INTERVIEW I

DATE: November 12, 1971

INTERVIEWEE: ZBIGNIEW BRZEZINSKI

INTERVIEWER: PAIGE MULHOLLAN

PLACE: Dr. Brzezinski's office at Columbia University, New York

Tape 1 of 1

M: Let's just identify you for the beginning here on the tape.

B: Right.

M: You're Zbigniew Brzezinski, and during the Johnson Administration, you served on the Policy Planning [Council] staff of the State Department in 1966 and 1967, but you were also a consultant with the State Department on several occasions other than that. So perhaps you might just begin by indicating when your first acquaintance with Lyndon Johnson or with any of those close to him began.

B: Well, actually, some of the acquaintance goes back to the Kennedy years, because I was somewhat involved, not centrally, but somewhat involved with the Kennedy years. I did some of the work for the Kennedy-Johnson ticket in the campaign of 1960, and then on occasion came down subsequently.

M: Did you talk to Mr. Johnson during the campaign period?

B: Yes, but very briefly and sporadically only, so that the contact was not in any way of any significance really.

M: You were associated on several occasions when the Teach-In movement began, after Mr. Johnson was President, and generally listed as the spokesman on the side of the administration at that point. Did Mr.

Johnson ever react to your activities in that regard?

B: I forget. I think that Mac Bundy [McGeorge Bundy] told me something to that effect, or I got a letter from Mr. Johnson, but there was no direct personal reaction.

M: No direct personal reaction. You were a consultant for the State Department at various times during that period.

B: Yes.

M: Did any of those tasks bring you in direct contact with him?

B: No.

M: Not until you were actually full-time down there.

B: Right.

M: Do you know how it happened that you got the appointment to the policy planning staff?

B: No.

M: No one ever told you that Mr. Johnson knew your name and picked you out as somebody he knew?

B: No. No.

M: Did you visit with him at all when you first went into that job?

B: Yes, after I occupied the job, yes. But not before.

M: Did he give you any direct personal instructions as to what he thought the policy planning staff ought to do, or what he wanted you to do?

B: No. No. Although we talked about Soviet affairs, and at some different occasions he would ask me for memos or something to that effect.

M: You have been a very well know expert in Soviet affairs. Did Mr. Johnson seem to you at that point to have any grasp at all of the

realities of Soviet affairs vis-a-vis the United States or Soviet activities?

B: Well, what I found most striking about Mr. Johnson was that while he was really not terribly well versed in Soviet affairs as such, that in talking to him about problems, he had a knack for identifying what was important and crucial. He was a very good listener, and then he would say--

M: He was a very good listener?

B: Listener.

M: Gee, a lot of people say you never got a chance to even talk when you were around him. You didn't find him that way?

B: No, I didn't. And I think that this was perhaps because this was a field which he really didn't know terribly much about. Secondly, it's conceivable, although here I'm entirely speculating, that the fact that I am a professor may have had something to do with it. I do think he had a suspicion about intellectuals, a sense of uneasiness, and until he sized up a person he tended to be rather calculating and deliberate. And then, as I said, I do have a certain amount of interest about an area in which I know a little bit: Soviet affairs.

M: Quite a bit more than a little bit.

B: And I think he really was a good listener in that respect. But he had a knack, in contrast to some other statemen, of then saying, "Well, I want a memo on this, I want a memo on that," and invariably these were the important issues. You could talk sometimes with some

some other important people, and I won't name them, but people at the apex of the government, and they would talk as much as you or more, and then you'd leave the room and not be quite sure what was decided or what was settled; nor would you leave the room even with any feeling as to whether they had any firm position on the subject. You couldn't tell. With Johnson it was much more precise, and this was very striking.

M: Yes. It is said frequently that under the Johnson Administration, and under Secretary Rusk, that the Policy Planning Council was downgraded as compared to its past importance in State Department operations. Do you think that's a fair [statement]?

