INTERVIEW XIX

DATE: June 13, 1985

INTERVIEWEE: GEORGE E. REEDY

INTERVIEWER: Michael L. Gillette

PLACE: Professor Reedy's office, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Tape 1 of 2, Side 1

G: Last time you mentioned briefly that the Johnsons had moved into the Sheraton Park. [They] sold their house on 30th Place and moved into a hotel.

R: Right.

G: And then they started looking for another house.

R: Right.

G: Presumably a larger house?

R: Well, one for entertaining, for the sort of thing where they could throw the kind of bashes that a vice president should be able to throw. Now, what they got was *Les Ormes*, The Elms, which was really a rather uncomfortable house to live in but ideal for entertaining.

G: How did they find it, do you know?

R: I think Clark Clifford found it, somebody like that. It was either Clark Clifford or somebody like that that knew about it. I believe the house had belonged to--oh, who in the devil did it belong to?

G: Perle Mesta?

R: Yes, I think that's right. I think it was Perle, and it was a marvelous place for a party: big grounds, great big dining rooms, big living rooms and assembly rooms. It was really

built with Victorian-style entertainment in mind and kind of ideal for Liz Carpenter, too, although she wasn't with us at that particular point, I don't think. I think that came later.

G: Ideal for her in what sense?

R: Well, Liz was very good at handling the, quote, "social schedule," unquote, and she planned most of the parties there. Liz is very good at planning a party.

G: Did moving to The Elms change Johnson's daily routine any? It was farther out.

R: No.

G: Did he spend more time there than he had at 30th Place?

R: No, not really. It was a little further out in terms of distance but not in terms of travel. *Les Ormes*, The Elms, was on better throughways into the middle of town whereas the 30th Street place was a little unhandy to get at. Not much. You know, the differences were so slight.

G: Yes.

Okay. Let me ask you about some of his travels. You mentioned that you did not go on the trip to Senegal the first year.

R: No. I was not on this trip to Senegal, and I was not on the trip to Belgium. [My wife] Lillian was ill at the time.

G: Did you have any role in the planning of this trip?

R: No.

G: Okay. Is there anything about the trip that you can talk about?

R: Senegal?

G: Yes.

R: Not really. He came back with a new story and a phrase that he always used in a speech, about this woman who had "a baby in her back, a baby in her belly, and three on the floor," and she wanted the same things when she looked at that baby that his mother wanted when she'd looked at him. That became one of his favorite lines.

G: Let me ask you about the [Konrad] Adenauer visit. He came to Washington and then came to the Ranch, too.

R: Right.

G: I assume that you played a role in that.

R: Oh, yes, quite a role. I organized all of the press coverage, and more than that, I helped in the setting-up of the Texas visit. Adenauer's security chief--I've forgotten his name now, a German professor--spoke very good English. He and I went out to Fredericksburg together.

(Interruption)

The security officer and I went out to Fredericksburg, and it was really funny because the Secret Service was with us also, and we walked into the town hall in Fredericksburg and there were all the good burghers of Fredericksburg: Colonel [Alfred] Petsch, Norman Dietel, Art Kowert, George Schultz, and Dietel takes one look and says, "*Sie sind von Deutschland. Ach, so schon, so schon*!" ["They are from Germany. Oh, alright, alright."] And after that the bastards wouldn't speak a word of English.

G: Is that right?

R: And the poor Secret Service, trying to coordinate this thing, and me trying to translate for them, which is terribly difficult. You know, if you know German the way I do, you don't

know the homely, familiar words. I can negotiate a treaty putting an end to a war in German, but when it comes to ordering a hamburger, hold the fries, I'd be totally lost. And fortunately, the Secret Service had one of the Texas Germans working in San Antonio, Clarence Knetsch [?]. And they brought him up. And after that, things went a little more smoothly, and between Secret Service Agent Knetsch and myself we managed to get the thing worked out. And it was fairly simple. We had I think it was about twenty members of the German press. And the visit went extremely well.

G: Did it?

R: Very well. Adenauer addressed the people of Fredericksburg at the fairgrounds. He spoke to them in German; he didn't need an interpreter. The only people that didn't understand what he was saying were the Johnsons, and they didn't count, and the reporter from the *Austin American-Statesman*, and I translated for him. Adenauer's German was very easy to translate. He was out of an older generation that spoke the kind of German that one studies in American schools.

G: Did Adenauer and Johnson get along well?

R: Hard to say. Their were no problems, no troubles, or anything like that, but the two men were so completely and totally dissimilar, and Johnson of course never got along well with those Texas Germans. I think that Lillian and I did better for him with the Germans than anything else that had ever happened to him, and a lot of it was his own fault. For example, when he was on the Ranch, he did all of his shopping in Johnson City, but Lillian and I preferred to shop in Fredericksburg because there were some excellent German markets in Fredericksburg. Very good meat was available, and so Lillian and I

became fairly well known characters in Fredericksburg and in Stonewall, which also is a German town, as you know.

Adenauer held a press conference also in Austin. Here he used his interpreter, Hans Neiman [?], who is absolutely one of the finest interpreters that I have ever come across. God, that man was good! He had some weird system of shorthand all his own. He had been a prisoner of war in the United States and just sort of picked up English naturally. He's pretty well recognized. I don't know if he's still alive, but he was the top interpreter for every German government for a long period, [for] Willy Brandt and [Ludwig] Erhard. Of course, it was rather interesting because Johnson kept insisting on talking in those Texanisms, which the American press didn't understand, let alone the German, and Hans Neiman was running up to me about every ten minutes wanting to know what in the hell it means "to go to the well" with somebody or "Mother Hubbard," or something like that.

G: Was there any substantive dimension to this Adenauer visit?

R: Not really. Of course, it depends upon what one means by substantive. I think the visit was more important to Johnson than anything else because it was one of the few things he had ever done that really got those Texas Germans. You know, the strange part of it, by the way, is Johnson's father had that Texas German vote solid, mostly because of a speech that he had made in the Texas Legislature during World War I when he got up and made an impassioned plea for tolerance for the Germans. This was when the anti-German hysteria in the United States was at its height.

But Johnson just simply could not get along with them. He was almost insulting

to them. I've never fully understood why Norman Dietel was so faithful to him. Norman had the *Fredericksburg Radio-Post*, which was one of the two weeklies in Fredericksburg. The other one, the *Standard Times* was owned, I think, by Colonel Petsch and edited by Art Kowert. It certainly wasn't friendly to Johnson, but Johnson wasn't friendly to them either. The Adenauer thing was really a master stroke where Johnson was concerned. I know the German press officer that was traveling with him--what in the devil was his name now; I got to know him fairly well--he went out and bought a bunch of Texas-type straw hats for the German press so they could all be wearing them when they got off the plane in Bonn.

G: Was there a White House presence there at the Adenauer visit to the Ranch? Did anybody from the White House or cabinet come?

R: No. We had some State Department people and that was all.

G: Did you?

