INTERVIEW IV

DATE: November 7, 1985

INTERVIEWEE: WILLIAM J. JORDEN

INTERVIEWER: Ted Gittinger

PLACE: Ambassador Jorden's residence, McLean, Virginia

Tape 1 of 1, Side 1

G: Let's begin by my asking you by what process you got picked to go to Paris to be the resident press man in the team.

J: Well, I was on the National Security Council at the time, as you know, on the staff in charge of Far East affairs, so I had been working on Vietnam for quite a few years, [for] three steadily and before that for a couple of years, in and out and back and forth, along with other problems. But anyway, I think that President Johnson simply associated me with the Vietnam problem, and he also knew of my newspaper back ground, and they had to have a spokesman, and there wasn't anybody else he trusted. (Laughter)

G: He set a lot of store by people he knew, didn't he?

J: Yes. He certainly did.

G: Is that how he picked the rest of the team, do you think?

J: Well, in part. He picked [Averell] Harriman. He knew him, but he also knew that Harriman had been dealing with the Russians and the communists for twenty-five or thirty years. Well, I don't know whether the President--I don't think he felt personally close to Harriman although he had known him for many, many years, but they had never been particularly intimate. But I think that, one, he felt that the head of the delegation should be someone of considerable prestige; two, someone

who had a good deal of experience dealing with the communists; and Harriman was a logical choice.

He picked [Cyrus] Vance--originally, I think that Harriman and Llewellyn Thompson were going to be the two chief negotiators, and I don't remember what happened. I think there were some other problems that they wanted Thompson to deal with, so President Johnson turned then to Vance. He had a great deal of respect for Vance. He had worked with him when the riots broke out in Detroit; Vance had gone out there. He had gone to Cyprus. He had been in the Pentagon, first as secretary of the army, and Johnson had sent him to Panama in 1964 when the riots broke out there. So he knew Vance, trusted him, liked him, had great confidence in him, and I think he felt that Vance would keep Harriman from getting too soft. (Laughter)

G: Was that a concern, do you think?

J: A little bit. I think a little bit. Probably unjustified, but anyway. . . .

G: No, that's an interesting statement. Maybe he--was he thinking back to Laos, do you think?

J: Yes. Sure.

G: I see. Okay. That's interesting.

J: So he needed a balance, and so on.

[Philip] Habib, I think, had been picked mainly by Rusk, and I guess Vance had known Habib, but I'm not sure of that. But Phil had a lot of experience in Vietnam. He had been political officer in Saigon, and had dealt with the problem in Washington as well, and he was very competent, and I think he was sort of the State Department selection for

the chief political job. And Andy Goodpaster was the military man, and there too, President Johnson had known him for a long time and trusted him, liked him, although Andy--that was changed rather quickly. I've forgotten what happened. Andy went somewhere else, and George Seignious replaced him, and there I don't know that President Johnson knew Seignious. I think he was primarily a Pentagon nominee who was accepted by the President. [A] damned good man, by the way.

G: He was in the Library a few weeks ago.

J: Was he?

G: Yes.

J: Oh, yes. He's now running the Atlantic Council? Or he's secretary general of the Atlantic Council or something?

G: I think that's right. It is the Atlantic Council. I'm not sure what his exact position is.

J: Yes. I don't remember that.

G: He didn't have time to talk to me, unfortunately, which was just as well. I was not at all prepared to take him on with no notice whatsoever.

J: Yes.

G: But, in any case--

J: But he's a very good man, and he worked out well in Paris. And then I was the fifth member--not the fifth wheel--and there again, I was picked because I knew the Vietnam problem and also had newspaper experience, and they needed someone to make our views known publicly.

G: Were you given special instructions? Was there a send-off of any kind, an orientation to give you an idea of what kind of a settlement we would strive to get?

J: I remember we had a meeting with the President the day before we left, in May, I guess it was, and we met in the Cabinet Room. But he talked in rather general terms, because at that point we didn't know if this was serious or not. We didn't know what they were up to. We didn't know if it was just a ploy, and of course I don't think we--we hadn't worked out any firm, fixed positions except that we wanted a settlement that would end the fighting, and have North Vietnamese forces withdraw from the South, and preserve a democratic (laughter) quote, "government"--at least preserve the existing government in the hopes that in the future we could encourage as much democracy as possible--and that would preserve the South intact as a country. It was about as general as that, as I recall. So we went off into the unknown, because we really didn't know what to expect, when they had accepted the idea of talks.

