INTERVIEWEE: LUCIUS BATTLE (Tape 2)

INTERVIEWER: PAIGE E. MULHOLLAN

December 5, 1968

M: At the end of the first tape, Mr. Battle, you had been discussing the Six-day War and the events leading up to it and thereafter generally. Before passing from that particular subject on to Cyprus, which I think you mentioned was the other crisis that you would like to talk about, there are a couple of things that seem a little incongruous. On television the other night, for example, a history professor at Georgetown, I think, named [Hasham] Sharabi, said that the Johnson Administration had been so ardently pro-Israel that we had driven the Arab bloc into the Soviet camp. Is that an accurate assessment of the Johnson Administration policy in that part of the world?

B: No, I don't think it is. I challenge almost every aspect of that statement. I don't think that the Arab world is yet in the Soviet camp. Soviet influence in the area has been increasing for quite a long time, but not allover the area. The Soviet influence is primarily in Algeria and in the United Arab Republic, in Syria, to a less extent in Yemen; they certainly have a vital interest in the area. They're also interested in Iraq. They have a vital interest in that part of the area of the world and have been trying to create and support radical regimes which would challenge the more moderate regimes which were closely tied to the United States. Those regimes are Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Jordan, Libya, others. There are a few--Sudan has been an area of contention between ourselves and the Soviet Union. I think the Soviets have gained there considerably, but to attribute all of the

Soviet growth of influence, first to say that they have that part of the world in their camp is a gross overstatement. And to attribute the growth of Soviet influence in the area to this particular period is I think a misstatement of history. The Soviet influence really began, and became a very compelling force, in the Dulles era. In the key country, particularly the United Arab Republic, there were two or three key decisions of that period--one had to do with the Aswan Dam and the Dulles decision not to finance that dam, after the Egyptians considered, and most observers do consider, that a full commitment had been made to them that U.S. financing would be forthcoming.

That plus the refusal to supply military equipment to the UAR, both of these were rather key decisions in terms of the Soviet opportunity in that country and in the area. Now each of these issues, I'm not saying necessarily that Dulles was wrong on those two points--I think the question of supply of military equipment is a very difficult one indeed and would have been difficult in any measure. But we had at that time embraced rather strongly the new Nasser regime and at least they considered that an outgrowth of that friendship would be our willingness to supply--or to sell--military equipment to them. Perhaps a combination of grant and sale. I think that would have been a very difficult decision to make.

The Aswan Dam issue; I think one has to separate the question of what was done from how it was done. I think a very good argument can be made for U.S. financing of the Aswan Dam, but a comparable argument can be made against it. It's a very complicated issue. But I think no argument can be made for doing it the way we did it; to lead the Egyptians to believe that we would finance and then do what they considered a backtrack on a commitment made and in a manner that was in their rather

sensitive minds an insult to their dignity--this had a devastating effect in the U.A.R. and continues to have it.

Now to get back to the point of your question. Without any question the events of June of 1967 tied us more closely, in part for real reasons, in part for artificial reasons, to the Israelis than we had been in the past. Now let us examine these reasons. One is that there was in all honesty an overwhelming sympathy both in the United States and throughout the world, particularly the Western world, for the Israelis and their position of sort of the underdog.

The other reason that I think there is a close look is the need for the Arabs always to blame someone other than themselves for their difficulties. That we had had a deterioration in relations with the U.A.R. and with other Arab countries is, I think, a fairly clearly established fact. Certainly it's true of the radical Arab countries, the ones that I mentioned, particularly the U.A.R. But the nature of the defeat that they suffered at the hands of Israel and the precarious political position that Nasser and others found themselves in necessitated them to blame someone other than themselves. And the immediate scapegoat of the United States and the United Kingdom was latched upon as the reason for their defeat. And Nasser's statement charging us with having been a participant in the war itself, or having bombed the Arab countries, killed their people and been a factor in their defeat certainly did not increase the affection that the American public had for Nasser and his regime, and I think added very greatly to the implication that we were very close to the Israelis. We had not obviously, as everyone knows, been involved in any way in the fighting itself and had done everything that we could--I know that President

Johnson took a very active part in this--in the days leading up to the Six-day War, and had in fact tried with all his might to stop the war, prevent its occurrence.

M: Were we prepared in that regard to convoy Israeli ships if necessary?

B: We never got to a firm decision on that point. There was a good deal of discussion as to how the issue of the Straits of Tiran should be faced. There were still several aspects under discussion: whether we convoyed a U.S. or ship of another nation through there, forced the blockade, convoyed an Israel ship. Exactly how this was to be challenged was never precisely decided. We had been discussing with various maritime nations a declaration on the freedom of the straits and were working on a plan involving a challenge by several of the maritime countries of the Straits of Tehran. But exactly what form it would have taken, this was not decided and only the President could decide it; it had not reached him in a form and with recommendations from those directly involved as to what he should do. We were still in touch with the several other countries, and I might add not getting much support from other countries. The British initially were interested in both the declaration and in the maritime venture; but they, I think, began to be extremely nervous as to the consequences, and certainly other countries--the Dutch were very much for it, and there were one or two--

M: Very much <u>for</u> taking some action?

B: For both the delcaration and for doing something. But there was a very real hesitation on the part of some of the other countries. Even though their initial response had not been in opposition to these suggestions, it was pretty evident to me, although not everyone agreed, that we were going to have a very hard time in carrying world support along for such an action.

But that was still very much in suspension, and the President had not decided what would be done; perhaps he had in his own mind but he did not tell me and I think that he had not. This issue was very much an open one at the time the war began.

M: And made academic by the actual fighting?

B: It was made academic by the actual fighting, and the matter was dropped and it was all over.

M: What about the other charge which was opposite from the one I started with--you frequently read that the operational officers in the State Department had tended to be pro-Arab to a substantial degree?