R: It was a very enjoyable affair. Adenauer, of course, was a very reserved man. I remember at the press conference in Austin I suddenly realized that his English was pretty good, but he wouldn't admit it, and Hans Neiman had to translate every question for him, and looking at the old boy's eyes, I suddenly realized that what he was doing was using the translation in order to give himself some time to think of the answer. After it was over, by the way, I was offered a trip to Germany and the German government with a stipend of I think it was sixteen marks a day, something like that, and take Lillian with me, which would have been rather handsome. There was a young fellow down in Texas--funny, I can't think of his name. He later went with the steak pit [?] guy, the

Texas financier who was in the Frito-Lay Building in Dallas, George--I think it was Dillman, and he did a superb job. He did all of the Jimmy Higgins [?] work for me, you know, running around with press releases and stuff like that and getting the press buses. They also gave him this trip to Germany, which he took, he and his wife.

G: But you didn't go?

R: No. When you were working for Johnson, you didn't do things like that.

G: The Bay of Pigs incident took place during the month of April. Do you recall what Johnson's awareness was? Did he have knowledge of the invasion beforehand? Was he called in?

R: Well, he had knowledge of it, but I don't think it had impinged on him very deeply. I mean the advance knowledge, that is. I don't think he had any particular attitude toward it one way or another.

The Bay of Pigs invasion is a very strange one. I managed to put it together later on and get a pretty good idea of what had actually happened, but that was well after the event and was nothing but an intellectual exercise on my part. The whole plan was harebrained. It's a marvelous example of what can happen when men sit around and just talk to each other month after month after month and not let any outsider in on it. It's the basis of a thesis of mine that secrecy, security secrecy, harms as much as it helps, because what it does, it not only prevents the enemy from knowing something--and it usually doesn't do that; in the modern world, I don't think it does that at all--but it also prevents your own people from knowing, which means that you do not necessarily get fresh approaches to it and get fresh looks at it. I think if any outsider had walked in and looked

at that Bay of Pigs plan without any precondition, that they would have recognized immediately how silly it was. The Joint Chiefs of Staff, as I understand it, said in a very subtle manner, "Forget it." But the trouble is, they were too damn subtle. They said they approved of it provided there was air cover and a plan for evacuation in case it failed. Well, I think all that the Kennedy people noticed was that they approved of it. They didn't get the ifs and the whereases.

G: How did you learn about the invasion?

R: Oh, I learned about it when it happened.

G: Just through the newspapers?

R: Right. Johnson didn't mention it very much before. Didn't mentioned it at all before, didn't mention it while it was going on. I don't think he ever mentioned it, really.

G: Was he involved in the White House discussions at the time on whether or not to--?

R: I think he had to be, but I doubt if he could have contributed much to it. Don't forget, this was a totally secret plan which the CIA had drawn up and which the Kennedy people were confronted with when they came in the White House. The plan was suddenly dumped in their laps, and part of it was they'd been training these troops down in Guatemala, and the claim of the people that were training them was that, "My God, if these troops weren't used now, well, just forget about it." The whole thing would fall to pieces, you know, which is a well-known phenomenon in military training. When you're training troops, there's a certain point where you had better send them into combat. If you just go on training and training and training and training, their morale sinks and they aren't worth a good goddamn. Well, that happened a couple of times during World War

II when they'd train some division and get it all set to go overseas, and then for some reason they couldn't send it overseas and the outfit would just fall to pieces and you'd have to start all over again. Obviously the Kennedy people weren't very sophisticated in warfare. Who is? You know, that's the business of generals, and as I understand it, that may be wrong, but as I understand it. The Joint Chiefs of Staff had not just said out and out, "This thing won't work." What they had tried to say was "it will work if" and nobody noticed the ifs.

G: Did Johnson allude to this in later years?

R: No.

G: He didn't draw any conclusion from it?

R: No. No. The first time that Johnson ever began talking to anybody else--and that was mostly to me; I don't think he talked to very many other people--about some of the things that were going on in the inner circle was the overthrow of [Ngo Dinh] Diem. Now wait a minute. When was the Cuban Missile Crisis?

G: October 1962.

R: 1962. When was Diem overthrown?

G: 1963, the following year.

R: Well, the Missile Crisis was the first time he ever started talking about it. He told me about the Missile Crisis before it was public knowledge. We were on our way to Hawaii at that point, and we had to do some awful fast reshuffling to get him back to the United States. Well, the first time I ever heard him speak critically was over the overthrow of Diem.

G: Oh, really?

R: I suppose you want to get to that later.

G: Yes. Yes, but I do want you to cover it in detail when we get to it. Okay. Also in April, Sukarno arrived in Washington, and there were several functions in his honor, and then immediately after that, you went with Johnson and others to brief Truman. You went to Kansas City to meet with Truman and then on to New York. Do you recall that trip? Was there anything significant about it?

R: I recall the Truman trip. There was no great significance to it. I do not recall the Sukarno thing. I mean, I know it happened, but Johnson played no role in it of any kind. Now, why the hell did we go to New York?

G: I have a note that you saw *Advise and Consent*, or at least Johnson did.

R: No, I didn't see *Advise and Consent*. Why the devil did we go to New York? Who else was on the trip? Do your notes show?

G: Yes. You, [H. V.] Dick Bird, Mary Margaret [Wiley Valenti], Tazewell Shepard were there in Kansas City, and then you went to New York, and apparently Weisl was the host there, Ed Weisl.

R: What I mean, does it show everybody else that went to New York?

G: Apparently this same group went. You went from Kansas City to New York, according to this [diary entry].

R: The thing's a blank in my mind.

G: Well, tell me about the Truman visit. Do you remember anything about that?

R: There wasn't very much to it. It was just sort of Truman taking us around. You see, I had

known Truman when he was chairman of the Truman Committee before World War II. Well, Johnson just sort of gave him a generalized briefing, which I think he could have gotten out of the newspapers. I think it was more a question of touching base with Truman in order to keep a past Democratic president happy than any thing else. There was no real significance to it.

I remember that well, but I don't remember New York. Of course, we went up to New York quite a bit during that period. Johnson loved to get a lot of the staff together, especially a lot of women, and take them up to New York, and among other things he'd treat all the women to a session at Eddie Senz' and they'd come back--I never thought too highly of Eddie Senz and what he did to women, myself. I thought he made them look like whores. You know, he'd plaster their faces. He was basically a theatrical make-up artist and his ideas were basically correct except that it was just too much for street. I remember one time he had my secretary, Geraldine Williams, and when he finished with her, she looked exactly like that bust of Nefertiti which is so very famous, you know, you see pictures of it in almost any anthropological thing. But if she'd have walked down the street, everybody would have assumed she'd stepped out of some theatrical production. And Eddie Weisl was always very generous, [he'd] take people to the Stork Club or various places like that. A lot of those trips had no purpose to them at all although he would sometimes come up with one. If there had been anything significant, I would have remembered it, but to me, there were so many New York trips that I can't place that one.

G: Okay. Let's go on to the Asian trip.

R: Around the world?

G: Yes. This was in May. Started out in California, then to Hawaii for the opening of the East-West Trade Center, or the ground-breaking of it.

