INTERVIEWEE: KARL E. MUNDT

Interviewer: Paige E. Mulhollan

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M: Your career is remarkably parallel in some ways to Mr. Johnson's, as you may have noticed before. Both of you have backgrounds in education, and you came to the House just after he did, I believe, and went to the Senate at the same time. Do you recall the first meeting or first contact that you had with Mr. Johnson?

Mundt: Not precisely. I'm sure it was when we were both members of the same Congress back there about 30 years ago. And I presume that we met as you usually meet your colleagues in a place like that. Casually, walking over to the Chamber some day or sitting around the cloakrooms, or something of that nature. We never served on the same Committees of the House together, although we did in the Senate. So I can't pinpoint it as I would if I had met him at a formal Committee meeting.

M: Do you recall anything about Mr. Johnson's service as a Congressman, anything striking about his activities in the House, or anything that he was particularly involved in?

Mundt: No, in those days, of course, it was in the Roosevelt era, and he was a very strong supporter of FDR. And that was probably the most quote liberal period unquote of his

political metamorphosis. Because in those days he was a pretty ardent and unwavering supporter of whatever public policies were espoused by FDR. Except if on occasion any of them might be injurious to what were considered basic Texas interests, of course, he would vote Texan.

M: When you were in the same Senate, did you develop any special personal relationship with him at that time?

Mundt: Yes, we served on committees together. At different times. We served on the Building Commission, for example. It built this new Senate Office Building in which we're transcribing these comments. And we have our names displayed down in the entrance ways to the building on the same bronze tablet as being members of that Commission. More especially, though, for a good portion of his period of service as Majority Leader, he was primarily the leader of a coalition in the Senate. Because his own party was split ideologically in such a way that he was unable to bring complete unity among the Democrats for the positions which he espoused as a leader, or sometimes the policy sent down from the White House. So in a sense he was a leader not only of the Democratic Party, but as a leader of the Senate he had to rely on a group of Republican Senators who normally shared a particular point of view which he was representing. I was in that group, and our numbers would vary up and down from the general area of 15 to 20, depending on issues.

M: Who were some of the other Republican names that he worked closely with?

Mundt: Well, Senator Curtis of Nebraska, [Carl T. Curtis, R.-Neb.], then Senator Dworshak [Henry C. Dworshak,R-Idaho] who has since passed away of Idaho, Senator Schoeppel [Andrew F. Schoeppel], who has since passed away, of Kansas, Senator Cotton [Norris Cotton] of New Hampshire, and his then associate, Senator [Styles] Bridges of New Hampshire. I believe Senator [Roman] Hruska, I'm not just sure when Senator Hruska came over to the Senate side, however, but I think he was there for part of that time, and Senator [Milton R.] Young of North Dakota, people of that general character.

M: How did Mr. Johnson work? What were his methods of leading the Senate?

Mundt: He would never call us together, well, let's say, seldom called us together. The Democratic and Republican phalanxes as what had to be a Majority point of view; he would work individually with them, that is, he would come over and talk with us individually, or sometimes in groups, but at least we wouldn't be in the same meeting place with the Democrats that would be working together. He was kind of a liaison officer between the two.

M: Did he engage in the so-called Johnson treatment? Arm-twisting at that time, or--?

Mundt: Well, he'd do it when it was appropriate, but he relied primarily on the fact that there was a general meeting of

minds, which he was enough of a professional to realize existed there. And so he would call on for consultation the people whom he had reason to suspect would vote in a certain way on a certain issue. He didn't have to make so many converts, if you could convince the two groups that it was in their mutual interest. Sometimes, he would do a little arm-twisting, but not so much on the Republican side. If he did it, it was more to get enough Democrats added to the Republican forces to win the day.

M: What were his relations with President Eisenhower?

Mundt: Pretty good. He was fairly objective on most of the issues. Now, when it came to something which was a partisan issue, which it looked like to him would give advantage to Republicans, or to the Republican Administration politically, he would react like most Democrats do, and be against it and wouldn't try to put together very often a coaltion to support it unless it was on a matter of foreign policy. He was pretty good in supporting the Eisenhower-Dulles foreign policy. But if it was a domestic issue, unless it was some issue, for example, like the depletion allowance, where he was vitally interested as a Texan and even though he felt it might give Eisenhower a little political gain, he was enough interested in the Texas position and enough interested because of his own personal convictions in the maintenance of the depletion allowance so that he would work very hard to get something like that put

across with his point of view, even though it might give some political dividend to Republicans.

M: Some of his Democratic critics, as I recall in those days, like Paul Butler, for example, used to say that Mr. Johnson made divided government work by surrendering to President Eisenhower. Do you think that's accurate?

Mundt: I think you must mean Paul Douglas.

M: Well, Mr. Butler was Chairman of the Democratic National...

Mundt: Oh, I see, I thought you were talking about something [else]. Right. Well, I wouldn't say it was exactly surrender. He would try to exact his pound of flesh. He would try to get a quid pro quo, but he changed surrender to cooperation with Eisenhower. I would say that Paul Butler was reasonably accurate.

M: What would you say was the overriding motivation of Mr. Johnson's activities as Senate Leader? Was it partisanship, or personal opportunism, or just what?

Mundt: He was fairly partisan. I've given the instances where he was not partisan, and the type of examples I gave you could with careful study be expanded beyond certainly the tax features that I mentioned. He was at that time just as he was in the House at the peak of his liberal career; he was at the peak of his conservative career. When he was Majority Leader, he was a fairly consistent conservative, and so he was keeping himself in conformity with what was at that time his prevailing political

concept and philosophy. We all felt, most of us who knew him felt, that he had his eyes on the White House for a long time before the opportunity came. And he certainly was not adverse to taking any action that would tend to move him in that direction.

M: One of the things your name is most closely connected with dates back to your House of Representatives' days, the Mundt-Nixon Proposal in 1948.

Mundt: Correct.

M: Do you recall Mr. Johnson ever playing any part in that issue one way or the other?

Mundt: No, I do not, except I think he voted for it. I think he supported it.

M: In the House or in the Senate later?

Mundt: In the Senate. We were both in the Senate at the time it finally got voted on over here. It had been the target of a filibuster led by some of the "liberal" members of the Senate, and if memory serves me correctly, and I think it does, he voted with those of us who were in favor of overriding the Presidential veto. Truman vetoed it, we had to pass it over his veto, and he was among those who resisted the attempt of the filibusterers to kill it by sustained debate.

M: Later on when you were so active in the Subcommittee on Investigations, which is associated with Mr. McCarthy's name [Sen. Joseph R. McCarthy, R-Wisc], did Mr. Johnson ever play--

I believe he must have been Minority Leader by the time the condemnation proceeding occurred.