G: Who made the arrangements? I guess the French would have made the arrangements for a place and the hall, and the--

J: The French were the host power, or the host country, and so they made all the arrangements for the venue, for the meeting place, for the chairs and tables, and so on. Of course, we and the North Vietnamese handled the things such as interpreters and so on. We really didn't want French interpreters for this process. But also, I guess our embassy arranged for the housing for us, and the Vietnamese did likewise. We were quartered at the Crillon Hotel, which is right across

the street from the embassy on the Place de la Concorde. Very nice digs.

G: Speaking of interpreters, did the Vietnamese speak French, or did they speak Vietnamese? How many times did things have to get translated before they got to where they were going?

J: They spoke Vietnamese. No, I think the Vietnamese was translated into English--

G: Oh, translated directly into English?

J: --by our people, and I think on their side, also, it went from English into Vietnamese.

G: I see. Did you have a planning session before the first meeting to sort of come up with a formula for what you were going to say and how you were going to say it and so on?

J: Well, yes, but--God, I don't remember it. Harriman made an opening statement, which we worked on in advance, and they made an opening statement, and I think our inclination at the outset was just to sort of play it by ear and see what they had in mind, and whether they were serious or not, because it really was not the kind of negotiation where you go in with a fixed position and say, "Well, here's our program for peace," and so on and so on--although we got into that. But as I say, the central question when we went to Paris and during those first days was, "Are these guys serious, or are they just going through a show?" The answer was, "They're going through a show."

G: How long did it take you to figure that one out?

J: It took me about two days, but Harriman would not give up, and Vance kept hoping, and so we went on and on and on, and--well, I had an open

mind. I was perfectly prepared to accept the thought that--or the idea that they would play around for a while and then would get down to business, and so on. But I would say that after a month, it became clear that we were really playing games.

G: How long did it take Governor Harriman to come to that conclusion, or do you think he did?

J: I think that he kept hoping up to the end that something would happen. I mean, he realized that we weren't getting anywhere, but he kept hoping that we would and that the situation would change, and if we just hung in there and waited them out that eventually they would realize that peace was a better solution than war. But the Vietnamese calculation was just the reverse, that if they waited long enough that we would--they felt that we were already sick of the war, and one of the reasons they accepted going to the peace talks, I think, was that we were so desperate to get out of this mess that we would accept anything that came along. And then when they found that wasn't true, and we found that they were not desperate, then it was just a waiting game on both sides, and I have always felt that they outwaited us.

G: How did you--?

J: One of the indications that this really was a charade and that it was not serious business, not serious talk about war and peace, was this long exercise we went through, working out the participation of the South Vietnamese and what came to be called "the shape of the table." Jesus. That was the most frustrating, irritating exercise, and. . . . As I tried to explain to the reporters who were covering all this, it did have political significance in that the position of the delegations,

and whether somebody would be at the main table or at a side table, and so on, all reflected some perception of political reality. They were trying desperately to force us into admitting that the South Vietnamese were puppets, and that they could sit in the room, but in the back row while we did the negotiating. On the other hand, they pushed very hard to argue that the Viet Cong were legitimate representatives of the South Vietnamese people, and therefore should have an equal place at the negotiating table.

Well, we went back and forth and up and down on this, and you can imagine--you've got four hundred, five hundred hungry newspapermen trying to write stories about this great peace exercise, and I am forced to go out in front of them every day and explain that "We've decided that it shouldn't be a long table. We haven't yet decided that it should be a round table," and so on and so on. (Laughter)

G: And that went on for weeks and weeks?

J: It went on for weeks!

G: Months, I guess.

J: Literally. Well, months, yes. I've forgotten how long it took to resolve this momentous issue, but it was the most trying time in my life in terms of trying to do a job, trying to build a house with no lumber, or trying to make bricks without straw, or whatever, in the biblical sense. I really had not a goddamned thing to work with except this terrible schlimazel back and forth and so on, and I tried to make it interesting, and I tried to explain the political realities and so on. It was a painful period.

G: How did you do this? Would you have a briefing every day, or a press conference?

