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INTERVIEW
with
WILLIAM C. FOSTER
DEPUTY SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
1951-1953

by

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GOLDBERG: This is a recording of an interview with Mr. William C. Foster, Deputy Secretary of Defense from September 1951 to January 1953.

Could you tell us the circumstances under which you became Deputy Secretary of Defense?

FOSTER: I was, at the time, Administrator of the Economic Cooperation Administration. General Marshall talked to me and said he was about to retire, and would like me to talk to Mr. Lovett. Mr. Lovett came to my office in the Miattica Building and confirmed that Mr. Marshall was leaving on account of Mrs. Marshall's health. He asked if I would be willing to give up what was a Cabinet-level position and become his deputy in the Defense Department. Since I had been in the Pentagon all during World War II, and we had worked together when he was Under Secretary of State in the old Economic Cooperation days, I knew him well and he felt we could get along together. He felt this was a more important job at the moment with the dying out of the European phase of the Marshall Plan and would I cross the river. This was the way it developed. Momentarily, I was both Economic Minister and Defense Minister at the NATO meeting in Ottawa in that Fall of '51. Mr. Lovett felt he should stay in Washington,

so I went with Mr. Acheson and Mr. Snyder to that meeting and acted in that dual capacity for the last time.

GOLDBERG: Did Mr. Lovett specify the areas or functions in which he particularly wanted you to operate?

FOSTER: He said the legislation provided and the way he wanted me to work was that I would be his alter ego. If he wasn't there, I would be Secretary and I would have many of the management functions and he would handle many of the Congressional representations on policy. He wanted me to do a good deal of the budget along with McNeil. It worked that way and I was the alter ego. Lovett was not in the best of health at that time, so that many times, I was both the Deputy and the Secretary, although he was available at Walter Reed and other places.

GOLDBERG: What areas particularly attracted your attention and interest? Where were you putting much of your effort during this period?

FOSTER: I think my forte was really administration. I handled the Joint Secretaries, which you know were fairly active at that time. The Under Secretaries, also came in on another kind of management council. I dealt a good deal with the Appropriations Committees with McNeil. I met with Bradley every morning, before Lovett got in, to go over what was happening in Korea, cable traffic, and I was generally Chairman of the Armed Forces Policy Council. I met with that regularly -- weekly or daily or whatever it was -- but it was very frequent. Anna Rosenberg, McNeil, Jack Small, McNarney -- so that I was the General Manager, I guess you would say.

GOLDBERG: Can you recall significant problems or issues with which you were concerned and which had a very considerable impact on national security and on operations of the Department -- things that stand out in your mind.

FOSTER: I am an engineer by training, so I dealt a good deal with the Research and Development Board. Out of that actually came my recommendation in '58 to McElroy to set up the separate Directorate of Defense Research and Engineering. While the Research and Development Board was a very useful function and very good people were on it, as you know, it didn't seem to have the control of research in the various pockets that I felt would be in the best interest of the United States, and I think my judgment, at least for awhile, proved to be correct. I am not sure how it functions now. I spent a good deal of time in that field. I think that we attempted to bring the Services together to avoid duplication and to meet the problems of the nation at war. I did a great deal of the testimony on the Hill, not so much on the broad policy of what would be considered now a posture statement, but on these problems with the Services that needed the head office to address the Armed Services Committees and the Appropriations Committees. I was a busy man and was there from 8:00 to 8:00 most of the time, although not so long on Sundays, but 7½ days a week.

GOLDBERG: I don't think the pattern has changed very much.

FOSTER: My friends over there, that I have been in touch with, seem to find that it is a big job, and there are certain things you

have to do. People ask to what do you attribute whatever success you've had, and I said that I had damn good people under me who could call on me when they are in trouble, and except for that I let them go their way. There is a difference now - Lovett and I could pick our own subordinates. It doesn't seem to work that way now. Most of the cabinet are picked and then are also appointed all the subordinates that don't have any personal loyalty, or are not apt to have any personal loyalty, to the boss.