Mundt: He voted for the condemnation of Joe McCarthy. He was not one of the active Senators who led the fight against McCarthy. In fact it was a strict Party vote, as far as the Democrats were concerned. McCarthy didn't get a single Democratic vote. So he voted with his teammates, but he was not what you would call active among the anti-McCarthyites. As a matter of fact, he and Joe McCarthy were fairly good personal friends and frequently prior to that. You asked for names of those who worked in the coalition--Joe McCarthy would be in that coalition.

M: Another program that you are very closely associated with that I'm sure you are quite proud of is the United States Information Agency, which I believe dates from the Smith-Mundt Act of 1948?

Mundt: That's correct.

M: Did Mr. Johnson ever play any role in that measure?

Mundt: That passed while I was still in the House. The Mundt name is the House name, the Smith name is named after Senator H. Alexander Smith of New Jersey, so I cannot be sure just what role he played. I know this; it was difficult to get it through the Senate and it was on the verge of dropping dead for failure to have ardent support, until we formed what was known as the Smith-Mundt Overseas Committee and took an overseas tour--Senators and House members together. We issued a unanimous report which was so strongly in support of these

projects that after that the lethargy disappeared, the opposition disappeared, and it passed, if I recall, without even a roll call in the Senate. So I would think you would have to answer that question by saying he was not a very ardent advocate of it, or he would have been able to get it out of Committee and get it on the floor without the necessity of that long, overseas trip which our Committee took. He certainly was not an opponent of it, or he would have had enough power maybe to prevent it or at least get a roll call when it passed. So I would say probably it had his passive approval; but I must say again, I was a House member, and I can't be sure.

M: In the so-called 1957 Budget fight, I seem to recall that then Senator Johnson played a leading role in cutting the appropriations for USIA and particularly in criticizing, I believe, Mr. [Arthur] Larson, then Chairman of the Agency.

Mundt: Yes, that is true, and I served on the Appropriations Committee with Lyndon at that time and served, as a matter of fact, on the Subcommittee which he headed, which took the hearings for the USIA. And I don't think that necessarily would reflect antipathy to the program. As a fact, there had developed a personal animosity between Larson and Lyndon, because Larson had given a speech out in Honolulu during the campaign in which he had been very critical of Johnson and his policies and Johnson personally, and he [Johnson] was

motivated in that particular instance by some personal antagonisms he had developed against Larson.

M: You went over on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, I believe, in the 88th Congress, 1963.

Mundt: I think that would be about right.

M: Do you have close knowledge of the role that Mr. Johnson may have played in the Eisenhower years in the realm of foreign policy?

Mundt: Yes, as I said earlier, he fairly consistently supported the Eisenhower-Nixon-Dulles foreign policy. On the resolution, for example, which was very successful by the way, in connection with the Channel Islands.

M: Quemoy-Matsu?

Mundt: The Quemoy-Matsu-Pescadores problem. As I recall, he was quite active in support of that, and he pretty generally in those days was what you would call now "a hard-liner" against Communism. And especially in the field of international policies felt that the containment concepts of Dulles made a lot of sense, that we couldn't grant any concessions to the Communists in terms of new areas of conquest, and of course that was the basic thrust of the Dulles policy, and I believe that both as a matter of statesmanship and public responsibility, and as a matter of personal conviction that Johnson supported that position.

M: Did he have a close relationship with Dulles that you know of?

Mundt: He had a close relationship with Ike, and I think a fairly warm relationship with Dulles--I wouldn't know so much about that.

M: The one example that comes to my mind is the so-called Eisenhower Doctrine regarding the Middle East. Mr. Johnson was Majority Leader when that went through the Senate. Do you recall that the Administration thought then that Mr. Johnson gave it adequate support and cooperation, or that he tried to weaken it?

Mundt: Well, I think he was a little stickier on that than he was on the Quemoy-Matsu situation. I think that he was motivated a little bit in that area by the impact of domestic political considerations, which always manifest themselves when you have a problem concerning the Middle East, because of the political implications within the United States. But I don't believe that by and large there would be any serious criticism by Eisenhower in connection with the major pattern of behavior by Johnson as Majority Leader during those days.

M: Did he have a well-developed position on foreign aid? That has been one of your chief interests, I believe.

Mundt: Yes, and I think he was totally wrong on that. I still think he's totally wrong. I've had long exchanges of correspondence with him, I've talked with him about it personally, and on balance he left me with the impression earlier that he was supporting it primarily because it had been initiated by

Kennedy, and having succeeded Kennedy under the circumstances that he did, he implied to me both by letter and by personal conversation that he did not want to get in there and repudiate what was one of the main spokes in the foreign policy and foreign trade concepts of Jack Kennedy. The big debate in the Senate had started under Kennedy. We had had a vote at that time. Between the time that we voted on it to express the sentiment which I espoused and which the Senate supported, of a reluctance to expand and a desire to curtail our economic trade with Russia so long as she was providing the major weapons used by North Hanoi and North Vietnam to prolong the war--between the time we had the first vote and the time it came back to the House and we had the last vote, the tragedy of Dallas had occurred. I remember very well Majority Leader Mansfield getting up and reading a letter from Johnson, or a message from Johnson, to prevail in the debate in which he made a most tear-jerking plea not to disavow the policies of Jack Kennedy. And in our exchange of correspondence, that seemed to be reflected.

Later on, after the period of mourning had subsided, he became really in his second term more the master of his own destiny; however, he continued to favor the so-called bridge-building concept of what I called trading with the enemy in time of war. And justifies it now and has for the last couple of years on the basis that he thinks that this

will create a détente with the Russians. And he has sort of embraced that Kennedy position as a position of his own. So we have been completely at swords-points on that issue ever since he became active in it in any way.

M: Going back in a little more detail on this issue, which is a very important one. Now, you're referring specifically to the Bill, I believe, to finance wheat sales to the [U.S.S.R.].

Mundt: That was when the fight began--when Kennedy was President, and which continued on over the period of the Dallas tragedy, and where [Johnson] became an advocate of the Kennedy policies after he assumed the presidency.

M: Now, your amendment to the Foreign Aid Bill that restricted such financing, I believe passed prior to the assassination. Is that right?

Mundt: Correct, correct.

M: Was any administration pressure which involved Lyndon Johnson exercised for that vote? This would be before the assassination.

Mundt: At that vote, he was just Vice President.

M: And he played no role?

Mundt: And I would not be privy to the knowledge as to whether he played a role or not. He might have, because Kennedy was very adamant about that. It was a very close vote. I would have to believe that Kennedy called upon him to talk to some of his Democratic friends. But I can't prove that. I don't know. But I know he became active and that the letter he

sent down was the determining factor after he became President--the second time we had the go around, where we weakened the restrictions I had succeeded in having placed upon it.

M: You withdrew your amendment, I believe, after it passed, and reintroduced it as an independent bill. Was that the way it was?

