INTERVIEWEE: E. O. REISCHAUER

INTERVIEWER: Paige E. Mulhollan

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I: Let's begin simply by identifying you as to position. You are Edwin O. Reischauer and your government connection during the Johnson Administration was as Ambassador to Japan.

R: That's right, Jim.

I: You took that job in 1961.

R: I had taken that job in April, 1961 and, like most other appointees of that sort, continued on under President Johnson until I finally got out on August 19, 1966--is when I left Japan, I believe.

I: You say that date like you--

R: Well, it took me a long time. I had been trying to get off for quite some time and thinking about it and making real efforts for quite some time.

I: Did you have any connection with Mr. Johnson at all prior to the time you joined the government in '61?

R: Well, I had met him while he was Vice President, during trips back to Washington, but not such a way that I had had any real contact with him, at luncheons and things of that sort.

I: Were you in a position to see whether he was or was not included in on occasions that were of importance regarding Asian policy or discussions?

R: Well, he certainly was not included in on any of the substantive discussions that I was in on in Washington. There were just largely preparation of the President for the visit of a Prime Minister, the visit of the Cabinet, the groups when they came over on their--every second year they would come over, you see, and you would have a discussion with the President to prepare him for this, prepare the little

speeches he wanted to give and so on. And at these rather small meetings, why, the Vice President was not in attendance. But I don't think it would have been normal for him to be.

I: So you didn't get the impression that he was being excluded?

R: No, closed out or included, I have no way of judging that, either way.

I: You served in that position through the transition after Mr. Johnson was suddenly made President by events. Was there a noticeable change in our policies so far as you were concerned in Japan?

R: No, there was not. Most certainly there was not a change in policy, or I might have run into real difficulty about my being willing to stay. There was, and I have said this on lecture platforms many times, there was no change of policy whatsoever, as far as Japan was involved.

I: What about personal contact after this?

R: Here was a great change for me. For one thing, like many others, I had been much taken by Mr. Kennedy's personality and capacity to put things in verbal forms. It was inspiring. I think my wife even more so; she had been so impressed by the phrase, "Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country," that sort of thing. And he was very charming and there was a real sense of let down there because here was a Vice President whom we did not know and who did not have the same charismatic appeal for us individually. And my wife was so dispirited by all this she wanted to leave right away, but as I said to her, I felt that we were needed all the more, in a sense, because quite clearly President Johnson had not established contacts with the outside world or been interested in that aspect of America's national interest as much as maybe Mr. Kennedy had. In any case, certainly in a country like Japan and most others he did not have a great image the way Mr. Kennedy had, which was a great help in foreign policy.

I: Sure

R: And with the Kennedy image gone, well, the whole problem of American foreign policy, in that sense, became more difficult. And my wife and I had a rather special place to the Japanese public, that made quite a bit of us, and therefore had something of an image ourselves, and it was all the more needed at that time to take the place of the void. Now in this sense there is a great change. I had a feeling that now I had to carry a lot of the public relations much more myself. And wasn't just being carried along by this great image of Kennedy which, right or wrong, was still a great asset in American foreign policy. The other thing was that, while I had no original contacts with the Kennedys at all, never met any of them until after I had been appointed ambassador--

I: One of the old cronies, huh?

R: They took me on faith, you know, and I am sure that President Kennedy was terribly distressed to find out I was another Harvard professor. He had enough of those around, you know, it was embarrassing. I had no particular contact, but Bobby Kennedy had come out in January, 1962 for a hectic but glorious week of public relations in Japan. They had given him a terrific schedule, he had enjoyed it immensely, and we established a real contact there, which meant that I was able in the last few minutes of his stay to fill him in on some real problem areas which immediately he took up with his brother as soon as he got back and we got all sorts of very difficult problems started toward solution, you see, through this personal contact. Now, this had been very important to me in my relationship with President Kennedy. This of course disappeared completely, and I did not have that same sort of entree to President Johnson and, quite frankly, I mean as long as this is supposed to be a frank and meaningful discussion, I had a feeling that his own images of professors and people

who lived in New England--I'm not a New Englander by birth--but people with my more academic, intellectual heritage and so on, he didn't have easy contact with them.