J: Not a briefing every day, but a briefing every time we had a meeting. We would go to the meeting and then go back to the embassy, and they had a big auditorium set up, and I would get up and tell them what happened.

G: Which was usually not much?

J: Well, I tried to make as much of it as I could. I mean, you know, "The proceedings began with an opening statement by Governor Harriman, who explained that--, and the North Vietnamese responded that so-and-so, and the central issue was so-and-so," but it always ended up with the same bloody thing, the shape of the table.

G: Were the reporters getting rather restive under all this?

J: Well, you can imagine, because when this thing started it was a forerunner of things to come. You know now when the President of the United States goes on an overseas trip, you've got all this coterie of newspeople, all the anchormen from CBS, ABC, NBC, and so on, reporters from every major newspaper, a huge delegation from the wire services, and hundreds and hundreds of people, which is one of the great absurdities of our time, since they could cover the story really better sitting in Washington and watching a television monitor, and contacting their sources here about what's really going on. But the mystique of the news profession is that you've got to be at the scene of the crime and so on, whether that means sitting in a hotel eight miles away from where everything's going on and not being able to talk to anybody who knows, or not.

In any case, in Paris I'd go up to the rostrum to tell the world what's happening, and here's Walter Cronkite, and John Chancellor, and Scotty Reston, and all of these big guns sitting around, and the three or four hundred others, expecting a story. And I was feeding them very thin gruel. (Laughter)

G: Is it correct to say that you took some of the brunt of their impatience?

J: It's quite correct.

G: Did they believe that there wasn't anything much to report?

J: No, I think I had a good deal of credibility with the press. Most of them knew me from the days when I was a reporter. They knew I wasn't going to play games, and I wasn't going to lie to them. There were occasions when I simply couldn't answer a question, and I just said so flatly, "I'm just not going to get into that today. When there's something on it that I can tell you, I will, but today's not that day." They pressed me fairly hard and so on, but I think they understood the position I was in, and also I think that they knew that whatever they were getting, it was a straight story, that I wasn't raising a smoke screen.

G: Would they come see you individually for backgrounders and so on?

J: Yes. Yes.

G: But presumably, they--?

J: Mainly for color, "who was sitting where?" and "how does this guy react, and what does his voice sound like?" and so on and so on. But I couldn't get into the business of individual briefings with that many people, with five hundred people there. They were all asking, of

course. But I did some backgrounding, not so much on an individual basis as maybe a group of six or seven people who had similar interests and so on, and I did the best I could with the ammunition I had, which was not very damned much. (Laughter)

G: Presumably then, they would, as you say, scatter and look for color and ambience and things like that.

J: And try to grab Harriman, and try to grab Vance, and try to grab Habib, and try to grab the North Vietnamese, and so on and so on, usually without too much success, but--

G: Was it pretty well agreed that you were going to be the contact man with the press?

J: Yes.

G: And Harriman and Vance more or less left it in your hands?

J: Especially Vance.

G: Why do you say "especially Vance"?

J: (Laughter) Well, I think Averell now and then met an old pal at teatime or something. But not too much. Not too much.

G: I see.

J: Vance was very meticulous, and Habib. They didn't play games, because it was--I think that's one thing that President Johnson had said at that last meeting in the White House before we left, that he wanted me to be the spokesman, and nobody else to be talking. And it worked quite well. It worked quite well, quite well.

G: Were the South Vietnamese a problem in this respect?

J: You mean on the press side? At first the South Vietnamese weren't there.

G: True.

J: When they came, it wasn't a great problem, no. We coordinated pretty much and worked together, and I don't think that--I don't recall any instance of any major break or leak or whatever on their part. They took a quite different view, of course, of the proceedings from our view, and I don't blame them. I mean, if I'd been a South Vietnamese, I would have been looking at it in a very different way, and they did. I mean, they detested the people on the other side of the table and knew they were out to do them in, and so on and so on, and they were afraid we were getting weak in the knees, and--but that might--we went from May, I guess, until January.

G: Yes. When was the first movement in the positions? Do we have to go all the way up to about October before we get any real sign that we might indeed be making some progress, when Johnson was apparently willing to offer a complete bombing halt?