Mundt: This is correct. We had it stalemated, and we introduced it as an independent bill, had separate hearings on it, and had the support to pass it until the tragedy arose.

M: Why did you withdraw the amendment, sir?

Mundt: I withdrew the amendment because it was tacked on a bill on which there was some degree of urgency. And I received an open commitment from the Majority leadership that if I would withdraw it, they would hold hearings on it, and would bring it up again for another Senate vote before a certain date, so that I had achieved my purpose of having a special Senate vote on the basic issue and was perfectly willing to have it stand on its own bottom, but I wanted to be sure I had a chance to get it out of Committee and get it heard and get it voted on.

M: Is this issue, I believe it is, where Mr. Johnson called the Christmas vacation session of the House to finally force the repudiation of the House insistence upon this, what in the Senate had been called the Mundt Amendment, right at

Christmas time?

Mundt: Yes, that was it. They had. I remember now--they were flying people back from different areas and it was either just before Christmas recess or just after--there was an urgency of a time situation involved in that. They had a whole series of roll calls in the House. It had gone over to the House by that time.

M: But you weren't involved in any of that?

Mundt: Well, I was over in the House lobbying for my position; but otherwise I wasn't involved.

M: I see. Would you say that when Mr. Johnson insisted that this measure be defeated then that it was not really a policy decision so much as perhaps a vote of confidence in the new Administration?

Mundt: At that time, I think that was the motivating factor. He had not resolved the policy so much in his own mind, but he wanted to avoid being accused of making a sharp differential between his policies and those of his predecessor.

M: Do you recall that Mr. Johnson played a role of any importance--now this would be after you came or part of the time, at least, after you came on the Foreign Relations Committee--during the Kennedy Presidency, while he was Vice President?

Mundt: Not so much. You're saying now while Kennedy was President and he was Vice President.

M: Yes, sir.

Mundt: Not so much because those issues were one of two types. It would be like this ruckus we had on trading with the enemy, where if he did anything at all, he had to do it with Democrats. We wouldn't be privy to knowing what went on in the Democratic cloakroom. Or the kind where there wasn't any particular disposition on the part of the Republicans then, just like there had been on the Democrats earlier, not to make foreign policy a partisan issue unless there was some big, deep issue involved, as there was on the wisdom or lack of wisdom of trading the enemy. But I don't think he had any particular services he had to render at that time, in that field.

M: Since Mr. Johnson has been President and since you've been on the Foreign Relations Committee, would you say that he has normally briefed that Committee adequately on major world crises?

Mundt: He did a good job of that for the first two years, especially, or whatever the time was between the accession to office and the time he ran. A fairly good job the next year; an increasingly poor job--if by poor you accept the definition of lack of communication--an increasingly poor job ever since down to the present time. He has not taken the Committee into his confidence and advised with it and consulted with it nearly as much in the last half of his second term as he did the first half. And not as much during the first half as he did

the last part of his first term.

M: For example, in instances such as the Tonkin Gulf attack, were you as a Republican member of the Foreign Relations Committee called in to a briefing prior to the submission of the Resolution?

Mundt: I don't believe so, but I couldn't be sure. We were called in still in those days quite frequently. And I can't just sift out in my mind without looking at the printed record as to whether we were called in on that particular issue or not. But it was at that juncture or shortly after that the sharp break came between him and Fulbright. And as that break developed, and as there increasingly developed a number of doves in the Senate--and for a long time the only doves in the Senate were Democrats, for a long time there wasn't a single Republican dove, but as they began to develop, and there were more and more in his own Party, it became more and more embarrassing for him to call down the Senate--the two Committees of the Senate who usually went--three Committees, really: Appropriations, Armed Services, and Foreign Relations; usually we'd all go down together, sometimes just two of us, sometimes one. I served on two of those Committees, so I was usually there--Appropriations and Foreign Relations. But it became increasingly embarrassing to him to have his policies criticized, publicly, although off the record, by the members of his own Party, and having to rely more and more on the

Republicans for his support in the discussions which we had. And I suspect that's the reason he began shying away from them to the degree that he did.

M: Has the coolness that exists between Senator Fulbright and President Johnson, in your opinion, hindered the effectiveness of the Foreign Relations Committee?

Mundt: Yes, very definitely.

M: Has it resulted in an increased role for Republicans, such as yourself, who have been generally favorable to Mr. Johnson on this issue?

Mundt: Yes, it has. Yes, it has; but it has not resulted in an increased role as far as the Committee as a whole is concerned. As we have operated individually, yes; and he came to look to us for support, and we gave it to him; and on occasion I had a feeling that when he had a formal luncheon down there for the Australian leader or some other leader, he had a little tendency to start packing the meetings with people who supported him, instead of those who opposed him, which I think is perfectly understandable. You don't want a public brawl in front of some foreign dignitary. But it tended to decrease the role of the Committee <u>per se</u>, while I think it did increase the Republican position, both on the Committee, and individually, and in the Senate.

M: Do you think Mr. Johnson may have tried to take some kind of action to neutralize the Committee's power since he feared

its makeup, then? Go around it, say, or in some way restrict it?

Mundt: Yes, I think so. One little incident comes to mind. I went down there for one of these formal luncheons that they have quite often for foreign visitors. I was among those invited, and he always lines them up and stands with the dignitary, and then has the members of the Senate, or whoever is there, walk by, and he greets them and introduces them to the foreign visitor. When it came along to me, he said to the fellow, I think it was the Australian, but I can't remember just who--I think it was. And he said, after greeting me and passing me down to the next man, he said, "Here's one Senator from South Dakota whom I can count on to support my policies," meaning, I suppose, that McGovern was a dove and seldom got invited down there, and of course, increasingly, and I think understandably, Lyndon became personally indignant against the doves of his own party. He felt, I can understand, a Republican who might do it for political reasons, but why should he get stabbed in the back by the [Wayne] Morses and the [Frank] Churches and the [J. W.] Fulbrights and the [George] McGoverns and the [Ernest] Gruenings, et cetera, et cetera? This is kind of hard to take. And he began to take it, I think, personally; and I don't blame him for it, because they're supposed to be members of his own team, and should in the course of a war, I think, either support him

or at least do nothing to make his job more difficult, which they certainly did.

M: Were you present at briefings regarding Mr. Johnson's first foreign crisis, which I believe involved Panama? Do you recall any of the circumstances of that occasion?

Mundt: I recall vaguely.

M: The particular instance that I'm referring to is one where I believe the Organization of American States had announced an agreement which had not actually cleared the President yet, and he called in some Congressional leaders and asked them whether or not he should accept this agreement?

Mundt: I don't recall that meeting.

M: What about the Dominican Republic? Were you involved in those?

Mundt: Several of them, yes.

M: One of the things that I think historians are going to ask about that particular occasion and perhaps about others, too, is whether or not at the time there were important people called in who opposed the decision to intervene. Do you recall anybody present opposing?