I: Was that partly a matter of accessibility? Was it difficult for you to see--

R: I don't know. I just felt that, you know, that it was very difficult for me to establish a real sense of rapport there. And I think it is partly because, unconsciously perhaps, he would have a prejudice, you know, another one of these damn intellectuals who can't come down to earth, which I can understand. I can understand. I am not trying to blame him for this, I mean we all have our own particular backgrounds and our own particular--

I: But you could get in to see him?

R: I had this feeling, well, no, there was a distinction there, there was a distinction. But this I think was not a distinction of that sort, it was a distinction of his much lesser interest, really, in foreign policy. John Kennedy had always asked to see me when I came back to Washington, as soon as, you know, it became known to his White House staff that I was back for some reason. I would then, within a couple of days, get a request to be fitted into his schedule, go over and we would have a, you know, fifteen to half an hour talk, fifteen to half an hour talk about how I saw things, what the problems were, and so on. Such a request never came from President Johnson. He was, you know, a President is a terribly busy man. And there are other things that probably absorbed his time more in that way, and so there wasn't this contact either. Now when we came back for the joint Cabinet meetings, you know, there is this Cabinet level economic conference between the Japanese and American Cabinet members each year, and every other year it is in this country, and so I would be back and we'd brief him for these meetings, and so on. Why, these all went very well, and actually since I left the position he has been extremely affable to me

and pleasant to me, and friendly and so on. But I didn't you know, have quite the same sense of his being interested, either in the job, or in me that I had with Kennedy, so there was a different feeling about it.

I: So you didn't have an opportunity, really, to see whether or not he mastered the details of something as complex as American-Japanese relations, for example, the details of trade policy, for example, or some other particular problem that might have arisen?

R: No, and for that matter it would be hard even to say whether John Kennedy had mastered them all, but he always had at least an expressed interest there a little bit more strongly. I've talked with President Johnson since about China matters, and things like that, and I think he can be extremely knowledgeable on some of these problems.

I: Well, you mentioned that he came to office without a great deal of background or interest in foreign affairs. I just wondered if you thought he had learned or made aneffort to catch up, as it were?

R: No, he obviously was forced to and I think he probably did get better informed about the crisis areas. Japan never quite qualified as a crisis area. That's--

I: That's good!

R: Oh, that's fine, both under Presidents Kennedy and Johnson. This left me with a great deal more freedom of action which is what I enjoyed about the job. I did a lot of sort of shaping things myself without too much consultation back home on points where I thought I could safely do that. But on the other hand, it was hard to get real attention, because it wasn't something that was going to explode tomorrow or even in the next six months. This was a matter of something well over the horizon, yet something we should be working on now. Now it was on something like this that Bobby Kennedy was so useful, on Okinawa, for instance, which right as now is

now an explosive problem of great magnitude and great danger to our country. Well, I could get him started on this back in January '62 so in the meantime, we have moved into a better position for the crisis when it came.

I: But by the time you left Japan, at least, there was no, I don't know how to say it, specifically Lyndon Johnson stall on Japanese policy. There still hadn't been any basic change that he had--

R: No, there hadn't been any basic change because the whole shaping of the policy was a mere slight changing of a fundamental interpretation. We never changed drastically on anything with Japan. It just had been a slow equalization of the partnership. I began using the word partnership on my own, and it was picked up by others, and this means a playing down, bit by bit, of the military aspects of the relationship, emphasis of other sides, the great innovations, if any, were those early in the Kennedy Administration to create the economic conference and the various other ones. Lyndon Johnson added one on medicine, if I remember correctly. Yes.

I: So it was a building on rather than a--

R: Another special conference of this sort. And made some suggestions for cooperative activities, but that wasn't basically changed.

I: You mentioned in one of your books how upset the Japanese were, particularly in the early part of our Vietnam escalation in 1965. Was there adequate consultation, or any consultation, with the Japanese government prior to the various crucial decisions that were made by our government that year?

R: No, there were not. There were cases of the government asking me what I thought the reactions of Japan would be to some specific steps.

I: But you were not to ask the Japanese government?

R: And there were occasions when we let them know what we were about to do, and certainly when the President had contacts with high government officials,

why, you know, they would talk about things of this sort. But there was not a real consultation. I think the Japanese would not have welcomed having a sort of help make the decision as to whether or not we were going to bomb North Vietnam.