Truman said who do you want. We would spend a lot of time with various people outside. I used the Business Advisory Council which I had been in close contact with for many years as Under Secretary of Commerce, and I found we could get names of people we needed, - production jobs, legal jobs, economic jobs, so that some of the people were there in the Services and McNeil was there. We did have to fill in gaps of Under Secretaries, Assistant Secretaries, Research and Development.. McNarney was brought back, in the office next to me. It was a happy family. We did get along very well, understood each other and had loyalty to each other, and I think that was the reason I felt we accomplished quite a lot.

GOLDBERG: Were you particularly involved in any of the major research and development programs of the period?

FOSTER: Well, I met with various people interested in that in the Services, particularly in the Air Force. The missile program actually started in that Administration, as you know. And in chemical warfare, I had some competence and I met with them and with

Whitman many times, and with his deputy Jim Perkins and several people who were prominent in the oil business and in the chemical business. In fact, I later got into the chemical business as President of the Manufacturing Chemists. Various friends I met with and worked with in that office had contributed to United States defense efforts. Of course, I was active with Le Baron and Starbird in relationships with the AEC. I made some trips with them and spent a good deal of time on that subject. I was more technically minded than Lovett and because of that background I did get into that area in the formative stages. The Department is a big machine to operate and I don't pretend that anybody does more than give it a nudge. Most of the stuff comes up, probably starting with a Lieutenant; by the time it gets up to the top, it has all the signatures on it as though the tops originated it, but the Lieutenants have a big part in running the machine. That's why as time went on, I tried to introduce, which was later reversed, programs where we had at lower levels a consultant along-side the boys who started these things. Then we could have more knowledge about it when it came up the stream rather than waiting until it got to the top and say yes or no, instead of trying to analyze it from the final proposal only.

GOLDBERG: I wonder if you had to be particularly concerned with some of the inter-service problems in the Research and Development field during this period in such matters as nuclear weapons and missiles, where you did have competition and you did have efforts to secure prime positions in developing and employing weapons?

FOSTER: Yes, not so much the employing as the developing. I don't pretend to have any great competence in planning war-fighting strategy. I was in World War I, but through the Joint Secretaries or Joint Under Secretaries I came in contact with a good many of what looked to be overlaps; I therefore had to make decisions. I remember particularly the Air Force and the Army on tactical aircraft where Vandenberg and Finletter had a strong position, and Pace and Collins another, and a decision had to be made. I, like Solomon, cut the thing in two. Of course the same thing was true to some extent with the Navy and its missiles and the Air Force and its missiles and the Army with its defensive anti-aircraft. This was almost a daily occurrence. I think the biggest fight was on tactical air between the Air Force and the Army which became heated indeed.

GOLDBERG: What was the general attitude then at your level and that of Mr. Lovett toward interservice problems? Was it basically one of achieving satisfactory compromises which would be acceptable to the contending Services or was it an effort perhaps to go beyond that and get not only at the merits but at the best solution to the problem?

FOSTER: Well, I think you come out with both things, at least you try to -- many times you had to make a compromise and other times you had to make a flat decision. You had to require decisions that offended one or the other of the Services. By and large, there was some merit in both positions and, therefore, you had to work out what appeared to be the best solution for both sides. You disappointed

both sides usually, and sometimes you disappointed one bitterly, but by and large your attempt was to find something where both would feel that they had an opportunity to do a job, which was what they were in business for.

GOLDBERG: Was there a feeling during this period that the Air Force was in the ascendency? Did the other Services feel threatened by the strength of the Air Force, its success with Congress and the Administration in getting more resources than the others, its having ideas and attitudes more readily accepted?

FOSTER: I don't think there was too much of that. I think one of our jobs really was to convince all of the Services that they were getting a fair shake. There were times where the Air Force got a little more on certain programs than the Army, but the Navy felt it was in pretty good shape in those days. We had passed the B-36 problem. I think we attempted to be fairly even-handed as to who got what, but in some things the Air Force seemed to get a little more than the Army, particularly, but I think it was a fairly even-handed result.

TUCKER: So, at this point the dissatisfied claimants were not trying the end-run route to appeal the decision.

FOSTER: No, I don't think they were. By and large they felt that Lovett and I were equitable as to who got what. The biggest fight was the total dollar budget, and I won't say that this was decided with the wisdom of Solomon, but it came out fairly equitably. I think it resulted in that because the conflicting forces were equal

enough so that when you got through, things came out pretty evenly.