Mundt: I think Fulbright did. Yes, there were two or three members of the Foreign Relations Committee who opposed it. One or two Republicans may have questioned it a bit; I don't know any of them who opposed it. Virtually all of the Republicans supported him overwhelmingly on that. The issue primarily

in those days was did he send too many troops. That was the pitch they made and the argument and Republican position; and his position was that if you are going to send any troops at all, you should send enough to get the job done without a war, rather than to send just a few that might get the job done by some shooting and some fighting. That it was good to impress them by our predominant power, so that whether I liked it or not, they'd go along without fighting back. And we thought he was wise to do that; I think history has proved that. He did it without much killing, without much shooting, and did it with a remarkable degree of permanence, which even the President and his advisors and those who supported him had our fingers crossed about at the time; but we thought it was the thing to do then and it has worked out better, I think, than any of us expected.

M: In the very early part of that, was the threat of Communist infiltration of the rebellion made rather clear as far as the briefings were concerned?

Mundt: Yes, it was. Dean Rusk emphasized that very much; we had a lot of meetings of the Foreign Relations Committee with the Executive Branch, usually with Dean Rusk or one of his associates, or our ambassadors over there, or people like that. They stressed that thing throughout--that the Castroites were behind this--Lyndon certainly stressed it in the meetings that we had in the White House. Those who opposed it raised

points of doubt about that, and also, as I say, opposed the idea that we went in with so much muscle, so many--I've forgotten the figures, but it was in the thousands, when they said that hundreds would have done it.

M: I'd like to get your opinion, while we're on this general topic, which might be a little subjective but you're in an expert position to know--how would you characterize Mr. Johnson's role on the general subject of Vietnam? Has he been a force for restraint, would you say, a force for escalation normally, or <u>has</u> he conveyed a consistent position in this matter?

Mundt: Well, he has been consistent at least from the standpoint of not wanting to become the first American President to preside over a losing war. He has been consistent in believing that we should not pull out and acknowledge defeat. I think he has wobbled a little bit like Hubert's [Humphrey] wobbling now as to how best to proceed. I think at times he has leaned in the direction of stopping the bombing and making major concessions short of capitulation. I think at other times he has leaned in the direction of his military advisors that the thing to do with the war is to win it quick and get it over with and give it the old king-sized, Texas-sized push and try to end it in six months. I think he has vacillated between those two points of view to the detriment of the country and to the detriment of the success of the war.

But I do applaud him in the fact that he has resisted the temptation simply to pull out and quit.

When he has had bombing cessations and made concessions, they have been half-way measures, which while they may have set the war back and prolonged the fighting, did not result in our defeat. My criticisms of his administration in the war would be the fact that these half-way measures neither get you peace nor victory. And that while he has taken half-way measures to concede to the Communists, to test them out and see whether they respond happily from his standpoint, he has also kind of relied on half-way measures as far as giving the military a free hand to go in there and get the war over with. So I think that the biggest problem is that having made up his mind he doesn't want to accept defeat, he has never been able to make up his mind that he wants to have victory. And that's why the war lasts so long.

M: His critics call it Mr. Johnson's war. Do you agree with that?

Mundt: No, I do not.

M: How would you characterize it?

Mundt: I would characterize it as, if anybody's war, the history in that is very clear.

Let's start back with the first indications of trouble which occurred under Eisenhower. Eisenhower took only one overt action of any importance in his Administration in

connection with the Vietnam situation. He sent over about 650 military advisors to help give the South Vietnamese some expertise and some guidance on how to put together an army and render logistics and things of that kind. Most of them operated in civilian clothing. There hadn't been a single casualty at the time he transferred his authority to President Kennedy, except for two who were killed in traffic accidents in Saigon. Nobody had been shot, noboby had been killed, nobody had been caught. That was the extent. Now, to the degree that he sent a little larger corps of military advisors than we customarily send to every country in the world that will accept them, we gave a little bit of aid to Vietnam in those days; but normally, in our <u>own</u> interests, whenever any foreign capital will accept our military advisors, we get them over there, because it's important to our interests to make friends with the military leaders of these countries, because in all the countries which are developing, the military corps has a tremendous influence.

Secondly, we like to encourage them that if they are going to buy weapons, to buy them from us instead of from the Soviets, because if you equip an army you make it dependent upon its supplier for ammunition, and for replacements, and for parts. And so the thing to do diplomatically if there's a little country that has to set up a defense establishment, try to get them geared to our

specifics and to our dimensions, and try to sell them American planes and American guns, and to have to come to us for ammunition, then they have to come to us for spare parts. And we have some control over them. The Russians play the game exactly the same way.

So both Russia and us send military advisory teams to every place where they'll take them. And when Vietnam was willing to take them, we sent over about 600. Now, whether that was more than you would normally send or not, I don't know; but in all events, they did not participate in the war, and they did not participate in the conflict, so you couldn't say that Eisenhower had anything to do with the war. And even the bitterest critic of the war, I suppose in terms of the hyperbolics that he uses, is Wayne Morse. And he always spends a lot of time in exonerating Eisenhower and saying that he had nothing to do with it and it's McNamara's war or Johnson's War. He forgets what other people forget--that between Eisenhower and Johnson, you had roughly a thousand days of Kennedy.

And the first warlike moves took place under Kennedy. As manifest by the fact, he changed the Eisenhower concept from sending military advisors over there to a different concept of sending organized military units over there who did logistic work, who did back-up work, who helped provide protection for the Vietnamese troops, and who in the main,

didn't participate in any more fighting than they had to, but they did participate in the fighting. And he built up the troops to around, I think at the time of his death, perhaps something over 20,000. But he had them in there as organized military units, and when you start doing that, you're in a war.

M: So, this is when the nature of the war changed?

Mundt: This is when we came away from the concept of being a friend of Vietnam, trying to help her in a nonmilitary and noncombatant method, to being a friend of Vietnam who indicated to her that our troops were going to fight with her troops to protect her. The reason they can call it the Johnson War, which I think is unjust, but the reason that they do is that there was a sharp jump within twelve months after Lyndon Johnson got control. From the point where Kennedy had sent in organized units to the point where they sent in massive reinforcements and massive troops, we actually got involved in the fighting.

M: Were the United States sent in massive reinforcements?

Mundt: Right. We actually got involved in the fighting as a general practice. Under Kennedy it was occasional when they were in dire circumstances, and our back-up troops got called in to protect the front lines. But it became a modus operandi shortly after Johnson got there, to have our troops assume certain front line responsibilities and engage in the fighting, and we became a partner in the war until now by gradual

continuation of moving in troops, we've become the senior partner with great responsibilities.

M: Did he give a reason for making this change? Mr. Johnson, that is?