I: What about you individually as an Asian scholar of note, was there consultation, not with what you thought the Japanese government would do, but with you on--

R: No. No. And there had not been any under the Kennedy Administration either. Chester Bowles, when he first asked me, he was Under Secretary at the time, he was the one who approached me to do this job, suggested that I'd be sort of not just Ambassador to Japan, but maybe sort of an overall advisor on the whole area, which, you know, sounded very grandiloquent and fine and all that sort of thing, you know. But when I got to the job I could see very quickly that this was not a very practical idea on his part. That there is a great sense of territory among the ambassadors, as in other animals, and they look with very extreme disfavor on any other ambassador making suggestions about their countries in any way, and this would be the best way to undercut myself in the whole Foreign Service and the State Department. I'd just ruin myself, and I thought the relations with Japan were important enough for me not to try to play that kind of role. Now I know Ken Galbraith played it quite differently giving advice on all subjects, domestic as well as foreign policy, you know. He was a free-wheeling person doing it an entirely different way, and it has its advantages but also its disadvantages in terms of what was really important to me--Japan policy. I think the way I played it was much better. They never did come to me and say, do you thing, in view of your having written about Southeast Asia, as well as other things, that we should do this or that. It would have been a difficult thing because

I was not following the intelligence reports that closely, nor were they normally coming to me in that kind of detail. And this would certainly have taken away my attention from the Japanese things too much, and since most of Washington was already, in a sense, overly focused on Vietnam--

I: Yes.

R: And underfocused on these other problems, which in the long run are the more important ones, why, I didn't want to fall into the same trap.

I: So you didn't even--

R: So I didn't really try to do it, no.

I: You didn't offer unsolicited advice?

R: No, I did not. I didn't, because I thought it would weaken my position on Japanese advice.

I: One of the points you also make is that our Vietnam mistakes occurred a good number of years ago, that we could have reversed our position in '46 or '54 much easier than later.

R: Yes.

I: Did Lyndon Johnson, in your opinion, really have an option as late as '64 and early '65? I don't think you make that explicit.

R: Well, I think so, yes. He had a better option, in a sense, than Nixon has today. In a way, and Nixon is going to take the option of withdrawal, obviously. I don't think he'll get out on an easy negotiation. Let's hope he does, but I think he will just have to opt for a unilateral withdrawal and do it very carefully. Now, I think it was an easier one that than. But I think the overwhelming military advice would have been strongly against that. The ability to follow the other course had not been proved wrong, I mean as lacking, as yet, so it might have taken more wisdom than any man could have to do that. It was a serious mistake, in retrospect, but certainly no more to be faulted than the mistakes of

Kennedy that got us in from nundreds to tens of thousands. Or the very serious mistake in '54 that got us in, really, in the first place.

I: Or even the earlier ones--

R: Or the ones under Truman that got us to be a major helper of the French, and you know, they all share the blame; this is not a unique error of Lyndon Johnson. He was the man that was holding the bag at the time when the birds came home to roost, if that is not too mixed a metaphor.

I: Your own position on Vietnam seems to go throughsort of an evolution, or does it? Six weeks or so after you came home you, in a speech, said something about favoring a gradual withdrawal of the bombing, but in your next book you generally supported, I think were the words you used, the position of the administration.

R: Yes, which I though was t-ying to minimize the war and find a way to end it. Yes. I have always, right at the very beginning I was against our supporting the French way back then. I was against the S.E.A.T.O. involvement. In a book I wrote at that time I warned against a war in French Indochina, and how much worse it would be than a Korean war and all this sort of thing. But during all those years in between we got more and more involved, I did not make comments on most of this because I was busy writing books on history or doing other things like that. By the time you got to '65 and the decision was made, I never really was in a position to express an opinion on that. I suspect I would have come out against it if I had the materials and all of that. It would have been more consistent with my other stand, but I was in Japan trying to minimize the bad effect of the escalation of the war in '65, '66. I wanted to leave in the summer of '65 simply because the situation had deteriorated because of the war with Vietnam.

I: You mean between the United States and Japan?

