INTERVIEWEE: GEORGE MC GHEE

INTERVIEWER: PAIGE MULHOLLAN

July 1, 1969

M: We might begin by just identifying you, sir. You're George McGhee, and throughout the Johnson Administration you served as Ambassador to the Federal Republic of Germany, and then as Ambassador-at-Large. When did you come back from Germany.

Mc: I came back in May of last year.

M: May of 1968?

Mc: Yes.

M: And then served as Ambassador-at-Large through the end of the administration, and then came over to the Urban Coalition.

Mc: Yes. I stayed on two or three months to finish up some work I was doing and then came to the Urban Coalition. I donate my services here on a part-time basis.

M: You are, of course, with the Texas nativity. The obvious suspicion in connection with Mr. Johnson is cronyism. Did you know Mr. Johnson back in the old days very well--say, 1930's and '40's?

Mc: I've known him since the early '40's but not that well. I first met him when I came up to join the War Production Board before Pearl Harbor. As a matter of fact, my first contact was with Mrs. Johnson. He was overseas on naval duty, she was running his office, and I was in the War Production Board. Knowing I was from Texas, she would call me and try to get war contracts for Texans and plants built in Texas. I talked with her on the phone many times before I actually met her. I was always greatly impressed

with how efficient she was in this particular activity.

M: Filling in while the congressman was gone to war. Then when he came back, did you form a rather close acquaintance after that?

Mc: We saw them occasionally socially in Texas groups. I assume we exchanged dinner parties maybe once a year--something like that.

M: But it was social and not policy?

Mc: Yes, that's correct. I was never deeply involved in politics myself. My work has always been in the executive end of the government.

M: You worked through the late '40's and into the '50's, of course, in foreign affairs, and much of that time you spent abroad. Did you ever have occasion to have contact with Mr. Johnson in his senatorial capacity, say, while you were Ambassador to Turkey, for example, or during that period?

Mc: No. I knew him socially in Washington, but had little or no real business with him.

M: When he became Vice President, you were very high in the State Department hierarchy, being in 1961 as, first, Policy Planning Council chief, and then later as Undersecretary for Political Affairs under Mr. Kennedy. Did Mr. Johnson take, that you could see, a very large role in foreign affairs as Vice President?

Mc: Yes. He was quite interested. Initially, there was the problem of keeping him informed and working him in on the foreign policy side. I was in touch with him at this time and was instrumental in getting an officer assigned to him.

M: A State Department officer.

Mc: Yes. We made arrangements to keep him informed on a regular basis on what was happening because it was a little difficult for him to

keep up. We assigned an officer to him who saw that he got reports and telegrams regularly. He took a great interest and was always glad to offer his services in particular missions.

M: I was going to say, he made a couple of rather well-publicized trips abroad. Did you have anything to do with either the one to Viet Nam or the one to Germany that he made as Vice President?

Mc: No.

M: Did he really master the details of the information that was being fed to him through this representative, or could you tell from where you were?

Mc: I didn't really have an opportunity to observe, but I'm sure from my experience with him that he would. He's a great reader and has tremendous interest in detail and masters his subjects thoroughly.

M: The only reason I dwell on that is because his critics have said that when he assumed the presidency he had this critical weakness, that he didn't know or care much about foreign affairs. You wouldn't think that was accurate, I take it?

Mc: No, I don't think that's the case.

M: What about meetings of critical importance during crisis situations? As far as you know, was Mr. Johnson included in those as Vice President, or was he generally not present?

Mc: No, he was present at those important crisis meetings. I was not always myself, but when I became Undersecretary I was in most of the meetings. As I recall meetings of the National Security Council or ad hoc meetings at the White House, he was usually there.

M: Did he participate actively, or was he sort of a silent observer-type, in your recollection?

Mc: He observed more than he participated. The President would frequently ask him his views, which case he would give it, and he occasionally volunteered. But as I recall he mainly observed.

M: You went to Germany at what time in 1963?

Mc: May of '63, one month before the visit of President Kennedy.

M: So you were there at the time of the assassination, and served in Germany through the transition?

Mc: Yes, I was in Germany five years.

M: A rather long stint for an ambassador actually.

Mc: Yes.

M: Can you comment on or compare the two administrations in regard to American policy toward the Federal Republic? Was there a change, a breaking-point between the Kennedy Administration and the Johnson one when it came in at the end of that year?

