became shot [unintelligible]

Timothy Naftali

You went to Neil and, at that point, you had decided on a new strategy with the Pentagon Papers, or had you?

Daniel Ellsberg

Yeah, so, now I was -- it was suggested, "Why don't you" -- in fact, they suggested I give it to Neil Sheehan. I didn't know -- well, they had already given it to Neil, a thousand pages to Neil Sheehan.

Timothy Naftali

They, you mean the three at the IPS?

Daniel Ellsberg

Yeah, the IPS people had already given a thousand pages to Neil Sheehan. This is a part that has yet to be worked out, at this late date, exactly what happened here, because Neil and Mark Raskin tell quite different stories. Not entirely different, they all agree that IPS gave a lot of documents to Neil Sheehan. And the significance of that is disputed, or what followed from that. It's pretty [unintelligible].

Timothy Naftali

So, you weren't the first to give Neil Sheehan Pentagon Papers?

Daniel Ellsberg

No -- of course, I didn't know that until a year or two ago. Oh, no, no, I can tell you exactly when I learned, in the -- -- Spring of 2000, 2002, I guess -- spring of 2002, Mark Raskin gave some interviews, which led me to talk to Mark Raskin of IPS. He'd be a good one to talk to.

Timothy Naftali

I'm sure.

Daniel Ellsberg

And so, this is the first I knew of this. Neil had never, up until this day, had never told me anything about it. But of course, concealing his sources, you know, and being private about the sources. But they had, in fact, given him all that I'd given them, which was about a thousand pages of quite important stuff, and they had done that in, I guess, January of, late January of 1971. Now, I went to him -- it's in the book. I forget, I think, early March of 1971, after they'd suggested I go to Neil, and, you know why -- it was not coincidental that they suggested that I go to Neil. That's -- what their calculations were is a complicated story. But that means to me, by the way, that the "Times," someone at the "Times" had -- knew about that story long before they've ever admitted, because Neil had to have discussed that with people high on the "Times," who probably kept it very closely held.

Timothy Naftali

Have you talked to Neil since 2002?

Daniel Ellsberg

Yes, he won't talk much about that. He says, "I've told you all I can tell you," and so forth. In other words, the "Times" involvement remains a very sensitive, internal secret of some sort. And, of course, what I have to infer is that the "Times" has been lying steadily. Everybody on the "Times", many of them probably didn't know the facts, but some did, and they've been, whoever it was who knew, has been dissimulating all this time about how they knew and who they knew and what came out and so forth, because, in other words, they must have made the decision to go ahead as Mark Raskin was assured they had even before I dealt with Neil, rather than much later. So, anyway, that's another story.

Timothy Naftali

What warning did you have that the papers would appear on the front page of "The New York Times"?

Daniel Ellsberg

Well, as you know, we're going over material that's in my book --

Timothy Naftali

I know, but I want to do it on the camera.

Daniel Ellsberg

-- but I'll just tell it; I'll just tell it. Again, for reasons that Neil just would not, really, be forth coming -- and Neil, by the way, all this time was very friendly to me. You know, as far as I knew, very friendly, but, and some of the reasons for not saying some things are ordinary journalistic practice, not to tell me at the time, for instance, that he had it earlier from somebody else. Keeping them secret is normal journalistic kind of practice, but why he would keep that up for 35 years seemed a little odd but, in particular, it remains somewhat mysterious to me that he did not tell me, from the time that he himself copied the papers, having said that he wouldn't copy the papers to which I gave him access -- he had copied them. And then, later, he asked me if he could have physical possession of the copies, which I postponed, giving him that. This is all getting complicated. Let me try to say it in a simpler way. When I gave him access to the papers, in the apartment, actually, of Patricia's half- brother, in Cambridge, I asked him not to copy them, or to take them with him to the "Times," in dealing with them to get a decision, because I felt that as soon as there's a copy out, it's totally out of my control. Those copies will be copied by other people. There'll be copies around, and then I figured the "Times" will probably not agree to publish these in the end. They'll think about it and they'll shy away from it, just as Fulbright had, and McCloskey, and Matthias. Everybody had sort of had second thoughts about this. So, I thought they won't do it in the end, and then the copies will be all over the place, and somebody will tell the FBI. And later events showed there was a good deal of realism to that concern. So, I said, "I'll take that chance at the point that you tell me that the "Times" is seriously interested in running these. They think they probably will. I don't ask for guarantees. They can change their mind at the last moment, obviously, you know, about the thing, but I want to know that they really think they probably will. It's their current intent to do it, and then I'll take the chance of letting them have the copies, and if they change their mind afterwards, that's too bad. But before that, I don't want you to have copies, just discuss it." He said, "Well, to convince them to do it, you know, I need more, I need more," and I said, "I'm sorry Neil," very frustrating to him. "I can't, I don't want you to get them until I have more