R: Yes, and I mean it got so much more difficult, it would look as though I'd had four glorious years, but now that it got tough, I ran away, you see. That wasn't fair, and so I did stay another whole year beyond what I wanted to do, or thought was wise, in terms of my own relationship with the Japanese there. And during that time I was trying to minimize the bad effect on Japanese-American relations, and I did this primarily in terms of pleading with the Japanese press to give fair balance in their reporting. Because what they were doing covering South Vietnam quite carefully, all the back streets of Saigon and all the corruption and all the things that were wrong, and were reporting this in great detail, and then taking handouts and guided tours by Hanoi which gives an idealized picture of the other side and comparing these as the true picture of the war, you see. Well, they aren't. They're two entirely different kinds of things and yet the average reader does not know that. And so this gives a grave falsification of the whole thing. And it was this that I really worked against trying to get a better presentation of both sides of it in fairer terms. And also trying to persuade the Japanese public to give us a little bit more of the benefit of the doubt, that I mean this was thought at that time by our leadership as a way to bring the war to a quicker end, thereby bring peace back into the world and all that, and I tried to get them to accept at least better motives than they thought we had. I'm not sure just where we came in or--

I: Then you go further--

R: And then when I got back here, I was very much against the bombing by that time. It was not doing what it was supposed to do. The best thing to do was to get out of it. It was one of the chief costs to us internationally, it was not achieving much militarily, and certainly not politically in Vietnam. Politically, it was probably working against ending the war

rather than for it, so I did take a strong stand on that. I began to be very afraid of what I am still afraid of, that in the process of getting out, the whole frustration may throw us into a very dangerous isolationism, and therefore I have been rather cautious in my advocacy of how we should end this war. You have to do it in a fairly measured, safe way or you are going to have a terrible reaction which would have an adverse effect on our domestic politics as well as our international position. And having had an awful war, we would have on top of that two other disasters, and let us at least minimize these. And so during that time, when I could see that the American public and this government was in no way ready to really terminate it, I kept arguing for giving the leadership a chance to try to find a way to end it, rather than just have everything break up in a fight between the two extremes within this country. And so I sort of supported what we were doing, in the sense that I understand they are trying to bring this war to as quick a close as possible, giving the administration the benefit of the doubt, which I don't think is unfair. I think they wanted to do that. Since then, I think time, the Tet offensive and everything since then has put much more of a time limit on what the administration has to get out of the war. I think Johnson sensed that very correctly. I thought his speech on March 31 and his whole action at that time, while politically realistic in terms of his own election, at the same time I thought was a magnificent piece of statesmanship, because he did give up any possibility of some reversal that would give him another chance I think, and instead made an effort to try to bring the war to an end. I am not sure that it has really worked that well, but at least the thing has started towards ending, from that time on.

I: It was the Tet activity and so on that convinced you to go. In 1968 you were a lot stronger critic of the war as you were in 1967.

R: Yes, because times had changed there very much you see. In 1967 there wasn't much understanding. I was already trying to show people we weren't winning this war. It was never going to be won that way. By 1968, the public was beginning to see the things that I had been talking about all this time, that you just can't exercise this kind of power successfully in Asian areas, and it does more harm than good in the long run, and you will have to stay out of this sort of thing. People were much more open to this. You could present it much more forcefully at that time, and the whole matter of time running out had come. You have to have a pretty big, rapid swing; it is a matter of two or three years in which you have to get out or else I think things will fall apart, once it starts going, and that's why this time then I pushed a lot harder on, you know, on urging a good, steady progress in bringing this to an end. Which is going to mean, I think very soon, a start of repatriation of American troops.

I: Hopefully I mean Nixon hasn't done a good bit of this. I mean, this hundred thousand in 1969, I think he is in real, real trouble. He knows that too, I think. You at one point, as you had become more seriously concerned, you went so far as to call for the resignation of Secretary Rusk. Do you think this is--

R: Did I say that ever?

I: I think this was on a television thing with Gale McGee and you were at least quoted as saying this. Now--

R: Yes, I have always tried to keep the personalities out of it. I could very well have said, you know, it might have been easier with a different Secretary of State. I may have said that.