TUCKER: Along those lines, were there budget ceilings established in the White House or in the Bureau of Budget, or were you fairly free in asking for what you really thought you needed?

FOSTER: The Services always came in for 30% more than they actually got. Our job in OSD was to put it down within reasonable figures, reasonable to the President and Bureau of Budget. But the Bureau of Budget did not exercise the same control over the Defense Department in those days because we were in a war. I don't think they ever regained the same control of the Defense budget as over other agencies that I have been part of from time to time.

GOLDBERG: I would like to go back for a minute to some of your earlier experiences before you were in the Defense Department. You had this very extensive experience in the Economic Aid Program; after we got the Economic Aid Program, we got the Military Assistance Program going. Did the military have much of a role or much connection with the Economic Aid Program?

FOSTER: Not until;1950, after the North Korean invasion took place. It was called ECA until the summer of 1951. When I left it, it became MSA. I did testify along with Louis Johnson and Dean Acheson during the early summer of 1950. The Defense budget at that time was minuscule. We had fairly substantial budgets for economic aid. The first year $4 billion, I think -- a total of 3 years around $10 billion dollars. The only military part was that NATO came into existence in 1949. Forrestal was still alive in 1949. I did testify

with him a couple of times. Our theory was that the cheapest money you could spend for the military was that overseas because it became very much entwined with the Economic starting in the middle of the summer of 1950. I saw more economic-military when I was Deputy Secretary through the MAAGs which I visited all around the world. The economic and military became incapable of separation.

The first two years of ECA Mr Forrestal visited us abroad a few times, and General Eisenhower went over in 1951 as SACEUR. I spent a lot of time with him because he was helping our recovery job. The first time I visited him was here in his Pentagon office before he went over. When I met him in Europe, he felt that he was forbidden to get into political discussions at all, but he was being asked to talk with heads of State and Foreign Ministers, and he said, "I don't feel it's my job." I said, "Sure as hell it is your job and you've got to do it." Then he said, "Well, no one has really told me to do that." I said I would get word to him from Truman as soon as I got back home. I attempted to set up a meeting for him in Europe with the President. On my return to D.C., General Marshall and Mr. Acheson said, "No, you can't do that, the President can't do that," - but I said, "Here Ike sits with all these demands and what is good for the economic business is good for the defense business and we have to do something." The President said, "I'll meet him in Iceland," but Acheson and Marshall said "Send him a letter, you can't meet him in Iceland." So he sent him a letter. Anyway, he got into the political

business in Europe in a big way thereafter. He felt he was being asked to help in economic decisions which he didn't feel competent to do at that time. The military was so intertwined actually with economic recovery that he should do it, and of course he became expert at it with good results.

GOLDBERG: Can you recollect any of the specific aspects of this economic-military interplay between the economic assistance program and the military once it did begin to function? You mentioned Korea as providing some real impetus to that?

FOSTER: It actually forced a combination of the two. NATO was gradually developing its needs and we did pick up through economic assistance a portion of their budgets, and they therefore could join with the military activities to a greater extent than otherwise would have been possible. I found that the economic aid which came through MAAG was a great boon to the people in the Far East. This was particularly true of Indo-China; it was true in Japan and Thailand -- not so important in Burma, but we had special technical and economic missions in many of those Far Eastern countries. Of course, Greece was, after World War II, a place where the military, if anything was more important than the economic, since communist forces controlled much of the economy.

GOLDBERG: We might follow that with discussions of the Korean mobilization which occurred beginning in 1950 and the role that you played in that. You were in a rather unique position here, on the economic side to begin with and moving to the military, so you had a view of both at the time and the relationship between the two. Have

you any thoughts about this with particular reference to the actual operation and the success of the operation. There are a great many people who feel that we made quite a few of the same mistakes as in World War II, but that we could not help ourselves. We were constrained to make errors in order to rectify them.

FOSTER: I think your analysis is a good one. I went through the World War II situation too, both ways, up and down, and many of the problems of Korea were due to the abrupt and unwise demobilization that took place after World War II. Our troubles in Korea went back to the rapid demobilization of World War II. I was in the Purchases Division and became Director toward the end of World War II. I found that some military men had been -- well - Lucius Clay, a Captain for twelve years, a Major for six and to a full General in two or three years. I had an Air Force Colonel who spent thirty years getting to be a Colonel. Before World War II he had to get permission from budget to make a long distance call to Wright Field -- a dollar call -- he had to get a special authority for the smallest item. The change in state of mind was a terrible transformation from being handicapped financially to having practically anything they wanted. Of course in that kind of change you made a lot of mistakes.