R: No, not Trade Center, the East-West Cultural Center.

G: Cultural Center, excuse me, ground-breaking. Then to Wake. Let's see. Was Johnson reluctant to go on this trip?

R: Reluctant? (Whistles) He dug in his heels like nobody's business! I think his suspicion was the whole thing had been cooked up by Bobby Kennedy in an effort to discredit him. He fought, he kicked, he complained. You could hear him bellowing all the way from the Capitol to the White House. I don't know why Kennedy was so adamant. There was a purpose to the trip, a very important purpose. What Kennedy wanted was a top presence to come down on Diem like a ton of bricks and tell him that he absolutely had to institute some reforms in Vietnam, that he could not get by in the dictatorial manner in which he had been running things. Kennedy himself couldn't go over to make it, but Kennedy, I think, really wanted the Vice President to go over because that put it in touch with the top leadership of the United States.

Now at the same time, however, I think he didn't want to make the thing look solely like a trip to put pressure on Diem, and so all these other things were sort of added to the trip. What I remember about it, we took off from Andrews [Air Force Base], and--this [diary] just says stopover at Travis Air Force Base for refueling. I guess that's right. There's in the back of my mind that something happened there, I don't know what. The trip out, the main thing that I remember was that I sat with Senator [Hiram] Fong and got quite a little bit of insight into both the politics and the laws of Hawaii.

Now, the important thing from his [Johnson's] standpoint in Hawaii was the ground-breaking ceremonies of the East-West Center. He had been responsible for it in Congress, and I also felt very strongly about it because that had been one of my projects. [John] Burns, the delegate from Hawaii at that point, had sold me on it, and I sold Johnson on it. It really was a very good idea. I've run into quite a few of the graduates and the students from it, out in the Pacific, and I think it's served a very worthwhile purpose. The original idea had been to build an East-West university, but after we consulted with educators, we realized that was too much and instead turned it into this center.

I remember how terribly difficult it was to sleep that night because of the difference in time zones between Hawaii and where we had left, but there was nothing exceptional or unusual in Hawaii. Just everything went according to plan. We were accompanied by a press plane, by the way, which was just loaded with newspapermen. The next day we flew from Hawaii to Wake Island, and again, that was just a refueling stop. The main thing I remember about it is what every body always remembers out of Wake Island, the gooney birds. Then from Wake to Vietnam, landing in Tan Son Nhut airport, and God, that was awful because it was about six-thirty in the evening, which was six-thirty in the morning back in Washington, where we had started the day before, and I already felt like I had the world's worst hangover. I immediately got into a fight with the Saigon police chief. He was not going to let the press anywhere near the [vice] presidential car, and oh, boy! You know, in Vietnam a journalist was about on the same social, political, and economic level as a streetsweeper in the United States, and they

were absolutely shocked and amazed that we'd let a newspaperman get that close to the Vice President of the United States.

(Interruption)

For some reason the State Department thought that they had arranged so at least we'd have a pool car following the [Vice] President, but the Vietnamese in their own inscrutable way had interpreted this as meaning that we wanted to let a car leave immediately for Saigon from the airport. Oh, God, what a battle! I think that I finally did manage to at least get the pool car in, but, you know, you were dealing with these absolute despotic--and they were despots. I should have realized from the way those cops were acting that they weren't really police, either. They were soldiers but assigned to police duty. But this was a bad enterprise. Well, fortunately, there was a Frenchman working for the Vietnamese government. He now, by the way, works for USIA [United States Information Agency]; I saw him when I was in Indonesia last summer. I can't think of his name at the moment. And the two of us got together when we finally got into Saigon and managed to get things straightened out.

Now, from a public relations standpoint, the trip was a tremendous success for Johnson. The crowds turned out and they really throbbed to him. I remember the headline on the *New York Daily News* was "Veep Wows Them in Saigon." From a standpoint substantively, however, he sort of went overboard. You were asking me for examples of the sort of things that he said that you wished to hell he hadn't said. Well, one of the big ones was this business about Diem being the "George Washington of Asia." Ooof! I was not there on the sessions between him and Diem, that was mostly

State Department people. The main thing I remember about that is sitting in the outer office of the palace and seeing those little, tiny Vietnamese generals and colonels and what-have-you walking around the place. It looked some thing of a paradox.

The rest of it were the standard things. We went out in the country to visit a silk mill, and there were some very interesting incidents along the way. He stopped at one village and just walked into the village, which was--all those Vietnamese villages had walls around them--and he just walked in and started to shake hands and talk to the people, none of whom understood him, of course, until he found an interpreter. And the Vietnamese security nearly went bonkers! It turned out that this village was a Viet Cong stronghold that he had picked; he didn't know that, but here he was, right in the middle of the Viet Cong. One of the interesting parts of it, by the way, is that the Vice President of Vietnam--I can't remember his name now; he's one of those colorless characters that everybody has forgotten [Nguyen Ngoc Tho]--was sitting in his car and was absolutely amazed at the way Johnson kept hopping out of the automobile to shake hands. Then before the trip was over, he did it himself a couple of times. But the thing that interested me the most was that on the way out to the silk mill--

(Interruption)

What interested me when we went out to the silk mill, there were only a few Vietnamese standing at the crossroads. When we returned to Saigon, my God, the highways were just lined.

(Interruption)

G: There were a lot of people when you returned.

R: Well, the reason being that obviously the word had gotten around that this guy will come out of the car and shake hands with you, and that's where the little Vice President suddenly started stepping out of the car and shaking hands himself. It hit him this was not a bad idea. Again, though, they had soldiers lining the road almost all the way. I don't know who was doing any fighting that day for the South Vietnamese army, and they all had their backs to the procession on both sides of the road, facing into the jungle with loaded rifles and ready to shoot.

The only other thing that I remember about it is that we had a demonstration of the Buffalo, that new plane that could land in about a hundred feet of ground and take off in about a hundred feet of ground. I do recall talking to some of the American training officers over there, who said that as far as the Vietnamese soldiers were concerned, they were damned good but that their officers were horrible.

G: Really?

R: They said that the young officers got killed off before they had a chance to learn anything, and the older officers didn't know anything.

G: I have a note that LBJ spent the night at a palace.

R: Sure.

G: The first night. Gia Long Palace or something like that?

R: Yes. I don't know too much about it, but that apparently is traditional, that visitors to Saigon spent the night in that palace. We were at the famous hotel--what do they call it?--I can still remember having dinner on the roof that night with some of the press. Had a marvelous meal and very good French wine. You could look out and hear cannon shots

on the edge of the town and see some of the flashes.

G: Was that the Caravelle?

R: Caravelle, that's it.

G: Okay. LBJ spent some time with the Nhus, Madame Nhu and her husband. Did he have any--?

R: Never mentioned them.

G: Really?

R: No. Diem he mentioned quite often, but not Madame Nhu or her husband.

G: Aside from assessing Diem as the George Washington of Asia, what else did he say about him? Did he--?