assurance. You're just going to have to try to convince them." In fact, it turns out that -- so he said, "Well, can I read the --" I said, "You can read them. You can even take notes on them, as long as you don't Xerox them. So, then I'll just trust you to do it," and so, I gave him a key to the apartment where they were being held, so he could read them, and take notes. He immediately then arranged with the "Times." He got some money for copying. He brought his wife down to help him. They checked into a motor hotel, and they immediately took all the papers out, and got them copied for the "Times," so that I couldn't back out entirely. Now, I never blamed him for doing this. In effect, it was the way -- he didn't have to do that, but I felt it was pretty much what I'd done. This material must get out, and I want to be sure that it does, you know, and so, he got it copied. That seemed to me, when I learned about it, good, even -- I could even admire it as journalistic behavior, even though it did involve lying to me. But what I've never fully understood was why he never did tell me that the "Times" was working on it, and the reason why that's odd is that, not knowing that they were serious, I continued to try to get them out by other channels. So, he was taking that risk that I would succeed in getting it out. So, it was after that, that I talked to McCloskey, for example, and gave him -- I gave him about a thousand pages, or so, or more, and I showed it to some other people, and, actually, I showed some to Howard Zinn and to Noam Chomsky, to get their -- just for their interest and feedback on the thing, and I dealt with Matthias, and so forth. So, he was taking a real risk that, by not telling me. Now, I think that he feared that if he told me that they were about to do it that I would get real busy and try even harder to get it out through Congress. I'm just trying to rationalize what he was doing, and, indeed, I might have done that unless he told me not to. But if he'd told me very seriously, "Dan, you know, this won't happen unless the "Times" has a scoop. Don't do it and here's why it's better and so forth," I would have obeyed that. I take it he didn't trust me, you know, to do that, and he thought I might try to get it out somewhere else. There was that misunderstanding somehow.

Anyway, he didn't tell me, and, so, the first I knew that the "Times" was even -- oh, then he actually went further. He said, "The "Times' has put this on the back burner. They are not making a decision on it, but I want it -- and they've given me another job to work on, but I would like just to keep myself current on it and do more reading on it. I'm working in New York. Is it all right if I actually take a copy, make a copy of it?" And, so, I said, "Okay, what the hell." A month had gone by. These other avenues weren't channeling out. I said, "Go ahead," and I'd always told him that, "When I give you the copy, as far as I'm concerned, it's out of my hands. I know I can't control whether it's done, or it isn't done and so forth, you know. That's my okay to go ahead," and even though he hadn't told me yet, I changed my mind, and I did let him have the copy. That was, about, in April. They were working night and day, meanwhile, of course, in the New York Hilton, to put it out. So, actually, this uncertainty on me persisted until the last day because I had learned that Senator Gravel was going to do a filibuster against the draft, which was about to expire, and I thought, "Okay, this is the perfect material for him to use in his filibuster. We'll get it out on the floor of the Senate." So, I had it in my apartment with the intent that I was -- for the first time -- that I was going to take it to Washington on Monday and deal with Gravel on the issue, hand it to him if he wanted it. I had never allowed it in the apartment before lest I be caught with it, so on Saturday the 12th, I get a call from a guy on the "Times." This all gets complicated, that I dealt with -- to whom I had also given part of the papers for his book on Tonkin Gulf, and he told me, almost crying, "Dan, that material you gave me, you know, from the bigger study on Tonkin Gulf," he said, "the "Times' has it, and they have the whole study." I said, "Oh, really?" And, of course, I had given them the whole study at that point, but I hadn't been told they were doing anything. He said, "Yes, they're bringing it out tomorrow. They're going to bring it out tomorrow. This place is locked up tighter than a drum. They're afraid the FBI is going to come in, and confiscate it, or enjoin them," I'd never heard any word, I'd never thought of an injunction, though the "Times" was very worried about it. And they're -- so everybody, nobody can get in or out without a pass. He said,

"My book is ruined. You know, the 'Times' is going to scoop it tomorrow." His book was coming out in a month. I said, "Tony, maybe this will just give you more publicity for the book, you know. It'll make more interest in the book." He said, "No, no." He was right, actually, as it turned out. It did kill his book, essentially, called "The President's War," by Anthony Austin. Even though he was onto something that the "Times" didn't have, but the book didn't get much attention. So, I said, "Well, that's very interesting, Tony. I'm sorry about your book and all." So, I then put in a call to Neil. Neil was unavailable, and, you know, I had the Pentagon Papers in my apartment, and they were worried the FBI was going to come. Now, they hadn't mentioned to me that I should expect an FBI raid any minute. So, I called my friend Howard Zinn and said, "Howard, can you store something for me tonight?" We were going to see "Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid" in Harvard Square, the movie, that evening, with Roz and Howard, and, so, we arranged -- we went over to his apartment. I took -- his house. I took the Pentagon Papers with me. I gave them to him to store, and then we went to see "Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid." And that night I went into the Harvard Square station kiosk, and got the first editions of the Pentagon Papers that were coming out.

Timothy Naftali

Did you think you were going to go to jail?