GOLDBERG: I remember what General Marshall said about that in testimony before a Congressional Committee in 1940, when they were churning out huge sums of money. He went back up to the Hill and said, "don't give us any more, you're choking the cow."

FOSTER: I was a small business man before the war. I had my own

steel business in Long Island City but as director of purchases, I developed a Foster rule of thumb. I put my finger over the last 6 digits and could recognize what we were spending. Your analysis is correct. You had to try things and get things speeded up. Many times your trials were bad errors, but it had to be done. We had difficulty in getting enough of certain things. We were short of ammunition at various times, as you know. Because we needed men quickly, we had to depend upon people who were inexperienced. We got a lot of bad stuff, but we had to get production. In World War II you had to devise artificial substitutes for competition. I did much of that in pricing activities. I met my first Congressional Committee during World War II when I had to get the War Pricing Act through, so that we could look at industries books and give credit to people who did a good fast job, share the profits with them, not take it away from them afterwards. I am a disbeliever in renegotiation. I think you should share with people who do a good job, otherwise they are not going to do the good job. We worked out synthetic competition by giving targets, even though many first times targets were wrong, but after you had a continuing run, you began to get correct targets and they still would do better by sharing in the profits.

GOLDBERG: What did you feel were the major problems in connection with the mobilization for World War II, primarily with industrial mobilization?

FOSTER: The problem of conversion, trying to get the big companies to give up their obviously profitable organized lines. Even

though we got them to give it up, they were not in themselves eager to produce new things. Therefore, we spent a great deal of time to get small business to be sub-contractors, and in order to divide the load more adequately, we tried to work out ways that sub-contracts would be forced on big business. In order to get the small companies to do a good job, we had to work out consultant groups to help them to do it. The major problem was one of mass. We just did not have enough of what we needed to build up overnight the tremendous production we did need.

GOLDBERG: Well, perhaps this was because you didn't have enough compulsion to use on them.

FOSTER: We had that with the textile industry, and we had a hell of a time with the textile industry to get them to shift from clothing to tents and other things we needed at that time. They were a very independent group. They claimed that labor didn't want to do it, and they had thousands of other reasons why they didn't want to do it. We could only do it by persuasion. We finally got the unions. We had very good cooperation with the unions. We had to get them in together with the production forces to make sure that everyone was pulling in the same direction. Now we couldn't force General Motors to make the tanks we wanted, but we had to give them the opportunity to make money. At the same time. they did want to make a contribution to the war effort but not naturally at the expense of our destroying their company.

GOLDBERG: Do you think that a formal declaration of war would have solved that problem for you in the Korean war?

FOSTER: No, I don't think so.

GOLDBERG: It did in World War II.

FOSTER: That was a clear case; maybe in that sense a declaration of war in Korea would have helped, but no one had any real doubts that we were at war in Korea.

GOLDBERG: Yes, but it was a limited war.

FOSTER: It was a limited war. With a declaration of war it is easier to give emergency orders. Mr. Truman did not think a declaration of war was needed.

TUCKER: To what extent were these problems increased by the organization of the Munitions Board? Mr. Lovett in his final letter does speak about the three claimants being judges of their own claims as members of the Board.

FOSTER: In World War II or the Korean War?

TUCKER: The Korean War.

FOSTER: The Munitions Board became really not what it had been in World War II at all. It was very much a subsidiary to the Services, it did not have the influence - only the form -- a lot of people running around doing things because it could give out priority orders. The real claimants were the Services directly, and they got pretty much what they wanted. I was in contact with the Munitions Board, but I did not really feel it was the moving spirit in production. They did have the ability to allocate basic materials and of course this was the important part of it, but they almost did it as ordered.

TUCKER: As ordered by the Services?

FOSTER: This may be a reflection on Mr. Small, but the Board did not come through big and strong. I think he has died, or otherwise he might dispute it. This is another thing about revision of history. The fellow who is last on the scene has an advantage.