R: Oh, he was just extravagant. It was LBJ in one of his more extravagant moods. I think Diem had said yes to everything that he'd asked for, and therefore he assumed, "My God, this is a great man and my friend."

G: Okay.

R: You could see all sorts of things when you were there. I know what bothered me the most was there weren't any civilian police, not even directing traffic, and the town was still fairly free of Viet Cong. We had one meeting in which all the embassy wives showed up, and they obviously weren't particularly worried about living there. They brought their kids, and Johnson addressed them. And when Johnson was at a state banquet, the Minister of Information of the Vietnamese government gave a dinner for me and for the American press on the Mekong, which was a restaurant on a boat in the Mekong River. It was a rather interesting affair. The liquor was flowing rather freely.

That was the first time that I ever encountered a rather well known Chinese dish in which they brought in a big roast pig with the skin cut in squares and all you ate was the skin, and I was the guest of honor so they gave me the ear of the pig. Try chewing on a pig's ear sometime! (Laughter) I can assure you it's no great treat. The main thing I remember, at one point the Minister of Information was speaking, and I suddenly realized he was toasting me and I had to respond, and all I could remember saying was "*Nos amis de Vietnam, pour la presse de les Etats Unis, je vous demanderai [remercierai?]*." I don't know what I said after that, but they didn't throw me in the river or anything so I guess it was all right.

G: What does that mean in English?

R: "Our friends of Vietnam, on behalf of the American press, I thank you."

G: There was a buffet supper with the American colony at the Majestic Hotel. Do you remember that? Did you get any insights from the Americans living there?

R: I don't remember it at all.

G: Okay. All right. Then he went to Manila and met with the President [Carlos Garcia] and addressed the Philippine Congress. Anything on that leg of the trip that you remember?

R: It was more window dressing than anything else. Also to give us a rest, and thank God. You know, it takes a long time to recover from that kind of jet lag. I remember flying in to Manila he got in one of those "let's do everything immediately" moods and lectured the whole staff, and he wanted, "Something, something, something, something!" What was it he wanted? Something to do! And somebody suggested that he lay a wreath at the Macapagal monument, which again drove him into a frenzy of denunciation. What he

wanted to do was go out and inspect a housing project or walk into a slum or something of that nature. There was nothing of any significance in that trip except the fact that he fell like a ton of bricks for the wife of President [Ferdinand] Marcos [Marcos was president 1965-1986]. She [Imelda Marcos] was a beauty! Oh, boy, was she a beauty. He started dancing with her and I didn't think they were ever going to stop. But there was no real significance to that.

G: Okay.

R: Then I think--did we go from there to Thailand or from there to Hong Kong?

G: Let's see. I have Taipei.

R: Taipei? Could be.

G: Met with Chiang Kai-shek.

R: Could be. Let me take a look, though. Let me take a look. It doesn't particularly matter because none of this was very important. Except for some of the things that might--oh, I forgot. We stopped at Guam. Price Daniel's brother [Bill Daniel] was governor of Guam at that point. For me that [stop] was quite a sentimental thing. After all, that's where I saw my combat service, and the airfield that I flew from was now given back to the jungle. You can't even see it when you're flying right over it. Agana, which when I was there was just a destroyed city--our navy had shelled it very heavily--now is a beautiful city. I forgot that part of it. But, again, there's no great significance to it.

The Rizal monument is where he did lay that wreath, after all. [Reading from diary] "Took a helicopter to the University of the Philippines, got an honorary degree, addressed joint session of Philippine's congress." If you asked me what he had talked

about, he talked about twenty minutes. "Met with a group of American business men. Got a massage at the Malacanang Palace."

I guess he did go to Taipei. I thought he'd gone to Hong Kong first. But then he went to Taipei, and, again, there wasn't anything of any great significance. I well remember how shocked I was at seeing Chiang Kai-shek up close. He looked like death warmed over, and Madame Chiang was obviously elderly but also obviously very vibrant, very much alive. But he looked fragile, as though--I guess the best way I can describe him is he looked like an abandoned wasp's nest. His skin was sort of a gutta-percha thing. And we traveled around Taipei. It was a fairly interesting trip. The only two things I remember is how uneasy the Chinese were about Quemoy and Matsu, and also, when we landed at the airport, how startled I was to see all of the German-style clothing that they had. They had the coal-bucket helmets, highly polished, and they goose-stepped. They'd obviously been trained by German training officers. And the other strong impression that I had was that the Chinese were the only people in the world that are really adapted to living crowded together in big cities. God, they love it. His receptions at Taipei--they were not necessarily the most enthusiastic he had on that trip.

G: Oh, really?

R: Not necessarily, but the people were so happy being jammed together and you could see they were just happy at having this chance of being in a great big crowd. At a state banquet in the Grand Hotel, one of the main things that I remember about that, they had us seated at tables of about ten each, with a Chinese host and a Chinese hostess at each table, and I was next to the hostess that didn't speak a word of English, not one word.

But that woman had the most gracious manners of anybody that I have ever met in my life. I was not going to be a lout and offend that woman come hell or high water. At one point they brought in a big dish of lettuce leaves. I've had this dish several times since then. It was sort of a lettuce leaf and a sort of a chicken-and-walnut mixture, and she very sweetly and graciously put a lettuce leaf on my plate and then spooned some of the chicken-and-egg mixture and indicated that I was to roll it up and eat it like a burris [burrito?]. Well, the embassy had been briefing us: "Don't eat any thing raw. Don't eat anything that's crinkly. Don't eat anything that's grown close to the ground." And I had about ten seconds [to decide], "Reedy, are you going to be a health addict, or are you going to be a gentleman?" Well, I ate it.

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G: Yes.

R: You know, she [?] insisted on drinking some of the water that night in that restaurant on the Mekong. Boy, did she have troubles when she got back to the United States! Very serious troubles. You learn to drink nothing in Vietnam except that hideous bottled water which tasted like--well, it's full of sulphur is what it was. But that's pretty much the summary of the Taipei trip.

G: Was there any substantive aspect to LBJ's meeting with Chaing Kai-shek?

R: No.

G: Maybe any discussion of Quemoy and Matsu?

R: Oh, they probably discussed Quemoy and Matsu, and--there was ritualistic stuff.

G: Okay.

R: You know, you had to discuss Quemoy and Matsu. It broadened my perspectives some, and I hope it broadened LBJ's perspectives some, but if the trip had not taken place, world history would have not have been altered.

G: Okay.

R: Now, from there, where did we go? Here's Taipei. Oh, then we went to Hong Kong from Taipei. Now, Hong Kong, of course, was just pure fun. LBJ bought me a couple of suits, you know, one of those things where they measure you in the morning, and in the afternoon they give you a quick fitting, and in the evening there's the suit. And some of those Dynasty shirts. God, he nearly went crazy in the Dynasty Shop. I thought he was going to buy the place out. Went for a ride around Hong Kong, around the island in a boat. I wasn't with him too much because we'd had a former staff member of the Senate Preparedness Committee--what was his name? That little fellow, about that big. He'd gone to the same high school with me in Chicago. He was a consul; he was in the consular office at Hong Kong. So he took me and two or three other of his old friends out for dinner at a marvelous Chinese restaurant in Kowloon, but it wouldn't have mattered. As I said, this was just a place to visit.

