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Oral History Interview of

Harold E. Stassen

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This interview is being conducted with Mr. Harold Stassen in his office in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on April 29, 1977. The interviewer is Dr. Thomas Soapes of the Eisenhower Library. Present for the interview are Mr. Stassen and Dr. Soapes.

DR. SOAPES: I'd like to focus our attention here on your role in the disarmament field. When you assumed the position as chief of arms negotiations in the Eisenhower administration, what basic instructions did you receive from the President as to what type of progress he expected to make in that field?

MR. STASSEN: Well, first of all, of course, his first instruction was to develop a recommended policy. The situation had been that there was a deadlock between departments in the beginning of his administration which had made it impossible to reach agreement on a policy and a program. And so, actually I think the cable came to me while I was doing Foreign Operations work on a trip over in Pakistan. The ambassador there called me in and here was a secret cable which asked me whether I would take on the matter of shaping up a policy in the arms control field. And, of course, having sat on the National Security Council with him and the Cabinet from the beginning, I was well aware of the issues that were there within the administration. So, as I recall, I cabled back saying, in principle I'd be willing to tackle it, but I'd talk to him when I got back on a certain day.

When I got back to the White House he told me that he was very much concerned, that he felt that to give a better chance of world peace that we needed to be able to take some initiatives, and that he would like, first of all, for me to proceed to develop a recommended policy for the United States. I then proceeded to

assemble a group of men, women of great distinction in various fields. You'll find in your records where, oh, there must have been about thirty individuals from the various fields like Dr. Ernest Lawrence and Dr. [Edward] Teller in atomic energy, Bedell Smith and others in the Army, some of the admirals in the Navy, General [Jimmy] Doolittle and others in the Air Force, Dr. [James] Fisk and others in the scientific field, Dr. Mouton in the economic field from Brookings Institute. We assembled this group and they started to study, and we went down to Quantico, Virginia for an intensive session. We developed a group of documents which are still, as far as I know, top secret--they were in gray folders--which projected and analyzed what the H-Bomb age and the missile age would be. That is the beginning of outer space missiles and then in effect in the realization of those potential developments what the United States' policy ought to be. And then these were presented to the President and the National Security Council. And, contemporaneously with that period, came the issue about meeting the Russian leaders. There was an internal difference of opinion in the administration about whether or not a summit meeting should be held. I was one of those that felt that it would be good to hold a summit meeting and--

Q: Why did you think that that was a good approach?

MR. STASSEN: That it would be one part of opening up exchange between the two areas of the world. And also that the image of

position of President Eisenhower and of the United States in the world should be that we were seeking to find ways to improve the opportunity for peaceful progress. This was an intensive, internal debate in that period of time and finally led to his decision that, yes, he would go to a summit meeting.

Q: Who else favored the summit meeting within the administration?

MR. STASSEN: C.D. Jackson, who was in the White House staff group, Nelson Rockefeller. I believe around the Security Council table that--I believe Herb Brownell spoke up for it; I think Milton Eisenhower was for it, speaking of the sort of your initial stages of the unfolding of it. And then of course when the summit conference was set--must have been about July of 1955--then there was an urgency of reaching decisions on the policy affecting arms control and disarmament. Then those decisions were made by the President in a series of National Security Council meetings so that he went to the Geneva summit conference with his mind quite clear as to what he would be willing to do and what he would not do and how we'd approach the moving toward an open world. Of course you do have in mind historically, but you get the perspective that up to this time the matter of what you might call the "iron curtain mentality," the closed off area of the Soviet Union and all the phobias that were connected with that was very much a part of the scene. So that a great part of moving for that summit meeting and plans to use it to open up the world and to open up the

communication, having in mind that Stalin had died and that new leaders were there in Russia. The world situation, of course, was changing.

Q: Changing in the sense that the administration felt there was a greater chance for accommodation with Stalin now departed?

