INTERVIEWEE: PAUL HOFFMAN

INTERVIEWER: JOE B. FRANTZ

July 28, 1971

F: This is an interview with Mr. Paul G. Hoffman in his office at 866 United Nations Plaza. The interviewer is Joe B. Frantz. The date is July 28, 1971.

Mr. Hoffman, let's talk a little bit about how you first became aware of Mr. Johnson.

H: I first became aware of Mr. Johnson in 1948 when I was the Administrator of the Marshall program. I learned at that early date that if I wanted to get something through the Congress, one of the first individuals to see was Lyndon B. Johnson. I think he was senator at that time.

F: He was elected to the Senate in 1948.

H: I think he'd just been elected senator. But even as a new senator he still had unusual influence in the Senate. As I say, he was the man to talk to.

F: He was hyperactive in those days, too.

H: Yes, he was.

F: And you were primarily interested, of course, in trying to turn around the Communist thrust in Europe at the beginning.

H: No. That really wasn't our purpose.

F: Well, that's what happened then. Let's put it that way.

H: We had a double purpose in the Marshall program, and I think that Senator Johnson was favorable to both our purposes. One was to assist in bringing about a very rapid recovery of Western Europe,

because it was clear that that was very definitely in the American interest. In other words, the Marshall program, while it was regarded by some people as simply a program to help European countries, it was also a program to help the United States of America -- both from the standpoint of export trade and from a standpoint of reducing defense costs.

F: You always saw it more of an investment than you did in any sort of an aid sense, didn't you?

H: I made a statement at one time, which appeared on a front cover of TIME Magazine, that time would prove the Marshall Plan to be the best investment that the United States government had ever made. I think that events have proved that to be a reasonably accurate forecast.

But the second purpose we had in mind in the Marshall program was to help bring about the creation of a common market in Europe, because we felt that one of the surest roads to peace was the economic road; further, that if a common market in Europe came into being the chance of the European countries going to war with each other would be negligible. That, again, has turned out to be true. I don't believe that war in Western Europe is a possibility.

So those were the two purposes. And, as I say, looking back over twenty years now, I still remember and recall very vividly the strong influence that Lyndon Johnson had in keeping the Congress behind the program.

F: Some of his opponents have claimed that he lacked an understanding of foreign affairs, that he was the parochial politician, or at least a domestic politician. I judge you wouldn't quite go with that.

H: No. I wouldn't be in a position to judge. My judgment is a very limited judgment. I know as far as the Marshall program was concerned, as far as our own --

F: He grasped what you were trying to get.

H. Yes. Also, as far as the work of the United Nations Development Program is concerned, he always displayed the greatest interest and sympathy for it, and support of it.

F: As you know, when the Eisenhower Administration came in, the Johnson-Rayburn line was to do a kind of constructive opposition as Democrats rather than just an outright opposition. I presume as Mr. Johnson's power grew that you found him no less effective despite the fact that he belonged to the "out" party.

H: I would say that with Sam Rayburn behind you in the House and Lyndon Johnson behind you in the Senate, you were well on the way toward getting the support by both houses.

F: You were frequently in those days mentioned as a possibility for the Republican nomination. Did you ever discuss this with Senator Johnson?

H: No. I never took it seriously.

F: You never discussed it much with anyone, did you?

H: No.

F: Right. Did you ever hear Mr. Eisenhower as President comment on the role of Mr. Johnson in the Senate?

H: I don't recall any conversation. There might have been. That was quite a while ago.

F: You went with the Ford Foundation and then, as an auxiliary of that, with the Fund for the Republic. And, of course, I don't need to remind you, Joe McCarthy got the Fund for the Republic as a special target. He had a number of them, but you were one of them.

H: Yes.

F: Did you ever talk with Mr. Johnson about these charges? You were, in effect, according to McCarthy, virtually running a Communist front in those now-irrational days.

H: I don't think that Senator Johnson, as he was in those days, took McCarthy's charges any more seriously than I did. In other words, I think he just dismissed them as being very partisan and without any substance whatever.

F: There was never any need in those days to sort of plan on how to neutralize Mr. McCarthy - between the two of you?