J: I don't know. I would have to review the bloody record on that. (Laughter) I remember the only time I really got into any trouble in this thing was at one session--and I think it was in October--when we had been talking back and forth on, for a change, some serious issues. And at the briefing, I told the press that there had been some movement. "But," I said, "movement can be forward or backward or in a circle, and I'm not sure yet what kind of movement this is. But anyway, I would say, characterizing the discussion, that there has been some movement." Well, you know what happened. The smart reporters handled it straight, with a caveat and so on, but a few came out with stories that--"Paris talks make progress!" And that hit Washington, and Lyndon Johnson

called Dean Rusk--(Laughter)--and Dean Rusk called Averell Harriman, and so on and so on. Well, I got a call from Walt Rostow, and he said, "What's this about progress?" and so on and so on. I said, "I didn't use the word 'progress.' I said there had been 'movement,' and that we couldn't tell whether the movement was backward or forward." "Oh," he said. "Just give me a short memo explaining all this for the boss." So I did, and that calmed things down.

G: Well, that's not very serious if that's the only trouble you got into.

J: No, that was the major flap.

G: That's not bad.

J: Can you imagine? That's not a bad record for ten months of baloney.

G: No, it isn't; in peace talks when you've got to give a story without much substance and satisfy these guys. Was there ever a problem with a leak, that you recall, during your tenure?

J: There was a little trouble, and I don't remember what it was, and I don't know even if I read the record if that would revive my memory. But the problem came from one, and maybe two, very junior members of the delegation, who were seeing members of the press and playing tennis with them and so on, and talking a little too much and so on. Well, it didn't take me long to discover this. So I just went to Harriman and Vance and told them what was happening, and that I wanted it knocked off because it was making my job difficult, and it just had to stop, that's all. So they called these fellows in, and it did stop.

G: Okay. Of course, there was a big flap in the fall when we thought, I gather, that we had gotten a tentative agreement from the North, but the

southerners originally had been agreeable but then backed down. Do you recall this, when Thieu--?

J: Yes, vaguely. There was some disagreement with Saigon, and the South Vietnamese did not go along with whatever it was we were trying to work out. I would say that in Paris, as long as the discussions were in those horrible, formal sessions at the--what was the name of the place? I guess Mili [Mrs. Jorden] would remember. Something Palace? [Hotel Majestic] Anyway, it's a very elaborate meeting place that the French had set aside for us, and it was very much like a palace.

As long as the meetings were in that setting, we made absolutely no progress. It was just a set-speech kind of thing, and the two sides were talking at each other, not with each other, and it was totally a propaganda exercise in which speeches were being made for the record, and for the next day's newspaper, and so on. I went to Vance one day and said that I thought that this whole thing was sterile and that it was getting absolutely nowhere, and that as far as I could see the only hope for any movement on this thing would be to move into secret talks, into private talks. And so we kicked that around a bit, and he asked me how I thought it could it be set up, and so on. And I suggested that I get together with my counterpart, and I've forgotten his name [Bui Tin?]. He was a member of the North Vietnamese delegation. He was the editor of the--what's the big newspaper in Hanoi?

G: [***Quan Doi***] ***Nhan Dan***?

J: Is there another one? No, I think it was ***Nhan Dan***. [The] editor of ***Nhan Dan***, and member of the Central Committee and so on.

G: Is he the same guy who was in Saigon in 1975 when the surrender took place?

J: Probably. Probably.

G: Yes.

J: I've forgotten his name.

G: Well, we can look it up (inaudible).

J: Who was Xuan Thuy?

G: No, it's not Xuan Thuy, but I can--

J: In any case--

G: We can refer to that.

J: Yes. So I got him aside at one of these sessions when we had a break and asked him to lunch. We set it up at a restaurant in the outskirts of Paris and so on. So I went to lunch with him, and we talked about all of the problems, and he agreed that these big formal sessions were not really doing anything and that maybe quiet talks would move us ahead faster. I wish to hell I had the notes of that meeting--but we also covered some substance.

G: It sounds like they were waiting for an overture, then, because you would have expected him to say, "I will take it up with the other guys."

J: Oh, well, he did. He did.

G: But if you also talked some substance (inaudible)?

J: We did talk some substance, and I think that was mainly my sort of probing him for what he really thought about this, that, and the other thing. But it was not the shape of the table, by any means. It was troops and infiltration and things like that.