Mc: No. The basic policies that guided us, which is the support of NATO and the development of close relations with Germany as one of the more influential of the Western European members of NATO, didn't change. Germany changed somewhat during this period, and our policy toward Germany reflected these changes.

M: Internal changes in Germany?

Mc: Yes. In a sense, Germany overcame problems that remained from the war and sought to throw off the influence of our country, to become more independent in its actions.

M: And we adjusted to that change realistically?

Mc: Yes. The difference occurred with the departure from the chancellorship of Chancellor Erhard. He was very close to the United States; he depended on the United States. He publicly stated that he owed his

position in German political life to the United States. This, I think, was a little out of touch with the times in Germany. Germany is a proud country. It had fully recovered from the war and wanted to play a more independent role. When Kiesinger came in as Chancellor, he adopted an attitude of greater independence of us and more reliance on France.

M: Mr. Kennedy is alleged to have had a very high standing and prestige among the German people, particularly after his visit that was one of your first actions there. Did the fact that he had this high prestige among the German people make it very difficult for Mr. Johnson to deal with Germans when he came in?

Mc: Kennedy's visit to Germany in 1963 was the most successful visit of a head of state, I'm sure, that has ever been. He and the Germans developed a tremendous affinity for each other. This was not only true among the youth but all segments of the German population.

The visit to Berlin, which was climaxed by the speech in the Rathaus Square--the "Ichbinein Berliner." speech--was really one of the most moving demonstrations I've ever seen. The Germans admired his youth, his dedication, his intelligence, his charm, and we drew on this credit for a long time. The visit was so successful that it made our relations much closer.

Johnson never made a state visit to Germany as President of course. This was, in my judgment, a mistake. Had he come immediately after his election, when his stock was very high in this country and in the world, I think he would have made a very favorable personal impression on the Germans. I urged him to come.

M: That was the next question. You're doing well; you're anticipating.

Mc: I urged him strongly to come, basically to show an interest, to make a presence in Europe.

M: Did he give you some reason for not being able to do so?

Mc: Others advised him differently. Some people thought he shouldn't leave the country while the Vietnamese war was still going on. Others thought that perhaps his visit wouldn't compare favorably with that of President Kennedy. There were various contrary reasons presented to him. In any event, he didn't come, except for the funeral of Chancellor Adenauer.

M: That was his one visit and that was much later.

Mc: And that provided only limited opportunities for public appearances, or meetings with German officials. So he never really had a chance to make a personal impact on Germany.

M: That might be a good place to ask about the difference in access. Did your position as ambassador vis-a-vis the President change with the administrations? Did you have greater or less access to Mr. Johnson than you had had to President Kennedy?

Mc: I didn't, as ambassador, communicate directly with the President. Normally you communicate with the Secretary of State, and only in rare instances would an ambassador direct a message to the President. When I was in Washington, the President always received me, and I would report. This was true also in Kennedy's time.

M: No difference in that regard.

Mc: I assume that Johnson was a little more available to me as an old friend. I had not known Kennedy so well. But normally an ambassador from an important post returning to Washington would be received by the President.

M: Did your position as chief of the mission there change any? Did Mr. Johnson try to strengthen the role of the ambassador in regard to the other agencies, or was it pretty much the same?

Mc: No, I don't think there was any change in this.

M: Pretty much a continuation of the Kennedy period.

Mc: I personally don't think this has ever changed during the twenty-odd years I've been in the State Department. The ambassador always had adequate authority, and his position has always been made clear.

M: There've been frequent complaints by a great number of ambassadors at least that the agency or the military or various other agency people usurped the role of the ambassador around the world.

Mc: I've dealt with two posts that involved the military and the agency and the USIS on a very big scale, both in Turkey and in Germany, and I've never observed this to be a problem.

M: That obviously says something about your effectiveness, too, which means you were on top of the situation.

Mc: It is a problem you have to work out, and somewhat on a personal basis. But there's no real necessity for any conflict. The military have a right to appeal to Washington on an important matter, and if you see that you're at an impasse you just go to Washington.

M: That's the remedy.

Mc: There's no use in having any bad feelings about it. Let Washington decide. You make your recommendation; let them make theirs. But this is very rare. I recall very few incidences where this ever happened.