H: No. Not as it involved Senator Johnson, although I don't remember well enough to remember just how the vote turned out. The man that I worked closely with in those days, as far as Senator McCarthy was concerned, was Senator Flanders. I worked closely with him in one respect. I helped raise the money to finance the study of the McCarthy record and other things.

(interruption)

F: We were talking about those McCarthy years. I don't know whether there's much to be said on that or not. I judge that you and Mr. Johnson never worked particularly on that.

H: No.

F: During the Eisenhower period, of course, you had the old-line Republican hierarchy expecting maybe a return to additional protectionism in trade, whereas Eisenhower's line was free trade -- and he held the line rather successfully.

H: Yes.

F: And Johnson has always been a free trade advocate. I expect he's the most"free trade" of the Presidents we've had in this century. Did you ever work with him on this problem?

H: No, I never did. I was a rather active member of one or two committees working for freer trade, we called it. But I don't ever remember talking to President Johnson.

F: Of course he wasn't the one you had to persuade.

H: No, he wasn't. Our effort was to get some Republicans lined up.

F: When you were named as a representative to the United Nations Assembly, did this require Senate confirmation.

H: Yes.

F: Did that give you any problem?

H: Yes. Not much. Of course, McCarthy made a great issue of it. I think I can say with some pride that he delivered one of the most vitriolic speeches against me that he ever delivered against anybody at that time.

F: You can take pride in the extremeness of it.

H: But it was not a close vote. It was something like 70 to 20, or something like that.

F: It wasn't anything that really you had to fight for or work for?

H: I never even as much as solicited one vote.

F: You said earlier that whenever you wanted to get something done that Mr. Johnson was one of the people that you could work with. Do you have any specific instances of that?

H: You know, I never had to spend much time with Senator Johnson because we knew he was with us. Our time was spent trying to persuade those who we had doubts about, and we never had any doubts about his position on the Marshall program or his position on trade or his position on the subjects in which I was deeply interested. We just didn't need to spend time with him.

F: In '56 you had that problem of the French, Israel and Great Britain against the Suez Canal proposition, which of course became an issue in this country. Did that bring you into contact with the senator?

H: No, I was here at the United Nations at that time. I can't recall any contact I had with President Johnson.

F: You may not recall, but during that crisis in the fall of '56 you made the statement that this crisis would actually strengthen the role of the U.N. Do you recall why you said that and what you had in mind?

H: I felt that it would strengthen the role of the U.N. because I thought the only hope to bring any peace to that part of the world would come through activities in the U.N. And it did, of course. The truce came -- let's see, when was the truce?

F: I'm not sure just when the truce did come. It would have come I guess a little later there in '56 or early '57.

H: I think it came in '57. It came as a result, if I'm correct about this, of the mission for which Ralph Bunche took responsibility. That's my recollection. But the Bunche mission bought a period of peace in the Middle East.

F: You never had any doubts in these years that you had the wholehearted support of the leadership in the Senate in your United Nations efforts?

H: No, I don't think so. The Senate never was a problem. The Senate is much more internationally-minded than the House has been at times.

F: We passed, as you may recall, the first civil rights act in four decades in 1957 under the so-called Johnson Senate. Did this have any effect at all around the United Nations and the people you were dealing with? Do they notice this much about U.S. domestic affairs? Did it make it easier for you to work?

H: I think two of the most significant contributions that President Johnson made were in the field of civil liberties and in his dream for the Great Society. From the first I think that without Senator Johnson, later President Johnson, giving wholehearted support to civil liberties, we wouldn't have made the progress we made. I think it was essential. I think that the dream of a great society has got to be restored to America.

F: Do you think that a part of the violence that ensued was due to the fact that people did have their aspirations awakened?

H: You can't have any great change without some turbulence. What we were attempting to do was to try to really make a fact out of the old phrase, "regardless of race, creed, color, and national origin." We've given lip service to that idea for a couple of hundred years, but it was only as we began to move in the field of civil liberties that we began to try to make it a reality We're still at it.