In any case, he said, "Well, this has been very interesting, and I'll go back and talk to my colleagues," and I said I would do the same, and so on. Well, I went back and reported to Harriman and Vance, and he obviously did the same thing. In any case, very soon we began to have private meetings with Vance and their number two man, whoever he was, meeting in obscure places in Paris. It really was quite remarkable that this kind of thing--with a huge press corps sitting around trying to cover this story, nobody ever latched onto the fact that the private talks were going on.

G: Nobody ever tailed you? Nobody ever--

J: Well, that's the point. I know if I had been covering this story it's what I would have done. But Vance used very devious routes. I mean, he'd take a taxi; then he'd go on the subway, and so on and so on. It is possible that some people may have tried to tail him, but anyway, he shook them.

So that went on for quite a while, with the formal meetings going on and then the private talks. The private talks were totally off the record. I could never do any briefing on the private talks.

G: Not even mention that they were going on.

J: No, no.

G: What would you have said if a reporter had taxed you with the fact that--?

J: I would have said that that was one of the things I couldn't talk about. I would not deny it.

G: Which is not quite a confirmation, but--

J: It's not a denial either.

G: Not a denial either. (Laughter) Did you participate in these [talks]?

J: No, no. It was just--

G: Just Vance and Harriman? Or was it just Vance?

J: No, it was Vance.

G: Just Vance.

J: Vance and Habib.

G: Okay. Did they keep you abreast of what was--?

J: Because Habib was doing at that point--Habib's French was very good, and I think that in those talks the discussion was English-French.

G: I see. Were they keeping you abreast of the problems?

J: Oh yes. Oh yes.

G: It must be very difficult to stand up in front of a briefing with all this information in your head and not accidentally--

J: And draw the line between what can be discussed and not discussed. It's very hard, very hard. And people are fallible, and you can suddenly say something that was on this side of the ledger that should have been on that side, and you're in deep trouble. It never happened.

G: Now at some point in October--

J: So anyway, what I'm really saying is that after these private discussions were launched, the substantive talks were in that venue, and the formal meetings continued, but they were totally sterile speech-making.

G: In other words, you've just got more work to do. You can't just make the speeches. You've got to make speeches in the daytime and then have your meetings in the evenings, I suppose.

J: In these circumstances and with this problem and with the personalities involved and so on, it is perhaps the only way. It isn't a universal for all negotiations.

G: In October, when things began to move a little bit back and forth, and Thieu apparently agreed with the formula that LBJ had come up with, and then went back on it--at least, that's the reading that most people give, is that--

J: Yes, I think that's right.

G: Were you, in Paris, being kept abreast of those developments?

J: Yes.

G: At one point, as I recall, Mr. Vance got extremely angry at the South Vietnamese because, in his view, he figured they had reneged on [the] agreement. Did you talk about that?

J: Yes, I think that's right. I mean, that's my memory, that he really got irritated with them, but I don't remember what the issue was. I mean, it was this business of we thought they were going along, and suddenly, they weren't going along. But to be more specific about that, I really would have to read the record and refresh my memory in some fashion.

G: This, of course, ties in with the semi-famous Madame Chennault affair. Do you have any insights into that at all? She is supposed to have gone to the South Vietnamese Embassy to encourage them not to accept a settlement, because if they did not, presumably Nixon would be elected, and they would get a much better deal with Nixon as president than they would with Humphrey as president.

J: Yes, I don't--my memory of that is that she didn't go through the embassy. She was dealing with the government in Saigon, and I don't

know what channels were used or anything, but I remember the incident quite well. She was pushing very hard on the Vietnamese--my impression was that it was Saigon rather than the embassy, but it may have been both--to, just as you said, [persuade them that] if Nixon were elected, South Vietnam would get a much better deal, and therefore, hold out.

G: How was all this reflected through the Vietnamese in Paris? Presumably that was where you were getting your information on their stance. Could you see this waffling effect?

J: I don't remember the time frame very well, but I do remember that the South Vietnamese were taking a much harder stand than we were. I did not, at that precise moment, know about this other business. I learned about it later, I think when I went back to Washington on a trip. But no, you could see that they were being tough. I thought that their toughness was fully justified, and that if I had been in their boots and the fate of my country was at stake, and if I felt that my ally was being a bit soft, I think I would have been tough, too. So I didn't tend to blame the South Vietnamese a hell of a lot. I think also, at that point, Harriman and Vance and everyone concerned, Lyndon Johnson and so on, wanted a settlement so desperately that one could get the impression they were being a little soft, and being a bit tough on the South Vietnamese.