B: Well, it depends on what you mean by pro-Arab. I think that the more frequent charge is that they're anti-Israeli. I think that there is no one--certainly in the bureau that I headed at this stage, or for some years--who has not felt that the United States was committed to support, certainly diplomatically and politically, the survival of Israel; and I don't think any of them would have believed or would believe now that this was not an essential role for us to play. The question of how far you go in support of them is an open question, and only the President can decide to what extent and under what circumstances we would come to support the Israelis in any military way or in any way involving manpower. That issue, fortunately, did not arise in the June war.

Most of this criticism goes back to the era of the 1940's when it was quite true that almost all Middle Eastern experts who looked at the question of our relations and our basic interests in the Arab world believed that the Israelis, or rather that the creation of Israel, would have a very detrimental effect on Western and U.S. relations with the Arab world. And that while the plight of the Jewish people around the world was an

extremely unfortunate one, that the Arabs had certainly as much legal right as the Israelis to Palestine. The sad thing about this issue is, in my own humble opinion, that both sides have an almost unassailable moral and legal case. The validity of either case hinges on when you begin the discussion. If you go back far enough, you can make a very compelling case for the Israelis; it depends on when you start, and it's a case on which justice and injustice is clear on both sides, and there is no answer at this stage, in my judgment, except to accept the verdict of history and to support the continued existence of Israel. Now, this does not necessarily mean that this should involve us in any support from a military point of view nor with American manpower. That decision has to be made by the President of the United States and in the context of the situation that exists at the time when this issue comes to the front.

Now, if we have another round of hostilities--I'm supposed to talk of history and not the future--but if we have another round of hostilities, serious hostilities in the Middle East, which at the moment appears quite likely, the President will have to decide in the light of the situation then existing whether he believes that he should because of the threat of the Russians, or because of the Russian involvement on behalf of the Arabs, or what have you. He has to decide then how far we will go. We are not committed; we have no commitment to come to the military defense of the Israelis; we have a general commitment to the territorial integrity of all the countries in the area.

M: Going back to 1950?

B: It goes back to 1950. The real beginning is 1950 with the Tri-Partite Declaration, which has been changed by events in history and certainly by the 1956 war. This had a very important bearing on it, but we have, over

quite a number of presidents of each party, given a real assurance of our support to the Israelis for their comtinued survival. This is not interpretative nor is it spelled out in any document. And the question of how far we go and what we do is an open one to be decided by the President of the United States, God rest his soul, at such time as the issue comes forward. I don't know who will be President when we next face the issue, but we'll hear it again.

M: It looks like maybe soon, too.

B: It may well be soon.

M: When you left office this fall [1968], did you not travel to that area immediately on leaving office?

B: Yes, I went out to Cairo to the official opening of Abu Simbel. They had invited Dean Rusk, and the Secretary obviously couldn't go and shouldn't have gone. Then it was suggested that I come in his place. The President was quite interested in this. We felt that this was a chance that should be taken; that they should be tested. We did not know whether the Egyptians really had something to say or whether it was going to be a case in which I simply restated what has been said to them repeatedly, but we felt that it was worth taking a chance.

I tried here to keep the press from building up my trip out there, and I succeeded fairly well. There was very little mention of it. I had many calls, and I told them that there was nothing earth-shaking in that trip, and that it should not be played up as a major initiative by the United States.

Unfortunately, I was less well able to guide the press in the Arab world, and it was built up a great deal more out there than it was here. I was the first senior government official to go into the U.A.R. after the

break in relations following the June 1967 war. There had been other people much more important, I might add, than I, but they were not in government and I was.

M: This was before you actually had resigned then?

B: Yes. This, also, I think complicated it and to some extent lessened the success of the trip. We knew that I was resigning and retiring from the foreign service, and there was a great discussion as to whether this should be announced before I went out. I felt that it had to be announced for several reasons. One is that if I got out there and talked with them and then did not tell them at that time that I was resigning--I have a great many friends in that government--and I did not tell them, then they would feel that we had misled them. And that I had come out with the appearance of a continuing responsibility for relations in that area when in fact I had known at the time that I would be leaving. If I had gone out and told them while I was there, it would have leaked to the press out there and that would have been most embarrassing back here. That I had gone out and the appearance that I had misled people back here would have been fairly grave.

So it was my own view that we were better off not to withhold the fact that I was retiring and resigning, and that we ought to put this out, make it clear to all interested before I went out there. So it was done. I think there was a slight feeling that this had lessened the value of my trip; I don't think it needed to have done so. But there were those out there who perhaps thought so. Although I had had a message from Gamal Abdel Nasser that he looked forward to seeing me while I was there, he cancelled his tentative appointment with me the last afternoon I was there. This could have been for several reasons. I think the most likely reason was

that I had talked with his foreign minister and his deputy prime minister, and a member of his staff who is roughly the equivalent of Walt Rostow, and with others. I had seen most of the senior people in the government. He knew by that time that contrary to the press buildup in the area I had not brought a big new plan, or my visit did not represent a major new initiative by the United States; and that he didn't feel that it was in his interest to see me with a degree of potential embarrassment in receiving both the former ambassador to Cairo and a senior governmental official at a time when they had no diplomatic relations.

The other thing that I think was entirely possible is that his health--he had been in Moscow for treatment and had only been back a few days and had just started seeing people again. The King of Jordan was in town at the same time, which also might have been a factor. He left the day that I was supposed to see Nasser. I suspect that, knowing Nasser, that if he had wanted to see me and he felt it to be in his interest to see me, he would have done so without regard to these other considerations. But these might well have been factors, and I suspect that he decided there was nothing big and new in what I was going to say, and he did not wish to take what he thought to be some political loss in the area from having received me when I was not bringing something that was really going to solve his problems. Like all Arabs he, as he needs to blame someone else when things go wrong, so does he look to someone else to direct his difficulties and to remove his problems. He hopes that a third party somehow can bail him out.