F: One of your interests during this period also -- and we will get over the '50's -- was a campaign for the passage of laws to limit campaign expenditures and have better disclosure of the campaign expenditures. Did this ever bring you into contact with the senator?

H: No.

F: What sort of reception did you get with the U.S. Congress in general on this? They're rather slow to move, aren't they?

H: Very slow. Something has to be done, in my opinion, in order to make it possible for a man with limited means to really win a public office without mortgaging himself in the process. I personally think that there should be a limit on campaign expenditures. And that limit should be one that makes it possible for any candidate to raise the amount of money without having to mortgage himself. When you have to raise five or six million dollars to win a Senate seat --

F: What do you think the opposition stemmed from -- just the reluctance to bare your soul?

H: No, I think it's more a matter of perhaps a subconscious desire to maintain the status quo. If you're in office, if you've won your office, and you're well into it, why change things? There is nothing, I think, consciously perfidious about it. I think it's just an unconscious feeling that, "We're all right now."

F: During the past twenty years we have seen a high point reached in the so-called foreign aid, and then gradually the Congress has tapered off in its voting of foreign aid until in some places it has gotten almost non-existent. How do you explain this?

H: I think former Prime Minister Lester Pearson put it in a phrase, "We've just got weary of well-doing." Further, quiet, constructive activity is never really newsworthy, you know. What is newsworthy is violence. We're up against that situation constantly to-day.

I remember when our first hundred million dollar program was approved by the United Nations Development Programme Governing Council I called a press conference. We gave some details of what we thought were very newsworthy projects. One was the survey of the Niger River and others of similar importance. The next day the New York Times gave us a part of a column on the twenty-eighth page. I said to a friend of mine: "You know, we don't want publicity for the sake of publicity, but our

contributions are all voluntary. We can't expect to get contributions unless people know what we're doing. How do we publicize the constructive work of the United Nations in these economic and social fields, because unless it's publicized, it won't be supported."

He said, "Well, I'll tell you Hoffman if you should build a sixty-five storey skyscraper in the middle of New York, we'll give you a few sticks on the financial page. But just blow up a two-storey building anywhere, and we'll give you front page story.".

F: It's that old business of one Peace Corpsman gone sour that makes every paper in the country.

H: Yes.

F: You made a statement back there also in 1960 -- this was right after the U-2 incident -- and you were saying to the World Brotherhood Congress at Chicago that we should channel our international attentions constructively. What were you talking about?

H: Maybe I can give my point of view a little better by saying that I can recall in 1931 I was in Canada. I was then with Studebaker Corporation. I was talking with a man named Carlisle -- he was President of Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company of Canada -- and I said to him: "Mr. Carlisle, how much longer are we going to have to face these bad times?"

He said, "Hoffman, these aren't bad times. They're tough times. But if you know your history, you know that all social progress is made in tough times." This is true. We don't make

progress in complacent times. We make progress only in times where there is some reason for turbulence.

F: I teach History of American Business, among other things, and one thing I always tell my students is that the time when the great businessmen emerge is in a period when things are going straight downhill.

H: Sure.

F: Because then, in a period like this of great affluence as we've just come through, everybody can get in the act with the result that everybody does and some succeed who have no business succeeding. But then when it begins to go downhill is when you do kind of squeeze all the water out of your programs and innovate.

H: It's tough times that show up those who have capacity as well as those who don't.

F: You weren't active in the campaign of 1960, were you?

H: No.

F: Did Lyndon Johnson ever talk to you about his presidential ambitions prior to the convention?

H: Never did.

F: Did you stay out because of your United Nations' association, or simply because you didn't want to take a stand on that?

H: The minute I became an international civil servant it was important that I keep away from partisan affairs because, in the first place, we need the support of Democrats and Republicans.

F: Right. In very early '61, you made a public statement that we needed some sort of International Peace Corps. Is this the genesis of the Peace Corps idea, or were you echoing someone?