I: The headlines then say, "Reischauer Says Rusk Should be --" that kind of thing happens, I was just wondering. That really was the question, whether or not you think an individual or a group of individuals was really of crucial importance in fastening this policy on to--

R: Well, of course a group of individuals is, because in the last analysis a small group has to make the ultimate decision. It is ground out by a huge bureaucracy and, it may be so tipped, the scales, by the time it gets to the ultimate decision-makers it is awful hard to right the scales. But they still take the ultimate responsibility for it, and I do think that men like Walt Rostow, and Rusk, and several others along with the President have to share the responsibility for having made the decision; whether a different group of men would have made a very different decision is another matter. I think Walt Rostow's rather mechanistic view of history and human relations is a real bad contribution to the whole thing. I think perhaps this particular way he has of viewing things is part of the problem. I think Dean Rusk's fixation with the China problem, that he got during his earlier service in the government at a time when this seems maybe a more valid point of view than it proved to be in the long run, I think this fixation with the China problem also was part of the skewing of the decision. He just could not get rid of the idea that this was somehow, basically, you know, a fight with China. And so on. And it just fundamentally is not, as many of us have tried to point out all along.

I: I have talked to a lot of these people, and whenever I try to go back to talk to them about decisions in the part their response is invariably well, this was not the problem that faced us on Monday morning, such-and-such-a-day at such-and-such-an-hour, this is all past history and it was irrelevant to our decision making. Does that mean the type of people who are in

important places are not going to learn the lesson that you say should be learned?

R: No, the trouble is that it means this, that the fundamental shaping of the decision is often based on attitudes that are terribly out of date. Now they faced a problem of whether to send troops from X to Y on such and such a day and that's what they felt they were answering. The truth of the matter is some basic concepts of what was happening in the world, maybe established ten or twenty years earlier, is what made them make the final decision that they did make, even though they thought they were only making that decision. And hence they were likely to be way out of date on it. It would be much better if they could, you know, say, well, in making this decision we were taking a view of what the world is going to be, and what does it look like, as of today, the whole world, and how would this fit into this bigger thing. No, they don't do that. I used to argue with my people in the State Department and the embassy, you know, we spent times often around the council table talking about pretty deep and vague things, philosophical, practically, and someone would say that this is not the way you really do it in the State Department, and when a question arises, then you answer it. And I said, "The heck you do. When the question arises and you have to give an answer, the answer you give is based on what thinking you did twenty years ago and haven't thought about again since that time. So you better keep on thinking about these things all the time."

I: Concept dictates tactics--

R: And I think this was very true of both Rostow and Rusk. Rostow had somewhat the economist's approach to the world which is more mechanistick and does not take in the psychological subtleties of human feelings and all that nearly as much as it should. And Rusk's, as I called it earlier,

fixation with the China problem that that grown out of the great disappointment of what had happened to China, and then the Korean War and the fright when we suddenly found we had 800 million hostile Chinese, as it were.

I: What about Mr. Johnson's personal reaction to dissent as it was expressed by you. Did he ever give you a call and say, "What do you mean criticizing my policies?"

R: No. Oh, since then.

I: After you were out of office, yes.

R: No, no, no, he didn't. Rusk once rather wryly, you know, said, I remember a dinner at the Japanese Embassy where former Prime Minister Kishi was there, I think if I remember right, he was. And the three of us sat down together talking after dinner, and he, Rusk, looked and said, "Well, I used to be able to count on Ed to sort of back me up in things, but I can't any more, you know." But he is a very gentlemanly man. The President didn't do anything. In fact, quite the contrary, after the State of the Union Message in January, '68, a little over a year ago, I was on the National Education Television--

I: I saw that show.

R: And I was about the only person that said anything good about him that night, because I thought, you know, there was a real difference in the tone of what he was saying, and later on I was very happy that i interpreted it that way, because there <u>was</u> a real difference. He was already, you know, moving in that direction. And apparently Mrs. Johnson had heard me, and been sort of impressed and all that, and passed it on to him, because when I did see him later on about something else, down there for a conference, he was more pleasant and happy and had obviously appreciated the words I'd said about him on that particular show.

I: So you think maybe some of the dissent, at least the responsible type, did get to him somehow?

R: May have. Yes, may have. Actually, when I talked about Rusk and Rostow as perhaps having dangerous preconceptions of a certain kind, I would not include President Johnson.

I: You would not?

R: I would not. I would not. I don't think he came with serious preconceptions of any type on these foreign policy problems, that have not been his major field of concern and his--I think he has a deep concern over people and things of that sort that would make him, in a sense, maybe a little more responsive, certainly, than a man like Rostow would be to the Asian problems. I don't think he had a chance for deep education on it and all that, but I think he could have been perfectly responsive.