GOLDBERG: I gather from your earlier remarks that you perhaps have the same view about the Research and Development Board during this period and after.

FOSTER: The Research and Development Board did not have other than an advisory role. They had meetings and committees - their recommendations had significance, but I didn't feel it was anything other than standing off to the side. There was some question in the minds of many of the participants about Oppenheimer of Los Alamos. The Services did not like him then. They felt he was not really doing his best to contribute to winning the war. I think this was a false feeling. He was a very outspoken fellow at those meetings and he was many times sort of against the military.

GOLDBERG: Was this a result of his attitude on the development of the hydrogen bomb?

FOSTER: I don't know what it was due to. He was just an "aginer" by instinct. I think it was partly due to that, and, as sometimes happens to scientists, he didn't go along with the crowd. We had some of the same trouble with Edward Hugh Condon, if you remember.

GOLDBERG: Yes, of the National Bureau of Standards.

FOSTER: I had to defend him against the House Un-American

Activities Committee and others. Condon was a very brilliant guy, but he just didn't want to be pushed. He is doing very well I understand now.

GOLDBERG: I would like to move on and talk a little bit about NATO which has been one of our major concerns now for the last 25 years. What were your views about the goals that were set in the early days of 1951, 1952 for NATO?

FOSTER: You mean in the terms of force contribution? Of course this has been a continuing problem all along. In 1949, the European countries were really incapable of any major financial contribution. We attempted to get them to do more and more, and my last year in the Pentagon I spent a lot of time with the Budget Bureau attempting to field a German force that would be a useful contribution because they would support their own force. I thought to do that we had to prime it by making available from our own budget enough so that they could get 1/2 million men if necessary. The other nations were always resistant, but we were certainly in favor of supporting it to start with because all the countries could make some contribution, and they can make a greater contribution but they just haven't. They never have changed much in the 25 years. I think the Europeans were right at first because of their economic needs to a greater extent than now. They made a remarkable recovery and they got used to putting most of their efforts into their own economic recovery. All we filled was about five percent of that. Fortunately, they were people used to doing things so that all they needed was that primer.

Having started down that course, they felt things never changed. They still feel its to our interest; therefore, they feel we ought to give most of the contribution. They will give some of the men, a lot of the men. They will give an economic base in Europe. They want to be given a good deal of dough to support them. A lot of them say its cheaper for us to have 200,000 men over there than to bring them home and let them stand around here.

GOLDBERG: Our initial demands at the early NATO Conferences were very high. Why did we insist on such very high goals when we must have known that they were unrealistic from every standpoint?

FOSTER: I think this was domestic pressure in the United States, I think there was a feeling psychologically unless you really held up a high target, they wouldn't come up with it, and they didn't. We gradually came down toward them. Speaking of that, I organized the 3 Wise Men in 1951 in Ottawa. At a NATO meeting, we had about 300 people in the room. I've forgotten who was Chairman then - Lester Pearson of Canada, In any event, Dean Acheson said Foster had something to say. I said we wanted to do something about this target and I was not sure the present methods were doing it well. We took a lot of abuse -- 290 people out of 300. We thought we should have something other than a debating group and that we ought to discuss this in a smaller group, so we called for a smaller group -- 75 people showed up, and I said to Pearson "What I want is one person from each nation a meeting of 14 or 15 people" and he agreed with that. The group agreed and we met that afternoon. That group selected three people --

Averell Harriman, Lord Plowden, and Jean Monnet.

The "three wise men" attempted to set up a balanced budget situation that they felt was achievable. They also hoped to set up some other objectives in addition to the military. It was a good group and it came up with a good report, but not much happened. Well, to answer your original question. The NATO funding and military contribution never met the targets, even though the targets were gradually reduced.

GOLDBERG: I guess that's what targets and goals are really for.

FOSTER: Yes, but one should have some realism, and though we think the targets were realistic, the achievement was nowhere near target. Maybe we were cock-eyed on the earlier targets. I was a little iffy on those discussions and thought the early targets were too high - much too high.

GOLDBERG: When you get that many nations involved, with their differences, it is difficult to get -

FOSTER: Especially when one of them is French. The least wealthy nations were the most cooperative. The French had DeGaulle, in addition. An individualistic people plus DeGaulle is a combination that's hard to beat.