M: So they didn't suggest anything either?

B: They didn't suggest anything. There was nothing new in the exchange; I had a very warm personal reception there, except that nothing happened.

I didn't think anything would happen, but I thought it was worth the test. I thought that by going out that it at least gave an evidence that channels of communication could continue to be open, even though we had no diplomatic relations and that we were still interested in them, for the person in the State Department in charge of that area to go out there. So I think it was a useful trip; it was not an earth-shaking one; it was about what I thought it would be and about what I told the press before I went here that it would do. I'm glad I went. I think the President was right in sending me out; and it was worth a try, but we had no great expectations for anything big or dramatic.

M: Let's shift over to Cyprus. I think that's probably one of the least understood of all the major international crises that has affected the United States recently. Can you go into that a little bit, particularly what the President's actions and attitudes--

B: Yes. This was a rather astonishing crisis in a number of ways. For one thing it was a crisis for some days before it ever got in the newspapers. We were frantically disturbed in the State Department some days before this ever got in the press. I remember my wife going to a party at Joe Kraft's, the newspaper columnist, and there were any number of senior American journalists, if there is seniority among journalists, rather important columnists at the party. At the last minute I wasn't able to show, and she said that any number of them came up to her and asked, "Where is Luke?" And she said, "Well, he's working." And nobody pursued it beyond that.

Now there was a big story there for them if any one of them ever thought to go a step beyond, but the assumption at that stage was that I was still involved with the Arab-Israeli crisis, but I was busily handling another one.

The Cyprus issue is an old one; it isn't a new one. It stems basically from the Turkish minority on the Island of Cyprus with the large Greek majority, something like four or five to one, with the argument over the role of the Turkish minority and the nature of the government and the extent to which the Turkish government protects the rights of that minority on the island. There were rights and wrongs on both sides. The Cyprus crisis got out of hand; it had been building up; it got out of hand over a series of incidents that did not in and of themselves suggest that the problem was as great as it was, but which brought to a head a lot of frictions and strains that had existed for some time.

Suddenly we were faced with it; we had a very strained relationship with the Greeks. Following the coup, we had not had very satisfactory relationships with them. We had suspended the shipment of all major military assistance to them; and in fact, our relations were rather strained indeed.

With the Turks we enjoyed a very warm relationship. President [Cavdet] Sunay had just been here, had seen the President, and had a very good visit. I had been out there not too many months before. There had been a great deal of exchange back and forth between us, and our relations were quite cordial. With Cyprus there were always difficult relations for the obvious reasons. [Archbishop] Makarios [III] is not the easiest man in the world to have a normal and natural relationship with. So the crisis came at a rather difficult time. We first hoped that we could avoid a direct involvement and hoped to look to the United Nations and to NATO to take the lead and keep these two members of NATO from having a clash with consequences that could have been quite disastrous.

M: We didn't have any preference between the United Nations and NATO?

B: Well, what we really wanted was somebody to solve it. The UN was already

involved, but for a lot of complicated reasons the UN, we feared, would not take the kind of position that was necessary; and in the last analysis, neither the Greeks nor the Turks were willing to accept a UN role as a predominant one.

We tried, for example, to get other countries--the British and the Canadians--to join with us and they did in fact join and were very helpful in trying to approach the two countries and bring some sanity into the situation. I could not really recall all the steps--there was such a frantic few days that I can't recall all the steps involved in this, but I remember on one morning that I went upstairs to see Nick Katzenbach and Dean Rusk and I said, "I think we've come to the point where we're going to have a war within the next forty-eight hours if we don't do something, and it is going to be devastating and very, very serious."

We decided then and it was recommended to the President that he dispatch someone out there; various suggestions were made, I can't remember all of them--they suggested McGeorge Bundy, some of us did; Cyrus Vance, me, and others. I suggested that I was not the person for it for a lot of reasons. I felt that we needed a figure outside of government, and that it ought to be someone with more stature than I had in a public sense, and that I was not the person. So my name was withdrawn from the memorandum that we were filling with the President; I don't recall who else specifically was on it, but I know Mac Bundy was and I know Cyrus Vance was. It was decided to send Cy. Cy had just left government, not retired, but just gone into private practice of law. He had already been brought back for one or two things and was obviously not looking for further government employment. But like the good soldier he is he agreed to go; he said that he didn't know a thing in the world about the Cyprus issues, and that we

would have to do something about briefing. It was decided that I would go up to New York on the plane that was to take him to the area; And I met Cy in New York at the airport; we set on the plane for perhaps two hours, and I went over all the issues at that time, stuck a sheaf of papers in his hands. And for the next days, I can't tell you how many days--but quite a few--he went through the most incredible series of diplomatic negotiations that I guess I've ever witnessed. And I've witnessed quite a few in all these years.

He did one of the most remarkable jobs that I think has ever been done and without the role of Cy Vance, without any question there would have been a war between Greece and Turkey; and he managed, through the most incredible skill, to keep everybody from starting shooting at everybody else.

We had very certain intelligence on a couple of occasions that the Turks were about to move, somehow he always held them off and we got a little more time.

I must say in all immodesty that we did pretty well back here, too. The President and the Secretary and Nick Katzenbach all were kept informed, but the actual operation of the crisis was left pretty much to me and to Joe Sisco and to Arthur Goldberg. And we three, in effect, ran the crisis; and we took quite a beating, too, but not anything like what Cy Vance took.

