INTERVIEW II

DATE: August 26, 1988

INTERVIEWEE: DAVID GINSBURG

INTERVIEWER: Michael L. Gillette

PLACE: Mr. Ginsburg's office, Washington, D.C.

Tape 1 of 2, Side 1

DG: Two weeks, perhaps more than that, before the convention, the vice president, Hubert [Humphrey], called [and] asked me to come over, and I did. At that time my office was just across the street from the Executive Office Building. He asked whether I would take some responsibility for dealing with the platform on his behalf. In particular he was concerned, as we were all concerned, with the so-called Vietnam plank.

I remember working with Bill Welsh, Bill Connell, Bob Nathan, and others. We agreed on a domestic issues draft very quickly. By very quickly I mean within a week or ten days; we then came to the Vietnam plank. This was the core problem. I felt it desirable to go to Chicago before the convention began, and in fact, got there about a week early to see whether a consensus could be worked out. Before I got there, I had a copy of a recent speech that Ted Kennedy had made--a good talk on Vietnam. I had talked with--who was it?

MG: [Theodore] Sorensen?

DG: No, not yet, I did that in Chicago. Before Chicago, I had begun speaking with Bill, who edited *Foreign Affairs* afterwards, the magazine published by the Council on Foreign Relations.

MG: Bundy, wasn't it?

DG: Bill Bundy, in the State Department, had worked on these matters. And, of course, with Mac [McGeorge] Bundy, whom I knew, trusted and liked. Also, George Ball--at least half a dozen more people of the inner circle dealing with Vietnam within the State Department and the White House. In Chicago I met first with Ted Sorensen, whom I also knew, liked, and had worked with before. The focus of discussion was the draft that I had brought with me. I had a small room at the Conrad Hilton where we met. The room was almost totally occupied by the bed, so we put several drafts of the Vietnam planks that we had on the bed, compared them, identified differences and sought to reconcile them. At this point, Ted did not seem to have, or at least did not show me, a copy of any particular version that he thought would fly. But we worked together. He did not agree to particular provisions, but we came close in language.

One issue had to do with the bombing. Do we simply say, "Stop the bombing," or do we say, "Stop the bombing when our own troops would not be jeopardized," or do we, "Stop the bombing," in some other verbal formulation? Another issue had to do with a requirement of a show of restraint on the part of the North Vietnamese. Would we stop the bombing before they showed that restraint or simultaneously with it? There were a number of other similar issues, although in retrospect, now, they all seem to me negligible. Yet then they were of decisive importance to all of the participants.

MG: Why were they important?

DG: This is a personal surmise. I think that pride had intruded a barrier to judgment. The Vice President was trying to deal with a group of people essentially concerned with responding to public opinion as it had developed in this country, and to the growth of concern that perhaps this war was maladroit, that perhaps the "war" was really a revolution within Vietnam, not really an assault by the Soviets or the Chinese. That perhaps containing communism was an irrelevant purpose; perhaps we only thought we were fighting a cold war in Vietnam--a "war" which didn't exist there. In 1964-1965 and 1966, long before the convention, I had regarded myself as a hawk and had friends with whom I could not safely discuss the problem. By the time of the convention I was beginning to have doubts. This, I think, was equally true of Hubert. He didn't express doubts or formulate them as I have, but nevertheless it seemed to me that he had become uncertain about the wisdom of the direction which the administration and the country had taken.

Why did the President--why did LBJ, hold to his views as firmly as he did, hold to a particular verbal formulation of his views? Here I relapse into amateur analysis. It had something to do, in my view, with his relations with Hubert; he was simply going to force Hubert to accept his particular formulations. Again, as we look at the words today, we have great difficulty understanding why responsible people should have ten minutes' discussion about whether to accept one or the other; yet any deviation from LBJ's particular formulation was unacceptable to LBJ. I'll tell the story later how we finally came out.

At the beginning, during that week before the convention, before the Sunday night which really brings the story to an end, I met first with Ted. Then I learned that Charlie

Murphy was in town. He was a friend for many years, first at the CAB [Civil Aeronautics Board] and later around the White House; he was known as a friend of LBJ's. I got in touch with Charlie and we met again in the little bedroom with the copies of several version of the Vietnam plank lined up side by side. I worked out, I thought, most, but not all, of the differences with him; I was, of course, trying to find a way of reconciling differences before we got to the floor. If the plank became an issue for debate within the convention, I felt it would be very disadvantageous, very harmful to the Vice President. So hour after hour, first with Ted, then separately with Murphy, and later with Ernest Lefever, who was working with Congressman Hale Boggs, chairman of the Platform Committee, and after dozens of telephone calls--I tried to hammer out an agreed draft. By Sunday I thought we had a draft that would be generally acceptable, and I gave a copy to Charlie. What he did with it I don't know, but I assume that he sent copies to the Ranch where LBJ was at the time. One of the rumors at the convention was that LBJ was going to arrive at any moment, but in fact he never did.

MG: Did Charlie Murphy ask for the draft?

DG: We were in my room, I had had copies made and I offered it to him. It seemed to me he should have it. We had discussed many word changes, and I remember that I gave him a copy. Then he left the room. I did not know whether we would meet again about the matter; I assumed it would next come up before the Platform Committee since I had sent copies to Hale.

On Sunday evening my wife and I were having dinner with Henry Brandon, a British journalist. While we were at the table a message came that Hale Boggs was looking for me, would I please come over. I left my wife with Henry at the table, went

over to the Conrad Hilton, down to Hale's rooms. He was there with his son, Ernie Lefever and Charlie Murphy. Hale said, "We've got to clear up the problem about the Vietnam plank because I will not bring to the convention a platform about which my President and my candidate cannot agree." He said he would rather resign and would do so unless the differences were resolved.

At that point Charlie went to a phone and called the Ranch. I think Tom Johnson was at the other end of the phone; from time to time I could hear LBJ's voice in the background. Charlie carefully read our long-negotiated version of the critical language of the Vietnam plank. The plank covered many details, but the issue of the bombing halt and the response by the North Vietnamese were the troublesome issues. Charlie then gave me the phone to hear Tom's reply. It was LBJ's reply through Tom, and some words were acceptable, some were not. I found it a little odd; for the first time there seemed to be some flexibility on the part of the White House. This I had not seen before in Charlie Murphy's discussions with me. Charlie would merely listen without acquiescing in anything. Then, of course, the negotiated and "improved" draft went down to the Ranch and it was this which we were discussing. We finally got to a point where I could identify three or four words which, if changed, would mean that the President had accepted the Vietnam plank, at least as of that time.