Daniel Ellsberg

Well, yeah. I assumed -- I'd always assumed that I would go to jail if they chose to prosecute. I knew there was a slight chance -- I could figure there was a slight chance they might not choose to prosecute, for political reasons. And, in fact, Ehrlichman advised the president not to prosecute -- Ehrlichman the domestic counselor. Good advice. If he'd followed that, he would have stayed in office, essentially. Or, strictly speaking, he would have still been concerned about what other stuff I was going to put out. The Plumbers would have come in. But if I hadn't been on trial, Dean's revelations could have been kept secret. The only way they came out, was that I was still on trial ten days after Nixon learned of it -- and he had to send it to Nixon, and it came out. If I hadn't been on trial, they could have sat on that information successfully. So, Ehrlichman's advice was good, but I thought, if they prosecute, which is 97 percent likely, I'm bound to be convicted. Seven thousand pages of top-secret documents, as my lawyer said to me later, has a bad ring to it. And moreover, you know, 7,000 pages, I'll go for life. I thought, this won't be a year or two or five years, so I expected to go to jail.

Timothy Naftali

For life?

Daniel Ellsberg

For life. Well, life, 30 years. You know, not necessarily consecutive life terms. I was put on trial facing 12 felony counts; 11 were worth 10 years each, and a conspiracy count, five years, so 115-year possible sentence. Now, with good behavior, I'd only serve a third of that, which would be 35 years. I'd be getting out this year. That's 35 years after 1973, which is when my trial ended. So, I'd get out this year.

Timothy Naftali

Did the FBI contact Louis? The administration feared that the FBI wasn't working hard enough to prosecute you because of Louis Marx.

Daniel Ellsberg

Yes -- my wife is here, you could you interview her on this. The story was, all over, that he feared the FBI wouldn't go after -- Liddy thought it wouldn't go after it, because Louis Marx was such a close buddy of J. Edgar Hoover. They never met. Did you know that?

Timothy Naftali

No.

Daniel Ellsberg

Louis Marx never met J. Edgar Hoover. He was a right wing Republican, and he did admire J. Edgar Hoover, and so, he did what he did for everybody he knew slightly. He would send J. Edgar Hoover boxes and boxes of Marx toys to give out as presents at Christmas. I got -- when I was in Vietnam, he sent me -- and I was engaged to his daughter -- he sent me boxes that I could give out to embassy people, Vietnamese, and what not. He must have sent thousands of boxes of these out, to friends and associates. So, he would send Louis -- he would send J. Edgar Hoover boxes of toys to give out, just as an admirer, and they knew people in common. They had friends in common, because of the right wing circles that my father-in-law moved in, and he was on, I think, a list of "Friends of the FBI." So, actually -- When -- I think his name was Brennan, an officer in charge of the investigation -- listed people who should be interviewed with respect to me. They listed my father-in-law and stepmother-in-law, everybody. And they had a box next to each one, approved or not approved, and, apparently, the story is -- the tapes, rather the records, seem to show -- Hoover disapproved the interview of Marx on the grounds that he was a friend of the FBI. And Brennan apparently misread this mark and did assign someone to interview Marx, which didn't happen. It never came about. Now, Louis Marx would have been more than happy, not just to be interviewed, but to put me in prison. He was a Nixon Republican. He thought I should be in prison, as he told my wife, and Patricia said, "I don't want to hear that anymore, you know, he's my husband," and so forth. Louis Marx never saw me again, would never see me again after the Pentagon Papers came out, and his son, his oldest son, has never seen me again, for 37 years now. But -- and the father is dead now. So, he would have been happy to do it. When Hoover learned that Brennan had scheduled an interview against his will, he was furious and wanted to reassign Brennan to Siberia or, you know, the equivalent of Siberia, somewhere, and he had to be prevailed on that this would not be good. Brennan was a very good guy, and they couldn't do this, and so forth. So, that's what that was about. But, in fact, there was no question of their not being interested in me. It was just specifically Louis Marx that Hoover was inclined not to have interviewed, mistakenly, and Hoover would have been -- the stepmother was interviewed, by the way, the stepmother-in-law, and she didn't mind being interviewed. None of these people minded. They were all interviewed, actually, except for Louis Marx, and he was envious. He wanted to be interviewed, but they did, of course, they -- but remember -- oh, the people I'm talking to don't know -- the FBI knew who put out the Pentagon Papers, because they had known it since early 1970. They had been told by my -- now, this is my former wife's mother-in-law, her father's wife -- not her mother, second wife -- the stepmother had told -- I think I've got the wrong, wrong relationship here. It was mother-in-law --

Timothy Naftali

No, it's your mother in law, step mother-in-law.

Daniel Ellsberg

My stepmother-in-law. I'm very bad on these relationships -- her stepmother, correct?

Timothy Naftali

Your stepmother-in-law --

Daniel Ellsberg

Her father's second wife is her stepmother, fair?

Timothy Naftali

Yes.

