INTERVIEW I

DATE: November 6, 1971

INTERVIEWEE JOSEPH SISCO

INTERVIEWER: PAIGE E. MULHOLLAN

PLACE: Mr. Sisco's office, Room 6242 State Department, Washington, D.C.

Tape 1 of 1

M: You were during the Johnson Administration first, deputy assistant secretary for International Organization Affairs, and then in 1965 made assistant secretary, where you finished out that administration.

S: That is correct.

M: Of course, you have been in NEA [Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs] since then with the Nixon Administration.

S: That is correct.

M: When was the first time that you made any personal acquaintance with Mr. Johnson? Remember that far back?

S: Sure. In many ways, I think this is going to prove about the only real contribution that I can make to this oral history, because I had not known President Johnson at all.

M: That's a good way to start.

S: I was told on one of those days by Secretary Rusk that he had recommended me to President Johnson to become assistant secretary for International Organization Affairs, taking place of the then-incumbent.

M: Harlan Cleveland.

S: Harlan Cleveland, yes. I was called to Secretary Rusk's office and told this, and he said that since President Johnson did not know me--

M: You still hadn't met him at all at that time?

S: I hadn't met him at all. [But Secretary Rusk said] President Johnson wanted to meet me before he made this appointment, and would I get into a State Department car and go right over to the White House because President Johnson wanted to talk to me.

So I went over to the White House, ill-prepared, and I was brought into that very small little office which is right next door to the Oval Office of the President. And I can recall that I introduced myself, and the President said that he had heard some good things about me from Secretary Rusk. But he really wanted to have a chat with me because, for one thing, he felt that presidential appointments were very important matters and he did not like to make presidential appointments without knowing the people that he was appointing. We had about an hour and a half discussion.

M: Discussion. Now does that mean that you talked as well as the President?

S: Yes, I got to say a few things, although I must confess that the President had a little more to say than I did. (Laughter)

M: Okay.

S: But, in any event, what we did discuss and I recall this very vividly, because it was my first encounter with President Johnson, to have the opportunity to sit down. Most of it was alone. At some point, I recall, Harry McPherson joined us in the conversation, but a good

part of it was alone in that room. We discussed American policy in the United Nations; we talked about foreign policy across the board. And I think the thing that struck me in that initial contact is the very broad view which President Johnson had of American foreign policy from, obviously, his vantage point. I can't really recall a lot of the specific details.

M: Did he offer the job to you during that conversation?

S: Well, after we got through. This was the interesting thing: We talked about China; we talked about Vietnam; we talked about the Middle East; we talked about a number of these issues. And after an hour and a half's discussion, he said the following and I'll never forget it: he said that he thought that Secretary Rusk had made a good choice. He said, "I'm sure you'll do." And he gave me some advice, which I'll get into in a moment. But he said that I should go back and report to Secretary Rusk that he, the President, was going to make this appointment, and that Rusk should immediately get in touch with my two senators, being from the state of Maryland, to clear that out, and that he intended to announce the appointment very shortly. At that time, I can recall, and I'm sure that this happened at various stages of the administration, there was a particular concern about leaks.

M: Always! Not at various times, always!

S: But in any event, one of the things which he underscored was the importance of holding information tightly, and I can recall that he said that if anything was to be leaked, there was always the

opportunity that this could be done from the White House in the proper way, and that one of the things that he would be watching in particular is that if there were matters that needed to be closely held, that it was important that I not only did that personally, but more important that I do everything that I should do to insure that nothing came out of the bureau that should not have.

And that was my initial contact of an hour and a half. We hadn't met. It was obvious that the purpose of the talk was to size me up and, after he'd drawn whatever conclusions he had drawn, he went right ahead and I was appointed assistant secretary of Internal Organization. I was impressed both with the depth of the substance and the very fact that the President of the United States would take that much time in talking to an individual really that was taking essentially a sub-cabinet post, and not necessarily the most important sub-cabinet post.

M: You're a career appointee and not a political appointee.

S: That's right, a career appointee rather than otherwise. So that was really my first contact.

M: Did he give you any direct instructions as to specific things he wanted you to accomplish with the bureau?

S: No, I think the thing that again struck me and one of the things that he underscored was that I should call them as I saw them, that he was very interested in knowing what my views were, what my recommendations were, and that he was interested in people who analyzed a problem and expressed their views on the

given problem regardless of what the views of others might be. He made a particular point of it in this conversation with me, and I think that it made an impression as well.