I: You mentioned earlier just in passing that you think probably the overwhelming burden of the advice Mr. Johnson got in '64 and '65 was pretty well unanimous in favor of the policy that was in fact followed. Did that ever change? Did dissent ever get widespread in government to your knowledge?

R: Well, I don't know anymore about it than what has come out in all the books and all of that, you know. I knew George Ball was usually against it, and Arthur Goldberg and so on. They happen to be personal friends that I knew, and I knew their feelings and so on. I think all the way through they had been rather dissenting on many things. I don't know if the dissent really grew very much at any time.

I: Do you think it was possible for a government official to voice it even?

R: Oh, I think so, yes.

I: Get it to the President?

R: Yes. Whether you get it effectively up--well, this would only be the very high levels. It is very, very hard for the lower level opinions to get through. You take China policy, where I think practically all the experts, both inside and outside government, have wanted a shift in our whole stand on China, our definition of our relationship, and this has been for years, but never really has gotten through because, well, for one thing I think Mr. Rusk, Dean Rusk, was very resistant to that, with his particular, fixed ideas. And it was a matter that didn't ever quite draw the real attention at the top, because it was never in crisis form, it wasn't something that has to be decided before tomorrow evening, you know. There is no reason why you can't postpone it till the next day or the next day, or you know, ten years from now, the way it goes.

I: So the seeming movement in China policy, in say, the last three years is more apparent than real, the rigidity remains, you think, even--

R: No, I think what has changed here, the experts have been thinking this way for a long time, and not just outside experts, also the government experts. What has changed is public opinion has really moved a long way; the hard opposition to any change in attitude towards communist China has, I think to a large extent, evaporated.

I: At least it's politically possible.

R: At least what I see. Now there may be parts of the country where it is very different, but, you know, the so-called Committee of One Million and so on, you just don't hear from them anymore.

I: Then, of course, you have, too, positive moves from people like Vice President Humphrey, who made a major speech in '66 calling for change. Where does that come from, the government experts or--?

R: It comes from inside the government. Yes, government experts, and this gets through, and all of that, and it is decided to make a small step in that direction. What usually happened, though, was that some other official then gave a speech a little while later in which the old rhetoric was used, so the net progress was about zero.

I: Something for everybody.

R: But when these speeches were made, there was no popular outcry. I think the whole American public is more than ready for re-definition of attitudes towards China. This does not really change our relationship with China very well, you know, because there is not going to be a response from them, but I think an admission that we would like to live and let live with them, that we aren't, you know out to try to destroy them, we recognize that they are historic China, things of this sort, and people are quite ready for it.

I: What about the Fullbright hearings that got such wide publicity? Did you get a lot of response?

R: Yes. I think that was very useful, yes. I think that did probably help as an education procedure, Mr. Fulbright's seminar, as they callit. And I think as a seminar it probably was a successful thing. Yes.

I: Did it affect the government or the people inside?

R: Oh, I guess so, to some extent. But the experts I know have all been thinking this way for so long, there wasn't much to be changed in their thinking, you know.

I: You introduced in one of your earlier characterizatons of Mr. Johnson his distrust of people with the intellectual community and those in the East associated with Harvard and so on. Can you explain that some? Who are all these people?

R: I think he had a basic distrust of them, or else a sense of strangeness with them, which I think a person could feel. I don't identify myself with any type, one sort or another. I'm perfectly able to get along with everybody, you know, and so on. I've gotten to know lots of senators of different types fairly well, but I sense it would be very difficult to get a real relationship of intimacy and trust with President Johnson.

I: Why don't the intellectuals like him? Is something like style that important?