H: I don't claim that. I think everybody has long felt that there would be great value in an international -- I hate to use the word -- Peace Corps because it conjures up the wrong kind of picture. Actually for a long time the United Nations - the specialized agencies - have used volunteers in various capacities. For example, the FAO has had what they call junior experts, or they are people learning their trade, in there; and UNESCO has had people learning the teaching trade. But we never had really pulled it together. But there is a demand for volunteers, and of course it has to be built up by a joint effort on the part of countries that want volunteers, plus the co-operation of the agencies, who are handling our projects in these countries.

F: Without getting into specifics, are the major countries - the great powers - more or less agreed on what is needed in the development of the more backward countries? I'm not talking about how they implement this desire, or how they support it, but do they agree in thesis?

H: I don't think there's a recognition that from the economic standpoint that this is one world. I'm not talking politics. I'm talking about the sooner we can get to realize that this is one economic world and begin to implement that concept, the better off we'll be.

F: I can remember a statement that you made of one underdeveloped area,if you could raise the income over ten years from $100 a year to $125 a year. Of course, looking at that on the dollars and cents basis, when you raise their purchasing power just that much and multiply this by all the units of people, that infuses

a lot of extra market into the world.

H: What has been very difficult for the more industrially advanced countries to understand is the intimate relationship between raising the income of the people - the real incomes of people in developing countries - through increased productivity. What we need, if we are going to keep America growing and prosperous is more customers - so does Germany, so does England, so does France and so do all industrialized countries. Where you have in the less developed countries - well over 2,000,000,000 people - let's just say that we're talking about 800,000,000 families. That's just out of the air. The figure I wouldn't know. If you can raise the family income, you immediately get increased imports. In other words, this is proved by Taiwan and proved by Korea and proved by the Ivory Coast, and proved by all the countries that have made real progress in increasing real personal incomes. Imports in a country go up proportionately or more. This is where the great new market is.

F: And any loss of market you get by, in a sense, raising a rival is more than offset by the other needs that have to be filled.

H: You see, there's a time span in which adjustments can be made. At one time the one great cry was low wages in Europe. Well, European wages have gone up very steadily with increased prosperity. You gradually bring about an adjustment. We do the things we can best do and keep very busy doing them, but you can't expect this accomplishment overnight. You've got to give time for adjustments.

When the automobile came in, the production of carriages went out. They went out over quite a period of time. But, nevertheless, for every job you lost you created fifty more in a new business. This is not understood by those who are being hurt. People who are not being hurt and are objective understand this. But if you're in a business that's going to be hurt by imports, you need time to adjust. The wrong answer to that is to put on quotas.

F: You have long urged a closer co-operation between business and government.

H: Sure.

F: Have you ever talked with President Johnson about this?

H: Not particularly, no. I think he sensed that, though. In the talks that I've had with him, I think he sensed the fact. I don't know who made the statement but I think it was well put that a government can control the climate; it can't control the raindrops. There's got to be co-operation in these modern times between governments and business if business is going to have the opportunity it needs. It can only operate in a climate that's favourable to expansion. So there's a necessity for an understanding relationship between labour and business and government. It's good business.

F: Do you think you've seen a change in the past quarter of a century in the fact that instead of these three separate groups, business, government and labour, they have come to see their mutual interests much more clearly?

H: There has been some improvement. There's need for a great deal more. We're in a very dangerous situation to-day for the simple reason that the relationship between higher wages and higher productivity has been lost. The minute you have higher wages without higher productivity you have inflation, and inflation breeds on inflation. I think we should have had price and wage controls six years ago.

F: Of course that's what is happening to us in our competitive race with Japan - their productivity is going up for workers.

H: Sure. I seem to be dragging things out of the distant past, but I recall one time at Studebaker in the mid-'20's when there had been a great deal of automation, there were considerable savings. And the question was raised as to whether those savings should be passed to the consumer in the form of lower prices, or should we pay higher wages, or higher dividends. Our decision was we should divide it between the three. I think it was a good decision. Well, to-day you don't have that opportunity. When we got to a point where all increases in savings due to increased productivity went to wages, we still didn't have the inflationary pressure. But the minute you got to a point where wages were being raised without regard to increased productivity - and remember, about a third of your working force cannot be made more productive -

F: Did you ever talk to President Johnson about the inflationary problem?

H: No. He never asked my opinion.