M: You had served in the bureau right through the change of administrations and, of course, with the United Nations since the mid-fifties. Could you tell a discernable difference in viewpoint or emphasis or interest toward the United Nations or other international organization by President Johnson as compared to, say, President Kennedy?

S: Well, of course, in this field of United Nations affairs throughout that whole period, I was the deputy assistant secretary while President Kennedy was in office. I would say, fundamentally, President Johnson's policy reflected more of a continuity of policy as it relates to what we did at the U.N. rather than any sharp break. I will say this, in all candor, that with most of us, there was increasing concern about the disproportionate relationship between power and responsibility in the organization, where the vote of the Maldive Islands--ninety thousand people; principal source of revenue, flying fish--that particular vote counting the same as the United States. That was I think a concern that became discernable In the Kennedy Administration, but I think it became increasingly magnified under the Johnson Administration. Moreover, one detected, also, a good deal of sensitivity about the criticism that was being directed at the United States by the Secretary General, in particular with respect to Vietnam. The Secretary General of the UN held very strong views on this matter. They were views

sharply critical of the United States, and this, of course, complicated the situation. I can recall, probably, the other incident during this period, and that is my baptism by fire, so to speak. Because my appointment as assistant secretary more or less coincided with President Johnson's appointment of Arthur Goldberg as the United States ambassador to the U.N. I had not known Arthur Goldberg either, never met him or the President. I can recall, even before I had been sworn in after the President had submitted my name to the Congress and made clear his intention to appoint me, that, in getting ready, I was involved in a series of rather extended briefings of Ambassador Goldberg. And interestingly enough, in the first several weeks that I took over as assistant secretary, I was confronted with a very immediate, delicate issue that involved some differences in view.

M: Is this article nineteen, now?

S: No, this is the question of whether the United States should take an initiative to bring the Vietnam problem before the U.N. Security Council. We did, by the way, subsequently in January of 1966. Let's see, I was appointed in January, 1966.

M: And [that was] the first time it got to the U.N.

S: That's right. I was appointed around September of 1965. So the first time we went in was around September. But the inner debate on this question, the really major one, took place right in the first days of Arthur Goldberg taking over.

M: That's your warm-up period.

S: That's the warm-up period. And what happened was this--this is new, this is not known, and therefore, would be of interest: Arthur Goldberg at that time felt very strongly that the matter should be presented to the U.N. Security Council. The concern at that time was that if the matter was brought into the Security Council, the council was likely to move in two directions: one, a call for a unilateral cessation of the bombing, and secondly, the likelihood that they would move in the direction of a cease-fire. The administration at that time, from what I knew of the Vietnam policy, was not ready either to move in the direction of a unilateral cessation of the bombing, nor for that matter in the direction of a cease-fire. So, what I was required to do, in the first instance, was to develop what the pros and cons might be, of recourse to the Council; but more important, what, based on my years of experience in this field, would be the likely outcome of this kind of a Security Council consideration. And my conclusion was that recourse to the Security Council, at that particular juncture, would likely prove unmanageable. Candidly, I took a much more reserved position about recourse to the Security Council at that particular juncture. I later supported the idea.

So, in the first two or three weeks, frankly, I found myself on the opposite side of a position that had been adopted by Ambassador Goldberg. I can remember that the discussion was one of such import that President Johnson called me directly at home on a Saturday, I've forgotten the date, and I gave him this analysis. This was

about four or five o'clock on a Saturday afternoon. And after I finished, he said, "Here's what I want you to do: I want you to write your analysis, your views, on paper and submit a memorandum to me by ten o'clock tomorrow morning. We're going to discuss this matter further at Camp David."

So I went back into the State Department about seven or eight o'clock that night and put it all down. He had said to me, "I don't want this memorandum to go through anybody else. This is a memorandum that must come from you directly to me."

M: Not even through the Secretary?

S: Not even through the Secretary of State. I said, "All right, Mr. President, I'll do that." But at that time, Mr. Rusk was out of the country. I did the following: I called George Ball, who was the acting secretary of state. I said that this request had been made of me by the President; I was going to send such a memorandum directly to the President; I wanted him to know that I was doing it, and I would send him a copy of whatever my views were. George Ball said that was the proper way to proceed, and appreciated that I would call.