R: Oh, a lot of this is awful snobbism, I think. I think you get regionalism involved here, and please pardon me for bringing this in, but I mean we still do have regionalism and actually his accent sets off an awful lot of people from other parts of the country. You know, it isn't what they consider the educated way to talk, and therefore it does not sound quite right, and I think a great deal of snobbishness came in there. I think one of his real problems was accent and diction. It gave him two strikes when he came up to bat each time, and what he said was, well, you know, had to be awful good to get through that to large parts of the country, and here the blame is not on him, the blame is on others. This is my own interpretation of much of this, and living in this environment I could sort of sense that to a certain extent. But, you know, at the very end--the reason why I feel that it was difficult for intimacy to be established there was that when I was trying to resign--I will tell you that story--it's something more personal with the President than most things. I had been trying to resign for a long time and my basic reason was, for one thing, my wife was very tired of the job and so on, it had been a hard job, though I had enjoyed it and I could have gone on quite a bit longer perfectly well. But I'd figured that my particular role in Japan was running to the point where it might become counter-productive. I was playing too big a role for an American

ambassador. What I was trying to do was balance up and equalize the relationship with Japan so they wouldn't feel this sense of inequality. One of the clearer remaining inequalities was that the American ambassador was going around like a public figure in Japan telling them we are all equal and friends and partners and all this sort of thing, you see; this is preaching. And we'd never tolerate a Japanese ambassador talking that way in this country. It had been a useful role at the time, and I think it did h help achieve some things and all that, but it was getting to the point where it was turning counter-productive, or it could become, and I wanted to get out before it became definitely counter-productive. That is why I wanted to leave by '65. I was very certain by '66 I must go. And now that I am a private citizen again, I can preach even more to the Japanese and it is perfectly all right, so I can go on playing that role, but I could not have gone on playing that role as an ambassador. So I put a lot of pressure and tried to resign, but they dragged their feet, they wanted me to stay and all that kind of thing. And finally when Rusk was out there in, it was early July, for the economic conference of the Cabinet level, I just talked with him and said that really, I was going to quit and I would really stop working, in a sense, until they said I could. Well, he took the word back to the President that I was just not going to go on, but a lot of senators were very keen on my staying.

I: Yes.

R: Mansfield and Fulbright and others like that. And this made an embarrassment for him, you see, and he wanted to be sure that this would not politically work against him, and so he insisted that I come back to Washington where he would have a chance to persuade me to stay. And so I went there, and had an hour talk with him. We talked about everything or rather he seemed to talk about everything, he didn't really give me much chance to talk. But the

real point there was he was just wanting to make a display so that Mansfield and Fulbright couldn't critize him, and fortunately for him, or maybe by some kind of design, Mansfield called up while I was in his office and he says, "Well, he is right here with me, but he just says he won't do it," and so on and so forth. It worked very well.

I: That sounds like more than coincidence.

R: Of course, you know, we were in this little tiny office that he would sometimes retire to. And he had other jobs to offer me, I could be one of the Under Secretaries, or take over as Assistant Secretary of the Far East, but these are jobs that I had decided I probably would not want to do, because I don't like to spread myself that thin and just be the sort of operator, handling things, I wou-d much prefer the deeper kind of job where you could concentrate on something with a long view. This is my scholarly background. I am not a lawyer; I am a scholar, so my way of approaching it is different. So I was quite sure I didn't want to do that. But, you know, if he had really said, "Look, we are thin on our knowledge of Asia, we've got Averell Harriman here, you know, and he does the Russian things, and he is awful useful at that kind of level, won't you stay by us as a sort of ambassador-at-large to see if we can't have more of that." Well, he probably could have twisted my arm and my would have objected greatly, but maybe we would have gone to Washington. Conceivable, you see. But, you know, that wasn't--

I: He stopped short of things.

R: Yes, he didn't really want me at all. You know, he didn't want to be criticized for letting me go, but he didn't want me. And Rusk is a difficult man to know, too, even though he is a person I have known for a long time; nobody feels very close to him. So there wasn't much incentive to want to go on, because I didn't have the personal contact with the two men that counted most.

I: There was the announcement just a very short time later that you had been appointed to something called I think the words are an Advisory Panel on East Asian Affairs. Is that more of the same window dressing?

R: Well, I have never been quite sure what the motivation was there. I think that, in a sense, is perhaps their idea, that they can keep a better press among the scholars by inviting them in this way. I think there has been some genuine consultation and discussion, and maybe it has had some very small peripheral value, but it isn't an important institution.

I: But bureaucracy does seek out, or at least give an opportunity to outsiders.

R: Oh, sure, sure, sure. No, there is a lot of consultation, and going back and forth. This is one of the great advantages of the American system, that by having people that do move back and forth between the outside world and bureaucracy, you have a kind of an easy give and take there that I think is very valuable.