Now the next stage of the trip is the one that gets a little bit important. That was to Bangkok. Now, at that point he suddenly got into a terribly bad mood.

G: Was this after you arrived in Bangkok?

R: Yes, but I think it was building up. I don't know why, but something did build him up, and one of the things that we did was to fly in the new ambassador to Thailand. His name should be on the list here somewhere. They ought to have a passenger list here

somewhere that would give that.

G: I'll fill in the name. I'm sure we can find it. [Kenneth Todd Young]

R: And here he really threw all caution to the winds. We were all staying in the Erawan Hotel in Bangkok, which then was the only first-class hotel in the city, I think. There are several there now. And that was the night that he really hit the bottle, and he spent the night just bawling the hell out of this new ambassador. It was sort of [inaudible]. I've often wondered, here he had Kennedy's sister and her husband [Jean and Stephen Smith] on the trip. I would sure like to have been in the White House and heard the report that he brought back, because this was common knowledge all over the place, and really, he just got himself into a terrible swivet, one of those wild, insane, drunken stream of words, which really had nothing to do with much of anything.

G: Had the ambassador done anything?

R: Not that I know. He'd been a Kennedy supporter. So what?

G: But in terms of offending Johnson?

R: Nothing that I know. As a rule, when somebody offended him that way, they wouldn't get that kind of vituperation. What they would get would be something short and very tough. I'll give you a story on that when we get to Italy. No, I don't know what it was. I wasn't there, thank God! This was the sort of thing, you know, that was relayed by the valet and various other people coming to us. But he apparently got it out of his system that night. He had too much of a hangover the next day to carry on the rest of it. But there were some low points on that trip and that was one of them. Very definitely a low point.

Again, nothing in Bangkok except good will. He shook a lot of hands, had a dinner, spent the night at the Erawan Hotel. Everything you have here is completely adequate for covering the trip other than that business. Let's see if there's anything else here that "interview" on Thai television; that was strictly vanilla.

Then to New Delhi. Now, the Indian trip--to me, the trip to India is very, very interesting because it gives a rather important insight into Johnson. He had a rather lengthy session with [Jawarharlal] Nehru, and believe me, when it comes to the game of cross-questions and crooked answers, that was it. He and Nehru simply did not understand each other. Which becomes significant because at the next trip, in Pakistan he and Ayub Khan became blood brothers in about thirty seconds flat. This is one of the things, by the way, that I have since discovered now that I have spent more time over there and have gotten some insight into Asian politics: the Pakistanis specialize in presidents that know how to get along with American presidents. The Indians, on the other hand, specialize in prime ministers that offend American presidents, and this has given rise to the very strong belief in India that we are on the Pakistani side, and that we are therefore responsible for all these separatist movements in India because what we're trying to do is to divide India up so Pakistan can conquer them one at a time. Indira Gandhi practically said that last summer. But if I had realized that I was right then on the birth of that particular concept--because again he and Nehru just didn't understand each other.

However, he got a very good reception from the crowds in India. I don't think he thought it was too good, because Indians are not as demonstrative as many other people.

When he got into Pakistan, again, the crowds were very demonstrative. Muslims are much more demonstrative than Hindus. It was rather interesting. Nehru had a few statistics that intrigued him. I think that was about the only part of the conference that came through. Nehru told him that at that particular point India was only able to save about 2 per cent of its gross national product, which meant that it had nothing to invest in capital development, nothing to improve its structure, and that's why India was in such desperate need for foreign capital, whether it came from America or what have you. And Nehru told him that his target was to reach a point where India could save about 18 per cent of its gross national product, and that at that point India could then take care of its own developmental problems. It would not be dependent upon the rest of the world. That he understood. That he understood. But where he had trouble was in some of this--he would regard it as mysticism, and he and Nehru could not see eye-to-eye at all on foreign policy.

G: Let me ask you to recall some specifics here.

R: Hard to recall too many specifics. Nehru, of course, wanted very desperately to keep India a neutral in the whole East-West conflict, whereas Johnson was looking for friends. There was just a sort of a verbal sparring about it, with phrases that--the two men weren't communicating at all on this point. The reason I can't recall very many specifics is that the only specifics did consist of that question of the 18 per cent and the 2 per cent. Otherwise, they were speaking rather mystically. Johnson was too much of a diplomat to come right out and say, "Hey, look, come on over and join us or you're going to be [in] trouble." And Nehru could not state his desire for Indian neutrality in any terms that

would be comprehensible to Johnson.

I think that was the night, by the way, of the dinner in the palace, which was a very colorful thing given by the Vice President of India. I'll never forget walking down those long lines of Sikh lancers standing there at rigid attention. One of the things that I remember was that there were two menus--this was my first real lesson in India--at the table, both in Hindi, which I couldn't read, and I asked a naval officer next to me what they were, and he said, "One is a vegetarian menu," and I said, "Oh, vegetarianism is common here?" And he said, "Yes, very, and especially among the Jains. I'm a Jain." Well, of course, I had read the phrase in Kipling, but I didn't know what it meant, and I asked him to explain what the Jains were to me. He explained how they were forbidden to kill anything. They'd wear a mask over their face so they wouldn't breathe in an insect. They walked barefooted. I sat there fascinated, and finally I asked the obvious question, "Lieutenant, how do you reconcile your religion and your profession?" That man talked twenty minutes and I still don't know what he said. Of course, I don't think the Indian navy is very deadly, but that was one of the funnier episodes.

Then we went to Agra to see the Taj Mahal, and that was just sort of a fun trip. He did something very obvious there, which quite a bit of the press interpreted it as crudity on his part, but I thought was a rather normal thing to do. Somebody told him that the acoustics of the Taj Mahal were very perfect, that you would get an echo which would reproduce the original sound very faithfully. So, standing in the middle of the Taj Mahal, he got up and came out with a loud "yahoo," or something like that. I think that's rather normal.

Oh, the other thing that I remember, and this I thought was very impressive although the press didn't quite get the full flavor of it. We went out to look at a couple of Indian villages, one of which was improved and one unimproved by the government. Now, you couldn't tell the difference by looking at them. They were both just these sort of plaster huts with a hole in the top to let the smoke out when they had a fire. And the streets were narrow, and they were cooking everything over buffalo chips. But I'm told that the difference was that there were sanitary facilities that you couldn't see on the surface at the improved village. But as we were driving along the highway, he came to a well where farmers were dropping the bucket on a long rope and pulling it up to get water. And he stopped, and he walked over to the well and dropped the bucket in himself and pulled it up. Then he turned around and he made a little speech to the farmers. Of course, it had to be translated; they didn't speak any English and he didn't speak any Hindi. At least, I don't think he did. But what he did, he said that he knew about this because when he was a child in the Hill Country in Texas that was the way they got water, and he described pulling up the rope, and sometimes the rope would slip and it would burn his hands. I could see some of the farmers nodding appreciatively. And he said in those days, the average annual income in Johnson City was the same as the average annual income was in India, which rather startled me. I looked it up, by the way, and he was right. I don't know where he got the figure; I didn't give it to him. Of course, the figure was a little bit faulty because that was cash income and the farmers in Johnson City had a lot more to eat than those Indian farmers.