But I remember the night before Thanksgiving, Joe Sisco and I and several of our colleagues--Stewart Rockwell was one of my people and a couple of those working for Joe Sisco--stayed up all night long and had a phone line open to Arthur Goldberg who sat all night with a phone on his shoulder and the three of us were talking back over teleconference with Cy Vance in Nicosia. And that went on all night. And we were there until

I would say--the next day was Thanksgiving, as I remember it. Perhaps I'm wrong, maybe the next day wasn't Thanksgiving, but it was that weekend. And I remember getting home in the middle of the afternoon, it was the second day, and we had all been just sitting on the end of this phone with poor Cy, who had been bouncing around between Ankara and Athens and Nicosia. I can't tell you how many trips he made on that plane he left here on; but any number of them, and he got no sleep for days on end. He was having trouble with his back from the beginning, and he left here with sort of a metal seat that he had to sit in because of his back problem.

But few people in the world can say that they stopped a war, avoided a war. And I think Cyrus Vance can tell his grandchildren that he kept a war from occurring and maybe a war that would spread very easily and very quickly to one involving broad participation.

M: He's back doing it again now. [The reference is to Vance as Deputy in the Paris talks on Viet Nam.]

B: He's back doing it again. So I think the United States owes Cyrus Vance a very great deal indeed.

M: What did the President do? Is there anything that he can do to put pressure directly on our NATO allied governments, Greece and Turkey, to keep them from acting precipitously?

B: Yes, and he addressed letters to them. But the fact that we had--you see, this same kind of issue had popped up several years before, and he had put such pressure on them then that it had adverse political implications in Turkey particularly. And we were very nervous about going too far, using the President's prestige and power too greatly, because we feared that it could boomerang and that we could easily find that we were blamed for

everything that went wrong. Therefore we were a bit cautious. We recommended a more sparing use of the President's power and his name than had been the case in the 1964 issue.

[interruption]

One of the interesting things about that period and there were many interesting aspects of it--looking back on it, it was one of the nicest crises I was ever involved in. It was nice for a lot of reasons, but it was successful. It was relatively short; it was bloodless, relatively bloodless; and it really, I think, awakened the awareness of both the Greeks and the Turks to what almost was, what almost happened, and led to the present time when there is considerable reason to believe that they will eventually solve the Cyprus problem.

Again an odd and rather revealing thing is that the Greek coup in a strange way made possible the avoidance of war for the simple reason that the coup was in control of the press; they could keep the press from inflaming the issue within Greece. They did not want this to be an internal issue because they already had enough problems, and they couldn't face another difficult one. The coup brought very few good things, almost none, but it did perhaps make it possible in this case for the wrong reasons to avoid a war. That they had control of the press, that they wished to improve their relations with the Turks, and that they didn't want an internal situation that was already chaotic over a new issue. They already had enough troubles. This made the Greeks much more flexible, and this was a factor that was not to be underestimated.

M: What about the alliance system that we had in the part of the world over which you had responsibility, CENTO? Is it even a reality, and if so what is its role in that part of the world?

B: Well, CENTO was never really a very effective instrument in my judgment. I think if we didn't have it, I wouldn't want to create it. But the fact that we had it has to be accepted and it would be a mistake to try to eliminate it. It has a limited utility, and it was built up to be something that it wasn't. It never had quite the meaning that the Dulles era attributed to it. It was, I think, oversold both here and there, not that it was sold very much here because very few people are even aware that it exists. But the CENTO--perhaps now it's a fairly useful device for exchanging of political views. It is not a major or even an important instrument of American policy, nor is it an important instrument of anybody else's policy with the possible exception of Iran.

The Turks put some store by it, the Iranians put considerable store by it, the Pakistanis put no store by it, the British are bored by it, and we are too. The Paks would like to see it end, the Iranians and the Turks don't want it to end in varying degrees; the British feel about like we do about it.

M: Could it become the basis of some kind of commitment in the same way that we argue that the Southeast Asian commitment comes from SEATO?

B: Not unless you stretch it awfully far, because we're not members.

M: Right.

B: And I cannot believe that it could be taken as anything major in that regard. I doubt it.

M: Is the Eisenhower Doctrine taken seriously?

B: Well, the Eisenhower Doctrine really was a momentary, short-termed thing without really any long--there was no time framework for it. Oddly enough, it was almost never mentioned during the Arab-Israeli War. It was mentioned in an historical context but never in any context that suggested it had any particular validity with respect to the policy in the current sense.

M: What about the actions of the United States in Viet Nam? It's often argued that they have had very unfortunate influences on our relations around the rest of the world. Is that true of the Middle East?

B: Yes, it's true, but not as true as people try to make it. I don't know that we would have done anything very differently, if there had been no Viet Nam. I think there might have been a slightly different attitude around about the U.S. involvement, but oddly enough all the doves in the Senate, particularly, who scream about commitments and the distinction of commitments, and who don't want them, are the liberal wing who are most pro-Israeli of any group in the Senate--

M: That's strange. Why is that--?

B: That's a strange inconsistency. Well, it happens to be that the liberal senators are those who have been most interested in Israel because it was a traditional, liberal point of view. A Zionist state was needed, and a Jewish homeland was accepted by most people of liberal persuasion. And they became the ones who were opposed the most to Viet Nam, and yet they were the ones who would probably have been more ready than anyone to intervene in Israel if anybody had been. They never had to face the issue nor did we--the government--so I don't know how it would have come out. It was an interesting little contradiction.

M: The New Republic asked for action on the same grounds they opposed it in Viet Nam, I recall that.

B: Did they?

M: Very clearly; and got called on it by some reader.

B: It's a strange phenomenon.

M: What about India and Pakistan? You missed the war as far as being assistant secretary was concerned, but you came along in its aftermath. Is the Johnson Administration policy leading anywhere there other than holding the line?