B: Yes. Yes, I do. I think that neither the President nor the Secretary of State used the Council the way it could have been used. I think that was unfortunate. The reason for it, I think, was perhaps twofold: one, the shift of general emphasis in policy-making from the State Department to the NSC, to the White House staff. This inherently downgraded the function of the unit in the State Department. With people like Walt Rostow and his immediate associates close to the President, there was less immediate need for the President to rely on the Policy Planning Council. Secondly, the Secretary of State himself, it seems to me, was not inclined to think in broad, long-range, policy-making terms. He was much more a man who felt that he ought to consult closely with the President. I think he was a man who operated on the basis of the intellectual arsenal acquired in earlier years, and he was not inclined to have that aspect

re-examined, re-evaluated, or tested by his associates, particularly his subordinates, in fact. And then finally, I think that he was inevitably and unfortunately, so compelled to give so much of his time to the Vietnamese problem that larger policy issues, in a way, were given short shrift.

M: Did it have anything to do with their preoccupation with secrecy? Was the Policy Planning Council excluded from important negotiating efforts in Vietnam, or things of this nature?

B: Yes, I think that had something to do with it, although I'm not sure the Policy Planning Council really had to get involved in some of these things. Certainly, I don't think the Council needed to be involved heavily in the Vietnamese problem as such; that was, so to speak, an on-going operational problem and not a problem for long-range policy-making. But whether my feeling about it is right or wrong is immaterial; the fact is that the Policy Planning Council had very little to do with the Vietnamese problem, and sensitive negotiations were kept out of its domain.

The problem, in my judgment, is more acute. I think the problem was more serious in a different way. The Policy Planning Council was not given access to some of the most sensitive materials pertaining to other larger issues more pregnant with longer range implications. For example, [with] the Middle Eastern problem, some of the more sensitive aspects of that problem, particularly during the Six-Day War, were really not directly related to the operations of the Policy Planning Council. Another example were direct talks

or contacts between the President and Soviet leaders--the Glassboro talks, for example. It was extremely difficult to get access to them. And while some access, in fact access, was established for people who had a professional competence in Soviet affairs and who therefore could establish a need to know, it took a great deal of effort, and it took time to get it. And yet, one, I think, could very legitimately argue that the Policy Planning Council, to the extent that it was designed to shape American foreign policy in the longer range sense, should have had access to these talks, particularly because of the overriding importance of the bilateral American-Soviet relationship.

M: Yes. You're saying really that it's pretty difficult to do contingency planning in a long-range sense when you don't know the facts on which you're basing plans.

B: That's right. But I think this was inherent in the situation in which the institution itself was not used by the Secretary of State, and the department as a larger entity was really divorced from the President. In my own experience, I think that I was able to have some contacts with the White House, or even with the President himself, largely because of the fact that I was basically an outsider who was going to become again an outsider.

M: Not a regular State Department man.

B: Not a regular State Department officer. Therefore, I had no hesitation in phoning up people in the White House and bootlegging memos to the White House.

M: When you say "bootleg," you mean bootlegging around the Secretary?

B: Around the Secretary, in effect. And in raising issues. I remember, for example, that once I raised an issue with the President as to whether the Secretary of State and Mr. [W. Avarell] Harriman were right in arguing that the Soviet Union was really trying to help somehow or other to resolve the war in Vietnam. My argument was, on the basis of the evidence that I saw and on the basis of my interpretation of that evidence, that the Soviet Union was trying to convince us that it was trying to help to end the war, but in fact, it was not trying to help to end the war; that on the contrary, the Soviet Union was actually trying to prolong the war, and that it had an obvious interest in prolonging the war, given the Soviet preoccupation, one, with the overall global rivalry with the United States and with its realization that in that rivalry we were being hurt by the war in Vietnam, and secondly, given the Soviet stake in keeping alive American-Chinese hostility.

M: Right.

B: Thereby minimizing the possibility of the United States exploiting the Sino-Soviet conflict to our interests. Now, I could have never gotten that across had I operated within channels.

M: Because dissent would not be listened to or because the channels would just kill it?