Daniel Ellsberg

I do this all the time with relatives; I can't get it right. Okay, she had to become quite conservative in her older age, and she went right to the FBI, having been told by my former wife that I had copied the Pentagon Papers. So, the FBI knew this from, either late December, either late '69 or early '70, and they interviewed RAND. Do you know about this?

Timothy Naftali

No.

Daniel Ellsberg

I think this was something I had to cut out of the book, just for space. I had a whole chapter on it. The FBI came to RAND in April of '70, having already tried to interview my wife, my former wife. And my wife, former wife, had been advised by her lawyer not to see them unless with a lawyer, and they don't interview people with their lawyers, so, they gave up on that. They came to RAND, Harry Rowen, and the security officers, and various people, to tell them this story: that I had copied the Pentagon Papers, and apparently -- not then, of course, known as the Pentagon Papers, but that I had copied a large top-secret study -- and given it to Fulbright and Goodell. And the president of RAND then told them, "Well, those people had a right to see it anyway. As senators they can get it," -- mistaken, because when Fulbright asked for the study, on a classified basis, four times, of Secretary of Defense Laird, he was simply refused. He didn't get it, but even a well-informed Harry is not exactly a layman at that point. He had been in the government, he was president of RAND, but he assumed that a senator did have a right to it. Indeed, the senators thought that. But, you know, no. So he said, you know, Harry actually said, "It's not a security issue here, you know. It's indiscretion." But at this point, hearing that it had gone, knowing that it had gone to Fulbright and Goodell, the FBI, we know from their files now, which I got on Freedom of Information Act, backed off. They decided that since

Fulbright was involved, it had the potential to, quote, "embarrass the Bureau" if they pursued this issue. It would come out. Fulbright might hurt them on their appropriations, somehow, get into a fight with the senator from Arkansas. So, they backed off on this, in about May of 1970, 1970, a year before the Pentagon Papers. Well, when the Pentagon Papers came out, they knew who had given it, very quickly. What is not clear from the files -- I've gotten -- what is it, I think, 24,000 pages. Let's see, no, no, I've gotten 16,000 pages of files from the FBI. I've never gone through them. It's just too much -- FOIA, a lot of it blacked out, of course. But from what I did read, it's not clear whether the FBI ever made clear to the White House that they had known about this a year earlier, and hadn't moved on it. On the other hand, it's possible they did tell Henry Kissinger and others. There are some indications that Kissinger did know about it. This is all a bit somewhat murky.

Timothy Naftali

Let me ask you, and that's my last question, which is, your relationship with Henry Kissinger. He was initially madder than anyone else in the Oval Office --

Daniel Ellsberg

Oh, no, you know, that's very -- the history of that is belied by the tapes, very strongly. In fact, I'm surprised to hear you say that. Haven't you seen the comment in my book, the very first discussion on June 13th, between him and Nixon?

Timothy Naftali

I'm sure I have. Wasn't he upset -- what was he thinking about you?

Daniel Ellsberg

Very mild reaction. The idea of someone putting out the tapes was very ominous as a precedent -- as a precedent for others, because they had a lot of secrets that had to be kept secret from the public and from Congress. The question was -- it was a question, though, of whether the person had access, because a lot of discussion between Nixon and Kissinger: what does State have? What does Laird have? Rogers and Laird were both skeptics of their policy, and Kissinger assures them, "I haven't given State or Defense," you know, "real data on what our plans are. Don't worry about it. All they know is what we've done" -- this is almost an exact quote -- "not why we've done it, or what our motives were," or something. "I don't tell them that, the secretary of state or the secretary of defense." We go back to what I was talking about, compartmentation, earlier. "They have no need to know. They're critical of the policy. They would object to it. They might even leak." In fact, one of the first suspicions by Nixon and Kissinger was that Laird had leaked the Pentagon Papers.

Timothy Naftali

[Inaudible]

Daniel Ellsberg

What?

Timothy Naftali

Yes, yes, this was a long concern of theirs.

Daniel Ellsberg

So, that's why they didn't give him that kind of information. In other words, so long as I didn't know much, as far as Nixon knew, about his policy -- Nixon had no reason to fear me; I'm at RAND. Now, Kissinger knew I knew a little more than he let on. As far as I can tell from the record, or memoirs or anything, Kissinger never did -- from the tapes -- Kissinger never did reveal to Nixon that I had worked for him on NSSM 1 or on the Options Paper or at all, for the Pierre [phonetic sp] or the early - - the indication of that is, he talks about my dealing with him in the late '60s, my having dealt with him, and then again a meeting that he had with me in '71, he tells, at a conference where I confronted him, an MIT conference where I confronted him. He doesn't mention in that very conversation that I had worked in his office in early 1969, or that I had two long discussions with him at San Clemente in 1970. I infer from these omissions, you know, this strange history which goes up to this point, and then breaks off, and then picks up here, that he didn't want to admit to Nixon that the man who had just released the Pentagon Papers had worked directly for him in the Nixon administration, and --

Timothy Naftali

Which is why Nixon assumed there had to be a conspiracy --

Daniel Ellsberg

There had to be a conspiracy that I must have gotten it from somebody else. Now, if they had a discussion of the fact that I had worked on NSSM 1, a frank discussion, they both would have discussed, "Well, probably that's all he has," and, you know, it would not follow, as far as somebody else had to give it to me. But when they realized that I had documents on NSSM 1, that is, from the Nixon NSC, Nixon had to assume that I had gotten it from somebody else. Kissinger didn't have to assume that.