I then wrote the memorandum. I finished up about ten or eleven o'clock that night. I sent it through White House channels to the President directly. Then, and this I only have by hearsay, there was a meeting at Camp David that Sunday morning about ten or eleven o'clock, and he apparently read this memorandum to the group in terms of what the possible outcome would be. The President then

called me back at home again on Sunday at four o'clock. Now, mind you, I hadn't been in this job for two weeks.

M: I was going to say you probably thought this was really the beginning of a job.

S: Yes, yes. I'd already had two direct telephone calls from the President, an hour and a half's discussion looking me over as to whether I might do the job, plus the potential difference of view between myself and the United States Representative to the U.N. And this was rather an auspicious beginning.

The President called me, and he said candidly that the memorandum as I wrote it came out perhaps a little more evenly balanced than the matter in which I had expressed myself orally. I said, "Perhaps," because as one writes these things, you tend to weigh these things pretty carefully. He thanked me for what he said was a very good job, and he informed me that he had decided that for the time being he would withhold any recourse to the Security Council, which in effect was supporting what amounted to the thrust of my own memorandum as against the recommendation that had been made by Ambassador Goldberg.

And I will say this, that I discussed the situation subsequently with Ambassador Goldberg because, after all, we were just beginning what was essentially a new relationship. I candidly said to Ambassador Goldberg that he might perhaps feel more comfortable with someone that he had worked with more closely, but Ambassador Goldberg's reaction was tremendously understanding and positive. He

said to me that every individual has to express himself in the manner in which he sees fit, that he was sure that he and I would work together very closely, as turned out to be the case over the next two or three years, and that, frankly, there were no scars over the first ten days of my takeover of this job.

M: You said that you changed your mind later. Was that before we actually went or after the first time?

S: I felt that in the context of January 1966, both Ambassador Goldberg and I at that time recommended very strongly and very positively that we go to the Security Council. It was in the context of the President sending a number of emissaries all over the world. He had made a decision for at least a partial cessation at that time. I felt that we could really get our position across at the U.N. and that the use of the Security Council could foster and promote American objectives.

As it turned out, because of the fact that the Chinese Communists were not in the U.N., because of the fact that North Vietnam was not a member of the U.N., the Russians took a very strong stand against any United Nations involvement, and the most we were able to achieve in January 1966 was to get the matter inscribed on the agenda. There was sort of a debate that took place in the context of the discussion on the adoption of the agenda. But there was never any subsequent action taken, not because of any lack of initiative in this regard by President Johnson or the Johnson Administration, but rather because the Russians didn't want to have

the U.N. involved at that particular juncture.

M: So there was no dispute between you and Ambassador Goldberg at that time?

S: No, not in that regard, not at all. In fact, we made parallel recommendations at that time.

M: How often did that personal contact with the White House go on as the job developed? Did it become unusual or did it stay as it was?

S: No, I think, on the whole, I had a reasonable amount of opportunity for this kind of contact, for this reason: First of all, at that time, the Middle East was really the key issue that the U.N. Security Council was involved in. There were frequent National Security meetings on the Middle East, most of which I was involved in. Secretary Rusk would take me along, as well as the assistant secretary for Near Eastern Affairs, because the whole focus for our diplomacy on the Middle East, at that time, was at the United Nations. And what resulted was the November 1967 Security Council Resolution, which happens to be the very structure, the very framework, that we're still to this day in 1971 trying to get both sides to accept as a reasonable basis for settlement. Therefore, there was frequent opportunity to participate in these meetings with President Johnson on the Middle East in particular. I can recall very spirited debates on the Middle East in the National Security Council meeting. I can recall President Johnson kidding me a great deal in front of Clark Clifford, saying--I've forgotten now what

it was, because this is so far back--that I had in that particular instance been such a spirited advocate for a given point of view that he kidded me that perhaps Clifford ought to add me to his law firm. But there were regular opportunities for this kind of contact with President Johnson.

M: And there were these really spirited debates?

S: Spirited debates.

M: Completely different points of view got loud hearings?

S: Different points of view. I have now a comparison in the sense that I have been involved in every National Security Council meeting on the Middle East, for example, in the Nixon Administration as a result of my present position. I think the one insight that I can give to people who familarize themselves with this oral history is not the difference with which this exchange was conducted, but rather the similarity, and that is, that points of view <u>are</u> put forward and discussed.