B: No, the channels would kill it. Secondly, a regular Foreign Service Officer, knowing that the Secretary of State had strong

views on it and knowing that Mr. Harriman had strong views on it, would feel, one, perhaps a little timid about pushing this point of view anyway; secondly, he would probably anticipate that even if he pushed it up and managed to get it past the under secretary, not to speak of the assistant secretary --

M: And the deputy assistant or the . . .

B: Or flunkies, he wouldn't get it any further than that. Whereas, I was able to go directly to the President.

M: How did you do that?

B: Well, I now forget what the circumstances were, in fact, but, anyway, I got to him, and we talked about it, and he asked me for a memo which he, himself, read to the National Security Council. And I remember the Secretary of State was rather surprised and called me in shortly afterwards. Fortunately, I deposited a copy of the memo for the President in the Secretary's office the same morning, so I could point out to the Secretary that there was a copy of the memo waiting for him. But this is purely to illustrate the point that an outsider, who had an independent position to which he could return and with friends elsewhere, particularly in the White House, could operate essentially not as a member of the Policy Planning Council, but as an independent, policy-concerned individual, who was within the government but who was able to short-circuit some of the limits which otherwise, in fact, were reducing the effectiveness of the Council as an institution.

M: You would set up personal relationships with people on the

NSC staff and things like that?

B: Right.

M: And run your memos through them? You had no trouble getting them to the President after they got to the White House, though.

B: Well, that would of course depend then on the individuals in the White House staff, but people like Harry McPherson, Bill Moyers, [Hayes] Redmon, John Roche.

M: Who were not really on the NSC staff.

B: Well, who were not really on the NSC staff

M: Who were all on the domestic side.

B: That's right. That's quite true. But whom I knew.

M: I see.

B: And who, in a way, were willing to play the game, because they saw certain benefits to the administration, to the President, in having other sources of information for evaluation.

Now, the NSC staff, in a way, was probably more concerned with protecting its own exclusive position and, hence, it was less of a useful mechanism for getting [anything] across.

M: But the President himself was responsive to this kind of [approach]?

B: Yes, and I think this was an important difference between him and President Nixon. I know, for example, that it's impossible to get through to President Nixon on a foreign policy issue without going through the NSC staff and Mr. Kissinger, ultimately. I know this to be a fact, because I know a number of people who have tried, and

well-placed people. They have tried to get through to the President through a variety of mechanisms and yet, at some point, everything has to go through the NSC.

M: You don't have a McPherson or a Moyers or somebody like that.

B: I think with McPherson or Moyers or Roche or Redmon or others, there was just much more give, much more willingness to be open to outside impulses.

M: That's very interesting.

B: And I think that was a great asset in a way.

M: The thing I've been told most often that you were most important for, as far as President Johnson is concerned, is the October 1966 trade speech. Was this one of the things that you got to him indirectly, or was this something that was initiated somewhere else?

B: No, that I had a fair amount to do with. This was not only on trade. This was really--

M: East-West relations.

B: Yes, a kind of a political, strategic speech which has had, I think, some historical significance. Its essential importance, in my judgment, is that it fundamentally reversed the post-war priorities of the United States and Europe. Until that speech, it was a central tenet of American foreign policy that reunification of Germany was a precondition for better East-West relations.

That speech reversed the sequences. It said that reconciliation of the two halves of Europe was a necessary precondition for the eventual and rather distant reunification of Germany. Then, of course, there were a great many specific items in the speech. But this was the essential point of the speech. In that sense, it was an

important strategic speech. It's something in which I collaborated very closely with Henry Owen, who was the director of the Policy Planning Council. I suppose in a way, at the risk of sounding immodest, the basic idea was essentially mine, because that was something which I'd written up in a book which I'd prepared for the Council on Foreign Relations.

M: Not only that, I've heard, as it finally came out, 50 to 70 percent of the words were yours as well. Is that correct?

B: Well, certain words. Yes, that's true. Now, once we managed to get that through the department and, fortunately, at that time there were changes in the department. There was change in the post of under secretary and all of that. So there was a fair amount of turmoil in the department, and hence the usual blockages didn't develop. We got the speech into the White House, and there, both Walt Rostow and Francis Bator worked on it.