Timothy Naftali

Could you tell us the story on camera of what Kissinger said, I guess it was, was it at RAND the day after the election?

Daniel Ellsberg

Yeah, well, it was right after the election. Kissinger, who had worked for Rockefeller right up to the election -- And, in that capacity, I had talked to him in '68 as a Rockefeller man. I had given him my view on Vietnam, and he said, "Would you be willing to talk to -- would you be willing to talk to Nelson Rockefeller?" "Of course, I'd be happy to," but that didn't come about. But I did talk to representatives of Gavin, and of Romney on the Republican side, and to Humphrey on the Democratic side, and I would have been happy to talk to Nixon, but I had no line into it. I didn't know anybody who knew him, or I would have. And I was dealing a lot with Bobby Kennedy. So, I just wanted everybody to know what I thought the reality was in Vietnam and what their choices were. So, that was in the summer of '68. So, now, wait, what was the exact question?

Timothy Naftali

Kissinger spoke to a group.

Daniel Ellsberg

Oh, yes, so later in '68, right after the election -- I was also, by the way, on a study group, which involved Kissinger, at the Council on Foreign Relations, when he talked about decent interval. He was the one pushing the idea of decent interval, that it would be -- our objective should be, simply, to assure that there was a decent interval -- a decent interval -- between the withdrawal of our troops and the takeover of Saigon, and the implication was six months, maybe a year, a year and a half would be fine -- it would be very good, that kind of period. I'd heard him discuss that. Now, that was quite a radical discussion, especially for a Republican to make. Nobody else was talking about the acceptability of Vietnam becoming Communist, or of Saigon becoming a Communist city any time during that. Even the Democratic candidates were not willing to say, out loud, that they were willing to contemplate that. They talked about negotiation, but it was all very vague, what it would come to. So, Nixon was sort of on the left of the public discussion of that. Now, to the left of him was, publicly, was nobody but the far left: the Yippies, Abbie Hoffman, Howard Zinn, and others who were saying, "Get out immediately. Get altogether out, not in a year and a half and, you know, not six months, but get out." But, in between, you didn't see that. So, as far as I knew, Kissinger, from sort of a liberal point of view, was at the radical end of this. Right after '68, then, right after the election rather, he came to RAND for the first time in many years. He would have been in the outs with RAND, going all the way back to his first book in '57, on nuclear weapons and foreign policy, which RAND thought very poorly of because he urged first use of nuclear weapons and threats of first use. And RAND was -- most RAND people were not in favor of that at all. So, for almost ten years, I don't think he visited RAND. He visits RAND and gives a talk at which I was present, where he made the statement, "Richard Nixon is not fit to be president." This is a Rockefeller point of view, and I was thinking, that's a striking thing for a Republican to be saying right after the election, you know. How can you get a job? Well, he changed his view of Nixon, you know, within days, because Nixon offered him to come to talk to him and offered him the post of national security assistant. So, he discovered that Nixon wasn't unfit to be president after all. It had to change his mind about Nixon, that Nixon had such good judgment as to offer him this job. It was very reassuring. And Nixon, by the way, had never met Kissinger up until that point I've written. So, in retrospect, one of the things that attracted Nixon to Kissinger -- made Kissinger attractive to Nixon -- was his advocacy of first use of nuclear weapons, which Nixon had always agreed with. In fact, I remember in '57 a photograph on the front page of "The New York Times," of Nixon, going into a National Security Council meeting with a book prominently under his arm, and you could read in the picture the title of the book, and it was, "Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy," by Henry Kissinger. And I remember being struck by that, thinking, "Boy, that's the best plug for a book I've ever seen." The vice president is carrying it in to the National Security Council. That stuck in my mind. Have you ever seen that picture?

Timothy Naftali

I have not seen that picture.

Daniel Ellsberg

That would be, that would be findable, but he hadn't met Kissinger at that point. The point was, he was very impressed by Kissinger's advocacy of first use of nuclear weapons, and coming back to my first, my meeting with Kissinger, I should say, not my first, at the Pierre in December, late December of 1969, I said --

Timothy Naftali

'68.