Mundt: Yes, the reason being that he thought Vietnam otherwise would fall, and that since we had as many troops as perhaps 20,000 under Kennedy and had committed ourselves to an ally and as a friend, and said, "Nice work, keep going, we'll help you out," that you would be turning your back on a friend. And the further you follow that, the more veracity there was to those arguments and the more people you had to send as the going got more difficult.

M: Let us jump around the world here briefly, Senator. You have generally, I think, been rather skeptical about what you called earlier the attempt to build bridges to the East. Do you think Mr. Johnson has, in this connection, pursued any drastically different policies from the Kennedy years?

Mundt: Well, Kennedy took the first step. Now it wasn't a big step; it involved primarily the sale of wheat and primarily the sale of credits. But it was the opening wedge and it started a pattern. And that was supported for the reasons which I indicated I thought were valid when Johnson took over. But on October 12, 1966, Lyndon made his biggest mistake in the war in my opinion. He then took these little beginnings of bridge-building which were growing from this first shipment

of wheat by the shipment of other things, but all within the context of the so-called Battle Acts, all within the context of the Congressional curtailments which sharply prohibited the right and the authority of an American exporter to ship stuff overseas. You had to have a license. You had to have a

M: The Battle Acts? Those are the acts which instituted this prohibition?

Mundt: Correct. There were other acts, too, but that was primarily it. But it was pretty clear by legislative mandate that no American could ship overseas without getting a license for every shipment, and having it approved by the government and the Department of Commerce. And that necessarily curtailed it and made it more difficult, but like most acts, it contained an escape hatch, which said that unless the President of the United States finds it in the interest of our defense or something like that. So on October 12

M: 1966?

Mundt: 1966, Johnson took executive action which opened up 402, or 403, say 400 items which they could not ship without any restraint or any restriction, or any license. If you manufacture something in this category, you know you can sell it to the Communist bloc. I think that was the fatal blunder he made in the war; I think it's one he seriously regrets; I'm inclined to believe that if you could read the man's mind,

get it in big and unlimited amounts from Russia, and still are able to get a lot of their small arms and small ammunition from China. Their men are being better clothed, better fed, and better housed, probably, than they ever have been before, and certainly better trained. They don't have this great desire to live long as we have in our country; death is a way of life if you can put it that way over in the Orient; and they're dying for a good cause. And it's a pretty hard thing to -- I mean, how are you going to stop a thing like that? As long as those factors all continue to operate.

So he got himself hooked on a policy which is completely unsound, which was opposed by Resolutions twice repeated in the National American Legion Convention--Lyndon has always been proud of his Legion connections--twice repudiated by the National VFW, been repudiated by a lot of other smaller, less-important organizations, has been condemned out of hand by a lot of members of the Senate and the House; has been criticized and curtailed every time the Congress has had a chance to vote on it; the last one I think was the plan to finance the Fiat Motor Company to build an automobile plant in Russia and we beat him on that one, so that it would be a tremendous apology, he'd have to make an abject apology that he was totally wrong to change that.

M: This is, you think, why he hasn't?

Mundt: I think this is--yes. And because of that, and the fact that

it has been proved out historically that it does prolong the war and increase our casualties, and makes it more difficult, is one of the reasons that rather than face up to the humiliation of failure on that error on judgment, is what I believe to be one of the factors that certainly motivated him to withdraw.

M: What about other measures, such as non-trade measures, such as the Consular Treaty and Air Travel to the Soviet Union?

Mundt: Some I opposed, and some I approved. None of them are of any ways near the same significance in themselves as this Executive action he took on October 12, 1966, followed by the one in February.

The Consular Treaty I opposed because it was allied with this whole foreign trade concept. If they set up the Consular offices, it is easier for them to have access to more merchandise, to establish more trade, and expand it. It in itself would not have been serious at all, if we still had the curtailments and restrictions against shipping them things; but having opened the door, I didn't want their purchasing agents creeping all over this country to expand the shipments, even more than they would normally flow.

M: What about the Atlantic Alliance? Has Mr. Johnson pursued a realistic policy in your opinion regarding keeping our alliance?

Mundt: Yes, I think so. I think he has been realistic. I think he

has failed. I don't know that anybody else could succeed. He failed, because it is a failure on our part, as a country, which you have to interpret as a government, at any single page of history. He failed in keeping steadfast our oldest and best friend in the Atlantic Alliance and that's France. Now, that doesn't mean that somebody else could have done better. But the fact that we lost de Gaulle and we lost France and they pulled out is certainly going down as one of the great failures of American diplomacy in the Johnson era.

Some people say that this was set in motion by Kennedy, because he visited Italy and said he visited France first. I doubt that. But even if it's true, the consequences evolved under Lyndon, and he has got to accept the consequences of the failure. I don't know that anybody could have done better. I don't know that anybody might not have done better, either. I think there could have been approaches. You study the man, you know that de Gaulle has got a vanity, an Achilles heel; you know the make-up of him. It's at least reasonable to suppose that somebody making a little more humble approach or an adroit approach, or a different approach, to de Gaulle, or going over to visit him might have kept this very catastrophic thing from happening.

M: There's the famous meeting at the Kennedy funeral between Johnson and Mr. de Gaulle.

Mundt: Right.

M: You believe that might have not helped things?

Mundt: Well, I think it could have been. It's a terrible time to have much of a diplomatic meeting, but I think that afforded another opportunity which we muffed. At least, we didn't get together and if we could have gotten together, conceivably something might have been done. Knowing the nature of the man de Gaulle, to woo him back, or to get an invitation for Lyndon to visit him, or some conciliatory, flattering gesture to the old man at that juncture, might have turned the tide. But anyhow except for that and except for his failure to show the diplomatic leadership to induce the free nations of the North American Alliance to join us in some kind of economic pressures against one, North Vietnam, and two, the Communist bloc that were supplying all the weapons to Vietnam, this is another serious failure in his Administration.

The reason he couldn't make any progress there, as I have told him face to face and in my letters, is because you've got to come into the court of world opinion with clean hands, and you can't go to our friends in West Germany and in Greece and in Great Britain and in France, and say, "Don't ship stuff to Hanoi," when they say, "Well, if you don't want us to ship stuff to Hanoi, why are you shipping it to Russia to be recrated to ship to Hanoi? You take advantage of the profit motive to expand your trade, even

with your enemies. Our armies aren't fighting, our boys aren't getting killed; this is good, lucrative trade we're having through Haiphong Harbor; give us one reason why we should stop."

M: So it all stems back to the trade?