What struck me about President Johnson, in particular, was that he was a very, very good listener. You know, I've heard President Johnson discuss some matter and speak at length on a given point. And this is a characteristic that many people in the public domain with what has been printed in our media find perhaps characteristic. But I was always struck in so many of these meetings how he was able to separate the wheat from the chaff, how he was able to go directly at the heart of a given point, and what a very, very good listener he was. If there was one point at issue, he would go around the

table and ask every man to express himself. And he'd hear them out and hear them out very patiently, I thought.

M: You didn't get the idea that the decision had been made and the meeting was just a kind of exercise to rubber-stamp something he had already decided to do?

S: Well, candidly, I think I was involved in both kinds of exercises. Certainly, I can recall certain occasions where I felt that the matter had been pretty well decided one way or the other; and there may have been one reason or another for this. But on the other hand, I think that I can also recall an equal number of occasions where it was a genuine dialogue between opposite points of view.

M: You mentioned channels to put things into the White House? Did you normally go through Harry McPherson or did you normally go through Rostow or Bundy?

S: No, normally, the recommendations would go from Secretary Rusk to the President. We would do the staff work.

M: You didn't have a counterpart over there?

S: Oh, yes. The informal contact would include Walt Rostow on occasions. I would say most often it was really Walt Rostow; Harry McPherson, from time to time. But I remember working with Harry more often where he was involved, for example, in drafting parts of a speech on the Middle East. But Walt Rostow was the informal contact at the time.

M: Did you ever feel that you had any difficulty getting your views accurately through that operation?

S: No, no because you see, the Middle East, which was the principal U.N. activity at the time politically, was a matter that was very much on the front burner. In addition to Vietnam, it was one of the key crisis areas that Dean Rusk was dealing with. Secretary Rusk was always available, and I felt there was always a ready channel to go to the Secretary. Moreover, Ambassador Goldberg came to Washington regularly. We had regular meetings with Secretary Rusk and, as a result, also a good many meetings that required consideration at the White House level. So there were occasions where there were National Security Council meetings, other occasions where there might have been informal meetings with smaller groupings. But there was never any serious problem in communication on the Middle East. And I could say that a good deal of the load was being carried by Ambassador Goldberg in New York, where I spent a good deal of time with him, in that, what was being negotiated at the time was this famous Security Council resolution 242. And so, at that particular juncture, both President Johnson and Secretary Rusk gave a great deal of latitude to Ambassador Goldberg in trying to work out this framework in the November 1967 resolution.

M: Now that's an interesting point in the whole business of managing international organizations. How much is there to Arnold Beichman's Other State Department concept of independence between the mission in New York and the bureau here?

S: I'm very familiar with Arnold Beichman's book, which I think is

quite overdrawn. I was in that part of State Department activity for well over fifteen years.

M: Yes.

S: I worked with Ambassador [Henry Cabot] Lodge, I worked with Adlai Stevenson and with Arthur Goldberg and others, subsequently George Ball, for example, in the brief period he was there.

First of all, most of the men in that period of time that were appointed by the President were individuals of great stature. Therefore, they were individuals who took the job in hopes that, from that particular vantage point, they would have an opportunity to influence policy. There is no doubt that there can't be two secretaries of state or two power centers. Now I don't say, and I think I would be very foolish if I didn't see evidences during that period of fifteen years, of where there were conflicting views and on occasion, on occasion, difficulties of channels and so on. For the most part, I think you would find that it worked surprisingly well, in that the U.S. Representative normally worked through the Secretary of State, [and] in the first instance tried to resolve these at that particular level.

I felt that my job was, in the first instance, to try to reflect the position of the U.S. representative to the Secretary of State and vice versa. And the one thing I tried to do, above all else when there were delicate political issues, and there were a number of them in that period--

M: Oh, yes.

S: I was involved in the whole question of whether we changed our policy with respect to the seating of Red China. Vietnam was always in the background in so far as the U.N. was concerned. The whole question of the Middle East that I have mentioned.

M: Cyprus?

S: Cyprus was very hot at that time and we, including myself, were all involved in missions to try to diffuse (defuse) the situation. So these were really not ordinary issues or routine issues; they were real crises, and it was a problem of crisis management. But the one fundamental rule that I tried to follow when I was assistant secretary and deputy assistant secretary was to try to face the discussion of the differences on issues, in the first instance, at the Secretary's level and with the United States representative at the U.N., and then to try to bring it next to the White House level. There were on a number of occasions differences of view that had to be aired before the President. That's understandable and that's the way it should be.