MR. STASSEN: That's right. Greater chance also of opening up communication. Moving on over you have to have in mind that then at that Geneva Conference, you see one of our recommendations was the proposal to open up to reciprocal observation--the "Open Skies" approach came out of our studies. And, of course, after it hit so dramatically then more or less everybody started to claim credit for it, but it came directly out of our studies, it's in our studies, those secret reports. The premises, of course, were that you could not do any kind of a disarmament approach unless there was inspection, that there was greater danger of miscalculation on one part or the other and then somebody moving. You have to remember, too, that back in that time there were some of the advocates of the so-called pre-emptive war, to try to use nuclear weapons to obliterate the opposition before it would begin. And there were many extreme doctrines proposed. And I think that historically as you trace it through--and now whether his files will have those top secret documents--they were at that time classified top secret--or where they would be I'm not sure--but from any study of arms control and of Eisenhower's decisions, that

group of reports which would have been made in early 1955, shortly before the summit meeting, would be a very key, basic document. That is, he made the decisions.

I think this is in some of the other oral histories we've taken for Dulles at the Firestone Library and for Columbia. But as he approached the summit meeting, Secretary Dulles, for whom, as I've said all the time, I have great respect although there were deep differences in approach, he took the view that the summit meeting should not take up the subject of disarmament or arms control. And on that premise he did not want in the delegation originally either myself or Nelson Rockefeller to be present at Geneva. President Eisenhower called me in just before that session at Geneva and told me directly that Secretary Dulles did not want me in the Geneva delegation because it would indicate a readiness to talk about disarmament and Secretary Dulles thought we shouldn't talk about it, shouldn't try to move on it, but that he thought that it would probably come up and he probably would want it up and we had a little study. So he asked if I'd mind going to Paris and standing by there with General [Alfred] Gruenther, who was then over there in SHAPE, and Admiral [Arthur] Radford so that if he wanted to call us up, we'd be nearby. And that actually is what happened.

In the opening sessions he became so convinced, the opening day, that he wanted to go into this subject and that the Russians were opening it, he sent the message down and we flew up from Paris

to Geneva. Then, in the presence of all of them, of Dulles and everybody else, this whole delegation, he told me what he learned since he arrived and he asked me to prepare a speech on the subject for the next day, working with everybody. So it was an intensive night of work with Secretary Dulles and everybody else. The next morning I presented to him a draft of a message which included consideration of all the different views--that included the "Open Skies"--and there was discussion and he made the decisions. Matter of fact, I think maybe I should dig out for you, I think that original draft and his notes on it I have, that I drafted and where he would delegate and adjust. I think that's in my papers.

Then, in that discussion, Secretary Dulles said that on the "Open Skies" that that should not be in the initial message because that should be used in rejoinder. I said to President Eisenhower in Secretary Dulles's presence, I said, "Mr. President, in all due respect to that view, as you know I've negotiated a lot with the Russians all the way back into the United Nations beginnings and," I said, "Bulganin is chairman of this session"--they rotated the chairmanship--"in my judgment, Bulganin will not wait to go around as you say. He will take the initiative right in his first speech and you won't have the opening for two speeches. You'll be next in the rotation and you give your message and when it comes back to Bulganin he'll adjourn. There won't be any further discussion. That's the way they negotiate and the way they operate." So he then sort of hedged a bit toward Dulles' view. He took some of the

"Open Skies" language from the draft that was prepared. But when they opened the session, Bulganin called the session to order and said, "I have a statement to make on behalf of the Soviet Union." And President Eisenhower looked back to me with a smile and he said to Foster, "I think Harold's right; we'd better go." So then you'll find that in his message in that Geneva meeting he put the "Open Skies" in full blown on his first presentation. And the fascinating thing is when it came back around after Macmillan and the French prime minister spoke, Bulganin said, "We've now concluded our session." It was ended.