Mundt: Stems back. Had we kept our own policies clean and clear and consistent, I think then Johnson very well might have been able to call, and I urged him to do it in three different letters, what I called a worldwide trade-aid conference of the free world. Get them all over here, the North American Alliance primarily; say, "Look, fellows, we're in a pretty tough old war, and there isn't any victory we can win which isn't just as important to you as it is to us. We're fighting the efforts of Communism to move on another aggressive march. There isn't any defeat we can suffer which isn't as serious as you, and probably more serious than to us. Because if the worldwide Communist march succeeds here and keeps on coming, we at least have Mr. Atomic Bomb. We're not going to be the next to fall. But some smaller country, maybe in Europe [if he'd been a prophet he could have said, 'maybe in Czechoslovakia,'] is going to be the first to fall. And you're going to be coming to us for help. And if you convince us now that helping our friends in Asia ward off Communism is bad, you're going to have very great difficulty convincing us that helping our friends in Europe ward off Communism is good."

"So I put the problem to you--here we are together. I'd have to hope, therefore, you, all kind of secretly, hope that we don't lose. Now we're not asking you for money; we're not asking you for material; we're not asking you for men; we've got one simple request. Will you please quit stabbing us in the back by that trade? We're shipping them nothing. Will you do the same? If so, we can bring this war to a successful conclusion."

This was a great moment in history, which he totally lost. By this completely inconsistent business of trying to establish a détente and bridge-building by feeding the enemy that's fighting you which because of its psychological international implications, and the doors that it closed to avenues which might otherwise have been opened, I think is a great tragedy of the Johnson Administration in the war, the one place I would say that he was totally and completely wrong in that area.

M: This is a Johnson initiative? This is not a situation of the Kennedy--?

Mundt: This became a Johnson initiative. Yet it was originated by Kennedy. I can understand Lyndon, and I can go along with the tear-jerking letter that he read that beat my amendment. And I can accept all that; but after you've been President for four years, you're writing your own policy then. And the Johnson initiative had to be the October 12 statement.

Because Kennedy was long since dead. And it was at that juncture where we lost the initiative to call the world together and say, "Join us in some kind of economic action, not endangering the peace, not imperiling you about getting into the war; just quit selling 'em, keep your doggone NATO ships out." Now, I gave that speech myself two years ago in NATO at the Parliamentarian Conference in Brussels, at the plenary session in that same general line, and was amazed that it got a standing ovation from everybody but the French, who sat there and sulked. But I put it to them just that way. I said, "This is as much your war as ours. And this is all we're asking."

And exactly what I was afraid would happen did happen. Around the corridors the next day, it was said, "If you believe that, why don't you do that in your country?" So I know that my thinking is sound on that.

M: What about the rest of the world? Has Mr. Johnson's aid program differed substantially from Mr. Kennedy's in, let's say, Latin America? Or in any other area?

Mundt: No, I can't think of any place. I can't think of any place unless it would be perhaps a little tendency to give a little bit more help to Pakistan versus India. Kennedy favored India versus Pakistan. But a very immaterial difference.

M: You're on the subcommittee for the Middle East, I believe.

Mundt: Yes.

M: Have you found the Johnson Administration adequately keeps the Committee informed regarding the problems in that area?

Mundt: Yes, through the Secretary of State. I don't recall his calling us down there for these kinds of consultations we used to have on Vietnam, so frequently during the period that I mentioned. But I think we've been adequately informed, not by Mr. Johnson, but by his people in the State Department.

M: You're also, I believe, connected with the Subcommittee on Africa. Is the same true for African affairs?

Mundt: Not so much. We don't get as much information on African affairs, possibly because they don't consider them as important. Possibly because they don't know as much about them, they don't know what to say; possibly as much as anything because they've been conned by the British into supporting a boycott against Rhodesia which nobody much in Congress really approves, which they can't much defend, which hasn't proved at all efective, and which is so inconsistent with the attitude that we take on shipping generally. So for one reason or another, they haven't called us in.

M: Do you believe, in that connection, that Mr. Johnson has made foreign policy decisions frequently based on what their domestic political influence might be?

Mundt: There's a little of that same background motivation which manifests itself so apparently and obviously in the Middle East affair; there's a little of that, because of the colored

situation in this country--I think probably that's why we're going in an economic boycott of Rhodesia.

M: For its domestic effects?

Mundt: For its domestic effects; but except for that, I wouldn't see that there's very much.

M: Who really makes the foreign policy decisions in the Johnson Administration in your opinion? Does Mr. Johnson, or a certain advisor, or a group of advisors, or just who?

Mundt: I think it's a triumvirate of [W. W.] Rostow and Rusk and Johnson; and that Johnson makes the decisions; and that Rusk is the principal advisor; and that Johnson has a complete faith and confidence in Rusk, as I have. I think he's a great Secretary of State.

M: And Rostow as National Security Advisor?

Mundt: Yes, and sort of in a third corner, an outside observer to make different suggestions.

M: And all these men have what you think are similar outlooks in regard to foreign policy?

Mundt: Rusk and Johnson--I can't quite understand Rostow because he has gone through kind of a metamorphosis. He was at one time a kind of a soft-liner on Communism; now he seems to be the hardest-liner on Communism. So I just don't know. I think he's a man that Johnson respects concerning his judgment, and that maybe the fact he <u>has</u> changed position, and you can't criticize a man too much for changing position in this

fast-moving world, and I don't criticize Rostow for that.

M: A man that never changes never learns anything, does he?

Mundt: Right. I think he's an honest guy that would tell me if he thought it was wrong and tell me if he thinks it's right--I've got confidence in his judgment. He has been on both sides of the issue--kinda good to bring him into the picture. And I think when he says be firm, it probably carries more weight than when Rusk says be firm. And I think that Johnson wants to be firm.

M: You mean because of Rostow's background?

Mundt: Yeah, because he'd be less likely to get it. He'd say, "All right, Rusk is a disciple of Dulles--and Dulles was a firm guy, and so why wouldn't Rusk be a firm guy; but here's a college professor and a fellow who was kind of wobbling around in the early days; he was slow to learn about the international conspiracy, but finally he saw through it and being a good patriot, he provided his judgments on that ground. But he <u>might</u> conceivably, I think that would be true of me, if I'd like to call an advisor, like to have some guy who had at one time had the other point of view because it would tend to indicate that he might look at it a little more objectively than somebody that had been married to a concept as long as Rusk has.

M: Let's shift over to a final few moments here in regard to domestic politics, if you don't mind, Senator. What was

your reaction when you learned that Lyndon Johnson had joined the John F. Kennedy ticket in 1960?

Mundt: I thought it was a political stroke of genius, as far as the Democrats were concerned. I thought that this was the toughest, hardest-hitting ticket they could put together. Without it, quite obviously, Kennedy wouldn't have won.

M: You think Mr. Johnson contributed that much?