MG: Did they have to do with reciprocity?

DG: They had to do with the bombing halt and with reciprocity on the part of the North Vietnamese.

MG: When you say "had to do with the bombing halt," do you mean the extent, totality of the bombing halt?

DG: To the best of my recollection, it had to do with the timing of the bombing halt. If I remember correctly, the timing issue bore on the security of our troops because troops cannot be withdrawn safely unless they're protected in the withdrawal. And the bombing was itself a means of protecting the troops so that the timing of the halt, and the withdrawal and safety of the troops were intertwined. We all recognized and accepted this so that I had the feeling the particular verbal formulation was not the issue. My conclusion, on this point, was that the President simply wanted Hubert to toe the line. Accept his words.

Speaking for the Vice President, we were not wedded to any particular verbal formulation; we were seeking to respond to the general desire for settlement as expressed in the convention. Friends in the hall and whole delegations with whom I had spoken during the course of the week had made clear that this was an urgent, pressing issue with them; we were trying to respond to that. And, I'm sure, it reflected Hubert's own views; he unquestionably wanted to lead the Vietnamese to the possibility of a settlement rather than continue the war.

The upshot of that telephone discussion Sunday evening was that a few important words reflecting marginal differences had to be resolved. For me, only one person could resolve the matter, the Vice President himself. I left the meeting, went to my room, washed up--it had been a tense discussion over some forty-five minutes--and took the elevator to the Vice President's suite. There it was pandemonium. The Vice President himself was in a quiet bedroom, off a large living room filled with people, drinking, talk and noise. White was there making notes for his book about the 1968 race [*The Making of a President, 1968*].

MG: Teddy White?

DG: Teddy White; Jim Rowe; Fred Harris; Ed Muskie, all or most of the key people in the campaign. I went into the bedroom where Hubert was sitting and sat down with him. I had the several texts with differences underlined in red and the words to which the President had objected bracketed. He temporized. He would talk ultimately. We talked at great length, the pros and the cons of this formulation or that, what we could gain or lose by the use of particular words, or alternative formulations. He gave no instructions and made no decisions. I left.

MG: Let me ask you at this point, what was Humphrey's frame of mind? Was it hopeful, or was it one of dejection? Did he feel the President was not giving him the latitude he needed on this plank?

DG: I have no doubt in my mind about this. He was dejected, felt let down, frustrated by this type of objection and by the threat which he mentioned when we spoke, the threat that if he did not capitulate, the President would not support his candidacy or might even campaign against him.

Before coming down to dinner that Sunday, before the meeting in Hale Boggs' suite and the telephone call to the Ranch, I had given Hubert our last draft. At our meeting in his suite he told me he had checked with Dean Rusk by telephone, and that a few suggestions that Dean had made seemed to him totally acceptable. He showed me the changes and I saw no objections whatever. They didn't have to do with the particular provisions which had become the stumbling blocks. So he began our discussion a little bit upbeat because he had Dean Rusk's support--he thought he did at the time. But it was clear by the end of our conversation, and I described it to him in somewhat greater detail

I suspect than I've been able to now, just exactly as it had happened. I left him; by the next day he had decided to go with still another set of formulations.

MG: Before you go into that, I want to ask you to elaborate on one aspect of that phone conversation with Tom Johnson. Did you get a sense of what Lyndon Johnson's frame of mind was when you were talking on the phone? Was it constructive? Was he. . . . ?

DG: My reaction at the time--and as said, we could hear voices in the background as we spoke to Tom--was that the President was distinctly irritated by the need for discussion. I don't think he was trying to find an acceptable formula or a way out. I think he felt challenged and badgered to make changes in views which he had already thought through very carefully and which he held, as Hubert knew, adamantly. You didn't get the feeling that he was willing to rethink or negotiate. In negotiations of this sort one generally tries to find a new way to say something close to the disputed language that brings the parties together with a formulation which neither had thought about before. We had none of that. LBJ simply demanded assent, capitulation. It wasn't a negotiation or discussion; it was a peremptory demand. There was no back and forth discussion as to the wisdom of this or that or what or how much one would give up by this formulation or the other. I was very unhappy by that conversation. The next day something very close to the Vice President's formulation, but including whatever we had agreed with the White House, was in the draft which was submitted by the committee to the convention. I 'm sure that others were also involved. I know that Hubert was speaking with many who were in the room that night, and I'm certain he was on the phone with friends and advisers in Washington, New York, and Los Angeles, as well as Chicago, that night.

What was done that night led to the debate within the convention and the split over the Vietnam plank. What in fact happened was that the alternative [Eugene] McCarthy plank was put before the convention, and a debate scheduled. I think seven people spoke on each side, and remember working on drafts of speeches for several of the speakers. Each speaker took a different subject of the larger problem for discussion with the convention. We won the vote. Might have won the election had we been able to achieve unanimity? With no debate would the convention vote have been different? I'm not at all sure; I'm inclined to doubt it. The McCarthy people were adamant that their view, their particular formulation, should be accepted. I had had the McCarthy view from Ted Sorensen and had been working with it; we came a long way--80, 90 per cent toward accepting the totality of it. One McCarthy representative gave me a copy and said, "This is it." They were determined to bring the plank to the floor and they did. The issue was put to the country so that McCarthy was calling for peace in Vietnam and Humphrey was urging more caution; put this way the true differences were unclear and I think, ultimately fatal to Humphrey's effort.

In addition to everything else that was happening, as you well know, the crowds outside the Hilton, the police lines holding back the crowds, the profanity, the ugliness of the confrontation: all this and more was being spewed out over the rest of the country via television. We saw a convention gone amuck. Now, in retrospect, twenty years later, I am inclined to believe that the differences over words in the Vietnam plank weren't as decisive as we thought then, but it was damned hurtful. And it reflects a bit on the President's stubbornness, his unwillingness to come to grips with the need for change, his inability to respond to what was on the streets. I'm not sure he understood it. At one

point, I was hoping that he would come to Chicago to see for himself what was going on there. He didn't and it was probably wise that he didn't; it would have been dangerous for him to be seen--and to see and hear.