But that "Open Skies," as you may also know, was the dramatic worldwide emphasis and it wasn't just in itself "Open Skies" and it wasn't only designed that way--it was a part of our endeavor which President Eisenhower fully took the lead in and subscribed to from our internal discussions that it was a better chance to move into the H-bomb age without war if we opened up the world. So "Open Skies" was the dramatization about, for the sake of peace, open up the world. And this became the great thrust, had great publicity. I think it would further show that Eisenhower's popular following went up over eighty percent, the highest point in August, September of that year, of the whole eight years. And a tremendous worldwide impact.

And then, with that, Nelson Rockefeller had worked up the concept of the exchange of delegations, so those exchanges, they are still going on which have been renewed I believe every four

years since that. I think that from that '55 meeting the preliminary negotiations about the exchanges between the Soviet Union and the United States took about two years to actually negotiate out. So I believe the agreement on first exchanges came to fruition in '57. Then there was the beginning of the exhibition in Moscow and the weight lifters and the orchestras and all this that began the exchange, and I think it's the very same agreement that every four years has been renewed since that time.

So I've always felt that historically President Eisenhower's leadership for, in effect, opening up the Soviet Union and opening up the world and decreasing the danger of surprise attack and the apprehension and miscalculations that could come up from concern about surprise attack, having in mind the background of, on the one hand, our Pearl Harbor experience and on the other hand the Russian experience with the Hitler attacks and so on, that sequence, that was, I think, a great historic moment.

Q: Did you get a feel for why Eisenhower changed his approach and called you down and decided to go ahead with this proposal?

MR. STASSEN: Yes, my feeling was that in his first contacts immediately with the Russian leaders--and Zhukov, of course, was alive and was there at that time--that he thought it was the right time to do it. I don't know as though he really changed his mind. My feeling always was, although this he never said to me, that he left us behind originally in deference to Foster Dulles, but that

when the situation was there he called us on up. This is a characterization through the years, you know, just as I had great respect for Foster Dulles but had differences with him as to what the policy ought to be. President Eisenhower had great respect for Foster Dulles but when the clutches would come there and he became convinced of something, he would overrule Foster and then Foster would accept the decision and go forward. Historically there was another very dramatic thing about that on the Suez Canal and so forth.

Q: You've mentioned that significance of inspection and I think historians have agreed that inspection was a key point in all of this. In the memorandum that General [Andrew] Goodpaster wrote of the meeting which you had with the President and the others right before the proposal was made--

MR. STASSEN: He, by the way, was on the staff at the White House at that time. And he was in all of these sessions. And probably kept some pretty good minutes because he's that kind of a man.

Q: Right. He makes one note in his memo of that meeting that you had advocated the exclusion of advanced technology from the inspection procedure so that the inspection would be of a limited nature. And I was wondering if you remember that and why the inspection would be limited?

MR. STASSEN: I don't have any clear recollection of that point. I think that we said that you had to always be aware that you couldn't really inspect what was going on in the laboratories on either side but that opening up so that inspectors could move around was a sine qua non of any sensible agreement.

Q: Some of the commentators have said that Eisenhower was holding out for a foolproof inspection.

MR. STASSEN: He might have used that expression in a press conference or something, but he was never so naive to believe that an inspection system could be foolproof. But it had to be as good as we could design and there was work on that. And of course in those early stages, the immediate stages, the Russians wouldn't agree to any inspection. In the course then of the negotiations from '55 on up, the follow-ups to '58, they did gradually open up that they would be willing to provide for some inspection. There was a certain amount of opening and development of openness, willingness to exchange inspectors.

Q: Was a disarmament agreement tied to any political considerations?

MR. STASSEN: The beginning, that is the summit meeting, that first summit meeting was set up on this basis, that President Eisenhower made a speech about atoms for peace, the willingness to meet anywhere provided there was some clear indication of a readiness on

the other side to do something toward peace and mentioning various things that they could do--seems to me that was about April of '55--like agreeing to have a mutual withdrawal from Austria.