But the problem was how to galvanize the President into giving the speech. And here I have to tell you a story which I have not told anyone and which I will have to put a restriction on. Not that it contains any state secrets, but it's just a little sensitive in a personal sense. I finally decided that the only way to precipitate the President into giving the speech was to create a domestic sense of urgency for him to give it. I, therefore, checked some dates, and I discovered that early October was some sort of an anniversary--I forget what. I believe either of John Kennedy's initiative on the Test Ban Treaty or something or other. I forget now.

M: Something that Kennedy had done?

B: Something that John Kennedy had done.

I phoned up the White House, I forget who. It was either Moyers or McPherson. And I said that I had just gotten word from my Kennedy friends that Bobby Kennedy was going to use that occasion to deliver a major speech on American policy towards Europe critical of the President's inadequacy, passivity on the subject, and that they ought to tell the President that there's this damned good speech waiting in the White House, ready to be delivered, full of innovative ideas which would absolutely steal the thunder from Bobby Kennedy's move.

Well, the speech was delivered on that very day by the President, who flew down to New York, picked some obscure convention.

M: Yes, it was not a major occasion at all.

B: Not a major occasion, but he transformed it into a major occasion by arriving essentially, ultimately, almost uninvited and giving this very important speech which made headlines all over the world for the next several weeks.

M: Right. Did he go as far with it as you had wanted to go?

B: Yes, the speech was essentially delivered. It was rewritten in the White House, but the central points and the central recommendations were as we had prepared them.

M: Having come about it in this way, do you think the President was a believer, or was it simply a matter of expediency as far as he was concerned?

B: No.

M: Did he believe the innovative ideas that he expressed in that speech?

B: Well, if I may be perfectly frank, I sort of have a double feeling about it. I think the President basically believed, and still does, and I think rightly, that ultimately some form of reconciliation with the East is necessary for global stability. In that sense, he did believe it. I have the suspicion that he wasn't fully aware of the extent to which his speech actually involved a reversal of hitherto fundamental tenets of our policy towards Europe, and I suspect that he was rather surprised by the extent to which some of the more conservative elements in West Germany, including the Chancellor, were shocked by that speech. I have a feeling that he wasn't fully aware of the nuances involved, for example, let's say, a reversal of the pre-conditions for German reunification and all that. This, I don't think he had a real awareness of.

M: Did he back away from it then, or did he in fact try to implement some of the ideas suggested there?

B: He never backed away from the central ideas. The implementation of the more specific trade proposals was attempted, and I think with sincerity, but without too much energy, largely because of the Vietnamese war.

M: I know [Wilbur] Mills, for example, indicated that he wouldn't even hold hearings on the Trade Bill once it was set up.

B: Right, right, right. This took time, and as many things in history, ironically, what Mr. Nixon's doing now comes closer to it. But this, I think, was largely because of the Vietnamese war. There was just so much political capital to be spent on just so many

things, and other things were more important and more pressing.

M: Did the sort of latent opposition that you mentioned might have existed in the State Department ever surface and come up against this?

B: Yes, within the State Department there were sort of two reactions. The first was to simply say that the speech said nothing new, namely, to kind of try to co-opt the new elements into the old in the hope of smothering the new. And the second one was that of shock and dismay. As some fellow once said: before I came to Washington, the United States had no European policy, but it had allies, and after I got through with it, we had a European policy, but no more any allies. This was particularly in reference to the fall of the [Ludwig] Erhard regime, which to some extent was connected with this speech. But there were a number of people in the State Department who really were for change, and had the Vietnamese war, perhaps, not been so absorbing of our attention and energies, more would have been done.

M: You mentioned the dumping of Erhard. That's more intimately connected usually with the various offset pressures we were putting. Did you get involved with the President on those--the McCloy mission or the McNamara mission earlier?

B: No, no. I was more involved in the so-called Harmel Exercise.

M: With NATO?

B: NATO. The offset business was, of course, what triggered the fall of Erhard, but the President's speech contributed to it because it

made it possible for the critics of Erhard to argue that Erhard is not taken seriously by the U.S. government, which doesn't consult him on crucial and Europe-wide policy issues.