MG: Did the White House or the press use any leverage on Humphrey in terms of threatening to block his nomination, threatening to draft the President himself?

DG: The one threat came from--was said to come from--a man who had approved and cleared the draft of the HHH Vietnam plank. I remember Fred Harris and I visited with Bob Strauss and the former governor of Texas . . . ?

MG: Connally.

DG: John Connally, John B. Connally. And I remember that Fred and I met with Connally; we showed them the plank. They looked it over, looked at each other almost in surprise, and they turned to Fred and said, "Yes, that'll be acceptable to our delegation." We knew of a threat circulating from the rumor mills. Whether it was founded in fact or not, I don't know. We had heard of a threat that Connally would insist that his name go in nomination in opposition to Humphrey's.

MG: His own name?

DG: His own name. That was rumored at the time. And that was perhaps the reason why we made sure that we reviewed the draft of the plank with Bob and with Connally beforehand. This was long before the Sunday evening, sometime during the previous week.

MG: Connally seems to have been concerned about another issue, and that was the proposal to abolish the unit rule.

DG: Yes, there was a lot of discussion about the unit rule. Ultimately, I think Hubert came out for abolishing the unit rule. He thought this was politically hurtful, but he felt it was necessary; Larry O'Brien pushed him in that direction. Fred Harris felt it was necessary to clear the Vietnam plank with them. I think that Fred and Larry both thought that Connally would either permit, or insist, or somehow arrange for his own name to go into nomination or, alternatively, try to draft LBJ, because that, too, was in the wind--that some in the convention would somehow try to bring LBJ back in. I cannot imagine that the unit rule, at that stage, was of great importance to the President. It may have been to Connally, but. . . .

MG: What was Humphrey's reaction to the controversy over the Vietnam plank?

DG: I was not with him that evening; I was working on the speeches, the seven speeches or eight or whatever it was that night, for the debate. I didn't see him until after the nomination.

After his nomination he was elated, happy. It was the conclusion of a very trying period for him. He had been distraught at some stages. One had the feeling, and I don't want to exaggerate it, that he had been wounded. He was usually a happy man, good-humored, and fun; in this period I [he?] was a man who was somber, concerned, serious, withdrawn, hesitant to speak, if you can imagine that with Hubert; I'm thinking of Sunday night again. But after the debate I saw only a political man who had been nominated for the presidency--had achieved a measure of his goal and was happy with it. At this time I had no personal talks with him which would in any way reveal his inner feelings, and indeed, I cannot conceive that he would have revealed them to anyone.

MG: During this period, was there any divergence within the Humphrey organization or the Humphrey advisers with regard to how the Vietnam plank should be shaped?

DG: Yes, there were those--including myself, and, I think Larry O'Brien, who felt that Hubert should strike out on his own, should formulate his position as he saw it at the time--and not necessarily in defiance of views or in contradiction of views that he may have urged before. Conditions were changing. We were learning more and more of what was in fact going on. Our views were being changed by events, not by argument. The facts were changing before us. This at least was the view that many of us were urging on the Vice President, and he heard it over and over again.

I'm also thinking of what came after the convention, in connections with the Salt Lake City speech and others. By that time, the crescendo of "Strike out on your own and speak your mind" was rising and loud. Most of us were saying the same thing: "You just must do this." And as he did make modest changes looking toward a different viewpoint, we could see the reaction in the polls; we knew that it was making a difference, and we felt that if he could dramatize it by a clear statement he would consolidate his position. But the Salt Lake City speech was pretty much the high point of the formulation. It was just before the election, I've forgotten by how many days; there just wasn't quite time enough. We think often, many of us, what a difference it would have made to the country had the next administration been a Humphrey Administration and not the one that it was.

MG: During the discussion with Charlie Murphy, with Ted Sorensen, with Tom Johnson, particularly with the people who were close to the administration, were the Paris peace talks a consideration in the language of the Vietnam plank?

DG: I had telephoned Averell Harriman in Paris to talk with him. I know Averell and liked him very much; I've known him for many, many years, and the word that I got back from that direct source--of course it was over the phone, and it was all guarded--

MG: Did you talk directly with him?

DG: Oh yes. My understanding was that they were making progress, that the talks were not on dead center, that there was movement, that something was being accomplished, that there were changes being made from day to day. This was also the viewpoint that I got from George Ball, from the two Bundys, and from others whose names I've forgotten now, with whom I spoke. I spent that week in Chicago on the phone and in meeting with others there, trying to find out where the cutting differences were and, in addition, the prospects were for peace. Your question is pertinent. My conclusion--it may have been wrong--on the basis of what I heard, was that progress was being made and that it would be advantageous to show willingness to temper the policies that we had in effect at that time.

I think this was also the view that Hubert had, because I remember, when we spoke that night in his bedroom, he spoke of his conversations with Dean Rusk. Hubert felt that Rusk, too, was of the opinion that progress was being made, and that we were not on dead center.

Tape 1 of 2, Side 2

MG: Well, do you think that the President preferred a stronger Vietnam plank in order to have the maximum leverage in Paris?

DG: The President seemed to have a high regard for Dean Rusk. The Secretary had very clear views about the negotiation, and from various sources I've understood that he felt that

firmness, at that time, was essential. I think that operating within LBJ was not only his own views on the merits but his feelings about how a vice president should conduct himself. In addition, he had the guidance, the advice, the wisdom that Rusk could give him. And [I] think that the advice that he was getting from Rusk was to the effect that it was wise for him to persist in the line that he was taking, to hold to a very firm line. That tends to contradict what Hubert thought that Rusk was conveying to him, because it was clear that when we spoke that night, Sunday night, that Hubert felt that Rusk would willingly accept the plank that did not contain the most extreme language.

MG: How do you explain this apparent contradiction on the part of Rusk?

DG: Here one has to reach into psychology. My own feeling is that Rusk understood the pain and the suffering that Hubert was enduring. He recognized that the distinctions between the two drafts were not of great significance and would not be perceived by the outside world as very important. And so I think Rusk told the President what he himself genuinely felt and what he knew the President wanted to hear, and told Hubert something very similar but just a little different, and it may also be true that Hubert heard what he wanted to hear. I was not in the room when he spoke with Rusk.