Q: The "Atoms for Peace" speech was December '53. And there were some suggestions in there of--

MR. STASSEN: Things to do.

Q: Right. Germany was one issue; Trieste, I think was--

MR. STASSEN: Trieste, of course Trieste was mainly with Yugoslavia and Tito. There was sort of a constant issue of whether or not political issues should be tied to arms limitation and there was a view--I'd be inclined to put it this way, although there's always very mixed reasons for many things--generally those who did not want any kind of agreement whatsoever affecting arms took the position that there had to be first an agreement on the reunification of Germany before we could make any kind of an agreement on arms limitations. At some stages President Eisenhower might have gone along with that kind of thinking, but I don't think he ever really adopted it.

Q: Who were those who were in that position?

MR. STASSEN: Well I think mostly Secretary Dulles and Adenauer of Germany. They were so emphatic about a program for the reunification of Germany that they wanted to put that ahead of

everything. And, of course, way back there it was my view that you just could never expect with the German war history that the Russians would agree to that and that therefore you had to realistically think that there were two Germanys and that we ought to let both Germanys into the United Nations--took a long time before that finally came about--and then negotiate on that basis of how you withdrew part of the troops from each side and Central Europe and so on. I don't believe--although of course I myself haven't, you know, haven't seen those top secret papers since '58 so there may be things in there I don't recall--but I don't believe that we had any political preconditions for the policies that we were recommending.

Q: One of the reasons I raise the question is because Eisenhower did raise the question of some political concessions in the December '53 "Atoms for Peace" speech--

MR. STASSEN: To get the indication that they really wanted to meet. See there was the view, sincerely expressed by some men, that there was never any use negotiating on any subject with the Soviet Union, that you couldn't trust their agreements, that they never wanted any real agreements, that it was a waste of time, that it was deceptive to the rest of the countries of the world, that their meeting had put a different sort of atmosphere of recognition of them that wasn't otherwise there, and so that you shouldn't go into these kinds of sessions. That was a part of the thinking

behind the opposition to a summit meeting. That is that you raise their prestige by Eisenhower being willing to meet with them. These internal debates were pretty intensive about this. And so they took this view about not reaching any agreement with them whatsoever, that it would be a harmful thing for United States policies.

Q: Did these people then, like Dulles, assume that the conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union was to continue on forever without resolution?

MR. STASSEN: Well they looked more for internal deterioration in the Soviet Union that would then cause them to, you know, pull their armies back out of Europe and so forth. It was a sincere view, and you never know what history is going to unfold on things like that.

Q: Some documents suggest that Dulles began to change his views in the second term. Several of the oral history interviews in the Dulles project suggest this. There is a letter that he wrote to Adenauer, I think about '58, where he's talking about not tying a disarmament settlement to political changes. Did you notice a change or a softening of Dulles's position?

MR. STASSEN: Some. And of course this was a thing that I worked on a great deal. I spent a lot of my time in those years talking with Secretary Dulles, trying to reason through the reasons for his

views and the other views that were to be considered. And I also in fact at some times would arrange for a joint conference between Allen Dulles, who was head of CIA, Secretary Dulles, and myself to sit down together on some of these issues on the basis that Allen's intelligence information would be somewhat different than Foster's conceptions of what the picture was. And without it being too blunt, I would try to bring that together in order to, you know, move Secretary Dulles on these policies. Never moved him very far. In fact, I got him to go along on having a summit meeting, which I think in the sweep of the history was a very important Eisenhower initiative. And that was very vigorously debated, as you must have in your files, in the early stages whether Eisenhower should have such a summit meeting, and likewise of what kind of proposals he'd make and what kind of initiatives he'd make. The issue on the exchange of delegations with the Soviet Union, one of the big thrusts was that they will load every delegation that comes over here with NKGB, the secret police people. And our response in the internal debate was not to in any way deny that. Say, "Yes, they will. But anytime they reach out, with whoever they reach out with, they can't avoid a return communication back up that reach to give greater information inside the Soviet Union than they otherwise would have." See I had the background of my own post-war contacts with Stalin, the interviews which were recorded of just how much misinformation they really believe on the top level about the United States and about what was going to happen in the world

and things like that. And in those years particularly, one of my greatest concerns was a miscalculated plunge into a nuclear war.