Again, as I say, I would like to review that record before committing myself to any of these judgments. I'm just giving you sort of raw reflections and vague memories and so on. But the Chennault thing was a real bombshell, and it irritated President Johnson incredibly.

G: Did you talk to him about that?

J: Yes, and he was profane in discussing it and so on. He just thought it was so outrageous he could hardly hold himself back, but he did not use it politically.

G: Did he think that Nixon was behind it?

J: (Pause) I don't really know. I don't remember.

G: That's a good answer, actually.

J: I think he was ambivalent about that.

G: Yes.

J: He was certain that Agnew was involved, for a very good reason.

G: Did he tell you what he had done about putting a stop to these proceedings?

J: No, no. He told me later.

G: What did he tell you?

J: I don't remember. (Laughter)

G: Well, at least you didn't say, "I'm not going to get into that." (Laughter) How much pressure was there on you gentlemen in Paris to get an agreement before the election?

J: I don't recall any great pressure. I don't think that Lyndon Johnson thought about these negotiations as having great political advantage. I think he would have been happy to have had an agreement and to have ended the war on his watch, as part of his record, but he never pushed--you know, I never remember any message or communication of any kind urging that we get something by the first of November, whenever. Also, I remember vaguely in the midst of all this, and it must have been about October, Hubert Humphrey making some kind of a statement--

Tape 1 of 1, Side 2

J: [inaudible] . . . it would have brought back a letter from--

G: You're probably thinking about Humphrey's Salt Lake City speech, which gave the appearance, at least, that he was moving away from LBJ's position--or at least that he was going to be independent on Vietnam.

J: I don't find Mrs. Chennault's name in this index here.

G: You're looking at the index to ***The Vantage Point***? Mrs. Chennault is not there; you're right. Why do you find that interesting?

J: Because when I was working on the book I remember our talking about it--(Laughter)--and I think at some point he said, "Oh, let's drop that subject. Jesus Christ." (Laughter)

G: Someone has suggested that--and this is plausible, but there's no evidence--that if indeed Nixon was behind it, that Lyndon Johnson did not want to know about it, for obvious reasons, because Nixon was now president of the United States.

J: Yes. Yes. (Inaudible)

G: Why was he sure that Agnew knew something? Do you remember that?

J: Yes. I'll tell you later. (Laughter)

G: That's even better than "I don't know."

Of course, an agreement was finally reached, and as it turned out it was just in time for the election, and although there is still speculation on whether that came too late to put Humphrey over the top or not, but--

J: What was the agreement?

G: Well, there was going to be complete cessation of bombing, for one thing.

J: Oh, yes. (Laughter) Yes, that's right. What were they going to do?

G: Well, I'm not sure that they, in fact, did anything, and for the life of me at the moment, I can't tell you what they promised to do. I think that--

J: No, No, I--

G: --they dropped their demands that we get rid of Thieu. Wasn't that it?

J: Well, that could be.

G: I think that's what the agreement was.

J: That's a great concession [with irony. Ed.].

G: Yes, I think that is what it was. They dropped that, and we agreed to stop the bombing. You say that General Seignious was by that time the military representative?

J: Yes. Yes.

G: What did he think of that concession, do you recall? Presumably, he would have been the man on the spot with an opinion.

J: I don't remember. I don't remember. In any case, I think George ought to speak for himself, but I don't--God, it's so long ago. I don't know whether you have this problem with memory, but especially when you're--of course, you've been living with this subject for a long time, so if I say more than--

G: I would have furnished you with some documents, but we don't have very much that's open on this particular topic.

J: Yes. Yes.

G: Stuff is being processed all the time, but I couldn't give you very much at this time that would help you refresh your memory.

J: Yes.

G: In any case, I suspect a lot of the papers that (inaudible).

J: Well, if I read through this, I suppose it would trigger some things.

G: Meaning ***The Vantage Point***?

J: ***The Vantage Point***, and I don't know whether I've got any--I don't think I've got any papers from that time, but I may. I've got eight boxes over there that have something in them, and I don't know--

G: On Vietnam?