B: Of the countries of my responsibility in the NEA I'm afraid India and Pakistan somewhat because of the many crisis I had in other parts of the area. As is so frequently the case with our country, we always tend to see things in blacks and whites when usually gray is the more predominant color if we look a little longer. We, I think, went too far in our reaction to the India-Pakistan war in cutting off economic and political aid to them. I think that this was the result of enormous concern in the Congress and in the public, over the horrors of our arming two sides of conflict. Very bad it is, and I don't subscribe to it; but it's one of the realities of life that you can find yourself engaged in. The real problem on this goes back many years before, as is so frequently the case. You're chained to history. If you look throughout the era of NEA, you'll find many cases when we were arming a country against an enemy we saw, when they were arming themselves against an enemy they saw; and they very frequently were not the same enemy.

This was true in the case of the Arabs and the Israelis, and the case of the Greeks and the Turks, and the case of the Indians and the Pakistanis. But we had embarked on armaments programs never to the extent that--well, it depends again on which moment you look at it. We had at various times followed rather inconsistent policies over the years with respect to Indian armaments and were delighted when India began to rearm against the Chinese after 1962 as the Chinese invaded India; and we were delighted that Krishna Menon had been proved wrong and that his desire to keep the Indians from having any effective arms policy was proved an error. Therefore, we were all for the army, but again we saw the enemy that they were arming against as China when they were quite willing to have a whack at Pakistan under the right circumstances.

So that's one facet of it. Another facet is that we had poured arms into Pakistan again against the enemy that we saw, the Russians, and against Communism in the area in an effort in the Dulles era to strengthen every country that was opposed to Communism, and we had shelled out much too much for arms aid to Pakistan. And once you begin this, it's very hard to turn back. You create an arms machine. And the resupply of it becomes essential, and if you don't resupply it, if they're determined to have it--and particularly when you've talked them into it--it's rather difficult to then tell them it's a bad idea. If you cut off all your resupply and spare parts or what have you, what happens? Two or three courses are possible. One is they can buy them in the open market of the world. We're not the only supplier of arms, of even of American arms, in the world. They're all over the place. They can be bought in the black market everywhere for nine or ten times what we sell them for. That's one thing. And then that runs up the budget cost, that runs up the cost of the machine, and that runs into the problems with the Congress, who are upset about the arms budget level. But it's because we're not providing it and we created the machine initially, and we're not keeping it going. And then they turn to the black market, or alternatively they turn to other suppliers in the case of the Russians. And the Russians are all too willing to supply in many instances around the world arms--Jordan is one of the key cases where this has been the case over the past year or two. They want to supply arms for political reasons, and we have a real problem if we cut off the supply of arms for a machine that we created and abdicate in favor of the Russians. We've got to be as a nation a bit more realistic about this than we have been. We need to recognize that many countries are going to arm, that we're better off supplying the arms, and that we can control the arms and the level of

arms better if we supply than if we move out of it and let the Russians come in and do it, or if we let them buy in the open markets from other suppliers.

M: This means it's hard to exact a price when we start again supplying aid after cutting it off, I assume, or makes it impossible?

B: It makes it very difficult and if you look at something in the case--. The first week I was in office in NEA, the first week--the first couple of weeks--we worked out a policy to resupply spares to both India and Pakistan on a limited basis and really didn't resolve the question of what we would do on items like tanks and planes, but let's look at what happened. If there's a tank brigade, and one tank is lost--destroyed, falls over a cliff, wears out or what have you--and you refuse to provide the tank, all right, the remainder of the tanks in that unit are of no value, and they either will start over entirely or you supply one tank. You'd be better off putting in one tank than you are in seeing them begin another kind of equipment. This is what happens.

We also agreed that we would supply, that we would authorize the sale from third countries a limited number of American tanks provided by us. What we didn't really anticipate was that we thought there were several countries that would like to supply them that nobody really wanted to. Nobody wanted to walk in, any more than we did, to the supply of tanks because they were permitted to sell without any real profit. And in the Indian-Pakistan context, the Paks wanted them, and every time they tried to negotiate with a third country for American tanks--Belgium, Turkey Iran--not Iran, because that was possible but for a lot of reasons it couldn't be. The Iranians would have done it, but the Turks and the Italians and the Belgians were all approached, and we thought one or the other of them would do it. Nobody wanted to, because the Indians came in and objected, and the tank sale in

each instance didn't have enough money for the supplying country really to benefit from it materially, and the result was that the Paks became more and more indignant--I don't know where this question is now. I haven't had anything to do with it for two or three months since I've been gone; and I don't know where this is. But this is the problem of having these blanket decisions that you're not going to supply equipment. What really we ought to do is be realistic about it, recognize that there are frequently going to be cases around the world where countries are going to arm themselves; and the fact that we provide the arms is not necessarily the cause of the war. They're going to get the arms whether we provide them or not, and we're better off in the main in supplying them than we are in having others do it, not only from an economic point of view which is I think not an important factor in the importance of the terms that we're talking. But still a factor. But more importantly, I think we have to recognize that arms are available in the world market and that they're used by other countries, particularly the Russians and also the French, as a means of political influence and that the other countries are much less troubled than we over the ethics of the question. I don't like the situation in which we find ourselves arming both sides to a conflict, but I prefer to have us trying to do it on a limited basis than to abdicate and let somebody else throw them in wholesale, distort the economy and the budget problem, and result in a Russian arms structure that certainly will not be consistent with our interests in a great many of these countries. That's the nature of the problem.

M: And still a problem, as you say.

B: And will be a problem for quite a long time.

M: You mentioned the Greek coup. Did the Johnson Administration have a

well-formulated policy toward this type of occurrence, or do they play it pretty much as an ad hoc thing?