[Interruption]

Q: In these sessions that you had with Secretary Dulles and his brother, are you telling me that Secretary Dulles's views were in part based on misinformation or a misperception of military realities or of political objectives of the Soviet Union?

MR. STASSEN: The factual situations of the economy and controls and so forth would vary on different issues, but to, you know, to anticipate that the real solution of the whole thing would come from the internal explosion--these could happen but they'd put them down. For instance, one of those times was on the--well of course it came up on the Finnish negotiations which I was in on, the Austrian negotiations. See there was, for instance, the view on Austria that it was just no use, and it was my view we should persist; we should try to think through what the Soviet position was. They would be very concerned if Austria became a part of NATO with its position so far in toward Russia geographically; so we should make it clear that Austria could be independent. It could have its own, in effect, national guard; that it would not be aligned on either side; that we'd both pull out and we should persistently put that in. And these were Eisenhower's decisions. He would say, "Why not keep at it?" As you know it was, I don't know, something like three hundred and some meetings and suddenly

they said they agreed. And the experts still disagree as to why did the Russians at that time agree to a mutual withdrawal from Austria. Nobody knows, and if you ever get the Kremlin minutes opened up I suppose somebody'll find out. But in any event they finally agreed; we did that very careful reciprocal pull back while the Austrians established their own forces. There were those that said that they will never withdraw the Red Army from Austria, there's just no use talking. And Allen Dulles did have information about some of the unsatisfactory aspects of having the Red Army in Austria, that there was some difference of view in the Kremlin as to what they ought to do, things like that.

Now it came up also in connection with Hungary, Czechoslovakia. There was the question of what kinds of initiatives should the United States take to give them a chance to let an independent Czechoslovakia, independent Hungary arise and let it occur without it being such a devastating setback to the Soviet Union that they just couldn't take it. And this was a part of some of the intensive periods when they'd say, "Well, they'd send the Red Army in; they just won't take that much of a reverse." And these were the kind of issues on which I'd try to get Allen Dulles and Foster together and then the President himself.

Q: In May of '55, just before the Geneva meeting, the Russians made an offer which scholars have said appears to have accepted a good deal of the American position on disarmament, and the United States rejected it. Why?

MR. STASSEN: It's hard for me to be absolutely clear with the different years and the different stages of negotiations, but I think at that stage the, you might say, the internal strength inside of President Eisenhower's administration was pretty strong in the direction of making no agreement with them whatsoever. Now as Eisenhower began to make his decisions and to give his emphasis, there was somewhat more of a recognition that that was his policy and that they should go along with it. Then there's the stage in which, in effect, Adenauer was more adamant and one of the French leaders--was it Jacques or something like that--there were contacts with Radford, with Jacques and with Dulles with Adenauer so that we would have that problem of allies being more resistant than our own internal people because they'd been partly overruled by Adenauer's decision. So we went through that kind of a stage. And, of course, it finally reached a stage as you know where the Secretary came to London and in effect ended the negotiations.

Q: Right. That was in the fall.

MR. STASSEN: Fall of '57 wasn't it?

Q: Let's see now, I remember there was a set of discussions in the fall of '55 after Geneva in which you withdrew, at one point, a number of the pre-Geneva American positions.