M: Particularly German issues.

B: Precisely. In effect, one could almost say that what we did to Erhard is more or less what Mr. Nixon and Mr. Kissinger have done to Saito.

M: With likely the same results.

B: Probably, yes.

M: In the long run.

B: Yes.

M: What about the Harmel Exercise? How did the President get involved in that one?

B: Only by the speech and the impetus thereby generated. He himself was not involved in it much, and it really wasn't ultimately all that important. It kind of fizzled out.

M: It produced a report.

B: Right.

M: With some things in it, but not much implementation.

B: No, no.

M: Were there--I know you were mainly involved with European affairs--any other European incidents that got presidential in that year that you were full-time with the State Department. Disarmament, perhaps? That was in the early days of the NPT.

B: No. To some extent the Middle Eastern problem and the question [of]

whether we shall move more rapidly immediately after the Six-Day War to promote some form of Israeli-Arab reconciliation. The President called in Mac Bundy in that time.

M: Bundy'd already left the government.

B: Yes, but he called him back in for a special mission. And it was my argument at that time that this was a golden opportunity to promote Arab-Israeli reconciliation, because the Arabs had been shaken very badly by their defeat. Their confidence in the Soviets was completely undermined, and the generous Israeli posture, backed by active U.S. involvement plus guarantees from both sides, might come just at the right psychological moment, making it in turn possible to have a settlement. And there was considerable disagreement on this. And ultimately, and to my regret, a more cautious point of view prevailed; namely, that we should wait, let the dust settle; with the effect, in my judgment, that we missed a golden opportunity; because then the Arabs had no choice, again turned to the Soviets, and the Soviets have come back in force, and opportunities for settlement have become smaller.

M: Did the President express a personal view of this?

B: I think the President, in the initial phase, was sympathetic for the argument. But I think domestic political pressures and particularly, again--and here again is where the Vietnamese war comes in--the need to retain or to maximize whatever support he had on the Vietnamese issue, made it impossible for him to adopt a course of action on the Middle East which ran the risk either of alienating support that

he had already, or preventing the further acquisition of support--particularly from certain sectors of the Democratic Party and certain sectors of the Jewish community in America. And for this reason, I think the President felt that it would be unwise for him to really move too rapidly.

M: What you're saying is contrary to what a lot of the career or professional diplomats say: that really the fallout from Vietnam in other areas of the world on our policy was not all that bad. I take it that you think it was all that bad.

B: Yes, I do. And I say it even though I supported the war in Vietnam. I fundamentally think, even today, that basically we didn't have too many options; that the option of not going in or the option of rapidly getting out was not a realistic historical option in the mid-sixties, either internationally or domestically. But this doesn't prevent me from recognizing, as I think I do recognize, that the war in Vietnam did really very significantly limit our freedom of action on a variety of fronts and also reduce, so to speak, the attention span of the officials. It was really increasingly more and more difficult to get people to focus on other issues than the war in Vietnam.

M: In particular, on the presidential level, I would think.

B: That's right. My own view towards the end of my stay was that we ought to do at least a few gestures designed to indicate that the American presence in Vietnam is not going to go up indefinitely, but in fact will go down, such as, for example, a pre-emptory

reduction by about fifty thousand troops of our troop level in Vietnam towards the end of 1967, I believe. But again, this was very important and very difficult to do under the circumstances, to get considered.

M: What about the relations directly with the Soviet Union which is, of course, your particular area of greatest interest and knowledge-- Mr. Johnson's personal diplomacy with the Soviets; disarmament initiative; and things of this nature? Were you involved with any of those?

B: Well, I wasn't certainly as closely involved as the people on the NSC staff were, but I was involved. I was also involved in the presidential initiative to create an East-West institute designed to study the problems of contemporary world, particularly of advanced societies. This was an idea, in fact, which was born in the Policy Planning Council, and then we transmitted it to the President, and the President liked it. In fact, this was one of the items which was excised from our October speech, because it was decided it would be wiser not to include it in an essentially political statement, but to launch it separately as a special bilateral American-Soviet initiative at a propitious moment and with Francis Bator and Mac Bundy taking an active interest in this after we transmitted it. The idea was launched, I believe, later in the year, separately. And the President continued to give it very, very close attention and sympathetic support. So this was something that we kept in touch with also.