B: Oh, I only had that one coup that occurred when I was in the NEA. I think we ad hoced it; it occurred the first week I was in office. I think we had enough signs that perhaps we could have anticipated that something--there were any number of rumors of coups and we knew of the existence of a coup plan. But that this coup would occur we did not know about in advance. We had, in looking back over it with the 20-20 vision of hindsight, perhaps we had tip-offs that this was coming that we didn't read accurately; even if we had known it, I'm not sure what we could have done about it. We could have made it clear we weren't going to back it. The colonels in Greece were surprised that we were opposed to them. It seemed to them that they were willing to do everything we wanted them to do. They were pro-King; they were pro-NATO; they were pro-American; they were pro-Western; they were anti-Communist. As the colonels kept saying, "What more do you want?" They were going to bring order, and they were going to supply the kind of policy decisions that they felt the United States wanted. That they had come into power through a non-constitutional means troubled us a great deal more than it troubled them. The notion that Greece is the cradle of democracy is just so much rot. It may be the birthplace of democracy, but democracy got out of there long before it reached puberty.

M: And it's seldom been back since.

B: It's seldom been back, and the idea that Greece has been run as a democratic model over the years is just--those who say that just simply haven't read history. It has been a corrupt and in many ways unconstitutional, undemocratic government over a long period of time. So we tend to let, I think, emotion take over in these cases. I don't like that crowd in Greece, either.

I think they're a second-rate bunch of thugs, but that is not the question. If we had let the emotionalism of a lot of our critics win, a number of things would have happened. If we had made public statements opposing the coup right after, we could easily have started a civil war in Greece. In the best judgment of all of us the colonels had control of the military, not entirely the navy, not entirely the air force; but they had enough of it--certainly they had the ground troops. They could have probably won out, but after a bloody civil war in which the Communists would have played around; and we could have easily started a civil war, and the consequences in Cyprus and Turkey would have been very serious indeed. And look what has happened in Czechoslovakia. We could have created a new situation in Europe and it was just sheer madness for us to do anything at all but to keep our relations cool but existent. And to try to use such leverage as we had to make the move to a restoration of parliamentary government and constitutional processes and a more democratic political life. It did not entirely succeed, but it succeeded in part; it worked less well than I thought it would, but it was still--even looking back I think we were right in what we did and to have followed any other course would have been really quite bad. It is a mess; there's no doubt of it. I don't like this regime, but they're better than they were. They've got a long way to go and even within the regime itself, there are many elements that are worse than those who are actually in control at the moment. Often these are not black and white situations.

I've got to put a long-time framework on the use of some of this.

M: This is fine. As long as you want to.

B: I'm being awfully frank about it.

M: Did the President ever take a specific stand on this problem of dealing with coups that we didn't like?

B: I never talked with the President generally about coups. I talked to him about this coup--the Greek coup--a couple of times; and I found him really quite balanced about it.

One of the fascinating things about this is the reaction of the academic world and the liberal community. I've always considered myself a liberal, too, but I find when I witness some of the things that the liberal community and the academic community have done and stood for over the last years, I find it absolutely appalling.

Now if you look at what happened in the case of the Greek coup, the week of the Greek coup--the aftermath of the Greek coup--Andreas Papandreou, a one-time American citizen and a member of the academic world here, was imprisoned. That was bad. We did everything--had a large hand in getting him out. I sent messages of many characters to the Greeks urging that they release him.

At the same time two Americans in Yemen were arrested by the Yemenis for having blown up an ammunition dump--charged with having blown up an ammunition dump with the resultant loss of several Yemeni lives, I've forgotten how many. These two fellows were able to be tried; they had not been involved in any way, shape or form. We knew who had been--we didn't know at the time it occurred, but we found out later. I don't think I will put that even on this tape. But we knew they were innocent. This had, for a few days, some publicity in the American press. Andreas Papandreou had more, but there wasn't any great difference.

I had literally hundreds of calls from the academic world asking us to do everything in the world but start a war with Greece to get Andreas Papandreou out. I did not have a <u>single</u> call or a <u>single</u> telegram or a <u>single</u> letter about the two Americans in Yemen who were in much more dire

straits and could easily have been forgotten, except for those of us in the State Department--the public forgot it, the public paid no attention. Those two were absolutely innocent, were official Americans, and were still Americans. Andreas has had a very complicated background and had renounced his citizenship and his life was not in danger.

M: And had been involved in what they said he had--

B: And had been involved in all kinds of things in Greece, and historians were probably the reason as much as any other one factor that led to the coup. But the academic world and all my buddies--I had been very closely involved with the academic world off and on for a good many years--the academic world flooded us with telegrams, with letters, with phone calls; but not one person--. If you want to get on a matter of high principle, I would have thought if they're pleading for human life that somebody would have said something about the Yemenis. I made this point in two or three speeches. They were off the record. I wouldn't have made them on the record. I said it to a couple of academic groups. And even after that I don't think I ever got a letter about it.

We finally got them released; actually making it a public issue would not have helped. It wasn't that I wanted--to make it a public issue but--in fact I didn't want either one of them to be a public issue, because our chances of helping Andreas Papandreou, which we wanted to do and tried to do everything we could to help him and succeeded. We succeeded in both cases. But neither case was helped by public outcry here; it made it more difficult for that government to do anything about it, to respond to pressure.

But the interesting thing is that it's just a matter of ethics. If you're going to stand on high principle, it ought to be a consistent one.

M: It's trying to explain the difference between Viet Nam and Israel--

B: Exactly, same sort of point.

M: What about the kind of advice that Mr. Johnson has sought and gotten on foreign policy matters? Has he relied to your knowledge on the people who have held foreign policy posts primarily, or has he gone outside? Particularly, you're a very close friend of Mr. Acheson's, for example, as indicated by the photograph here and you said so last time. Has he used Mr. Acheson?