MR. STASSEN: Pre-Geneva, that was, for instance, the matter of an abolition of nuclear weapons. One of the parts of our study was

that you could not cancel out the nuclear age. That is, when you once had discovered how to make nuclear bombs, you couldn't just wipe that out of existence, and, therefore, to put down any kind of a proposal in which part of it's going to be the elimination of nuclear weapons is just not sound, not right. And we pointed out that a country could have a large stockpile of nuclear weapons and shield them off with the proper shielding and no way you could discover that they were there. With the then most sensitive instruments you had, you could be a hundred feet away from the stockpile and you wouldn't know they were there. So that to have a potential of anybody to say, "We know that two years ago we were to destroy all our nuclear weapons, but we got news for you; we got a couple hundred of them stowed away and you better do so-and-so," that was just an unthinkable position to be in. So we withdrew any proposal that we would wipe out the nuclear age and destroy or eliminate all nuclear weapons. That was the important part of that.

There was quite a lot of turmoil and misunderstanding and so on as to our position at that time, but you'll find that in those top secret papers. As I said, there's no way that you could inspect the elimination of nuclear weapons, therefore you should not take a position that you've eliminated them, but rather you took the approach of how you limit the, quote, danger of their use, limit the potential of reciprocal surprise and so on. I was part of working that out.

Q: So one of the limits to a broadly gauged agreement at this time was simply the technology of inspection.

MR. STASSEN: That's right. No way that you could inspect the elimination of nuclear weapons on this earth once it had been discovered, and that's still the case.

Q: Of course one of the Russians' standard responses to some of Eisenhower's initiatives was to propose a world disarmament conference and to discuss the immediate elimination of all weapons, and so this was part of the background of the rejection of that approach.

MR. STASSEN: Come down to the realistic thing and particularly put the thrust on the reciprocal openness of the whole world as being a better direction, and then, as I said, the other exchanges to open up the world and unite through exchanges of people, and the mutual economic development of peoples, and opening of trade. Those were all a part of his policy so that we can have a better chance of having the world evolve. And of course remember, you undoubtedly do, that in 1955 we begin a lot of bets that the world wouldn't reach 1977 without a nuclear blowup. And a lot of these things since then have so much sustained the studies that we'll obviously better be able to look at it in another fifty years from now and know more about it than we know now. But there have been many times when both sides, since that time, have seemingly headed toward a confrontation and then both have kind of pulled back. And

we used to, in those studies, say that there was a time when duels between individuals were very frequent, were even countenanced by the laws and by the church, and then you came to a time when the handgun became so efficient that both duelists were carried off the field dead and then they lost their enthusiasm for duels. So the nuclear age means that we're going to have mutual destruction. And as leaders think that through--I have always felt that our work and Eisenhower's work in those years, a lot of it was a kind of an educational penetration to the thorough awareness and analysis and consciousness of other leaders of the world to what a nuclear war would mean. Then do everything else you could to work the problems out without blowing up in that direction.

Q: Was the Department of Defense as adamantly opposed to a nuclear disarmament agreement as some of the scholars have been suggesting?

MR. STASSEN: No. You know we had participation of the Department of Defense in all of our sessions. Even in the session we were criticized for in London, the working paper, which I trust are in your files somewhere that was handed to the Russian delegation in the United States' ambassador's home, was in a session in which the Department of Defense, the atomic energy department, intelligence units, Department of State, were all present in a working session in which we explained that policy. And I've always also looked at that paper as having quite a sort of a penetrating educational value to leadership on all sides. That you analyzed and you

[unintelligible] Russia all new bases and you analyzed everything that came down with those force level considerations of bases and so on.

I'll put it another way. In the original studies we had a lot of top military people, granted they were retired, but they had great prestige. I mean like Doolittle, and Bedell Smith and so on. And then right through all of our working we had military participation. It was frequently difficult to convince them that we were ready to take a step, and they would present their views. But when Eisenhower decided it, they went along quite well except for some of this business about, you know, what was the Radford-Jacques axis with France and the Dulles-Adenauer axis on base policies. To what extent--and these are difficult to drop.