Daniel Ellsberg

'68, I said, "You could use nuclear weapons, and annihilate everybody, but," -- I said "kill everybody" - - "but that wouldn't be a victory as I would see it." What I didn't know was that Nixon had had, since '68, the thought of threatening nuclear weapons. That's when he had the discussion with Haldeman, of the madman theory and the threat of nuclear weapons, so Nixon had already -- and had undoubtedly conveyed this to Kissinger by that time -- had already conceived. The trump card here, the way to achieving a successful outcome, is not to just to threaten escalation, but to threaten nuclear weapons. As he put it to Haldeman, "Then Ho Chi Minh will come to Paris, or wherever, right away, and make a deal." And the deal he was after was a very moderate deal: you get your troops out; I'll get my troops out. Moderate, but infeasible -- no Vietnamese was going to make that deal. In short, Nixon had -- actually, Nixon's speechwriter, Phil Whalen, says that he had had similar discussions with Nixon as early as '67.

Timothy Naftali

When was the last time you saw Kissinger?

Daniel Ellsberg

Was in the MIT meeting that he reported to Nixon when he said that I called him a war criminal. He said to Nixon, "He was, you know, wild, radical. He called me a war criminal." Actually, I didn't. There was a -- he said, "A murderer, he called me a murderer and a war criminal." I didn't use any language like that at all, nothing like it. He was confusing, I think, something in his mind. About the same time, in connection with the Laos invasion, I wrote an article for the "New York Review of Books," which I gave the title, "What Nixon Is Up to on His Strategy." They gave it a front page title of, "Murder in Laos," and this was maybe a month after I had seen Kissinger, and in the article, I do use the word murderer, in connection with the killing of civilians in Laos, that this was murder, which was the feeling I had come to, of course, in mid-'69. All of this is so detailed. It's for an oral history. It's not for a Watergate exhibit or anything.

Timothy Naftali

Well, no, this is an oral history.

Daniel Ellsberg

Yeah, well, it is an oral history. So, in fact, Kissinger's statement to Nixon that, in my last meeting with him, I had called him a murderer and a war criminal was not correct. I had never used those terms in

connection with Kissinger. I had said that what we were doing in Laos, in the article, was murder. It's associated with the policy, not specifically with Kissinger, and the implication was war criminal. I didn't use that term. But what I had said in MIT -- but, you know, from the book. This is in the book, I believe -- was this. It was my last meeting with him. I had met him just before that and, again, he did not report this to Nixon. In August of '70, just before my marriage and my honeymoon, and then, again, just -- I broke off the honeymoon to have a second visit with him at San Clemente, both at San Clemente, and that's another story we can go into. And then, he asked, he urged me to come to be a consultant at the White House. And he said, "We use the words 'consultant' very carefully now. You would not be officially a consultant, but we would pay your travel, and your hotel. And I want to have a talk with you, like the options talk we had in, last year in '69." He didn't say options with respect to what, and since Vietnam was not a hot issue at that particular moment -- Cambodia had died down at that point -- and, I don't know, to this day, what it was he wanted to discuss with me. He -- I -- we made a date to come to Washington, which his secretary called me up in Cambridge, and said, "He's not able to make that, to do that, but he's very anxious to see you. Let's make another date." So, we made a date for a week away, and then when that came that had to be postponed. And the third time, I said, well -- in my own mind, I thought, well, this is not going to happen, and I gave it up. And I thought -- I didn't know what that was all about, what that options stuff -- why he was urging me to come. I thought, maybe he just wants to be able to say, "I've talked to everybody, even Dan Ellsberg," because by that time, of course, I was an open critic of the war, although the Pentagon Papers had not come out. In retrospect, I have one little hypothesis. Exactly at that time was the Jordan crisis, which did involve nuclear threats at that time. In fact, Haldeman takes some credit, and Laird takes a lot of credit -- if you read, and read Hirsch's account on this. Laird -- with other people, he wouldn't say it directly to Hirsch -- takes credit for sitting on Nixon's urging to "nuke 'em, nuke 'em." "Henry -- nuke 'em, Henry -- nuke 'em, Laird," and that Laird was actually postponing action on this, and doing that until Nixon died down, and there's a strong implication, by the way, that this is one of Nixon's alcoholic episodes. That is, which was frequently, but it was during that that he frequently said, "Nuke 'em Henry, nuke 'em Henry. That's what I want you to do," as he did on April 25, 1972, you know. But that wasn't drunken. What he says to Kissinger, of course, then is, "I would use the nuclear weapon, got that Henry?" And Kissinger says, "Well, I think that would be just too much." He said, "You think so, Henry? I just want you to think big, for Christ's sake." Well, he had a lot of discussions like that, some more passionate than others. That was, apparently, going on at the time I was talking to Kissinger, the considerations about Jordan and the efforts to destroy Fatah, I mean, the Palestinians in Jordan, and so forth. It may have been that he wanted to talk to me about. Anyway, that goes on, nothing happens in terms of discussion. Finally, there's an MIT meeting. Do you want me to tell that?

Timothy Naftali

Sure, and then we'll end with that.

Daniel Ellsberg

Yeah. The meeting, called Runnymede, pretentiously by the MIT students, meaning that they thought of themselves as the barons meeting the king. And it wasn't just the MIT students; it was their parents, and various prestigious elders who were at this meeting -- in fact, quite a prestigious crew. Vance was there, for one thing. The head of Itek, Franklin Lindsay, I think his name was, was there. I think his son was at MIT. And it was quite a -- and the editor-in-chief of "Newsweek" -- what was his name? I used to know him, a number of times. You don't remember who that was?