B: Yes, on numerous occasions in my presence. He had Clark Clifford, Abe Fortas, Dean Acheson, Mac Bundy, particularly were present on several occasions. He brought in any number--George Ball, who was out of government at that time. All those were brought in. I saw nothing whatever wrong with it. They were all used as an additional source of advice and thoughts. I must say, in all candor, that I can't speak for the relations between the President and the other assistant secretaries of state, but my own relationships with him were excellent. He made it very clear to me on numerous occasions that he wanted my views. People called me, and it would come on occasion--I remember once Bob McNamara got me out of a speech in New York--I guess it was just before I walked on the platform, and said, "The President wants me to talk with you personally about this issue and what do you think about whatever the point was?" I don't recall.

There were other times when he asked me. There were times when Walt Rostow called and said, "The President asked me particularly to get your views on this." Now, when I had that kind of question I always gave my views; and then I, being an orderly creature--and an old experienced hand around town--I saw to it that the Secretary of State, who was also my old friend and was my boss, knew that I had received such a call and what I had said. If he wished to advise to the contrary, that was up to him. But I didn't make a habit of advising the President without letting the

Secretary know it, and while this didn't happen often, don't misunderstand me, it only happened a few times, but it did happen.

And I went many times to NSC meetings, to Cabinet meetings, to meetings of the control group, as we called it, in the Arab-Israeli period. The President was there and even though the Secretary or the Under Secretary spoke, he would nearly always turn to me and say, "Luke, do you want to make any comment on it?"

M: So any charge that his source of advice was all one-sided is not in your experience valid?

B: Absolutely. My own experience is diametrically opposed; and I can truly say that I felt at home with him, and I had no hesitation in speaking up with him.

I was present at the ranch when [Levi] Eshkol of Israel was there; the President talked with me and in fact I recall Dean Rusk saying on a couple of issues, "Well, Luke knows more about this; he has been working with it more directly than I have; see what he says."

And I felt at no time that I was shut out of or not consulted--this does not mean that everything I wanted to do was done. It does not mean that the President always accepted my advice. But I felt I had a chance to have it known, and I had no hesitation about talking. And I attended any number of sessions with the President and members of the Cabinet when I was the only non-Cabinet member there, with the exception of a couple of White House staff--Walt Rostow and perhaps others--something of that sort. But that happened on any number of occasions.

And on occasion I would go over. I went over on Cyprus and sat in on several things where the Secretary or the President would ask me to make the presentation. So I presented the issue, and we talked about the problem.

On a couple of occasions Joe Sisco and I went together; on other occasions Joe and I were there and Arthur Goldberg and others were there; it varied, but there were very few occasions--I used to tell Nick Katzenbach when we had these sessions, as we frequently did at the White House, on the question of how the President did not like to have too many people go. And I always said to Nick and to the Secretary, "I am not in the least sensitive about not going to things. It never bothers me at all; when anybody wants to hear I make my views known to those who are representing us, and I will accept it if that is what happens. I am not going to take offense if I am not included."

Well, Nick is a remarkable fellow, and Nick would say, "Well, Luke, you know you know more about this than I do and I don't think I--if we have to choose between us, obviously you ought to go."

So unlike most situations involving the President, where everybody is supposed to be clawing to get over there to be seen and to be known, I didn't feel that way at all. If the President wanted to know what I thought, he knew where to come and that was all there was to it.

But the only thing I am saying is that to a degree we sorted it out ourselves, and I don't think this was as true of some of the other assistant secretaries. They'll be doing this, and let them speak for themselves. But my own relations with President Johnson were very good; I had a very warm and deep affection for him and a great admiration for him. While I didn't always agree with him, he didn't always agree with me either. But still he listened and he retained and he read and he followed and I've seen him in some very remarkable performances in a diplomatic context.

M: That was the other question I wanted to ask in that regard. What kind of a personal diplomat--you mentioned the visit with Eshkol--

B: His performance varied sometimes, but I've seen him on occasion when he was absolutely superb; he was excellent. In the efforts to stop the war, the June war, before it began and the talks that he had afterwards, he was I thought quite remarkable. And he had his own style, but it was a good, American, honest, sincere, direct presentation of a position, and I don't think anyone could expect any more. I think, as an American, I was always very proud of him; I had no feeling whatever, you know, that the criticisms of him and all that--I've seen a lot of him; he wasn't always the easiest man to work for, we all know that, but he had a genuine American--he may be the last Populist President we'll ever have. I don't know. But he had a genuine, earthy, honest, direct, and highly intelligent approach to things; and I found working with him, dealing with him, entirely satisfactory.

M: I only have one other question, and it's a little bit irrelevant to President Johnson, but it's not irrelevant to foreign policy. Richard Rovere, several years ago, wrote an article about the Establishment--Eastern, Ivy League, Council of Foreign Relations and names <u>do</u> move in and out with facility; and you would certainly be among that group. Is there such a thing that might be called a capital "E" Establishment in foreign policy making?

B: I don't know.

M: You mean you don't go to their club meetings?

B: I don't know. You asked me this, I must now be personal, and I didn't mean to be. I happened to be reading a book a couple of nights ago written by John Leocacos.

M: <u>Fires in the In Basket</u>?

B: Yes. And he came to a description of me. He said, "Lucius D. Battle, an accepted Establishment figure, but one who is not stuffy about it."

M: I just read the same book, and that's why I asked you the question.

B: Is that how you happened--?

M: Yes, sir.

B: So when you say, "Is there an Establishment?" I don't know. I never would have considered myself an Establishment or an institutional figure in any way. I just never think about it in those terms. I think that there perhaps is an establishment of the intellect, an establishment that is based upon ability and integrity. And you soon, after you have as many years as I have on this particular track, you soon know where those are who both know how to get things done and have the brains and the courage, the guts, to try to lead and move in the directions that are going to be productive.