GOLDBERG: During the Korean war the Government had other problems and programs as important and demanding as the Korean war itself. We mentioned one here -- NATO, and there were also other major rearmament programs which were undertaken at the same time. What is your feeling about this? Was the Korean war in a sense almost secondary or a sidelight?

FOSTER: No, I don't think so. Directly to the contrary. The Korean war was No. 1. The others were important - Indo-China was a major problem. NATO, of course, had major secondary importance. We spent so much time on the Korean war. Developing the nuclear part of our armament was another important problem and became increasingly important. We thus developed concurrently the major strategic weapons, which was very important.

GOLDBERG: Because of domestic political pressures, the Korean war was obviously in the forefront all of the time. It had to be given a great deal of time and attention, but weren't we devoting more of our resources during this period to other purposes such as the buildup of SAC, air defense of the United States, and forces for NATO, than to Korea? This was what made the mobilization and rearmament greater than it would have been if it had been simply for Korea.

FOSTER: Quite right. In the aggregate, those things together were greater than Korea, but Korea was in the forefront of the emergency situation. You could take more time with Air Defense, SAC, and nuclear weapons development, but you had to meet the Korean situation every morning.

TUCKER: What percentage of your time was devoted to the problems of Korea, purely Korea?

FOSTER: It is a hard thing to quantify, but I guess about 25% to 30%.

TUCKER: May I go back to perception of the threat in Indo-China. Was this perceived as a threat from Communist China or an internal

threat, or was it looked at more in terms of its relationship to what we wanted France to do in Europe and its threat to France?

FOSTER: The Government was sort of divided. Some of us felt, the French were leading us down the path in Indo-China. Certainly in '51 this was true. That war was a guerrilla one in which they were fighting insurgents largely, and some of us felt the French should be doing it instead of leaning on us. We did have a very large MAAG operation there, and we were getting very little out of it. We never got anything except a black eye. The State Department felt that we should do more for France, but some of us in the Pentagon felt we should cut our ties and let the French bail themselves out. I was very strong on that, and I was beaten over the head by my beloved friend David Bruce, who was then Under Secretary of State.

GOLDBERG: What was Mr. Lovett's view on the subject? Was it the same as yours?

FOSTER: No, I argued with my friend Bob on this one. He was somewhat of a Francophile, but not to the extent David was. He never supported me vociferously but usually stood behind me quietly. This was a very active part of our business because we were supplying food and weapons. It cost a lot of money then and now.

GOLDBERG: As long as we mentioned this business of the threat, obviously the perceived or apprehended threat from the Soviets was overriding or at least influenced everything we were doing or thinking at this period. What do you feel was the basic attitude, at least in the Department of Defense, on the role of the Soviet threat, in terms of our program?

FOSTER: Of course this was the major stimulus for air defense, for nuclear weapons development. The imminent threat of attack by them in Western Europe or attack by them on the United States never ceased to be a major support for a lot of other weapons programs. All the strategic programs certainly were brought about by the fear of the Russian possibility.

GOLDBERG: There was apparently an upsurge of fear of this threat during this period. Was it only the Korean war which precipitated that or were there other things?

FOSTER: We had Berlin, you know. When I was in ECA, I went to Berlin about 10 or 15 times.

GOLDBERG: That had preceded it.

FOSTER: It preceded it, but there had been no diminution in the number of stoppages at the gates of Berlin. Mr. Stalin was always thinking up things that would annoy us. The mobilization by the Soviets periodically - you never knew whether it was the real thing or a trial run. They kept the pot boiling all during this period and forced us to spend a lot of money against airplane threats which they didn't have. SAC was kept active all the time.

GOLDBERG: Did you have much to do with SAC during this period?

FOSTER: I went out there several times and LeMay came into the Pentagon with Vandenberg a number of times. I had it mostly through their demand for more, more and more. I got that every day. Yes, I had a good deal to do with it.

GOLDBERG: Were you interested or particularly involved in their strategic thinking, their ideas on the nature of their target systems?

FOSTER: Yes, in general terms, but I can't say I spent a great deal of time on this. I had to be aware of it, I had to be aware of the basic reasons for the 2½ war theory, and the Chiefs were always eager to give you a briefing on how imminent the threat was. It was their business. I am not the most enthusiastic supporter of the Joint Chiefs. I have been in sort of an adversary position for many years, both then and later.