Timothy Naftali

What, no --

Daniel Ellsberg

-- was there. So, the barons were meeting King John, and something comes up. Runnymede is a little bit in the news now because the present president, George W. Bush, it turns out, suspended habeas corpus and eventually, with the help of Congress and the military commissions -- which doesn't go back to George III. It goes back to Runnymede and the Magna Carta. It just canceled out 700 years of British constitutional law. So, Kissinger was going to be there, and I wanted to hear how he briefed these people, what his briefing was. I hadn't had any particular thought of confronting him at it. And the -- there was one prior indirect interaction. I'd been at a -- I had talked to Don Oberdorfer who was writing a book on Tet and -- or no, not about Tet, but about Nixon's policy -- and Don got me by phone, and said, he'd just talked to Kissinger, and that Kissinger had said to him that, "Our actual policy," he said, "is one that was actually recommended by our left wing friends, including Dan Ellsberg." He mentioned Mort Halperin and Dan Ellsberg. I said, "Really? What did he say the policy was?" And he said, "Well, negotiating, Vietnamization." He may have mentioned mutual withdrawal. And I said, "He said nothing to you about escalation, about threatening nuclear weapons, about threatening invasion?" He said, "No, no, nothing like that." I said, "Don, if his policy was what he described it to you, this is now -- I would never -- I would still be at RAND." The Pentagon Papers hadn't come out yet. I could have said to him, "I would never have given the Pentagon Papers." I said, "That's not his policy," and I described what I thought his policy was, in terms of threats. So, at MIT, at a reception, early on, Kissinger saw me, and came over, very friendly. He said, "Dan, Dan, I hope I didn't embarrass you with Don Oberdorfer." "No, no, it didn't embarrass me."

The implication was that he had identified me with the policy, and that, I think it had not -- I had refrained from putting out that I had worked on NSSM 1. That had never come out in public. I was discreet on that point, I thought, embarrass him to no effect. And so, I think the point -- he had pointed out that I had worked for him. I think he thought that I might be embarrassed at the thought that I had worked for him, if that came out somehow. He says, "I hope I didn't embarrass you." I said, "No, no problem, Henry." That was all right. He then went in and had his briefing. So, his discussion was that he said, "You know, you're asking questions," he said, "as if we're trying to widen the war." He says, "We're trying to end the war, to bring it to an end, shorten it," and I don't remember at this point more of the exact words, but that was the idea. "We're trying to end it, not to widen it." Now, in retrospect, he left that meeting to monitor in the White House -- go back to D.C., and monitor the pre-invasion bombing of Laos, which started the next morning, or that night and the next morning. So, all this talk, "We are not" -- oh, I remember the words now, "We're winding the war down, and it will continue to wind down," and he goes back to the White House and works on the incursion into Laos, which includes, of course, Vietnamese troops within a day or two -- so, wild. Then, meanwhile, I just said, "Well, I will ask a question, and I'll only get a chance to ask one question. That's the way this thing works here. So, what question shall I ask him?" And so, I decided on this. I had talked to Winston Lord, who was now a chief aide of Kissinger, deputy, several times in the intervening years, and he had stayed with Kissinger when the all the others left, and he was rather apologetic about that, why he stayed, and I said, "Winston, I understand that. You're a young Foreign Service officer. You know, to work with Kissinger is a great opportunity. You know, do your best." So, I didn't hold that against him. I'd had, in the fall -- we're talking, now, 1970 -- I had copied the Pentagon Papers, but, of course, I didn't tell him that. So, I had dinner with him and his wife, who was Chinese. Later, of course, he was

Ambassador to China, and he was, I think he spoke Chinese, as I recall -- he was an Orientalist. So, I hadn't seen his wife very much but she -- we had a long conversation with her, and she was very right wing, very, at that point, very Republican, very hawkish on the war, much more than Winston. And so, she was pushing at me, and pushing at me, on this and that. Finally, at one point, I'd said to her, "You know, these people don't have any concern" -- I was talking Democrats or Republicans -- I said, "They don't have any concern on Vietnamese deaths. It's not a consideration." You know, she said something. She was very skeptical on that point, and I said, "We never collected statistics on it. Ted Kennedy, in the Senate, did what he could to get statistics. They were never confirmed by the Defense." I said, "Here's a situation, after all, where we collect statistics on rubber tires that are needed for the B-52s, and on how many bicycles may come down the Ho Chi Minh Trail, and how many of this and that, everything, but nothing on Vietnamese deaths." And she said -- and I said, "Look, to give you an example of that," I said, "I proposed a study when I was working on the Options Paper," which I told her about in front of Winston -- that -- -- I proposed a study of Vietnamese casualties, that we do a serious study of what the bombing was causing in the way of Vietnamese casualties. I said, "There had never been such a study." I knew that, and I proposed that they do one, and Kissinger had rejected it.