M: The most publicized early activity in the Johnson Administration in regard to Germany was what is generally referred to as his killing

the MLF. What role did you as ambassador play in that particular episode?

Mc: I opposed the MLF. I thought it was badly conceived, particularly since the British obviously were not willing to participate. They participated in the planning, in my judgment, only in order to try to kill it, because they were unalterably opposed to it. Without the British, it just wasn't possible.

M: What about the Germans?

Mc: Foreign Minister Schroeder was very much for it. I don't think Erhard was very enthusiastic, but he was for it.

But Schroeder faced quite a fight in Germany because there were people who opposed it. And the way we finally killed it was very embarrassing to Schroeder. We pulled the rug out from under him. It hurt him.

M: We did that more or less unilaterally without adequate consultations so far as you were concerned?

Mc: Yes. It was a leak to the press which finally killed it. It was done before we had consulted the Germans. It caught Schroeder by surprise.

M: And this hurt him politically?

Mc: Yes, it hurt him politically.

M: What about Erhard? There were two meetings with Mr. Johnson and Erhard during this general period in the summer of 1964 and then at the end of 1965. Were you present for either of those?

Mc: Yes, I was always present at meetings between the President and Erhard.

M: So you were present for both of them.

Mc: They would retire during the course of these meetings for discussions

that no one else participated in except the translator. We usually found out, of course, what had occurred.

M: The meeting at the ranch occasioned quite a lot of publicity because of its casual, allegedly undiplomatic nature. Did this type of thing bother Erhard? Did he react negatively to that type of treatment?

Mc: No. Erhard rather liked this, but I think it was not very wise in that it appeared to indicate a degree of intimacy which different people perhaps thought went too far. The Germans are very dignified people. I think the ranch is a very congenial place to have a meeting, but the impression given to Germans is that it's a little too intimate for their Chancellor.

M: What about Mr. Johnson's own personal style as a diplomat? Was he effective, or did that style sort of put off the dignified--?

Mc: No, I think he was very effective. He mastered his material, and he presented his case very forcefully. And he always made a great effort to cultivate a personal friendship with the people involved.

M: Where did the MLF business stand at the time of that ranch meeting? Was Mr. Johnson still, as far as he was telling Erhard, willing to go along at that point?

Mc: I frankly don't recall precisely what was said with respect to the MLF at the time of the ranch meeting.

M: Was not that the chief subject of that particular talk?

Mc: It was discussed, but I just don't recall what was said. Do you know the relative dates of the meeting and the final denouement of the MLF?

M: The meeting was in the summer, and the final killing of the MLF --actually, Of course they dragged it through the ANF thing for another year. But I think in November or so of '64, was the news leak you mentioned, so it was three or four months thereafter.

Mc: There was no issue between us on the MLF, at that time since both of us favored it, so I don't believe it would have been the major subject of discussion. We were waiting to try to work it out with the British and the other Europeans.

M: Then Mr. Erhard came back in December 1965. Almost nothing was published about that meeting. What was the occasion for that primarily?

Mc: The principal subject under discussion was the offset arrangement.

M: As early as 1965. The McNamara--von Hassel agreement was in late 1964, is that correct--the first major agreement for German purchases?

Mc: The first agreement was much earlier. It was negotiated by Gilpatrick.

M: That was in the Kennedy Administration.

Mc: That's right, the first offset agreement. There was a renewal of the early agreement by Von Hassel and McNamara along very similar lines.

M: But it had reached a fairly definite problem stage by late '65 when Erhard came back here. Is that correct?

Mc: That was Erhard's last visit.

M: Yes.

Mc: Yes. Erhard was in bad trouble. He had left his budget get out of hand. He asked for time in meeting his obligations under the offset.

M: How brutal did the United States have to get?

Mc: We didn't grant his request.

M: We held him to the earlier agreement.

Mc: That's right.

M: And this was in late 1965. Then what was the occasion for the McCloy mission which came a little over a year later, early 1967?

Mc: That was quite a separate affair. This was to provide a basis for a limited withdrawal of U. S. troops.

M: From the NATO--?

Mc: Yes.

M: But it didn't have as much to do with the offset problem?

Mc: No. The solution to the offset had come in the intervening period through an agreement on the part of the Germans to buy medium term U. S. securities. There was no definitive agreement, but from year to year, following the change in government, the Germans would meet the offset to a large extent--not quite in its entirety--by purchasing an agreed amount of medium term securities.