Of course another real sixty-four hundred dollar question for research--a little later when Eisenhower was going to meet Khrushchev in Paris--was that May Day fly over Russia completely an accident? In other words, I'm sure from my contacts at the time that Eisenhower did not approve that specific flight that day. Now whoever gave the okay for that flight to go that day, how high up was that approval and how much were they aware that this would be such a deep insult to the Russians that it would blow up the coming summit conference? There are always some who sincerely believe--I've respected their sincerity while I disagree with them--that Eisenhower should never sit down with any Russian leader at any time. That was a sincere conviction.

Q: These were both civilian and uniformed?

MR. STASSEN: And military, that's right.

Q: We've made several allusions already to differences you had with John Foster Dulles. Could you, in some way, capsulize or summarize how you differed with the Secretary?

MR. STASSEN: Well, it was just a different concept of what was the best way to move the world toward world peace. It was basically that. I was convinced, and we talked it through, that if you opened up exchange in the world between the communist areas and the non-communist areas and you got an exchange of people and ideas and information, and you would maintain a very alert and powerful military position at the same time, and develop trade, that you had a better chance of a gradual modification of the communist system away from absolute dictatorships, and that you had a better chance of evolution of the world without the tragedy of a nuclear war. And I always felt that when you once had the nuclear age upon us, that you couldn't contemplate a world war without it going nuclear; so that it would be very unlikely that you could ever get a war between major powers without it winding up as a nuclear destruction. Therefore, it should move that way.

I think Secretary Dulles's views moderated some, but I think he was sincerely convinced of a very righteous tough position of being opposed to any real communications with the Soviet Union other than in a formal, diplomatic exchange. That would lead to

their ultimate interior deterioration and a better world position. This, of course, applied also in the China side, you know, going way back. I advocated two Chinas and I think we took now the other extreme, you know; we've gone all the way over toward the mainland and shortchanged Taiwan and Formosa. I've always believed that we could have a universality approach and open up towards both Chinas, both Vietnams, both Koreas, both Germanys, and that's always been my view. I respected those that had different convictions, but I've always said too, "You wait a hundred years before you know who's really right."

Q: Did the United Nations play a significant role at all in disarmament proceedings?

MR. STASSEN: Well, they, of course, were the umbrella framework within which those negotiations and contacts could take place. And they followed on up on the openness and things of that type.

Q: I think there was a disarmament subcommittee that--

MR. STASSEN: In those days, most of those negotiations were under the United Nations subcommittee. That's where we negotiated.

Q: Was Hammarskjold playing any major role?

MR. STASSEN: Not a major role, but constructive role.

Q: Your tenure in the Eisenhower administration was as a controversial figure. Eisenhower, however, appears to have stayed

with you. Did you feel that you had his complete support throughout your tenure on the White House staff?

MR. STASSEN: Well we talked it over frankly, of course, many times. I realize that he was in a, you know, conflict of positions. He told me of--which of course actually was present also in the Cabinet meetings--of the difference of my economic views with Secretary Humphrey's views for example, and the foreign policy views with Secretary Dulles's views. And I frequently asked him, "Do you want me to speak up in Cabinet and security council meetings on these issues?" He said, "I need it. I do want you to speak up; that's why I've got you there." And it was kind of a tough picture in the sense that, you know, sometimes we'd have one of those hot policy debates and he would come to the end of it, "Well I think Harold's right and I think we'll do x-y-z." He knew that around that table that that was going to make it tougher for me to get another issue carried through. And so actually I'd talk with him about ways in which he became convinced I was right on some things, that he could develop the motion that way without directly going. But you see, with a different background and a different philosophy and a whole different idea of what the policies of the country ought to be, it was inevitable that I was in pretty stiff debates in the Cabinet. And so often I'd be the only one to speak up for a different view, and that was particularly true in the early years of the administration.