M: Sure.

S: But in many, many of these instances, it was possible to resolve them at that particular level, rather than to confront the President in that kind of situation. So that this was really part of the unwritten portion of the job description, if you will; and to communicate, of course, the sense, the feeling to the United States Representative in New York as to the broader policy considerations on this end that

went into some tactical decision as it related to an immediate problem on the General Assembly agenda.

But when you have outstanding Americans, such as Adlai Stevenson and Arthur Goldberg, these were individuals who were interested in American foreign policy per se. They did not feel that their mandate was limited to the mere items on the agenda on the General Assembly.

M: Right.

S: And therefore, frankly, the job at that time was a much more interesting job than in other circumstances because, as assistant secretary, I was dealing with whatever the hot issue happened to be, whether it was on the agenda of the General Assembly or not. That was the interesting part of the job.

M: Probably didn't endear you to the other geographical bureau chiefs in the State Department.

S: No, in fact our bureau at that time had the reputation of--how did we put it?--"being involved in everybody else's business." But that's inevitable in the role of a functional bureau of that sort, where you have overlapping responsibilities with geographical bureaus. Bear in mind that when the Hoover Commission some thirty years ago recommended the original organizational structure of the State Department, that the regional bureaus, at that time four--now five, because of the African Bureau--were given operational responsibilities with the so-called Bureau of United Nations Affairs, and that whenever the matter was a matter of either actual consideration in the U.N., or potential, the operational responsibility shifted to

that U.N. Bureau. That's the way the Hoover Commission recommended the operational breakdown which meant that eleven months out of the year, the Far Eastern Bureau actively dealt with the Korean problem. But that one month of the year that it got involved in the U.N., the action telegrams didn't go to the Far Eastern Bureau--obviously, you cleared and coordinated your position, but it went to the U.N. Bureau, which meant that you dealt with every major foreign policy problem in the span of a two or three year period. That was the reason why there was opportunity to participate in meetings with President Johnson, because there was so often a U.N. component. Now I don't say that the U.N. necessarily played a major element in the thinking of the leadership of the Johnson Administration. I'm not suggesting that for a moment. But it was a component that was cranked into the making of whatever position the United States adopted.

M: Both Ambassador Goldberg and Stevenson before him were widely thought to be at least not totally sympathetic to President Johnson's views on Vietnam. President Johnson was able to operate with them smoothly in spite of this disagreement, as far as you are able to see in looking back on it?

S: I think there were differences. There is just no question about it. I can recall, and this even predates President Johnson, the whole Cuban missile crisis where we were so directly involved, where Adlai Stevenson had some strongly held views which were not necessarily the views of the late President Kennedy. Insofar as

President Johnson is concerned, there were on occasions differences, and I was fully aware of what these differences were, because Ambassador Goldberg frequently made recommendations either orally or in writing. I was a rather regular participant in these meetings that he'd have with Secretary Rusk, since they dealt with a lot of these substantive matters that we dealt with. And, as I say, I think that when you talk in terms of differences, the one thing that really I would single out is that there were differences of view on Vietnam between Ambassador Goldberg and President Johnson. I just think there's no denying it.

M: But that didn't cripple the operation?

S: Oh, hardly! Hardly, hardly.

M: Did the bureau ever construct a satisfactory of Adlai Stevenson's conversations with U Thant that were relayed by--?

S: Well, that's a very, very fascinating chapter, because one of the participants has one recollection of the conversation; another participant has another recollection. One of those participants is dead, as you know: Adlai Stevenson.

M: Yes.

S: I have practically nothing to contribute to that, for this reason: I became aware of this exchange inadvertently, I can recall. I began to pick up the threads on this rather late in the hour. But there is no doubt, from where I sat, that there were a series of conversations between Secretary Rusk and Ambassador Stevenson, and I think some misunderstanding resulted as to what one may have said

to the other, and what one may or may not have communicated to U Thant at that time. U Thant maintains, as you know, that he made a specific proposal; that he was carrying that specific proposal on behalf of North Vietnam; the proposal being, if I recall, according to U Thant, the proposing of some kind of a meeting and Burma being a possibility as the site. U Thant purports to contend that no response ever was made. From what I know of the history of it, there was just some misunderstanding, I think, between the participants, as to what may or may not have been communicated. But I think it really illustrates in part that this is really not the way to do business, because this was not a recorded [exchange]. There were no mem-cons, as far as I can recall.