Their arms purchases continued, but at a lower level. They ordered two to three hundred million dollars' worth, whereas our total foreign exchange drain was in the order of 850 to 900 million.

M: But they were meeting the dollar difference, they just weren't doing it by arms purchases.

Mc: That's correct. Of course, this was not very satisfactory on a long-term basis because the loans had to be repaid. On the other hand the Germans were committed not to demanding gold, so the expection was that they'd be "turned over," as in fact they "turn over" when they come due the shorter term Roosa bonds that they hold now.

M: What about the effect politically on Mr. Erhard? Is it true, in your opinion, that as reported here this agreement did bring down the Erhard government?

Mc: No. He was brought down by the cumulative effect of a series of affairs. This was one. It did hurt him, there's no question, but he would probably have come down anyway.

M: He would have fallen without our pressure here.

Mc: Yes. He gradually lost all supporters. In the end there was almost no one

who really thought he should continue to be Chancellor.

M: Did we give adequate consideration to the possible effect it would have on his domestic political situation when we did decline to go along with his request in late-'65?

Mc: This was considered, of course. Obviously, I brought this to the attention of the President. In my personal judgment there was not adequate consideration given to this aspect in the final decision.

M: To Erhard's position.

Mc: Yes.

M: And, given his closeness to us, it might have been argued that we should have been gentler toward him.

Mc: Yes, this was my own judgment, and this is what I recommended. The influence of the Secretary of the Treasury and the Secretary of Defense was greater, and they prevailed.

M: Do you know if the President himself had a personal viewpoint on this matter that he pushed for or followed ultimately?

Mc: He accepted the view of the Secretary of Treasury and the Secretary of Defense.

M: What about the McCloy mission that came in early '67? You say this was to negotiate for lowering of the troop level. Is that a little unusual, to send a special mission for something of that nature instead of using the normal diplomatic channels that exist?

Mc: No, it was a trilateral affair. Discussions had to take place in England and in this country and in Germany. It would have been difficult for an ambassador to do that. It was difficult for me as Ambassador to Bonn to go to London and meet with the British officials. That would have usurped the prerogatives of our ambassador in London.

M: So you weren't bothered by the McCloy mission?

Mc: Not at all, no. I had plenty to do.

M: Yes, I'm sure. What was the German reaction to that mission?

Mc: They were skeptical about it at first because they had consistently been allergic to any threat of reduction of our forces. To them it looked like the beginning of the end of our strong support for NATO and might lead to further withdrawals and leave Germany defenseless. But the numbers agreed upon--about 35,000--was in the end acceptable to the Germans. They understood our problem. We had to make a gesture to those, such as Senator Mansfield, who were demanding even more drastic withdrawals in an attempt to bring down our balance of payments drain, which the Germans were not fully meeting. The British had the same problem.

M: So the alternative would have been to increase their offset, which they would have found less tasteful than the 35,000 withdrawal?

Mc: We never put it to them that way. We wouldn't have been able to maintain the existing troops under the situation then existing merely by getting more offset.

M: The political pressure was strong enough--

Mc: The political pressure was for a token withdrawal. The President was always very strong on maintaining troop levels. This was a fixed policy of his. He resisted the pressures for withdrawal as much as he could. I think he finally agreed to the 35,000 reduction because he felt the political pressure--not just of Senator Mansfield--but the entire Senate Democratic policy committees. I think he felt that he had to make this small gesture--because we took them back after Czechoslovakia, and they're still there.

M: Right. A little over a year now. What about the Nonproliferation

Treaty? The press commented at the time that was in the process of being signed that the Western allies, and particularly Germany, thought that the United States had not adequately kept them informed and consulted about negotiations on that.

Mc: There's some truth to the German accusation. The fact is that we did discuss this matter with the Russians before we discussed it with our allies. Our explanation was that this is a matter we've been discussing with the Soviets for years, and had always ended in an impasse. There was nothing really to discuss until the Russians indicated they were willing to make new concessions, which they hadn't previously. As soon as the Russians gave this indication, then we did talk with our allies.

M: They didn't feel that we had split up the business with the Russians and left them clear out?

Mc: Many Germans felt this. Many Germans--wrongly, of course--suspected that we had made a deal with the Soviets behind their backs; that they'd help us in Viet Nam if we would get Germany to sign the Nonproliferation Treaty. This is not the case, but this is a widely held view in Germany today.