Hubert was usually, in one's dealing with him, very open, very candid. He told you the total story, sometimes embellished. I did not get the feeling in my dealings with him in Chicago that I was hearing the full story. He was guarded, restrained, listening. Here was a man under strain, dealing with a situation that he couldn't control and yet was very important to him. It was not the Hubert that I knew, and had known for so many years before. I had traveled with him. I was among those who, years before, had urged him to take on Jack Kennedy in West Virginia. I come from West Virginia, and had

assured him that JFK would face an anti-Catholic bias, assured him, misled him, with others. I traveled into--I think we have sixty-five counties in West Virginia--visited each one of those counties, took some weeks off for the campaign in West Virginia, and spent a lot of time with Hubert on the road. I loved him; Hubert was dear to me. But that period of strain in Chicago--strain is an understatement, say agony--changed the man.

MG: Permanently, you think?

DG: He was a happy man when he had the nomination, but there were overwhelming problems in dealing with LBJ during that week. There were conversations that Hubert had with LBJ alone that I don't know about, although I know that they took place. What exactly was said in those conversations I don't know, except that Hubert concluded he was being told, "Either you go along sufficiently in my direction, or else you will not have my support in the election and the campaign." Not easy for LBJ's vice president.

MG: Was it then a fear of opposition from the President rather than a feeling of loyalty to the President?

DG: I understand what you're saying. The sense of loyalty, the sense that a vice president who had been designated by LBJ should be loyal to LBJ, and with whom he had worked for so many years, this was clear. But that was only the first skin on the onion. And when you peel that off there was something else: a sense of "Why is he insisting on this? Why is he creating so many problems for me? Why can't I have his support? I have been loyal to him. He is stepping down now. I can be nominated. I can win this election with his help. Why isn't he. . . . ?" A sense of frustration, a sense almost of anger, of helplessness which leads to anger, that "I can't move him."

Then there was the pain of what was going on outside. Even on the top floor of the Conrad Hilton one could hear the yelling of the crowds below, see the police on foot and on horseback and the crowd control lines outside. These were frightening times. I can't say how he felt, but I think that he felt that, "I had been loyal to him. He is stepping down now. Why can't I have his support?" Now, had he been urging a total change in the program and policies that had been formulated under LBJ, it would have been one thing, but he wasn't. The changes were so modest, so minuscule now that I don't think he understood it at that time why the President was so insistent on his viewpoint, and why he was willing to urge threats which meant the possibility of political death for him.

I think that this was a puzzled and frustrated and angry and disappointed man. We spoke once of the pain of being a vice president and he talked, and at that time he mentioned LBJ undoubtedly went through this himself under Kennedy. And he spoke of the tension, hostility, that existed between Bobby Kennedy and LBJ and of the strain that led to the relationship between LBJ and Jack Kennedy. He was aware of these things, but this was a man who, in the final moment, he had only the steel-edge decision to make; either he would capitulate, as it would be seen by the rest of the world, to Johnson, or he would disregard Johnson and go his own way. He couldn't do the latter. It was not in his character. That, to him, would have been disloyalty, which he couldn't accept within himself. There was anger, too, but he couldn't cope with the prospect of what he would regard as disloyalty.

MG: I don't want to steer you off the subject, but as long as you've brought up West Virginia, I have to ask why you think that Kennedy did carry West Virginia over Humphrey in 1960?

DG: Well, I can tell you the feelings we had. I told you before that I had gone to each one of the county leaders, in each of the sixty-five counties during that two-week period, just driving from one to another and meeting and going over the prospects of who will you work for and can we help you. It's simply that we did not have the manpower, we did not have the money, we did not have the promises to make. We did not have the walking-around money to hand out to them so that they deal with getting the people to the voting booths. We lacked the resources to conduct the campaign as the Kennedys conducted it. They did an absolutely marvelous job. Many of my friends in West Virginia were already working for them long before we came into the state, so that they were prepared. It was almost as if it were a campaign of entrapment. It wasn't that, but we had the feeling once we were there and going from county seat to county seat to meet the leadership that it was something that was not doable. It was a marvelous campaign on the part of Jack and his people.

MG: Was money the central factor, do you think?

DG: If you put it into terms of central factor the answer would have to be yes, because it's money that permits organization, money that permits advertising, money that permits you to get on the radio, money that permits you to get on the television. It was the lack of any resources, human resources and material resources, that I think absolutely guaranteed failure in the campaign. Now, that's odd, because the United Mine Workers at that time were very important. And the United Mine Workers were committed not to Jack Kennedy, but to Hubert Humphrey. He was someone whom they knew, someone whom they had had before them, whom they loved. When he went from community to community, the response that he had was marvelous. But the organization that he had

was nil. I mean, it was just a handful of people throughout the state and we couldn't make that difference in terms of the telephoning, getting the automobiles out to bring people to the polls, getting the advertising in the papers and on the billboards and elsewhere. No. Looking back it seems to me clear that we simply did not have the resources to conduct a national campaign in West Virginia.

MG: To what extent did Johnson help Humphrey in West Virginia in 1960?

DG: I can't answer that. I don't know. I don't have any information on that. I was traveling at the time with Hubert. I saw no evidence of Johnson there. To the contrary, well, this wasn't Johnson. If I remember correctly, Hubert was attacked as not having been in the wars.

MG: Was that one of the Roosevelts?

DG: Yes. It was Franklin Jr. who made the speech in Charleston, attacking Hubert. We just felt, "Who had put him up to it?" We're clear in our minds that--we concluded then, and I believe now, that it was the Kennedy organization that arranged for it, that gave him the text of his speech.

MG: You discussed your negotiation discussions with John Connally of Texas. What about some of the other party leaders like Mayor [Richard] Daley?

DG: I did not have any direct contact with Mayor Daley, but I know that Hubert did, and Hubert met with him to my certain knowledge; I saw the Mayor going in to talk with him. But we did meet with Walter Reuther. We did meet with--the fellow who became head, I think, of Cornell University, very able. We met throughout the week. This was Fred Harris, myself, at that time, or sometimes it was Muskie and Fred, but we did touch base, both on the Vietnam issue and other issues with the key leadership, the intellectual

leadership, labor leadership, religious groups. It was a busy period, yes. I thought that aspect of the campaign was well done. It was thought through and well-organized.