M: Any other issue-oriented activities where you had close contact with the President? Don't let my failure to mention one of them prevent you from recounting one if there are some.

B: Well, which one do you have in mind?

M: Well, I don't have any in mind.

B: No, I don't think so. I think that was about [it]; that was roughly it.

Well, there was another issue, perhaps. Yes, another issue was a somewhat controversial issue, namely: how much contact should the President have and try to develop with intellectuals?

M: He used several people in that regard, and you were one of them.

B: Right, and here I remember vividly one specific issue: should he go up to Harvard; should he have sessions with the Harvard faculty and with that particular community? And my argument was that it would be unwise for him to do so; that by then, by 1967, the intellectual community had made its own mind up; that its mind was closed, and the President would not get a respectful, not to speak of sympathetic, hearing from them, and the effort would be futile; indeed, it might backfire. And I remember that I discussed this once, and Francis Bator was there, and he was furious at me, because Francis, for whom I have great respect, wanted him very much to do that and had done a great deal of preparatory work to get the President to go up. And he was very naturally upset that my little input may have further

contributed to the President's hesitation on the subject. Ultimately, the President didn't do it. But this was another issue.

M: What was the intellectual community's reaction to you for your failure to join the club on the way they had made their mind up by 1967?

B: I think it was ambivalent. On the one hand, I think a good section or the majority section of the intellectual community disagreed with and resented my posture on Vietnam. On the other hand, I think probably a majority of them, at the same time, approved of what I was trying to do on the East-West front. The whole notion of peaceful engagement of building bridges was viewed as essentially a step forward from the more narrow-minded days of the Cold War. So in that sense, I think the attitude of the intellectuals toward me was ambivalent.

M: Part good and part bad.

B: That's right; that's right.

M: What made you decide to leave full-time government service in 1967?

B: I felt that I had done just about as much as I could have, given the position I had. I didn't see the President giving me any other position. I told the President I was going to leave, and he wrote me a very nice letter, and he saw me before I left, which is certainly something he has never before done, or any other presidents before done, for the members of the Policy Planning Council. So,after sort of thinking about it, I decided there was not much point really in staying any longer on the Policy Planning Council per se. And I

really didn't see anything which I could go and suggest to the President that he appoint me to if he were so inclined. On the NSC, Walt Rostow and Francis [Bator] were really pre-eminent, and they didn't need a third leg for that particular . . .

M: Francis was leaving about that time, too.

B: Right; and Walt appointed a regular foreign service officer as his deputy. So it was clear that that particular channel was firmly in hand and [that] they didn't want any outside assistance or intrusion. To be on the White House staff without a defined responsibility would really mean being kind of hanger-on, which would have been futile. The ISA and Defense were in a kind of unsteady condition, and there was nothing else in State that really made much sense. So in light of that, I thought that I would leave. By then I also had a pretty good relationship with the Vice President, and I figured that if the President and Vice President ran again, I might come back in some capacity if they won, or, as in fact it turned out, to help out in the campaign, which I did with the Vice President, however, running for President.

M: Right, unforeseen at that time, the way it worked out. Did you ever have any further contact with Mr. Johnson?

B: After I left? No.

M: After you left. When you worked for Mr. Humphrey in 1968, you were part of his foreign policy brain trust. The whole issue of how much pressure Johnson and his people brought on the Humphrey people to make them hold the line in Vietnam is a very important subject. Was

it substantial?