GOLDBERG: I would be interested in your views of your relationship with the Joint Chiefs and the military services. This is a major problem in the Defense relationship at your level.

FOSTER: A lot depends on who they are. I got along very well with Bradley. He was a very temperate demander from the viewpoint of the Chiefs. I don't think that's been the case with some of the later Chiefs, there's been a real problem about that. Are they representing their Service or are they representing the overall activity? I have made recommendations from time to time that when a man becomes a Chief, he ought to either leave the Service or ought to have a deputy who is Chief. He is above and beyond the Service, but he will never get over the Service inclination. If he still has both responsibilities, there is something wrong with that kind of organization. To Fitzhugh, the Blue Ribbon Panel, I wrote a long screed on this subject. I also wrote him that a civilian did not have the real constitutional command of the Services that is contemplated -- the constitutional provision of civilian control. Why? Because they do not have the information. It is hard to have a balance at the top level between the civilian point

of view and the military point of view. In time of trouble the Chiefs become almost preeminent. Anything they demand they get. They feel they can go up to the Congress on their own and demand it. There's something screwy about this civilian control. This made and makes me very unpopular with the Chiefs.

GOLDBERG: Did you have some specific problems during this period?

FOSTER: No, I got along quite well with that group. Never had any real trouble with Bradley. I won't say there weren't troubles with Vandenberg, Fechteler, and Collins. They were fighting for their Service usually. Speaking for the Chiefs, was Bradley and he really spoke for the Chiefs. I got along better with them then than I did with later Chiefs -- maybe because then I had more authority.

TUCKER: Would you propose an independent staff for the Secretary or just the separation of the Chief from the operational function?

FOSTER: No, I thought there should be a sort of Joint civilian chiefs and a civilian body more effective than the Joint Secretaries. I used the Joint Secretaries a good deal and met with them regularly, and with the Joint Undersecretaries on the administrative side, but it seems as though they, too, have a single approach. What I attempted to do was give them a common feeling for the whole institution rather than for their particular Services. There is really nobody that does that except the Office of the Secretary itself. Maybe there should be an independent civilian board that meets with them; maybe a mixed board. I am just not sure. I think the Chiefs do get an authority which they neither deserve nor are competent to discharge. These are harsh words.

I don't know when they will get to read this tape, but they know I feel that way.

TUCKER: Part of this perhaps comes from your later relationship in ACDA in which you certainly had great difficulties, and everyone else in that position had problems with the Chiefs, I know.

FOSTER: When Kennedy was President, Max Taylor was Chairman of the Joint Chiefs and we had a couple of set-to's. The Government was run differently then. A Committee of Principals really was much more effective than the National Security Council or even the Cabinet. In those days I met with my peers in the upper ranks very regularly. In Mr. Nixon's time, I think Mr. Smith, in fact, met with him a few times; I don't know whether Ikle has ever seen Nixon. At any rate, at one point, when I made a recommendation in the meeting of these Principals with the President, Max said, "This is absolutely against the national interest."

"Max," I said, "you don't even know what the national interest is." He said, "I'd like to talk with you and the Chiefs on that." I said, "I just want the Chiefs and you," so I met with Max and the Chiefs. "Max," I said, "when you say national interest, you forget the economic interest, legal interest, political interest, some of the psychological interests, which I, as head of ACDA by statute, am required to take into account." He said, "Bill, you are absolutely right, and when I meet with the President again and with you and have an argument, I will say, from the military viewpoint." I said, "I could never dispute that. If it is against the national interest, I think I am better

equipped than you are to judge that." They do talk about the national interest. I don't pretend to be a military expert at all. Military interest is an element in the national interest and many times the controlling one, but there are all these other aspects which have to be taken into account, or should be. That is enough on the Joint Chiefs.

GOLDBERG: What about the military Services, - your relations with them, and your feeling about the relationship between OSD and the military Services.