MG: I notice that some of Humphrey's old ADA [Americans for Democratic Action] friends like Phil Hart had supported Edward Kennedy in this drive. Any insights on that?

DG: No. I'm afraid I can't help you on that.

MG: There was an effort on behalf of some in the Humphrey organization to persuade him to withdraw, resign as vice president.

DG: Oh, yes, and I was among them. His answer was, "I cannot be disloyal so long as I'm vice president." Our answer was that, "It's time to resign. If you're going to run this campaign you've got to run it as your campaign, with your policies and we urge you to resign." And he would listen, but I never had the feeling that he ever seriously considered it. I think he should have done that.

MG: Would it have helped him?

DG: I think he would have been the next president, and we all felt that way. Jim Rowe, I remember, was talking in these terms. I don't think this was true of Connell. I think it was true of most of us who were, in a sense, the nonprofessional members of his staff, who were not full-time, were urging this. And we thought it would dramatize the differences, dramatize the issues, and we were all convinced. I think Larry O'Brien was among these, too, to ensure the election.

MG: Was their polling data to suggest that if he did put some distance between himself and the administration that he would fare better?

DG: Well, you remember that after the Salt Lake City speech, where he did begin to put some distance between himself and the administration, his rise in the polls was dramatic, and I

think toward the end it was fractional. I mean, this was one of the really close elections in our history.

MG: Did the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia have any influence at all on the Vietnam plank that was urged by the White House?

DG: I don't know. This was not something that we spoke about that was on my mind during the Chicago episodes, nor did I hear any discussion of it. It must have been. It was happening at that time. We knew about it. There must have been a feeling that. See, at the time the British-Israeli invasion of Egypt took place, [Dwight] Eisenhower was faced with, I think, the Hungarian revolt at that time. I remember that the parallels that the Soviets took advantage of our troubles to move and this was the second occasion. We were busy with Vietnam so they would move into Czechoslovakia, but I don't recall that--I had no discussions with Hubert in that area.

MG: Any personal recollections of the melee in Chicago and the riots? Did you have any encounter yourself in going to and from the hotel or. . . . ?

DG: I remember the sense of fright to see people, strangers, lined up in depth in the street across from the Conrad Hilton which faced on--I guess it was Michigan Boulevard [Avenue]. They were being held across the street, and there was a police line, and the insults, they were simply trying to provoke the police. Occasionally they would spit at them, or throw things at them, and the police would stand there with their batons out, armed, and I couldn't understand what was going on. It was a mixture of puzzlement and fright. It was an uncontrolled mob. I don't think that many of them understood, except in the grossest way, why they were there, what had brought them there. I talked one evening--this was perhaps Friday or Thursday--I went out to walk, not across the street

because they weren't there then, they were off in some park somewhere, and I walked to the park, because I wanted to talk to them. One could only communicate in clichés, in bumper sticker language, and it would always end up in the utmost profanity. It was the usual "F--- you," and then "Get the hell out of here." It was--

MG: Why did you want to talk to them? What did you have in mind?

DG: I don't know. I had such a feeling that--I know Hubert, this gentle, and to me, wonderful, humane, warm, decent human being, and the notion that these people were fighting him of all people was to me not--I mean, at bottom, that was the problem, the gross inconsistency between their demands, their conception of Hubert and what, in fact, the reality was. Maybe it was just as much curiosity as anything else to go out to talk with them. I don't know really what motivated me at the time, beyond that.

MG: Let me ask you to describe your role in the fall campaign and after the convention. I know that you joined the Campaign Policy Committee. Did you have specific responsibilities in this campaign?

DG: No, we would meet regularly and on call in the Vice President's office, and issues would be put before us for advice, for a decision, and we would respond. I used to do occasional drafts of speeches, or drafts of sections of speeches, or particular paragraphs on subjects. It was as much writing as anything else but also to hear the polling data, to hear how the campaign was going. I wasn't traveling with him. I went out only once or twice, twice I went out with him on the plane, but one had a feeling that it was going to be very close and the resources were very limited. That was the perennial problem: how do you raise money?

I remember at that election I finally concluded in my own mind that there has to be a way in which the government has to finance these elections and the notion that you have to demean yourself and the way in which this was done, going from cocktail party to breakfast to lunch just to raise money in order to campaign, and then in addition to campaigning--how you could do this? I didn't understand, and I thought it was wrong. I still do.

MG: One of the things that you worked on in particular, I think, was arranging loans based on pledges of money. Do you recall that and your success, to the extent that you were successful?

DG: I remember that the issue was discussed. I remember that I supported the advisability of doing that. I remember urging that we take a look at each pledge to make sure that this was going to be honored; telephone the people if possible, that we were doing that to let the pledgers know what we were doing, and it was -- I think this was done. I don't recall actually what happened but I remember the discussion about that problem, and I remember looking at the regulations and precedents and so on.

MG: The President's Club had been a large fund-raising center in the 1964 campaign.

DG: Yes.

MG: Was this organization helpful to you in 1968?

DG: I don't recall. I don't remember any discussion of it, and I have no memory of it.

MG: Were you able to get the list of members of the President's Club from the White House, do you recall?

DG: I remember the problem of lists was discussed, and I remember that there was great difficulty in trying to get the lists, and indeed there was discussion that the President had

arranged that the lists not be made available. Whether that was actually so or not I don't know, but that subject was discussed at least at one or more of these meetings and this was something which we couldn't understand. "Why not? Was this an effort on the part"--this was also discussed--"of LBJ to get back at Hubert for something?" It was not a good time.

MG: Were you involved in the drafting of the Salt Lake City speech?

DG: Yes.

MG: Let me ask you to describe that and the background of it and the significance of it in some detail.