But then he explained how the farmers had finally gotten together and formed an

REA cooperative and had managed to get electricity, and they didn't have to pull that water up in a bucket anymore. And I don't think the farmers really understood that, but they very obviously got the message that here was a nation where the very top man in the government, or one of the very top men in the government, cared about ordinary farmers. I think it was one of the best things he ever did. The press was a little cynical about it, you know. They thought it was cornpone but--

G: You mean the American press?

R: Yes. But I myself thought it was really a rather great thing.

G: Back to the rebel yell in the Taj Mahal.

R: Yes.

G: Were the Indians shocked or offended by that?

R: I don't know. I doubt it. They may have been, but, you know, the Taj Mahal is not a sacred thing. What it is, is a monument. The Shah Jahan built the monument as a monument to his wife, but it's no shrine or anything like that.

G: How did the American press write up the episode?

R: Amused.

G: Really?

He also laid a wreath at Gandhi's tomb while he was there. Do you remember that? Was there any significance to that?

R: None in particular, it was just the thing to do.

G: Did he have any conversations with Indira Gandhi while he was there?

R: No, but she was not much of a public figure at that time.

G: Is that right? Okay.

R: I know I met her years later in Washington, had about a twenty- or twenty-five-minute conversation with her. My God, that woman had a whim [will?] of iron. You talked to her and you realized immediately that she was tough.

G: What was his reaction to India, the poverty there?

R: I think that he looked upon it as being the same as Johnson City when he was a kid. You know, Johnson felt like a minority member being discriminated against. That was one very deep part of his psychology. He once made the remark that he had all those people from the Ivy League like [McGeorge] Bundy and the rest of them, that they're all sitting up there looking at him through a monocle. And I think that he had a very genuine and rather deep feeling for the Indian peasant, and I think he really wanted to do something because he did interpret what was happening in the same terms as what happened in the Hill Country when he was a kid, and the man did not have enough sense of history to realize the differences, but I think that his interpretation was one that really struck through to the Indians, and he was really rather popular. He got what I thought was a very good reaction from the Indian masses.

G: He went from there to Karachi. Pakistan.

R: Karachi, yes. And there, of course, the reception was tumultuous. More to his liking. I don't think it was really any more enthusiastic than the receptions he got from the Indian crowds, but, after all, Karachi is Muslim, and Muslims are more likely to go wild, sacrifice sheep, dance in the streets, beat drums. Boy, they really gave him the kind of reception he liked. He had a marvelous time, and he met Ayub Khan, and as I said,

inside of three minutes they were blood brothers. You took one look at Ayub, and you immediately saw all the barracks he'd been at, all the barracks room dinners, Harrow--he was a typical British colonel with a very British accent. He had a big--what in Texas they would call a barbecue that night with all of the various shish kebabs and shashliks and what have you, and the largest pipe and drum band I have ever seen in my life.

The more important things that we did: one was going out to look at some very interesting houses that had been designed for Pakistan by a Greek architect, and they were rather well done. What the Greek architect did--in the first place, there was virtually no rain, so you didn't have to worry about windows and things like that, and it was always warm. So he designed these houses without windows. There was lots of sand, lots of limestone, so what he did, they were poured concrete, and really, for Pakistan, it was marvelous housing, and very cheap and very inexpensive.

Then, of course, there was the episode of Bashir [Ahmad], the camel driver. He gravitated toward Bashir for very obvious reasons. First of all, Bashir had a camel, and here he's looking at this big crowd, and here's this camel's head coming up so, you know, it's one thing you couldn't miss. But second, Bashir had a very attractive face. There was something grandpappyish about him. He looked like the kind of uncle everybody would like to have. And he did; he dearly loved kids. And he walked over to Bashir, and I was standing right beside him at that point. I know exactly what he said. What he said was, "Mr. Bashir"--well, of course, this was said through an interpreter because Johnson didn't speak Urdu, and they had an Urdu interpreter there--"Mr. Bashir, I've enjoyed visiting your country. I hope some day you have a chance to visit mine." That was what he said.

Now, I don't know what the interpreter did to it, but I do know the next morning when I woke up, a copy of the newspaper *Dawn* was shoved under my door. Most Pakistani newspapers, by the way, are in English. I think there are seven papers in the country altogether, and I think of the seven, five of them are in English, and one in Urdu and one is in Pushtu, I believe.

But *Dawn* had a big editorial and, God, they were just as enthusiastic about Johnson as Johnson was enthusiastic about Diem, and they were talking about, "The word is all through the bazaars that he has invited Bashir, the camel driver, to come to the United States and live in the Waldorf-Astoria." I don't [know] how in the hell the Waldorf-Astoria ever got into it. (Laughter) This, by the way, is rather typical of papers in that part of the world; they never let the facts interfere with a good story. And I just sort of shrugged my shoulders. Later it turned out, however, that the people in Pakistan had taken that fairly seriously.

There wasn't much else that was really too noteworthy except, as I said, he and Ayub becoming bosom buddies. We went for a tour of the harbor in a Pakistani naval vessel, drank Pakola, which is the Pakistani version of a soft drink. Arghh! Sickening sweet. But they did not at that point allow Coca-Cola to come into the country.

There's one story--you'd better get Buzz [Horace Busby] to tell it to you because he was there at the time; I wasn't. But he was getting set to do something. He didn't like the communiqué that the State Department people had produced, so he sat down and he started to dictate one. "The President of Pakistan and the Vice President of the United States agree that government is only legitimate when it is founded on the will of the

people." And Buzz gasped, "Hey! For the love of God, this country has been under martial law for seven years."

I remember Ayub himself was--Johnson liked him because he was so damn direct. There had been some kind of an incident in which Pakistani planes bombed some Indian thing right on the border, or there had been a clash between the Pakistani and Indian troops in which there was some--that I've forgotten. But Ayub is supposed to have said to Johnson, "One of your striped-pants diplomats is going to come in today and ask me whether any of the American equipment was involved in that, and I'm going to tell them, 'Of course! Why the hell do you think I've got it?'" And Johnson dearly loved that. Of course, it was in violation of treaty and everything else, but . . . So, it was a good, fine visit.

G: Back to the camel driver. There's been some speculation that the interpreter was really creative and added some poetry--

R: In the United States?

G: Yes.

R: Oh, brother! (Laughter) We had him out at the Ranch and we had two professors there, Walter Prescott Webb and J. Frank Dobie. So first he gets introduced to Dobie, and he mutters something in Urdu, and the interpreter, Ali Khan [?], says, "He says, Professor Dobie, that it is obvious that your wisdom must be as multitudinous as the white hairs, the white hairs of sagacity, that are sprouting from your head." And then he gets introduced to Walter Prescott Webb, and he grunts some thing in Urdu, and Ali says, "Ah, Dr. Webb. He says that to look at you is reminiscent of the words of the immortal

poet: 'Ah, take the cash, and let the credit go, nor heed the rumble of a distant drum.'"