J: Well, I don't know. I mean, my records over the years. They go back to Japan and the early 1950s. And I've got some chron files and so on and so on, but there may be. I don't know. I must check that; I must check that. I know that I--I'm working on Korea now, and I opened up one of those boxes, and I got a whole stack of stories that I had written from Korea, which really brought back a lot of memories for me, and among other things, told me where I was at certain times, which I had just forgotten completely. I mean, I had only the vaguest memories and so on. Reading the stories recalled this and that, so I knew where I was. I don't know whether I've got anything from Paris or not, but I could dig it out, take a look.

G: You came back when? In January, you said.

J: It was either January or early February. The new administration came in, and Lodge was appointed to replace Harriman, and Harriman left early. I think Harriman left in December, and Vance ran the show, and then Vance and I left [at] either the end of January or early February, and then Habib stayed on. And I guess Seignious stayed on. I don't know about that.

G: General Ewell went at one time. I think maybe it may have been in 1970, though.

J: Well, I think he replaced Seignious, but I don't remember what the dates were. But anyway, Habib and Seignious were sort of the continuation, and Habib had known Lodge well earlier, so there was no problem there, and so he continued as the principal political officer under the Lodge regime. Of course, the whole goddamned thing didn't get anywhere at all in any significant way until Henry Kissinger got involved and began talking privately to them and reached an agreement, and the bottom fell out of everything--to put it succinctly.

G: Who took your duties over in Paris when you left?

J: Harold Kaplan, who was my deputy and then became spokesman.

G: Oh, well, you didn't have any problem with having to brief him or read him into the situation or anything of that sort?

J: No, no. He had worked for me over there for, oh, six months, I guess, so he was fully clued in, and--

G: So you came back to do what? What did you--?

J: I came back to go down to Austin, Texas and help President Johnson get his foreign policy papers organized and to write ***The Vantage Point***. I wrote maybe a third of that, and that was in 1969-1970. I have only the vaguest recollection of that. I mean--

G: Well, that's a way a newspaperman operates, isn't it? He--

J: Well, it seems to me that over the years I've always been involved in so many things, and I've got so many irons in the fire, and I'm working on some project and so on and so on, and the ones in the past just sort of disappear. (Laughter)

G: You shovel them out, so you can make some room for more.

J: Yes. It's like studying Japanese writing, you know. After a certain point, [for] every new character you learn you forget one. When the bucket gets full--

G: What kind of a deadline were you racing to meet in writing ***The Vantage Point***?

J: I don't we were rushing to meet a deadline, except the kind of a deadline that is imposed by an imperious, demanding son of a bitch who wants you to finish this thing yesterday. (Laughter)

G: You and who? Walt Rostow? Did he work on it as well?

J: Walt worked a fair amount on it. Walt and I really did the foreign policy part.

G: I see.

J: All the foreign policy stuff. Bob Hardesty, and Harry Middleton, and--what's that little poopsie from Harvard, who wrote the book about Johnson?

G: Oh, Doris Kearns?

J: Doris Kearns. They worked on the domestic part of the book, although she didn't do that much. Bob Hardesty and Harry Middleton did most of the work on the domestic side.

G: How was LBJ to work for, "post-pres"? You said he was imperious and impatient.

J: I enjoyed every minute of it. I thought he was one of the most fascinating men I had ever met, and so I found working for him perfectly fine and damned interesting, and I learned something every day, and--I don't know. I mean, I've heard all of the stories about how he

mistreated so many people, and I am sure they're true. He never mistreated me, maybe because he knew that if he had I'd have walked out the next day. (Laughter)

G: Did he have trouble decompressing when he went back to the river?

J: I think he did. Yes. Yes. And you know, those old habits die hard, and a guy who has spent all those years on the telephone, making policy, and so on and so on, finds it very hard to just relax and read a good book, and as you know, Lyndon Johnson was not a great reader. He was a voracious reader of official documents, but he never curled up under the old oak tree reading a book of poetry or a good novel. And so those habits died hard. Well, it ended up with him getting on the phone just as many times, but talking to the Ranch foreman, and to the banker in Austin, and to old friends, and so on and so on; that same compulsion, but not dealing with the shape of the world.

End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview IV

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