M: Did any of them think that we had traded off the MLF for the Nonproliferation Treaty?

Mc: No. There was quite a gap in time between these two things.

M: Yes.

Mc: The MLF was pretty well forgotten by the time the Nonproliferation Treaty came along.

M: But they did associate it with perhaps some Viet Nam difficulties.

Mc: I don't think anybody in Germany was particularly unhappy about the

departure of MLF except Schroeder and some of the leaders. Germans generally didn't really understand it. They knew that it would exacerbate their relations with France, and they knew that the Russians would be greatly concerned about it. It worried a lot of Germans.

M: Did Mr. Johnson ever have a distinct point of view regarding the German-French agreement--relations?

Mc: Yes, one of great tolerance.

M: Tolerance for their increasing friendship?

Mc: Yes. This is the policy I urged. I urged that we welcome this rapprochement and not be concerned that it would be at our expense.

M: And Mr. Johnson bought that?

Mc: Yes. He was always very careful, as you know, of everything he said about De Gaulle. He was similarly very tolerant of the German-French relationship, which is what I strongly recommended.

M: Was there strong pressure on the other side of that argument--that is, to discourage the German-French rapprochement?

Mc: There were various elements in our own political life that resented De Gaulle and disliked the idea of Germany having a close relationship with De Gaulle. This hurt Kiesinger's image a little in this country.

M: What about Mr. Johnson and Kiesinger? There were also stories at the time that Mr. Kiesinger came to office about bad personal relations between Mr. Johnson and Mr. Kiesinger.

Mc: No, that's not the case to my knowledge.

M: They got along well personally in the way Mr. Johnson would like with a chief of state?

Mc: Yes. They were a little hesitant in meeting with each other, and both

were cautious in making the first gesture. On Kiesinger's part, this was because he had taken a definite turn toward the French. He wanted to readjust the balance in his relationships with us. He pursued a policy of deliberate coolness, indifference. That was before they met, so there was nothing personal about it.

M: So it couldn't have been personal.

Mc: It was entirely a question of policy. Johnson didn't want to get ahead of him. If Kiesinger wanted to take this turn toward the French, and indicated a little reluctance to visit Washington, Johnson didn't want to be in a position of forcing it on him. So he was also a little reluctant. The delay in their meeting gradually became interpreted as a difference, but this was never true on a personal basis. They got along very well from the first time they met.

M: Virtually all the so-called analysts that talk about the cold war issues in Europe point to the German problem as <u>the</u> problem that must be settled before any real movement can take place. Did Mr. Johnson give it that kind of high priority so far as you could tell?

Mc: There's no question that Johnson attached full importance to Germany. You may recall that when he was Vice President he took the initiative in inviting Adenauer to his ranch. I went down. I was in the party. This wasn't part of his duties. I think it reflected his interest in Germany.

M: This was on his own initiative so far as you know?

Mc: Yes. When he was Vice President. He didn't have to do that. Here was a Chancellor who was visiting the President, and Johnson took him down to his ranch with all of his entourage--a very successful visit. Adenauer enjoyed it very much.

During the period he was President there was no opportunity for a solution to the German problem.

M: Was there a trial?

Mc: No.

M: Did we push Bonn toward, say, building bridges to East Germany?

Mc: No, we didn't need to push them. This was a policy that they accepted on their own. We encouraged them, yes.

M: We did encourage their doing so?

Mc: Yes.

M: How about recognition of the Oder-Neisse line, did we push that?

Mc: No, we didn't take a specific position on that.

M: Did we really do anything that might have led towards some kind of short-term action on reunification, or did we simply just stay out of that problem?

Mc: Everyone concluded at that time that no progress was possible on reunification. We would have welcomed any steps the Germans might have taken on their own towards recognition of the Oder-Neisse. We don't take a public position on this in deference to the German sensitivity and position. This is their problem. We've never wanted to get ahead of them. We always made it very clear that anything they wanted to do in this regard would meet with our disapproval. We made it very clear that Schroeder's policy of "movement," which was the first step, in which he established trade and cultural missions and agreements with Eastern European countries, we thought a very good step. But we weren't able to contribute because our relations with Eastern Europeans countries weren't good. As a matter of fact, German friendship with us was one of the limiting factors in their

policy of rapprochement with the East.