DG: Hubert was not making real advances in the polls at the time. We were quite convinced that he had to improve his position in order to win. Secondly, we were convinced that in order to win he had to distance himself more from the administration's policies. Not from Johnson personally, except insofar as a change in policy meant a distance to the man. We all began sketching out ideas, doing drafts. Who actually put together the first draft I don't know, but I remember that we came together. Larry O'Brien conducted the meeting and we reviewed the first draft. We were all pleased with the direction of it, but there were various suggestions for change. All of us took a hand at actually making change and making suggestions, and there was a number of versions which we reviewed. The one which we recommended, or at least most of us supported, was not the one that Hubert finally delivered. It was a somewhat more moderate distancing effort than the one we had recommended, but it was still a major step in the right direction.

MG: More moderate in terms of the--

DG: Of the differences with the Johnson Administration, because people, particularly the media, were looking at each speech [asking], "How does this differ?" seeking to create problems between Humphrey and Johnson, and every speech, every comment he made that concerned Vietnam was, "Is this a further change in Hubert's viewpoint?" I did not go out to Salt Lake City. I was a little bit disappointed in the choice of the speech. I thought that he should have been more forthright and made the differences a little sharper. Nevertheless, the reaction was a good one, and it was prompt. We saw it within three days, I think. We saw polling data which indicated a very favorable reaction and a positive one from the electoral viewpoint. So that we were all happy with it and we wanted him to pursue it, but instead for the most part, he did a little bit more beyond Salt Lake, but the subsequent speeches were merely restatements and elaborations on the Salt Lake City speech and didn't add very substantially to that speech, but it was clearly the right thing to have done. I think that the right thing would have been a resignation of the vice presidency, and I think that further distancing might well have won him the election.

MG: What was the White House reaction to the Salt Lake City speech?

DG: Hostile, in the sense that it was regarded as a mixture of disloyalty and, somehow, Kennedy influence. The President was pretty paranoid about the Kennedys, and I had the feeling that he just thought that Hubert was perhaps responding too much to Teddy or to the others, I don't know. The fact that Larry O'Brien was really the campaign director and an ex-Kennedy man I think perhaps led him to that view, but he mixed the sense of disloyalty with the Kennedy involvement.

MG: Any specifics, aside from O'Brien's role in the campaign, any specific evidence that points to LBJ's paranoia about the Kennedys?

DG: Nothing more than what he would say in private.

MG: What would he say in private?

DG: It would usually be something profane. I'd rather not go into--

MG: But it was something that indicated that the Kennedys were--

DG: Hostile to him.

MG: Hostile to him.

DG: And always plotting against him, creating problems for him. Yes.

MG: Was this in your own conversations with him?

DG: In my personal conversations and also from what others would say, including members of the press who knew about all this at the time.

MG: I wanted to ask you to describe, if you will, the burden that you had trying to keep the campaign afloat financially. You've mentioned that money was a problem.

DG: It was, I thought, the most demeaning and undemocratic problem that we had. Hubert was flying from one place to another, often to New York because there's so much money there, sometimes to Chicago and elsewhere, in order to attend affairs to raise money. And he would come back from these things sallow, pale, exhausted, and this was unusual for him. The man had the vitality of an elephant, and these would just unnerve him--the need to go to solicit individually the big gifts, to meet with the big givers. And the cost of things, the bills would begin to come in--I mean, the estimates of what we would need to carry on the television campaign, the radio campaign, the advertising and so on. You would see the bills as they would come in, the estimates coming in three or four weeks in advance and [think] how were you going to raise the money? It was just an endless thing; it was persistent, it was a kind of a political cancer actually. You had no idea,

"What am I going to do next?" Hubert was a very sensitive fellow, and he could feel a room when he went into it, and he and a lot of others were, of course, out campaigning to raise money. Labor was helpful and others were helpful, other organizations. But it was fractional in relation to the needs of that particular time and compared to what we are spending today, it was negligible. The amounts we were spending then seemed to us astronomical, but nowadays it's simply out of this world, totally.

MG: Were there spots that you couldn't air because you couldn't buy the time?

DG: Oh yes. There were not only spots that we couldn't air, but spots that we had sent out to be aired which at the last moment we would telephone and recall it because we wouldn't have the money to pay for it , because all of these things had to be paid for currently. You had to be up front with the money in order to go. This was the ugliest part of the campaign.

Tape 2 of 2, Side I

DG: It was the ugliest part of the campaign. It was the one to which we never found a solution. We never had a substantial percentage of the money needed to carry on that campaign as it should have been.

MG: I saw a note that indicated that there were some public opinion polls that had been conducted but couldn't be released until they were paid for in full. Do you remember that?

DG: No, I don't, but I know that the polling costs were, of course, enormous, and we tried to arrange at times for gifts of these things but couldn't.

MG: How about paying the campaign staff, meeting the payrolls?

DG: If I remember correctly, that wasn't [a problem]. We met almost all of the payrolls. There was a period I believe of about two weeks, or very few weeks, in which we were having trouble. But I believe that, ultimately, everyone who was promised payment received payment, but not necessarily on time. To some we would ask, specifically, would they please forgo it until the following week in order that we could [pay] anticipating additional funds coming in.

But the money problem has not been solved even today, especially today I suppose, since so much more is gone, and we certainly couldn't solve it then.

MG: Was there an organizational problem as well in terms of coordination and having the. . . .

OG: The two people who were spending a lot of time with Hubert mostly, of course, on the campaign plane were Connell and I think Ted Van Dyke was there a lot of the time. I think all of us have the feeling that for one reason or another we were not informed of what was going on. But I must say that I think that's generic to any campaign. And I think that the notion that anybody is really kept as informed as he would like to be in a campaign is visionary. And we weren't and we didn't know. We could follow in the papers and that was it.

MG: Humphrey had a reputation as a very talented campaigner. What were his strengths and what were his weaknesses?

OG: He had a marvelous capacity for rhetoric, for emotion. He was a magnificent speaker. He was, in a sense, an old fashioned orator, much more effective in person than on the tube. But, little by little, I thought that he improved even for television. I thought he was the best speaker next to FDR that I had seen during his life. He had a capacity for emotion. He had a capacity for reiterating an idea, for playing with an idea, for

elaborating, for illustrating, so that you finally got a full view of what it was he was talking about. He didn't simply say something as a lawyer might, once, clearly, and let it go, and then he would restate it, and illustrate it, and then offer a humorous illustration and then perhaps a political one. So that communication--we speak of [Ronald] Reagan these days as the Great Communicator. I think of Reagan as having very modest talents compared to Hubert in that regard. When Hubert finished making a speech, you knew what he had been talking about and you could summarize it. He had this wonderful capacity to take a simple notion and weave a speech around it so that it became the theme of the speech, and the theme of the speech hit home. I've heard many of his speeches. I think they read less well than if one heard them as spoken but he was a powerful speaker, I think the best that I had ever heard in the Senate, and I came here once early enough to hear Huey Long. So I think that Hubert had enormous talents in his eloquence.