I: There is one thing in connection with the bureaucracy. Mr. Johnson is sometimes credited with having sort of rescued the status, as it were, of the State Department in comparison to what Mr. Kennedy had used it for. Is that, in your experience, true?

R: I think that is true because--I was talking about how I could really approach the President directly through Bobby Kennedy. Well, you know Bobby Kennedy happened to be Attorney General and not Secretary of State. And this in a way was really jumping completely around normal lines of communication. I do think Bobby was running around trouble-shooting for the President, even in the foreign policy field; he went out on several missions of this sort, and in a sense helped take the center of gravity away from the State Department and put it in the White House, or between the Kennedy brothers. And, obviously, President Johnson did not have anybody in that sort of position, and I think had a much greater trust in Dean Rusk, and a much greater capacity

for easy understanding with him. Here again, we run into this blooming regional problem. It could be that Dean Rusk is a Georgia boy of fairly humble background, the sone of a Presbyterian minister with no great wealth, was an easier person for him to deal with than for Kennedy with his New England Catholic background and Harvard; maybe, I don't know.

I: Poor Georgia background.

R: Poor Georgia boy.

I: But this didn't I assume what you are saying this didn't result in a really--

R: No.

I: Really a re-vitalization of the State Department either.

R: No, I can't see that it did, no, I think it was just that Dean Rusk was a little bit more central to the whole policy making thing under Johnson than he had been before, because there were fewer people suddenly crowding him out.

I: I don't want to cut you off. Are there subjects about which I have no way of knowing that you think worthy of including here?

R: Well, let's just go back to an earlier theme, just to illustrate a point or two. President Johnson, I think, represented more the inward-looking, old populist American tradition which is a very fine one in its way, but not international, outward-looking. He probably was not much at ease with foreigners of any type, except maybe the Latinos, something that was more familiar in his particular background and all of that. I saw him in his relations with Japanese. They are a very isolated people, not an easy going one, but--it was a difficult matter for him to get the right kind of relationship. He tended to a kind of informality, even at state dinners, that would be a little bit shocking to them. And I remember once my wife was sitting opposite him at a big state dinner when the Japanese cabinet members were there, and he was

giving them, you know, ten-gallon hats all through the dinner, popping them on their heads and all this kind of thing, and while this is the Japanese image of what the American is like, and it's very authentic, still at the same time they are a very decorous people, and this is a little bit shocking. And I remember another occasion, and this was when Adlai Stevenson had just died and the news had just come at the moment when he was giving a reception for the Japanese. Well, this is a tough time for anybody, because I think he had a great respect for Stevenson, but he couldn't rise to the occasion, realizing that for the Japanese Cabinet people this was a big White House party, and they couldn't have quite the same feelings about Adlai Stevenson that he did. A moment like that, you know, we smile through our tears and all that; he just wasn't going to try to adjust to their set of values for it. It is all very understandable, you know, it's just one of these examples of how hard it is for the President to fulfill all his different jobs. He has to be so many different things to so many different people that nobody is really able to, and one of the hardest ones, I think, for him was to perhaps have this relationship with foreigners, at least, as I saw it with the Japanese. On the other hand, when he met with Prime Minister Sato, I could see, oh, boy, they really hit it off well together in their private conversation, and they came out practically beating each other on the backs.

I: This is all one to one--

R: Yes, this was on a one to one basis, with only an interpreter in there with them. Sato is a good, tough politician, he is an ex-bureaucrat who has worked his way to the top of the political heap in Japan and been in government, that is, his whole life, for a long time as a bureaucrat, then as a politician. These men, you know, have a common kind of experience. And so on a one to one with another man who is running the Japanese government, a great relationship. Very, very successful at that.

I: How important are those presidential relationships? Do they really rub off in terms of national policy?

R: Oh I think they are helpful, yes. They are helpful, but you know in the big democracies, why they also have their negative side. You have all the opposition, you know. You have the problem of politics in every other country, and you don't want to be too close just to one side. In our relationship with England for example, if everybody felt that our President was in Wilson's pocket, well the opposition would be very, very made about it.

I: It's usually the other way around.

R: Yes, it's usually the other way around. But you see the problem there. And depending upon what the country is, it's more or less important, but I think often is very important.

I: Anything further?

R: No.

I: Again you are very nice to have me in the middle of a busy day.

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By EDWIN O. REISCHAUER

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