B: Yes, I was the director of the foreign policy task forces for Mr. Humphrey, and I remember that throughout August the central issue was Vietnam. And one of the task forces in the group which I was responsible for prepared a report on Vietnam on which we consulted also people like Reischauer and others. We had a special meeting of the task force, and a few outsiders, with the Vice President, and I participated in it. We drafted a statement, after a great many discussions and long deliberations, indicating the Vice President would favor a cease-fire, I believe, and in any case, a suspension of the air attacks against the North. And this would have meant a major departure from the established policy. After the Vice President discussed this issue, I had a session with him, and we agreed that this was the right thing to do, that this was politically timely, internationally, and not damaging to American interests, and that he should issue a statement. It was agreed that he would show it to the President, naturally and quite properly so, but I remember saying to the Vice President before he went to see the President--I did not go with him--that he should make it clear to the President that he's showing him the statement not in his capacity as a Vice President, but in his capacity as a presidential candidate of the Democratic Party--that this was a statement that he was issuing in that capacity. Well, I don't really know what transpired. I think there are other people who know better than I, like Ted Van Dyke and others, but I gather that the Vice President did not show

the statement to the President that, even though the opportunity was there, that it took him some time to actually show it, and that then he didn't go through with it for quite some time because of the President's very obvious disapproval and disagreement.

The statement was finally issued a month later, two and a half weeks before the election itself, and by then I think it just didn't have the desired effect. For one thing, by then it was clearly the impression of many people that the Vice President was hesitant and couldn't make up his mind. Thus, he didn't gain the support of the doves and yet he alienated some of the hawks.

M: But the pressure that was delivered was personal in the sense that it was Mr. Johnson's strong displeasure face-to-face with Mr. Humphrey?

B: That is my impression. And I think this was largely a function also of Mr. Humphrey's sense of loyalty to the President, his personal sense of loyalty to the President, as well as his institutional sense of loyalty, that made it difficult for him to act in keeping perhaps even with his own reading of his political interests.

The President obviously had the very obvious interest, since in effect or at least implicitly, the statement did mean the severance of close identification on that particular policy issue between him and the Vice President. So I fully recognize that the President had a very major policy issue on his hands.

M: Was that the only one in which you were personally involved pertaining to Vietnam?

B: Yes.

M: We're approaching your hour here somewhat. Are there any other

topics? I don't want to close off an opportunity for you to recall an anecdote or an issue on which you think you can add anything of importance to our story of Mr. Johnson.

B: Well, the only point perhaps, anecdote which I could mention, and this would be just at the end, is that the President once said to me that the only people in whom he could really have confidence in terms of good solid judgments in international affairs were [Abe] Fortas and [Clark] Clifford, that these were the only people who gave him solid, sound advice, and these were the only people who were not taken in by circumstances or events or even other individuals.

In this particular instance, the President said that Dobrynin, the Soviet ambassador is an extremely effective person in taking people in. And he recounted some story to the effect that the Soviet ambassador can influence people on the Hill, he can even influence McNamara, he can even influence Rusk, and the only people who aren't taken in are Clifford and Fortas. Then he made some remark to the effect that he knows and they know--I guess, those two know--that in politics, sometimes it's very important to grab your opponent by the balls, to squeeze hard and to twist, not to let go. (Laughter) And this I thought was very Johnsonian.

M: He didn't let go. (Laughter) Well, thank you very much for your time.

B: Okay.

[End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview I]

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Legal Agreement Pertaining to the Oral History Interview of Zbigniew Brzezinski

In accordance with the provisions of Chapter 21 of Title 44, United States Code and subject to the terms and conditions hereinafter set forth, I, Zbigniew Brzezinski of New York City do hereby give, donate, and convey to the United States of America all my rights, title, and interest in the tape recording and transcript of the personal interview conducted on November 12, 1971 in New York City and prepared for deposit in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.

This assignment is subject to the following terms and conditions:

(1) The transcript shall be available for use by researchers as soon as it has been deposited in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.

(2) The tape recording shall be available to those researchers who have access to the transcript.

(3) I hereby assign to the United States Government all copyright I may have in the interview transcript and tape.

(4) Copies of the transcript and the tape recording may be provided by the Library to researchers upon request.

(5) Copies of the transcript and tape recording may be deposited in or loaned to institutions other than the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.

Donor

September 9, 1981
Date

Archivist of the United States

September 23, 1981
Date