So after this is over I take Ali aside, and I said, "Ali, is it correct that this man just learned to sign his name thirty days ago and that's all he can do in Urdu or any other language?" He said, "Yes, that's right." And I said, "Look, in the last thirty minutes, I have heard him quote Yqual [?] and Omar Khayyam. Now how in the hell does a total illiterate quote Yqual and Omar Khayyam in the course of a fifteen- or twenty-minute conversation?" Ali says, "Ah, George. You must realize he is from Bareilly. Bareilly is a city where the manners are of the utmost graciousness. The Moguls sent their children to Bareilly to be educated. In Bareilly, if a cabdriver sees someone standing in the street, he will put his head out the window and say, 'Please, honored sir, would you mind moving your presence just a few feet so I do not inadvertently hurt you?'" I said, "Ali, keep it up. You're doing great." There was no doubt about it whatsoever. I was told later on by a few people that did speak Urdu that Bashir's language is about what you would expect out of a camel driver.

G: Well, back in Pakistan, what was LBJ's reaction to the way the invitation had been extended?

R: I never heard him react. I think he would just love the column because it said what a great man he was. Oh, the column was just the same kind of language LBJ would use. I don't think he took the Bashir thing seriously any more than I did or anybody else that read it.

G: But he did go through with the visit.

R: That's complicated. After we got back to the United States, we got some cablegrams

from the embassy in Pakistan saying, "For the love of God, all Pakistan thinks you invited Bashir. You've got to do some thing about it." So he kind of groaned and said okay and started making arrangements, and Bashir just disappeared. He lived in this huge--you know, Karachi is a city that went from six hundred thousand to about two million in about a month at the time of the partition, and while this was several years after the partition, there were still all kinds of problems, and right in the center, there was this huge open space in which you had these mud huts. They had taken reeds and sort of plastered them together like tepees and plastered them over with mud, and you had about a hundred thousand people living in those very makeshift accommodations, one of whom was Bashir. And I remember there was very little water for all of them, two or three water fountains in this whole area. And when the embassy sent somebody to try to talk to Bashir, he just disappeared, and all they could get out of it was that some government man had come up and taken him. Nobody knew why. However, later on, Ayub came to the United States to visit, and he went down to the Ranch to visit with Johnson. So while he was at the Ranch, Johnson talked to him and got Bashir sprung. It turned out that the Pakistani government was afraid that this illiterate camel driver coming into the United States would disgrace Pakistan. Now, I don't know where they got Ali. He came up from one of those foreign institutes in Washington, D.C., but he was a real find.

And we did a number of things. We got in touch with the People-to-People program, and they had one of those Fairchild--what do you call them--Airstream, or something like that, which was ideal for flying him around the country. The Ford Motor Company volunteered this truck which they would give him, so he wouldn't have to

worry about camels anymore. And he came down to the Ranch. You want the full story of it now?

G: Yes.

R: He came down to the Ranch, and it really was a tremendously successful visit. Everybody liked him. You couldn't help but like him. He had the kindliest face, and he just throbbed to children and they sort of throbbed to him. There were a number of rather interesting points. At one time, Johnson had an old Tennessee Walker that was about as gentle as a rocking chair, and so they put--this was a kind of a stunt--they put Bashir on this Tennessee Walker. Somebody said, "You'd better put Ali on a horse, too, then, so he can be up there and talk to Bashir." And somebody said, "Well, they can't do it. Only one horse is saddled. That's Henry's horse, and nobody can ride Henry's horse but Henry [Blackburn]." I remember Ali saying, "A horse is a horse." He walked over and he said something to that horse, and I swear that horse snapped to attention and saluted, and Ali got on that horse's back--I have never before or since in my whole life seen a man in such complete, absolute command of an animal as Ali was in command of that horse. Henry was the ranch foreman then and, you know, all those Texas cowpokes glory in having horses that nobody can ride but them, but this horse knew a boss when he saw it! That night at the table, I can remember Mrs. Johnson saying, "Mr. Khan, you ride very well. Tell me, where did you learn?" And he kind of sat at attention, which he always did when addressed by members of the First Family, and said, "Ma'am, I was a first lieutenant in the Third Bengal Lancers."

But after that we sent Bashir on a tour of the United States and, God, it turned out

beautifully. Just as a stunt, it was perfect. Of course, there were problems. Gasoline was sixty-nine cents a gallon at dockside in Karachi in those days--and that was a hell of a lot of money for gasoline then--which meant that he had to get better payloads for that truck than he'd gotten for the camel. You know, the camel, you just fed him every day, that was all. And the embassy had his son taught to drive the truck, and his son hauled furniture and stuff like that. It was a rather enjoyable episode. I'm rather glad *Dawn* invited him.

G: Okay. From Pakistan, he went to Athens.

R: No. Well, if he did, my memory--when did he go to--oh, no, I'm thinking of the Middle Eastern trip. That's right.

G: Visited the Acropolis and the Parthenon. Anything on that leg of the visit?

R: Wasn't very much, really. That was just sort of a rest stop. All of my memories of it are--oh, the most important thing that I really remember--of course, we had the usual frou-frou. I can still remember Liz Carpenter coming down the hall and saying, "Is the water safe to drink?" We were in the Hotel Grande Bretagne.

But he did have a session with [Constantine] Caramanlis, who was then prime minister of Greece, and what intrigued me about it so much is an election was coming up, and the embassy was very much worried that Caramanlis was in trouble and that [Georges] Papandreou, whom they regarded as a real wild man, was going to win the election. The reason that I'm so intrigued by it is a year later in his Middle Eastern tour, Papandreou was president and an election was coming up and they were worried that Papandreou was going to be defeated. (Laughter) God, that was funny.

But the incident that stands out the most in my mind was after a session with Caramanlis, they'd had some sort of a communique that indicated they had arrived at agreement. I think the agreement was that we were all good people or something like that. And that was where Johnson--Caramanlis spoke no English, by the way--pulled his famous, "Well, Mr. President, this agreement reminds me of a Mother Hubbard. It covers everything and touches nothing." And the interpreter gulped and said something. Then he said, "Well, I'll tell you, Mr. Prime Minister, you've got my britches. I need a drink." The interpreter looked wide-eyed and said something, and Caramanlis got the most puzzled look on his face that I have ever seen, and some members of the American embassy who were standing there explained it to me. The interpreter had gotten through that "Mother Hubbard" by making an allusion to "Fatima's veil," but, "You've got my britches. I need a drink." had completely floored him, and it came out in Greek, "My trousers are missing. I must have alcohol." (Laughter) Which, of course, was a little bit unusual.