MG: Did he tend to speak too long?

DG: Oh, of course. I was speaking at the moment of his strengths. The weakness, of course, was that he did speak long, often, and he joked about it, and everyone did with him. They teased him about the length of his speeches, the endless--unable to sit down. They'd give him a half hour; he would take an hour, hour and fifteen minutes.

I once arranged for him to go on a paid speaking visit--this was subsequent to the campaign--to a trade association in Florida. He had half an hour assigned to him. He spoke for an hour and fifteen minutes, and people began to squirm. I was presiding, and finally I had to stand up and stand right by him as he was speaking on the podium in order to embarrass him to stop talking. Yet the content was wonderful; he could grip you with it, but people do not listen to long speeches these days. That was a weakness and at

times one thought that sometimes the emotional quality was sometimes strained. But with him it was real. He was an emotional man. It wasn't simply put on for the program. That's what he felt. He was capable of tears, laughter. He was a joyous human being. That's why to remember him in the Conrad Hilton Hotel that night saddens me.

MG: Was he weak in the sense that he was too subject to influence by those around him?

DG: Yes, it was felt that during this time of great stress, just before the convention opened, that he was listening to the last adviser who spoke with him, and he was swayed by one and the other. I did not see that to the extent that others did, perhaps because I never pressed the viewpoint on him in terms of iterating and reiterating a position, but the weakness that I saw in him was a weakness that one sees often in presidents. I did not think that he chose the best possible people available to him to be in his immediate entourage. I thought that whether it was loyalty, or habit, or something else, he stayed with reasonably incompetent people too long. He was unable to make the cut, and I think every American president has to have one trait, and it's very important to the presidency: he has to have a capacity for brutality. He has to be able to cut, to eliminate people who really shouldn't be in the immediate group. I thought this was a weakness. And to me it was the outstanding weakness of Humphrey.

MG: Any other strengths that come to mind? I didn't mean to short--

DG: Well, he had his capacity for empathy with the poor, with the black, the ethnic minorities. His capacity for understanding the difficulties of people. His capacity for understanding the difficulties of businesses. Oddly enough, he strongly supported, at times, subsidies from businesses that were threatened in one way or another. He was a strong supporter of the foreign aid program. He was wonderfully helpful, I thought, to his colleagues

when he was in the Senate. He helped them, particularly the younger people as they came in. He was a man of great courage in the sense that I watched him--I was in Philadelphia for the--when was it? I guess 1948, and I had seen, of course, a great deal of him during the years. I had served as counsel to the Platform Committee over half a dozen or ten conventions, and saw Hubert at most of them, and his appearances before the Platform Committees, his arrangements for appearances before, his capacity to change--to try to shape policy. The notion that Hubert was profligate with money was absurd. He was careful in the legislation that he would seek to support. He was careful in spending it himself. So he's a man that we miss in public life.

MG: What did the [George] Wallace candidacy do to Humphrey's prospects in 1968?

DG: Well, I suppose when I said before that I'm not at all sure that Humphrey could have won any--no matter what happened, I had in mind among other things the Wallace candidacy. I think that Wallace got something like 14 per cent of the vote. This would have made all the difference.

MG: Do you think that vote would have otherwise gone to Humphrey?

DG: I think the preponderance of that vote would have gone for Humphrey. It would not have gone for a Republican candidate at that time. It's less true now.

MG: I know that one of the things that you were concerned about at the time was Wallace's appeal to labor unions, the rank and file. How much of a problem was this and what did you do to counter his appeal to labor unions?

DG: I can't answer that. I was not involved--see, once the campaign started most of my involvement was here in Washington at the meetings. What was actually done on the road I could only read in the papers. I know that there were constant negotiations,

discussions, telephone calls to the labor unions, but actually what difference that made, how much we lost to Wallace--but labor's role in the Wallace campaign is a component that I think would have gone to Hubert had Wallace not been in that campaign. So I think myself that with Wallace in the campaign and the strength that he showed then, it seemed to me very hard for Hubert to have come through. And that he came as close as he did is to me a miracle.

MG: Did the Jewish vote become somewhat disaffected toward Humphrey?

DG: The notion that the Jewish vote--I don't know, the data must now be available--must have been very largely, preponderantly, for Humphrey. And also Johnson had been very helpful in terms of providing some types of arms for the Israelis at the time. And the Jewish vote largely went sentimentally for the party that was really helpful apart from their own viewpoints. The notion that there is a solid Jewish vote is an absurdity, I think, as demonstrated subsequently; I mean, it moves. It's not a vote that's skewed totally, by a long shot, by Israel. I think it really breaks down very largely on class lines, I mean, basically wealth. I think the wealthy Jews, on the whole, vote Republican, and the poor Jews usually vote Democrat.

Did Hubert lose any part of the Jewish vote that he might otherwise have obtained? If I have a guess to make now, I would say that he got as much as he thought he was going to get, and never sensed any defection among the Jews to Hubert. I think he was as beloved there as he was elsewhere. I don't even recall his particular viewpoints as to what should be done to assist or not to assist the Israelis. In his most intimate groups he had a number of Jews apart from myself. I would think that he had by far the overwhelming majority of the Jewish vote.

MG: One of the themes that the Republicans emphasized in this campaign was sort of a law and order theme that the Democrats were soft on crime.

DG: You must remember that beginning about 1963-64 we had not only the Vietnam violence but we had the student uprising in the universities. We had the black riots that began in the summer of 1967. We had the assassination of Martin Luther King, the assassination of Robert Kennedy. We had the Kerner Commission set up, of which I happened to have been the executive director. We had also a commission appointed to consider violence in America, which was subsequent to ours. We had the Katzenbach commission on crime. There were a number of very serious efforts to understand the racial violence that existed in the country. The Vietnamese violence that took place in the country, the student uprisings within the universities. This was an odd period of history, odd within my lifetime. Why was there so much of this, in retrospect now? I still don't know. I spent most of a year on the Kerner commission stuff, and LBJ was absolutely convinced that there was a conspiracy. Remember that he had been in Dallas in the parade when . . . .