F: In '64 he named you, along with 15 other distinguished Republicans and Democrats, to be his advisers on international relations.

H: That's right.

F: I judge that he brought you down individually rather than --

H: No, he brought us down just once.

F: Just once. Tell me about that.

H: I think it was a mistake not to have kept that group alive. It was appointed just before the election. The Republicans appointed a similar group under - I've forgotten who now who was in charge of that group. But it was a very good group he appointed. We had one meeting out of which I think came some very productive ideas, but we never were called together again, which I thought was a mistake.

F: Did you ever see any of the ideas implemented?

H: Well, no. It was a frank conversation. I was personally very concerned about the VietNam situation, which I'd known something about because we were asked in 1950 to put a mission under the Marshall Plan into Indochina. After considering it, we decided against it. We decided at that time in which was French Indochina, that it would not be productive, that we wouldn't involve ourselves. I was very concerned when they began thinking about just accelerating the war. I said at this meeting, "Just remember when you think about going into the VietNam war in a bigger way that the attitude of the American public to-day is one thing, but when the coffins start coming back it will be another. I think this should be a matter of the deepest concern."

F: What kind of reception did you get to it?

H: They listened.

F: Did the President meet with you?

H: No, he wasn't with us at that time.

F: Why do you think Johnson never called you back - just got interested in other things?

H: I haven't the remotest idea. I don't know.

F: Do you think he was looking for campaign ideas?

H: I don't know. I think it was suggested to him, and I think he acted on the suggestion in perfectly good faith, but I think he got diverted to other things that seemed more important at that time. I think his great interest was the Great Society.

F: You're speaking of VietNam. Of course it became a millstone around Johnson's neck, and has become one around the country's neck. Has it been one around yours as a U.N. man from the United States? Does it make it harder for you to operate?

H: No. In '59 our program was a little over a hundred million dollars, including contributions of recipient countries, which are about half; last year our program was about $507,000,000 so we've been able to make progress. I can't say the VietNam war has affected us directly. I think it has affected the country very directly and made it more difficult to get contributions from the U.S. Government.

F: Is there a senatorial disillusion with the effects of foreign aid? Have we wanted too hard to be liked and appreciated rather than looking on this as an investment?

H: I think you have a very diverse attitude in the Senate. Some senators believe that the bilateral programs have involved the United States economically and as a result, we find ourselves militarily involved, too. Therefore, they're opposed to foreign aid, bilaterally administered. There is, of course, a great growth in sentiment to channel more aid multilaterally and less bilaterally but that sentiment hasn't expressed itself in very less substantial increases in multilateral aid. It has expressed itself in decreases in bilateral aid. I don't find in the Senate anything in the way of real hostility to multilateral aid. What I find is some indifference to all aid.

F: Is there a growing isolationism on the part of the United States insofar as it affects the U.N.?

H: I think that anyone that would appraise the sentiment in this country today, would have to say that isolationism is a too strong word. I think there's a feeling on the part of many people that we have troubles enough at home and why go outside and worry about them. I think it's a result of a failure to recognize that we can't insulate ourselves from the rest of the world. We can't.

F: With your work in the development program, and with your being a citizen of the United States, does this hamper you? Does it give a kind of Yankee-big brotherism, as against if you had come from Burma or somewhere else?

H: No, I don't think so. Maybe I'm deceiving myself, but I think that I have been a good international civil servant. That came to test with the United States with near-disastrous results when I approved a program for Cuba -- which I did a number of years ago - and immediately heard a howl around the country. I said nobody gave me the right to expel Cuba from the United Nations, and as long as Cuba is a member of the United Nations, Cuba is entitled to exactly the same kind of treatment as any other country. We have Communist countries and Socialist countries and other countries, and I think we can quite honestly say that we have divorced completely from our program ideological considerations. That doesn't mean I haven't views.

F: I couldn't help but overhearing parts of your telephone conversation a moment ago. I have had since '59 four protracted working trips to South America, including seven months in Chila, in 1965. And I have been very interested in what is happening there with the Allende government, and whether the Chilenos, who are the one people in this continent would could pull off a successful socialist revolution without losing their democratic stability -- I don't know whether they can do it. I'd be very interested in what you think is going on down there.