M: They couldn't take steps because of their friendship with us?

Mc: Yes. We are very suspect in Eastern Europe as a result of the Vietnamese war--but also because of many other factors, the fact that we don't grant most-favored-nation treatment to their trade; that we still have "captive nations" celebrations here. We don't have much influence in Eastern Europe.

The Germans are getting along much better on their own, which is why we didn't want to associate ourselves publicly with it because that would have hurt the Germans. But privately we made it clear to the Germans that we approved of what they were doing and not to hold back on our account. They mustn't fear that we thought they were going too fast, getting ahead.

M: You mentioned the Vietnamese issue in regard to the East Europeans. What about in regard to the Federal Republic--a lot of Viet Nam fallout that perhaps didn't become public?

Mc: It hurt us with the students, but it didn't hurt us with the great majority of Germans. The Germans never really understood the issue very clearly. They'd had no real experience in that part of the world. They mainly regretted us having gotten involved in it in that it might force us to decrease our interest in European defense.

They thought it was hurting us, and they regretted that. They wished we'd just get it over with. They wouldn't have cared too much how we did it.

M: The idea of making a settlement there that was some kind of victory in order to make our commitments credible in Germany was not--

Mc: They wanted us to win. Otherwise, they felt our position in defense

of Berlin and NATO, and Germany would not have been credible, as you say.

M: They did believe there was a relation then?

Mc: Yes, in that they didn't want us to capitulate in Viet Nam, because that would decrease our credibility in Western Europe. On the other hand, they didn't want us to get too deeply involved so that we wasted our resources there, because they thought Europe is the most important.

M: Do you think we were rather badly distracted--the administration was rather badly distracted from European problems by Viet Nam by the time you left, say, in '68?

Mc: Not as much as we were credited with being. We kept our forces there, except for this 35,000. We were very active in the NATO. We had more ideas than anybody about improving the NATO. We named good military representatives and ambassadors, and the President spent as much time as any President ever did receiving European visitors. I know Johnson used to say that he saw more Germans than everybody else put together. He was always accessible to them. But the Europeans naturally knew that the President and other leaders were devoting a lot of their attention to Viet Nam.

M: You mentioned that the administration appointed good ambassadors and good military representatives and so on. What about the people who advised Mr. Johnson in Washington primarily on European affairs? Did he have people who were up-to-date in current realities in German affairs, for example, on the White House staff and on the German desk at the State Department, for example?

Mc: Yes, we had, I think, very good Assistant Secretaries of State during

this period dealing with European affairs. Of course, Rusk himself was the principal adviser. Rusk was very knowledgeable about Germany and NATO.

M: And Rusk was not distracted too greatly by Viet Nam to give--?

Mc: He had time for both. No, I don't think there was. I think this was more apparent than real.

M: I've seen the figure 80 percent of Rusk's time dominated by Viet Nam. Do you think that would be an exaggeration?

Mc: I just don't know. I wasn't here during that period.

M: Are there other issues in regard to Germany in which there was direct presidential action while you were there that we haven't had occasion to mention that I might not know about, where Mr. Johnson personally was involved in some way?

Mc: I think we've covered most of them. The MLF and the NPT and the level of troops and the offset. These were the principal issues that arose during this period.

M: When you came back in May of 1968, what was your position or job for the balance of the administration?

Mc: I was ambassador-at-large. Cabot Lodge and I had merely traded jobs. This is an undefined job. I worked directly for the Secretary. During this period I had no contacts with the President.

M: I was thinking particularly about the Czechoslovakian incident in August [1968].

Mc: No. I concerned myself with this but in recommendations directed to the secretary. To the extent to which my memos were forwarded to the White House or incorporated in other Department memos that went to the White House, I don't really know.

M: Then you weren't in meetings at which the President took part on that particular subject?

Mc: No. The ambassador-at-large is not a part of the line organization and doesn't normally participate in meetings of this type.

M: Did you renew your social acquaintance with the President and Mrs. Johnson after you returned?

Mc: I think we saw them once or twice.

M: But again in a sort of a formal capacity, not close--?

Mc: In large, White House receptions. We went to the White House for dinner.