That changed quite a bit after the heart attack because then we couldn't have those kind of debates. You know, in the early years if you had a real tough issue, you could say or he would say, "Well, now we'd better get together on this issue on Thursday morning," or even sometimes of an evening, "talk it through. I want to get it thoroughly--." Then he'd make his decision and go on. But after the heart attack, you really didn't feel you could have that kind of a debate in his presence because of the potential problem of it. So then it tended to go out where each secretary, each Cabinet department, would do more as they saw fit with less supervision from Eisenhower himself. It was a different stage of the administration after that heart attack.

Q: You think this changed approach had a significant impact on policy decisions?

MR. STASSEN: Oh, definitely. I think historically that there's two different stages of Eisenhower's policies and administration. One is the first years, which I would call more thoroughly Eisenhower as President, and then the second stage where it was more the matter of all the individuals that he had out doing this.

Q: So that in economic policy, for instance, George Humphrey's views might become--

MR. STASSEN: --would be more predominant after the heart attack than they were before and likewise on other issues, nuclear ones

Strauss more after than before and foreign policy was Dulles more after than before. The first years, that Cabinet meeting session and the security council sessions were, and of course with Bobby Cutler working with him on planning board really were, you know, Eisenhower decisions, Eisenhower policies with him encouraging an input of those with different views.

Q: Where did Admiral Strauss fit on this spectrum of interest in getting a nuclear arms agreement?

MR. STASSEN: Well pretty much the same as Secretary Dulles. Although sometimes he would, you know, he would be a source of a, you might say, a more accurate presentation of nuclear facts than you'd get otherwise. He was very brilliant and you always felt that if an issue was right there, on the factual basis he would lay out the facts, but he would tend to be more withdrawn when it moved toward an agreement.

Q: The reason I raised the question is I noted in looking at the documents surrounding the "Atoms for Peace" proposal that he and C.D. Jackson were the main figures in drafting that speech in the fall of '53, but then as it got close to the date for giving it, Strauss tended to back off.

MR. STASSEN: That's right, yes.

Q: That was generally his pattern, when it got very close to making a proposal he would then be more conservative in his--?

MR. STASSEN: Right. Yes, see "Atoms for Peace," that came out of the OCB and C.D. Jackson drafted it. C.D. was a very strong individual.

Q: In what ways do you think he influenced the administration most strongly?

MR. STASSEN: Well with, you know, an imaginative approach to how to move major issues in a constructive way. Of course he had President Eisenhower's confidence, had worked with him in Europe and so forth, so he had both ability and confidence himself, so he was a very important person.

Q: As kind of a summarizing final question to put to you: How do you think that the historian should evaluate Eisenhower's performance on the nuclear issue?

MR. STASSEN: I think very high. I think the fact that we are talking in 1977 without there having been a nuclear blowup should give him very high grades. But I do believe that that summit meeting in 1955, the very forthright talking which he then did--what a nuclear age means, what would happen in a nuclear war. It was unprecedented plain talking, and it was very, very important.

Q: Important as an education of the public and world leaders as well.

MR. STASSEN: That's right. And also to, in that stage, you know, to reject any of the kind of extreme policies that were advocated. Just as an example, there was that advocacy of the pre-emptive nuclear war which some seriously urged in those early days of the H-bomb, on the theory that in a nuclear war--some of them said that a nuclear war is inevitable in ten years and we better hit first and do it. And we talked through, Eisenhower talked through, what kind of a world would it be, what would be our own moral status within ourselves if we ever did a thing like that? And those kind of extreme advocacies were thought through, faced up to, and he made what, in my view, were just superb decisions. Or, likewise, the other kind of advocacy of, you know, in effect war's terrible therefore you just keep backing away. And I've always felt that he certainly reached those kinds of conclusions that that wasn't the way to peace either. You don't just back away because then an aggressive element like the communist element would be pushing out until finally you had to fight, and you'd have all of the devastation of war. So that I think that his balanced judgment in those very unusual times led the country and the world along in such a way that we can meet in '77 and still not have had any experience of a nuclear war. So I continue to be very much devoted to him and his memory and believe that the passage of history will gradually bring that home more and more.

Q: Thank you very much.