MG: Kennedy was assassinated?

DG: When Kennedy was assassinated--and how he had reacted then. And I remember when he called me into the Oval Room and we began talking. This was in August of 1967 when he had asked me to come back and to deal with the Kerner commission. And I said to him that I had seen nothing to suggest that there was any conspiracy, in commenting on his statement that, "You cannot tell me,"--I'm almost quoting the language now--"that there was no conspiracy when we had these outbreaks in this city, and this city, and this city, and this city, at the same time. They must have been in communication with each other. It must have happened that way. . . ." Well, I can tell you that we had the FBI and

we had the CIA, and we had all the defense and intelligence agencies of the country looking into this matter and our conclusion was there was no conspiracy on this thing. So. . . .

MG: I want to talk at length with you about your work on the Kerner commission.

Another question on the campaign that relates to Vietnam: to what extent was Humphrey aware that Nixon was in communication with South Vietnamese government representatives through Anna Chennault?

DG: I remember only one conversation when he asked me--he knew that I had been rather close to Tom Corcoran and another man, Ben Cohen. Joe Lash has just done a book on dealers and dreamers, about Ben and Tom. Tom was close to Anna Chennault. And he asked me just what I knew about Anna Chennault. And I basically told him the obvious: that she was the widow of General [Claire] Chennault, and Tom Corcoran goes with her presently and sees a good deal of her, and that was it. Whether he knew, as has been subsequently indicated, that she was in touch--or whether in fact she was; I believe she was--with the Vietnamese, I don't know. It's not conceivable to me that the administration, at the intelligence levels and within the State Department, did not know. Then, as now, there's a close surveillance of certain kinds of outgoing messages, telephonic and otherwise, and the notion that we did not know that she was in touch with [them] seems to me not credible. Since I believe that, I also believe that he knew, but he never told me that he knew, and I just can't be certain. But I'm morally certain in my own mind that he did know of that.

MG: And yet he did not use it publicly?

DG: Did not use it. It's quite often--if information comes to you from intelligence sources, it becomes very difficult to use in public, or else you spill the beans and cut off the information.

MG: President Johnson did announce a bombing halt at the end of October.

DG: He did.

MG: Do you recall that and the impact?

DG: I know that he did. I don't recall the impact beyond the fact that it was discussed, came before the election and the feeling was it would be helpful. The discussion that I remember was, "Why did he do it? Did he do it to help Hubert?" None of us thought so. There had been so many evidences of unwillingness to help, of possibilities of friction and hostility and lack of cooperation that none of us was willing to accept the fact that this was done to help him. So why it was done at the time, I don't know. Have you seen Dean Rusk's biography that's out, or should be out by now?

MG: Yes.

DG: You have already. He may have some indications in that which--but I don't know.

MG: The theme that the Humphrey campaign put forward, reflecting on [Spiro] Agnew as unqualified to assume the presidency, [was], "A heartbeat away." Any recollections of how this was coined and your use of it?

DG: No. Bill Safire was doing most of Agnew's speeches at that time. I knew him, know him, like him. I remember the alliterations in all of Agnew's speeches were all pure Safire, and I remember talking with Hubert about Agnew. He grew sober, I mean very serious, then. Usually it was the kind of bantering sort of conversation that he would

have with most people, and myself included. But he became sober then. "You know," he said, "this man could be in the White House." It was a sense of shock.

You know, all of us were conscious of the fact that LBJ had had a heart attack, a serious one, and at that time he was also, I think, doing a good deal of drinking, reflecting the tension that he was under. And it was a man of sorrow. This was a Greek tragedy. This man who had done so much for the country had now decided that he couldn't run in his own country, couldn't run again. Most of us were convinced that had he decided to run, he could have won. Whether that's so or not, I don't know, but I suppose he must have felt that he wouldn't risk the catcalls and the booings and all of that, that would accompany him wherever he would speak. And perhaps the Secret Service had something to do with that, too. But this was a saddened man, a tragic man.

Again, [it] suddenly comes to me, when he was leaving to go to the Ranch, leaving the White House, we went out to Andrews Air Field. I went out, and found a lot of others there, to see him off. We weren't invited; we just went out. I called somebody and found out when he was going. And then we all stood around in a big circle near the entrance to the plane and the President walked around to shake hands with each of us and he looked at me and I'll never forget it. I was crying, and he was crying, and it was a sad, terrible kind of business.

Now, when you think of that man going off and think of a fellow like Agnew possibly coming into the White House, and Hubert knew the qualities of Johnson, his strengths; he'd worked with him in the Senate and been close to him as the vice president. He had seen everything at Atlantic City, all Johnson's capacity for terrorizing. But the notion that an Agnew could come into the White House to replace this man was just

something that I think repelled Humphrey. And there was no humor in his distaste for Agnew. He just felt he was not a man who should be in the vice presidency.

MG: Was there a specific aspect of the man that offended him?

DG: I think it wasn't the fear of corruption, although that was there. It wasn't a distaste so much for the arrogance of the man, as he held himself out, but I think it was a sense of the shallowness of the man. I mean, this was a man who had no sense of history, of what the presidency was, and there was a kind of anger in Hubert about that. I have no recollection now what it was he ever said about him, but I do remember conversations in which Agnew would come in, would be part of, and it was always harsh, unhumorous, kind of angered, as if he was an interloper here, and it was not acceptable to him.

End of Tape 2 of 2 and Interview II

NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION

LYNDON BAINES JOHNSON LIBRARY

Legal Agreement Pertaining to the Oral History Interview of

DAVID GINSBURG

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, David Ginsburg of Washington, D.C., do hereby give, donate and convey to the United States of America all my rights, title and interest in the tape recordings and transcripts of the personal interviews conducted on August 15, August 26, September 19, and November 11, 1988 in Washington, D.C., 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.

David Ginsburg
Donor

9/2/93
Date

Acting Archivist of the United States

June 16, 1994
Date