M: There's a question that doesn't have much directly to do with Mr. Johnson, but I think it may be important a long time from now, and that's of course what we're trying to anticipate. You were director of American aid to Greece and Turkey in a very critical time--1947-1949. What is sometimes called the New Left historians are now rewriting that era and emphasizing what they think was a great deal of American provocation at the early stage in the cold war. Do you think they had anything to say, based on your knowledge? Is there a rule for revision here of any kind?

Mc: No, I don't really think so. This was at the time a very serious problem. The attitude in this country was quite different then from what it later became. It wasn't so anti-communist. Our Greek-Turkish aid program, the Truman Doctrine, was accused by so-called leftist liberals in this country of being a reactionary policy of supporting a monarcho-fascist regime against the wishes of the Greek people. We had very considerable opposition in the country.

M: This was the Wallace candidacy--

Mc: Yes. Very sincere writers were writing against this whole effort. But I thought that this had been clearly revealed in subsequent history the nature of this Greek guerrilla war. It was obviously completely inspired and supported by the Soviet Union and the world communist mechanism. It involved only about 40 or 50,000 hardcore people, scarcely representative of a country of--what--Greece has five or six million people, I guess. And the idea that Greece today would be better off behind the Iron Curtain, as another Bulgaria than she is as a free country--granted she at the moment doesn't have a complete democracy, nevertheless she's quite independent of foreign influence and control. But the Greeks are the most democratic people in the world. The idea that they would have been happier as a Bulgaria, which is what would have happened to them had we not gone to their aid, is just fantastic.

M: So what you think these people now are doing is actually reviving what was being written by similar minded people at the time?

Mc: This was the line then. It's curious. I hadn't heard of its revival.

M: Oh my, yes.

Mc: Who is writing in this vein?

M: There's a number. David Horowitz. There's a new book by Gabriel Kolko on wartime diplomacy. Horowitz-one called the American Colossus I think is the name of it. It's very big on this Greek and Turkey being a very provocative--. I am being curious because if this becomes a historical school of thought, the comments of people like yourself who were on the scene at that time may be very important to get on the record. So although it doesn't have anything to do with Mr. Johnson, I'm glad that you're willing to comment on it.

Mc: I'm clear in my own mind that this was one of the wisest policies we ever pursued. We didn't spend much money, and we won. The Greek-Turkish aid program only cost $700,000,000 in two appropriations over two years, and it later merged with the Marshall Plan.

M: Right. But it was separate at the time.

Mc: We never lost a life. We were only advisers. We had 3 or 4,000 military advisers in the end--and quite a large economic aid mission, but it was a very cheap victory. But the main reason we won is because Mr. Tito defected and dried up the supply lines to the guerrillas. Until then we weren't doing too well militarily. It was a very difficult military operation.

M: Until Mr. Tito declared his independence of the Soviet line?

Mc: That's right.

M: You've got history at your mercy here. Are there any other areas of your association with Mr. Johnson, or anything else that you think is important to recall?

Mc: One could go on forever, but I think these are the principal things.

M: There's no reason to duplicate things you've written, which you've done somewhat widely during your State Department activity. Okay, thank you so much for your patience this morning.

Mc: Thank you.

GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION
NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS SERVICE

Gift of Personal Statement

By George C. McGhee

to the

Lyndon Baines Johnson Library

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

1. Title to the material transferred hereunder will pass to the United States as of the date of the delivery of this material into the physical custody of the Archivist of the United States.

2. It is the donor's wish to make the material donated to the United States of America by the terms of the instrument available for research in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library. At the same time, it is his wish to guard against the possibility of its contents being used to embarrass, damage, injure, or harass anyone. Therefore, in pursuance of this objective, and in accordance with the provisions of Sec. 507 (f) (3) of the Federal Property and Administrative Services Act of 1949, as amended (44 U.S.C. 397) this material shall not, for a period of 5 years or until 1 year after the death of the donor, whichever occurs earlier, be available for examination by anyone except persons who have received my express written authorization to examine it.

3. A revision of this stipulation governing access to the material for research may be entered into between the donor and the Archivist of the United States, or his designee, if it appears desirable.

4. The material donated to the United States pursuant to the foregoing shall be kept intact permanently in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.

5. The donor retains to himself during his lifetime all literary property rights in the material donated to the United States of America by the terms of this instrument. After the death of the donor, the aforesaid literary property rights will pass to the United States of America.

Signed G. C. McGhee

Date Aug. 2, 1971

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

Date March 24, 1975