Mundt: There isn't any question in the world, because he wouldn't have carried Texas. He didn't carry Texas, anyhow, but they stole enough votes down there, and Johnson's friends took care of that. Where you win by 1/2 of 1 percent. Johnson helped hold as much of the South as they held. He certainly delivered Texas; he gave a balance, if you want to call it balance, or a two-headed, which I prefer to call it, leadership in the political ticket, one walking one way, one the other. Kennedy was the liberal, he the conservative, because he was still in his conservative era of public service, which he left the day he took the Vice Presidency, by the way, as soon as the campaign was over. He changed; I remember talking to a Press Club of Chamber of Commerce, or some place down here, during the interlude between the election and the inaugural. And they said, "What kind of Vice President is Lyndon going to make?" I said, "There's nobody in this room knows the answer to that, and I don't think Lyndon knows today, because he is either going to have to follow the policy

which he fairly consistently followed as a Senator, being what I would call a progressive conservative, or he's going to have to join up with Kennedy and become what I would think is one of these idealistic and unrealistic liberals. And what he's going to do, I don't know. And he doesn't know. But we're gonna have to watch him."

Well, it became true; he became a complete liberal--entirely in the Kennedy camp. So that I thought this was a political stroke of genius. I felt that he would take it when I heard the debate whether he was gonna take it or not, knowing him like I did, knowing his background--he wanted to be President. He, having associated himself with me and the S. J. Res. 12 Amendment, which would change the electoral college; and I went to him to get his support, and I got it--he helped me to try to get it through; we got it through, but not with enough votes to have the two-thirds majority--I said,

"Lyndon, you've tried to be President for a long time. You've got a lot of qualifications, but you're from the wrong state. Texas can't get it, because it's too small in electoral votes, and it's in the wrong part of the country under this system. Break it up under my system--you and I and everybody else got a chance to run for the Presidency."

And his eyes gleamed. I knew it without that. But we all knew that. Knowing that, this was his one chance.

Kennedy was going to get the nomination--four years from that, who knows what Lyndon Johnson's popularity was going to be--whether he's going to be alive or not, whether he's going to be popular or not. So this was his one chance to achieve possibly a lifetime ambition. I don't think he needed any urging at all. When they called him up, I think his mind clicked and said, "Yes." Without Sam Rayburn or anybody else coming in and talking about it. So I wasn't surprised at that, but I thought it was a very crafty, very cleverly derived, political scheme.

M: After the assassination, were you personally involved in any of his very early talks? Did he call you in those first days, or did you attend any meetings?

Mundt: Well, he called me actually. Yes, he did call me. He called practically everybody. And said, "Now, look, I've got a hard time, and we're old friends--don't mess me up, Karl. Any time you want to get in the White House, you know you can call your old friend, Lyndon. Things are going to be just like --." This was the old buttering-up process. But he called actually then within fifteen minutes after he concluded his State of the Union Address. Because walking over to the House as we have to as Senators, we ran into this great big group of reporters who were standing out there. "What do you think about the President's speech?" "What do you think about this?" "What do you think about that?"

When the AP reporter asked me, he says, "What do you think about the speech?" I said, "I'm not sure how I'd evaluate it, but I can tell you one thing--there isn't going to be a single farmer in America who likes it, because he never even mentioned the words 'agriculture' or 'farming.'" So that got in the paper.

Time I'm back in the office fifteen minutes later, the White House is calling. Lyndon on the phone. Says, "Karl, what's the matter with you? What you jumping on me for like that?"

I said, "I just said the truth didn't I, Lyndon?"

"Yes," he said, "some God-damned speech writer forgot all about putting that in. You sure caught me with my pants down on that one."

"Well," I said, "you got no complaints then."

"No," he said, "that's all right; but I want you to know, you haven't got a better friend ever been in the White House than I am. You want something done, you just come to old Lyndon. We'll take care of those farmers."

That those were the ingratiating things about Lyndon. He <u>was</u> fairly good about it. You <u>could</u> go to the White House. You <u>could</u> see him. He <u>would</u> talk with you. He'd let you criticize him. And he didn't play mean, petty, small politics. There isn't anything petty about Lyndon, as far as that is concerned. He plays for the big stakes--he plays hard. But

if it's a question of "Could I bring down the Mother of America who happens to be a South Dakotan, and will you say hello to her for me?" the answer is "Yes." And when you do this, you know, "You know the old Senator and I--we're good friends. We may disagree politically, but I want you to know, you've got a great Senator." There's nothing small about him. He's big in his mistakes, he's big in his ambitions, he's a big man.

M: Do you think that the flood of legislation that passed in his early year or two could have been passed by the Kennedy Administration had it stayed?

Mundt: No. He did an awful arm-twisting on that. He used his political know-how. He overused the power of patronage; he overused the capacity of the White House to put a project in state "x" over state "b"; there was as great, I suppose, an effort, successfully, to manipulate Congressional action by using the powers of the White House as since the days of Andrew Jackson.

M: And it worked?

Mundt: And it worked. But it brought his harvest of despair. You can do that, but it's like the old thing--"A man convinced against his will is of the same opinion still." You may say, "All right, you put my brother in as judge now, and you've got me in hock on that one, but by gum, I'm not going to vote against my constituents, and against my wishes, and against my principles again."

M: You mean, he used up his credit?

Mundt: That's right. He shot up his ammunition pretty fast.

M: Do you think the Kennedy staff that Mr. Johnson retained ever developed a loyalty to Mr. Johnson?

Mundt: A professional loyalty, yes. A personal loyalty, no. They never replaced Johnson in their estimation--in their affection. I don't know of any particular cases where there was any professional disloyalty, where they would carry tales and do things to hurt him. But neither were they the kind of fellows who would get up at two o'clock in the morning and take off their shirts and run out in the winter weather to try to save him. They were doing the job for which they were paid, professionally and well.

M: You don't think they led any sort of movement, perhaps, to tarnish his image?

Mundt: Not during the remainder of the term that he served. I think those that remained, some of them in the second term, they were looking ahead for the new guy, for the possibility of a new guy. I think there began to be some cracks in the situation, but certainly not when he finished out the first term. Maybe not the first year of the next term, but there began after that, I think, to be a few breaks.

M: Why, in your opinion, maybe you've already indicated some of this, in your remarks about his using up his credit in the early days, are there other reasons why Mr. Johnson lost his famous consensus?

Mundt: Yes. First of all, he's like an enthusiastic big-city hunter coming out to South Dakota shooting pheasants, and he shoots his whole box of shells the first cornfield he walks through. That was one of his troubles, he shot his box of ammunition up.

That wasn't the only one. The dissension in the Vietnam war began to manifest itself on domestic policies. He was crowding the doves pretty hard, and they were fighting back with what weapons they had. And his own preoccupation with the war didn't give him much time to do the things that he had been doing. He'd come up to the Senate and visit with them, and call them down to the White House for a midnight snack and visit with him. The fact was we were spending money awful fast, and had pretty well run out of funds for his new adventures. All those things pyramided together to destroy his effectiveness. Plus the fact that there began to be those who believed that Johnson wouldn't run again long before he announced that he wouldn't run again.