I think that is the establishment that I think ought to exist and comes nearer existing. Now it overlaps. I don't know whether it's Eastern Seaboard, Ivy League--

M: I'm just wondering whether a Southwesterner could get in it.

B: Well, I would certainly think so. I'm a Southerner myself. I was amused by this reference that you were referring to. But I think that the old conception of the foreign service of the United States as being totally Ivy League, totally Eastern Seaboard, is really quite wrong. I have had a very strange career in the service; I have been in and out of it; and I've had a rather odd career. I was a two-time Wristonee, but I'm the only Wristonee who has ever been President of the Foreign Service Association. No one else has that particular distinction, and I had to fight like a steer to keep from being reelected. So all I'm saying is that it is possible for a renegade like me to be at home with the old guard of the foreign service, many of whom I consider my closest friends. And I don't know whether there

is an Establishment, in a sense. I think there are many establishments in our society today; they seem to me to be based on, if you compare them with other societies, on sterner stuff and more valid measures than is the case with other societies. They are not based entirely on titles or wealth or birth.

M: It's at least open?

B: It's open and there's nobility within them, and it is never totally closed. I think that is good. I think there is an establishment, has been a foreign policy establishment, in a sense; but I think it has been based on those factors that I was discussing, of brain power, ability, and courage, and guts and what have you, rather than a little group that created to maintain itself. So it would seem to me. I may not be a--

M: From an establishment Establishment figure such as yourself, that's--

B: I said that's what the book said.

M: I'm just--

B: I didn't say that; I was just amused by that reference which I just happened to have read a couple of days ago.

M: I don't want to foreclose you from anything. Is there any subject we haven't dealt with or mentioned?

B: I don't know whether I've covered everything or not. I think we probably have; we've covered the U.A.R. as far as my services as Ambassador there; we've covered it chronologically, haven't we? I don't think of anything else.

M: I certainly thank you for your--

B: I recall--I don't remember whether this was on your tape or the Kennedy tape.

M: They run together in your mind, I'm sure.

B: They do, and I also had a number of other people in here over recent days, asking me questions, and I forget with whom I spoke on specifically.

The President and Mrs. Johnson spoke with me at the ranch--we got on the subject of records and personal papers. Have I talked with you about this?

M: No, you haven't. I'd like to talk with you about it.

B: And I told them, the same thing has been raised by the Kennedy library people, who have asked me for my personal papers. And I said, "I have no personal papers." I have none. I have turned over, each step of my career, which has been extremely varied; and I've been privileged to have been around during a lot of the great events of our time for the last twenty-five years, and I have in each step of the way, I have turned over whatever I had to the Archives of the United States. I have various personal letters from, in some instances, extremely famous people, extremely intelligent people; but they were written to me in the sense of being--they were non-operational; they had nothing to do with issues before me or before my office at that particular time. I just don't have private papers, I have little notes from various people of renown. I do not consider that it has been my right to have personal papers. I consider that those papers and my actions were the property of the United States government, and the record will speak for itself. I've had people in here talking with me about writing things, and putting down recollections of the Acheson era, and various things; and I have said each time that I simply don't--in a speech I am going to make on a related subject very soon, I'm going to make this disclaimer in the speech: that I have neither in my heart nor in my files such stuff as that kind of book is made of. And this I feel rather strongly about.

I told Mrs. Johnson particularly that it wasn't that I would not be delighted having them become the property of the Johnson Library, certainly

for the years that I have served in the Johnson Administration; that would be where they would go, but I don't have any. I turned them over to the Central Files of the Department of State; they go into the Archives.

M: Where these will also go; insofar as the administration of them is concerned.

B: I have no cache of documents that are going to shock the world.

M: No need to look in attics in the future for the Lucius Battle collection?

B: They won't find any Lucius Battle--you may find a few things, but they'll be strictly personal, and I hope I will have the courage to burn those before I--

M: I hope you won't. I hope you make them, perhaps, part of your estate under some--

B: But they are clearly personal. They are clearly personal.

M: But they're the kind of things that you need to write biographies about famous people, including yourself.

B: They are letters written to me by a few famous people about issues unrelated to what I was doing at that time. They're things written to me when I was abroad by Dean Acheson, by George Ball, by people of that sort; notes from Mrs. Roosevelt and of other people, handwritten scripts here and there, occasionally witty, amusing comments to me about something that was happening in the world at that time. But they have nothing to do with my responsibilities at the time I was in office, or of my overall responsibilities as a member of the State Department.

M: No, but they do have a great deal to do with the in-depth personalities of important people, so don't burn them. I mean, wait until your estate is settled and let them go into the Library of Congress or something.

B: I feel a little bit that those people, every one of them, had an audience if they ever wanted to publish anything. They didn't need to use me as a source of that.

M: You can believe, though, there will be a lot of people doing in-depth biographies of those characters.

B: Well, that may be.

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GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION
NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS SERVICE

Gift of Personal Statement

By Lucius D. Battle

to the

Lyndon Baines Johnson Library

In accordance with Sec. 507 of the Federal Property and Administrative Services Act of 1949, as amended (44 U.S.C. 397) and regulations issued thereunder (41 CFR 101-10), I, Lucius D. Battle, hereinafter referred to as the donor, hereby give, donate, and convey to the United States of America for eventual deposit in the proposed Lyndon Baines Johnson Library, and for administration therein by the authorities thereof, a tape and transcript of a personal statement approved by me and prepared for the purpose of deposit in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library. The gift of this material is made subject to the following terms and conditions:

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Signed Lucius D. Battle

Date [illegible] 3, 1970

Accepted Harry J. Middleton - for
Archivist of the United States

Date March 10, 1975