The rest of it was sightseeing. I can still recall, I was going up to the Acropolis as he was coming down, and he asked me what it was all about, and I tried to give him a little history of it. What else? Is that the trip--we went somewhere else in Greece, I think, or was that on the Middle Eastern trip? Oh, it says that we arrived at Tripoli and toured the base, which meant he went around it real quick. "Stopped in the Azores." I remember at the Azores he was just dead tired and I think had had a couple of drinks, too. This honor guard came out to the plane, so Mrs. Johnson came down and received them.

Then we went to Bermuda, where we had a kind of a rest stop. It was sort of fun.

He went shopping. The press had come up with a number of songs. One was "Around the World with LBJ" and just a lot of humorous references to the trip. I remember the "goddamned AP." He was always talking about the "goddamned AP," so that line was in the song. But Bermuda was, as I said, just a rest stop, and a very good one, too, because he was able to arrive in Washington reasonably fresh, which he would not have otherwise. Carl Rowan was on the trip, and Carl Rowan wrote the statements for him. Carl at that time was assistant secretary of state, and Carl Rowan wrote the report for him to deliver to Kennedy and a report for him to deliver to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. I think that's about it.

G: Did this trip, particularly the Vietnam portion of it, influence Johnson's thinking in later years?

R: Yes, in a number of ways. The most important immediate thing, it led to the first open criticism I ever heard him make--and when I say "open," open to me, not to anybody else that I know of, although if he was talking to me, I imagine he was talking to other people, too--of the Kennedy Administration. He was deeply shocked by the overthrow of Diem. very deeply shocked. He was telling me later, "If you only knew how"--you know, the kind of plot he knew was going on. The man was terribly distressed about it and sort of hinted without saying it--and I don't believe it really happened--but hinted that Diem had been deliberately killed under CIA instigation, under Kennedy instigation. Part of that was I think that he had felt that he had made a personal commitment to Diem, and this was the way it was answered. But I think to some extent that it may have influenced him into believing that he had a commitment for keeping South Vietnam free of communist

troubles, too. Then, I think, like almost every other American president, he became overly fond of Pakistan. I'm trying to think if there was any other.

G: Was he pleased with the trip overall?

R: Yes, I think he was pleased until they got to this question of the overthrow and assassination of Diem. I think he was pleased with it. None of his worst expectations were realized. It very obviously was not a Kennedy plot to make him look foolish.

I should add a couple of other things, looking back on the trip as a whole. He was constantly using the fact that Steve Smith [was on the trip]--and Steve's wife was with him--as evidence of how deeply the administration felt about each country he was in. Otherwise, the President would never have sent his youngest sister, *et cetera*, *et cetera*. That was a theme he hit in every single country.

G: Why were they along?

R: I think that the reason that he gave may have been the reason. He at first thought that it was just a question of Steve Smith there to spy on him, I think. As I've said, I would sure like to know what kind of a report Steve Smith brought back. The only really bad episode was in Bangkok, but there were a couple of other occasions, I think, when he boozed it up a bit too much. Let's see, there's one other thought that I had in my mind.

Tape 2 of 2, Side 1

R: I think--and this again is hard to put my finger on, it's sort of an interpretation--he may have left that trip with an overly simplistic picture of the problems of Asia and an overly simplistic idea what could be done about it. I think he started to think in terms of economic development, in terms of REA [Rural Electrification Administration], in terms

of water projects, which of course from an economic standpoint might be a solution to many of the difficulties of Asia. But I don't believe that the complexities of Asian history and Asian thought ever came through to him. I don't think that he ever really understood the fact that these people thought differently than Americans do. That's one of the reasons why Ayub Khan, I think, appealed to him so strongly. After running into all the Confucianists and the Malays and the Hindus, to meet somebody who at least thought like an Englishman thought, which was a better description of Ayub than an American, that had a tremendous appeal to him.

He was a great development man. I think that everywhere he looked in rural Asia what he saw was Johnson City and the surrounding country, and I think that he believed that the same panaceas that could be applied to Johnson City could be applied to Agra or to the area around Agra, or to the rural areas of Thailand. You see, it's terribly difficult because Johnson very rarely gave insights into his introspection, and when he did, it would usually be something rather banal. You could usually find out what he was thinking of in terms of action, or what he was going to do, and some of the thinking that went into the action that he determined to take. I think I mentioned to you the last time that line of Bill White's when he was writing about the Congress, that there were two Texans, one of them Rayburn, he said, "subtle in thought," and the other Johnson, "subtle in action." That is a pretty good description of the man; he was subtle in action but not so much in thought.

G: Initially, when he exercised all of this reluctance to go, do you think that he felt in physical danger of being sent to an area where there was combat?

R: I don't think so. Well, he may have. He was not a terribly brave man when it came to physical danger. He wasn't a coward, but he wasn't a terribly brave man either. No, I think that it was basically that he felt he was being set up. What happened to Nixon in Venezuela made a very deep impression on him. Do you remember the occasion when Nixon got surrounded by the crowds and all that sort of thing. And he looked upon it in terms of the Venezuelans reacting against Nixon, and what he thought was that the whole thing was really a blow to Nixon's political standing in the United States. And he thought the same thing could happen to him, that they were setting him up to get some very nasty, jeering crowds and that the whole thing was probably a Kennedy plot. I think that that was really what caused it. I don't think it was physical fear.

G: Anything on his report to President Kennedy? He did meet with Kennedy on his return, or shortly after his return, and met with [Dean] Rusk.

R: There's nothing that's not in the record. I think you must have a copy of that statement that Rowan wrote for him, and there's nothing else outside of that.

G: Well, I think we've covered it fairly well. Can you think of anything that we've left out?

R: There's probably something, but I can't think of a damn thing of any significance. I'll probably remember forty things after you're gone.

End of Tape 2 of 2 and Interview XIX

NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION

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Legal Agreement Pertaining to the Oral History Interview of

GEORGE E. REEDY

In accordance with the provisions of Chapter 21 of Title 44, United States Code, and subject to the terms and conditions hereinafter set forth, I, George E. Reedy of Milwaukee, Wisconsin do hereby give, donate and convey to the United States of America all my rights, title, and interest in the tape recordings and transcripts of the personal interviews conducted in Milwaukee, Wisconsin on June 12, 1985; June 13, 1985; September 25, 1986; January 7, 1987; January 8, 1988; August 28, 1988; February 6, 1990; August 7, 1990; November 11, 1990; and December 13, 1990, and prepared for deposit in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.

This assignment is subject to the following terms and conditions:

(1) The transcripts shall be available for use by researchers as soon as they has been deposited in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.

(2) The tape recordings shall be available to those researchers who have access to the transcripts.

(3) During my lifetime, I retain all copyright in the material given to the United States by the terms of this instrument. Thereafter, the copyright in both the transcripts and tape recordings shall pass to the United States Government. During my lifetime, researchers may publish brief "fair use" quotations from the transcripts and tape recordings without my express consent in each case.

(4) Copies of the transcripts and the tape recordings may be provided by the Library to researchers upon request.

(5) Copies of the transcripts and tape recordings may be deposited in or loaned to institutions other than the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.

George E. Reedy August 24, 1995
Donor

August 24, 1995
Date

John W. Carlin
Archivist of the United States

9-13-95
Date