There was just no interest in knowing, because it might leak out, and there was no concern. It was not possibly a concern. So, suddenly, this quite conservative woman -- very brilliant woman, very intellectual woman, brilliant -- who had been pressing me up until this time, suddenly her whole demeanor changed, and she said, "Is this true, Winston?" Winston said, "Yeah, that's true." And so, she looked very disturbed, and she left. She didn't say any more, and she left. She left the room, and she went upstairs. So, I thought back to that, and I thought that got to her, apparently. To me, it was self-evident and commonplace, that there was no interest in this, but apparently that was a touchy point, perhaps. So, and I thought, so, I thought I'll ask him about Vietnamese casualties, and -- Kissinger. Just to be sure that he didn't have a ready answer, I went to a pay phone and I called Winston Lord, in a break in the conference. I don't think I went into all these details, but since it's the Nixon Library, it's of interest, and, of course, I'm giving away -- but at this point, I'm sure Winston wouldn't mind this, I don't think, at this point. So, I call Winston, and I said, "Winston, do you remember the proposal I made for another NSSM, National Security Study Memorandum -- not one, but you know, I suggested about seven or eight draft proposals that I wrote out, none of which were accepted. I said, "Remember that I proposed the study of Vietnamese casualties, and you remember that discussion we had with your wife?" He said, "Sure, sure." I said, "Have they, ever since, done such a study?" He said, "No, not to my knowledge." I said, "Okay, good, that's what I wanted to know." So, the time comes for me to ask a question of Kissinger. So, I said, "Dr. Kissinger, you said earlier that" -- what was it -- -- I forget, I had a lead-in, which is in my book, but I don't remember the exact words. Let me put aside the preamble, which I forget at this moment, to my question. But the point of the preamble was that you are giving a message about values. He didn't want to discuss morals and values and what not. That was, you know, subjective, and was for other people to discuss and worry about. I said, "But the truth is you are giving a message about values by what is said by the White House, and what is not said." I said, "So, I have this question for you. What, in your best -- what is your best estimate, of the number of Vietnamese civilians who would be killed if your strategy's carried out in the next 12 months?" He'd been very, very self-assured up until this point, and had answered everything in a very smooth way, which impressed me, and I thought, "I can see why this guy is so persuasive to people. He handles everything very well." And, for the first time, he stopped. He stopped on that question, and he actually looked around, and he thought for a moment, and he says, because I'd said Vietnamese civilians. He says, "You're accusing us of racism." I said, "No, no, I'm not. That's not the issue here." I said, "Just, let's just say, what is the estimate of casualties of all kinds over there, including civilians, that you

have?" He said -- well, first he said -- oh, then he said, "That is a very cleverly worded question." I said, "I'm not trying to be tricky here. Just, what's the answer?" He says -- he thought for a while. He said, "What is your alternative?" I said, "Mr. Kissinger, I know the language of alternatives, and of options, and pros and cons, and costs and benefits, very well, and that's not what I'm asking you. I'm simply asking you, what, in your estimate, will be the consequence of your chosen strategy, your chosen approach, whatever it is?" He went past. He even turned around. He sort of paced back and forth, and I said, "Or don't you have one?" I said, "Is it that you don't have any estimate?" Which was the case, which I knew to be the case. He paced around, and then, the student, who was running the thing, said, "Well, Dr. Kissinger has answered enough questions, I think, tonight, and he has a busy schedule. He has to get back on the plane. Let's call it a -- " Without having given any answer, he left, and went off, and that was the last time I saw him. So, that was the meeting he mentioned to Nixon. He said, "The last time I saw him was at this MIT meeting where he called me a murderer and a war criminal." I've said exactly what I said to him, and I didn't use terms like that at all, but that's what he heard, let's say. And, of course, it was not just a Republican thing. It was just as true under McNamara and under the Democrats.

Timothy Naftali

Let me ask you, what were you doing the day Nixon resigned? Where were you?

Daniel Ellsberg

Oh, well, I can smile on that, because it was August 8, 1974, which was the fourth anniversary of my -- well, when he announced that he would resign, the next day, was our anniversary, and we were getting ready to celebrate it at a fancy dinner in Marin County in Mill Valley. And so, we went in to dinner, to celebrate this, and it was rather an expensive restaurant, and a bottle of wine came over to the table. An anonymous person there had contributed a bottle of wine, because it had just been announced on TV that Nixon was going to resign the next day, and then, at the end of the meal, I was going to pay it, and someone else had paid the meal, so, the only time this happened, in our experience, so -- but we've had something else to celebrate all these days on our anniversary. Though, actually, we rarely celebrate it together, because August 8th is in between Hiroshima Day and Nagasaki -- the sixth, and Nagasaki Day, on the ninth -- so, for years, I was usually in jail during that period, or I was off demonstrating somewhere. It's only very recently that I've been together with her on that anniversary.

Timothy Naftali

Dr. Ellsberg, thank you for your time. Thank you, Dan.