FOSTER: As I said in the beginning, we had the great virtue of having our own people in most of the top civilian spots in the military Services. We had a very harmonious relationship. I was devoted to Finletter -- not so much to Pace. I had some trouble with Pace. You probably heard about the Quartermaster Laboratory. Well, Senator Douglas learned that they were going to put a single Quartermaster laboratory some place in Massachusetts, and he got hold of all the people who had a laboratory in their states, possibly 40-50 legislators. The report came back to me from Pace that they were not going to allow it. It seemed to them that it would weaken the activities of the Quartermaster. Pace said, "I can't do anything with them. Yet we did all this research, we had all these people look at this thing, we hired consultant engineers, talked to various people, but we can't convince them. I would like you to go up and talk to these people because I can't do anything with them." Well, I went up, looked at the site selected. It was the ideal site from the Army viewpoint.

Douglas said, "Do you know Mr. Secretary that the site that you are supporting is not the one that had all that support?" I said, "Why, what do you mean?" "The one that had all that approbation is 50 miles away, the one that Pace and the Quartermaster General are recommending." I said, "No, I didn't know that - nobody told me that." It was 50 miles away. I said, "Well, I withdraw my support. I will take the Secretary and the Quartermaster General back with me and we will have this out." And I said to Pace, "What the hell do you mean getting me up here with that group of 50 legislators and making an ass of me?" "Well, we didn't think a change of a few tens of miles made a difference." I said, "You should fire that Quartermaster General." So I say, Pace was not my favorite secretary. It was Bendetsen, the Undersecretary, who I was very close to then and later. I took him around the world with me on the last trip to MAAG missions in 1952 during the election campaign.

GOLDBERG: The Navy was behaving all right during this period?

FOSTER: Yes, Kimball was very cooperative and they gave no trouble. Fechteler was CNO. He wasn't particularly obstreperous, and the Air Force - Finletter and Gilpatric -- were very close to me. Floberg was a cooperative Assistant Secretary of the Navy. We had a very harmonious relationship.

TUCKER: These relationships extended to the Assistant Secretaries in the military departments?

FOSTER: Yes, they, too, were selected in consultation with Lovett and me.

GOLDBERG: There were a lot of men with substantial stature in those positions, but things changed.

FOSTER: I can't imagine how you can run a railroad when half of your assistants are selected not for their ability necessarily. I am a Republican. I have served 6 Presidents, 4 of whom were Democrats, and I got along very well with them. I haven't served Mr. Nixon closely. I was closer to Mr. Nixon when he was Vice-President. I had a good deal to do with him then.

GOLDBERG: I would like to talk a little bit about your relationship with the White House. Are there any observations you would like to make about that? Obviously, there are very great differences in styles and relationships among Presidents, and this, of course, is vital to any major function of Government.

FOSTER: Either Mr. Lovett or I would call up Mr. Connelly, the appointment secretary, and see President Truman on one-half hour notice on any day, and frequently we did. The President would come to the Pentagon a few times and visit with us and the Chiefs. When I was asked to become Deputy Secretary, the President asked me to come over and see him to tell me that he wanted me to do this thing. I said, "Mr. President, it will be an election year next year" -- this was May or June 1951 -- possibly 3 months before Marshall left, and I said, "You know I am a Republican and I think an election year would be a very active one indeed." He said, "Bill, I am not going to be running. Even though I were, have I ever, in any of the things you have done for me, put any political pressure on you in any way

against your inclination?" I said, "No sir, you never have." He appointed me the first time without ever seeing me, with Harriman, when I was made Under Secretary of Commerce. So I saw the President -- I don't know how many times. He gave me seven Presidential appointments at various levels. He asked me to take one or two others that I did collaterally. It was a very warm and frequent contact with the White House, and he gave us his cordial support. He was of the greatest help in every way.

GOLDBERG: Did he play a substantial role in connection with your major decisions? Did he leave a great deal to you and Mr. Lovett?

FOSTER: He left a great deal to us, but if we had a real problem we could get to him at once and he would give us his decision at once.

GOLDBERG: What kind of things would you go to him for?

FOSTER: I get a little confused between the things I went to him for when I was ECA administrator and Deputy Secretary at the Pentagon. It was just so normal - not much stands out on it. I can't think of any particular time when he did not support us.

TUCKER: Did he keep his part of the bargain and not introduce any political considerations into the management of the Defense Department establishment?

FOSTER: For the seven years that he was President and I served him, he never but once called me to appoint a specific man. Of all the six presidents, with all due respect, he was my peerless leader.