H: No question but what Allende is a Marxist. There's no question but what he is going to nationalize manufacturing industries, banks and insurance companies. He's going to do that. He believes in that. He also believes in the protection of private holdings and the right of people to own land. I would say that he is not a Marxist in the sense that the heads of some countries are. He is not nationalizing everything. I personally believe that he's faced with very serious problems from the left. In other words, the real revolutionaries are not interested in personal freedom, freedom of assembly, freedom of the press that up to now he has wanted to protect.

F: He has been the moderating influence in a sense.

H: Protect these freedoms. No, I don't think anybody can speak with any assurance except - I never made any secret of the fact that there is nothing sacred about private enterprise or public enterprise. The enterprise that will best serve the most people is the enterprise that should prevail. I think that in most cases private enterprise produces a better result than public enterprise, and that isn't ideological talk. It's just a case of what are the facts.

F: You're on a committee of the Baruch Foundation for an annual conservation award. Have you been active particularly in conservation?

H: I've been interested in it ever since 1910, I think it was, when Governor Pinchot came out with a great blast. The interesting thing about that is a great deal was accomplished as a result of that beginning of that campaign. But the United States never got turned on about it, as my kids say, until 1970.

F: Did you work with the Johnson Administration at all on any of this conservation?

H: No.

F: Not with Lady Bird?

H: No. Mrs. Hoffman did. I didn't.

F: You urged in '68 the doubling of aid from the rich nations. What kind of reception did you get to that?

H: I don't know about aid generally. Our aid has increased -- mostly from the richer countries -- from $54,000,000 in 1959 to about $240,000,000 last year.

F: While Johnson was President, did you have anything in the way of an official relationship with him?

H: No.

F: Did you ever go down, other than on this one meeting?

H: Oh yes, we saw him. I saw President Johnson on several occasions.

F: Was it primarily social?

H: Primarily social.

F: You weren't in an advisory capacity at any time?

H: No.

F: Did he ever talk to you about his plans to quit?

H: No, never did.

F: Caught you by surprise, too?

H: No, I thought after the New Hampshire elections - it didn't surprise me.

F: There's something I've wondered. Johnson has been roundly flayed because of Viet Nam particularly, and because certain of the Great Society programs, in a sense, increased discontent because they did open new possibilities. In the U.N. group that you run with, is there a strong anti-Johnson feeling, or do they take it pretty well on balance?

H: I never heard any real expression of anti-Johnson feeling here. I think there's a feeling that the U.S. doesn't give the status to the U.N. that it ought to have, but that has been true for a long time. I never heard any anti-Johnson feeling. Of course, one of our consultants today is Tex Goldschmidt, who was a very close friend of the President.

F: We have interviewed him and his wife, incidentally.

H: Who have a much closer relationship with President Johnson than I ever had.

F: You get almost a feeling of solid opposition at times. I'm reminded - this goes back to Chile again -- Chileno professor down there at the time of the Dominican intervention who came to me one day and said, "Of course, I'll have to denounce your country for this, but basically I think they're correct." Whether he's right or wrong is not the point, but I wonder if this isn't an attitude just simply because the United States is here and Johnson is here and so forth, that you have to portray him as a --

H: I think that in many Latin American countries a politician to be successful has to be somewhat anti-American because we're big, we're dominant. But I never heard any expression around here of of any strong anti-Johnson feeling.

F: From your particular vantage point, I'd be very interested in what you thought of Mr. Johnson as President.

H: Of course, I was very, very interested in his plans for a Great Society. In other words, it was an idea we have to strive for. We have to become a Great Society. We still have to become a Great Society. The greatest interference with the Great Society was the Viet Nam war. It diverted us from what, to my mind, was one of the most important objectives. In fact, I think there's nothing more important to-day than to have America restore its faith in itself. We could build a Great Society here. We just want to give it high priority. I felt it was very unfortunate and tragic that we were diverted from making at least a part of that dream come true. But that's the way things work.

F: Thank you very much, Mr. Hoffman. I really appreciate this.

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