M: You mean members of Congress?

Mundt: Yes. Some thought it was health, some thought it was whatever it was that did motivate him. There was at least some speculation that he would not be the guy who would be President in the next term. So there began to develop Humphrey camps, and Kennedy camps, and McCarthy camps, and the camps that finally came into bloom and some that never

did show the light of day. There began to be those little inevitable movements for personal power in the Senate, and I suppose in the House, which added to the other contributing factors.

M: Then you weren't particularly surprised when he did in fact announce that he was not going to run again?

Mundt: Yes, I have to say in honesty that I was surprised. It wasn't a shocking or shuddering surprise. As a matter of fact, I won a bet. I made a wager with [Senator] Thruston Morton [R-Ky] I suppose a month before that, when he was talking about Johnson was going to be the nominee, and we talked around a table and somebody said not. He was positive. "Well," I said, "how would you like to bet me? Give you a bet, I'll give you $5 against $15 that he's not the next nominee." And he couldn't reach fast enough for his pocketbook. So I won the bet. I had that hunch. I had that feeling, and I won the bet. But I was still surprised. I'm not trying to say that I was a Jeanne Dixon and saw it in the crystal ball, or something like that. But I had that hunch. Because you don't even bet one against three if you've got no hunch at all.

M: You mentioned that you thought his trade area had been one of the major consideration?

Mundt: No, not one of the major, [though] I think it was a factor. I don't want to overemphasize that, but I think it was a

factor. As he sat down and looked at the situation, and what he could do to correct it and get on top. I think another factor was he honestly believed that by getting out, he would have a better chance to end the war to his credit and to the credit of the country. That was a factor. I think that his health was a factor--not that he's ill--but that another four years might do him in. I think that was a factor. And I think that he had been very much, for a tough, rough, big guy like Lyndon, he's got a kind of a soft heart and a sensitiveness about him that you don't usually see with a swash-buckling Southwesterner. I think he was badly hurt by some of his old friends' deserting him on the war issue. He showed it in little ways like why should he tell the guy from Australia, "Here's one South Dakota Senator who supports me?" and another White House place where we were going out to have a picture, out on the front porch, and I'm not much of the pushy type to get my name in pictures, and I don't think it helps you too much to get it sometimes with a Democrat, anyhow. I was kinda standing back and letting the eager-beavers rush up to get beside him, and he came back and said, "Karl, come on up here and get in this; after all, you're one of my good supporters." Pulled me up on the platform to get my picture taken.

He's a pretty sentimental guy. I think when he bestows

his friendship on somebody, it's a pretty solid friendship. I think he expects that from others and some of his good friends, party associates, and Senate associates, were getting up and saying some pretty bad things about him at a time when he couldn't fight back, about the war and so forth. I think there was a sort of an overall disenchantment. "Why should I go through this thing for four more years? Whatever glory there is in this, whatever reputation I've been able to build up, I've got it pretty well built." I think those things added in to it; that maybe having gotten off to the wrong start on bridge-building and maybe a dramatic thing like pulling out, this takes it out of the issue, maybe we can get peace out of the whole deal. I think that had he known that the Democratic Party was gonna commit suicide before television in Chicago and really fall apart like it has, he might have out of a sense of loyalty, run again. But he didn't know that then; nobody could tell.

M: I take it you're feeling pretty good about the political situation as of right now.

Mundt: Yes, I am.

M: That's according to at least what the newspapers are saying. You have every reason to be. How would you compare Johnson's Presidency; you've been here a long time; you've served under five Presidents, now.

M: I came under FDR.

M: How would you compare Mr. Johnson to the Presidents under whom you have served?

Mundt: Well, let's see. That's FDR, Truman, Eisenhower--I think he is the second. Now I'm talking in terms of country, and his overall usefulness, and I think Ike did more for his country than any of those five. It's a little unfair to Kennedy, because he wasn't here long enough to get much done. He just didn't get much done. The things that FDR did in the main have been injurious and inimicable to our interests. Truman was a kind of custodian. I think he's be the second of the five, next to Ike.

M: What would you say might be his strongest positive characteristic? His strongest favorable?

Mundt: Personal characteristics? Well, the fact that he's an activist. The fact that he, I think, is basically and fundamentally a well-meaning American, dedicated to our way of life, shares the repugnancies of most good citizens against the yippies and the hippies and the Communists and the unsavory elements. I think he's a good wholesome national leader who doesn't radiate it with a degree of acceptability that Ike did, because Ike had about a hayfull; but basically those who know him respect him for that. And I think that he inherited a war situation at a stage where it was hard to stop and difficult to continue. I think he's made the mistakes that I've mentioned about the

fact that half-way measures don't win the war. Certainly when you are trading with the enemy, you never win them. I have to give the man a lot of respect to have stood up against the criticism that he's had of those who simply said, "Well, let's take defeat and see what it feels like." He shows a courage and a capacity to stick to his convictions which I admire.

M: What about the other side of the coin? the weaknesses?

Mundt: Well, he's overly egotistical. He'd be better if he'd be a little more humble. If he could have had half of Ike's humility and Ike could have had half of his determination, we'd have had two damned good Presidents. He's a little bit too reluctant to consider other people's viewpoints when you express them. He's got the conviction that he's right, and he's a little bit haughty. A little bit high-handed, a little bit overly ambitious. And while none of those are very serious faults, they do add up into a President who finds himself in difficult circumstances, who is bound to commit some mistakes and have some failures, which he wouldn't have, I suspect, if there was some of that manifest in his failure about de Gaulle.

M: Do you think the press has been unfair to him? in this regard?

Mundt: I think ever since FDR, who had the press either captivated or bought, and I was never sure which, that they've been unfair to every President that we've had. They weren't fair

to Eisenhower, they were surely unfair to Harry Truman, I just leave a blank in my thinking about Kennedy, because he wasn't there long enough, but I think they were unfair to Johnson, yes.

M: You've been extremely cooperative, Senator Mundt, and I can't stop here without not only thanking you, but also asking if there's anything which I haven't mentioned that you think is important that you'd like to say or have remembered. Remember, we're talking about scholarship thirty to forty years from now.

Mundt: When I take a look at it in print, maybe I can think of something and I can just jot it down. Dictate a note or something, but I can't think of anything right offhand. It's hard to think back.

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By Karl E. Mundt

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, Karl E. Mundt, hereinafter referred to as the doner, 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, and all literary property rights, 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 20 years be available for examination by anyone except persons who have received my express written authorization to examine it.

This restriction shall not apply to employees and officers of the General Services Administration (including the National Archives and Records Service and the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library) engaged in performing normal archival work processes.

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.

Signed [signature]

Date 9-18-70

Accepted [signature] for
Archivist of the United States

Date 1-26-76