M: No memos written on it?

S: That I'm aware of. I shouldn't be categoric here, because I don't really know whether each of the individuals themselves may have written a memorandum. But certainly, it was not done through the normal medium, and therefore I think that any conjecture on my part really is quite inappropriate. But I do know that it was largely this kind of a very closely held operation, and I think this is what probably gave rise to some misunderstanding as to what one or the other may or may not have said and what may or may not have been communicated to U Thant. Of course, I can recall that period. It was always very, very difficult because it is very difficult to catch up with the press in this regard. Every one of all sorts of individuals would presumably pick up this kind of a lead or a rumor.

I can recall that these things were pursued and followed very systematically, but one is never able really to get across clearly just how a number of these things were followed up.

M: Just to follow that line a little bit, you ultimately got a good deal more involved in it as, I take it--I think this comes from Leacacos and others, perhaps, publicly--your participation in the so-called Harriman group.

S: Yes.

M: How formal was that group actually organized?

S: Well, it was an informal grouping. It was under the chairmanship of Governor [Averell] Harriman, and we were the so-called "peace group" in the sense that we were to follow up on every little thread in terms of peace proposals. There was Governor Harriman, Bill Bundy, Ben Read.

M: Chet Cooper.

S: Chet Cooper and myself, and one or two others I'm sure, I can't recall them now. What we tried to do, under the guidance of Ambassador Harriman, was to follow up these various quiet endeavors to achieve an end to the war, which we did.

M: All of them? Was your involvement on ones that were not necessarily through the United Nations, or only on those that were through the United Nations?

S: Well, no, it really started out as the result of my active participation on the Vietnam aspects as they related to the U.N. part. But then, when you become part of this kind of a group, it was no

longer based on that; it was a little broader participation. And also, what you may not know is that at the opening of the Kennedy Administration, in the first six or eight months, I've forgotten now, I became involved in a working group getting ready for the Laos Conference.

M: I see.

S: I was taken to that Laos Conference by Secretary Rusk and Governor Harriman and, as a result of having been there a little while, Governor Harriman wanted me to stay with the delegation, and I stayed with the delegation for a given period. I had an opportunity, at that time, to become the chief of staff of our delegation. I chose to [come back]. I really was needed back here on U.N. matters.

M: So you were not exactly an inexperienced hand on this Southeast Asia, being brought in.

S: No, no. Even though I hadn't served. No. And the interesting thing is that I then recommended to Governor Harriman the man whom I thought could really take my place, interestingly enough, namely, Bill Sullivan. Governor Harriman had not known Bill Sullivan, and I recommended Bill Sullivan to Governor Harriman, and the rest of it is history.

M: I was going to say that relationship turned out just fine!

S: And the rest of history! He didn't miss me at all. (Laughter)

M: No, I guess not! I've talked to Mr. Sullivan, too.

S: Sure.

M: Looking back over the general peace strands that your group followed up, do you think now that any of them represented missed opportunities, looking back at them all in hindsight?

S: This is a very difficult judgment for me to make because, frankly, regardless of my participation in that group, and I welcomed it, I never really felt I had any more than a small piece of the jigsaw puzzle.

M: Was that by intent, or just by your not being put in--?

S: No, no, no. Because, after all, I had a limited responsibility in this situation, and my limited responsibility was to make my input in that particular group. After all, the operational responsibility did not reside in my bureau; it resided in the Far Eastern Bureau under Bill Bundy. And therefore, while, as I say, I welcomed the role that I was able to play, it was a very limited role, and I'm under no illusions in this regard. I suppose if I look back, I would say of all the opportunities that really strike me, the one relating to the Chet Cooper mission to London.

M: That was in 1967.

S: The one where Kosygin was visiting London, I think perhaps that was an opportunity that offered some good prospect at the time. At least, I thought it did at the time.

M: Cooper seems to feel, in his book, that he was pretty much betrayed in Washington in the sense that the White House changed the signals on him while he was over there. Did you share that [feeling]?

S: I was not a participant in that backstopping at that time, so that I really have no judgment to make at all. But, from what little I knew at that time, that seemed like a particularly good opportunity. I never did accept the view that at the time when the Poles, for example, which was another opportunity, presumably put forward I think it was a ten point proposal on behalf of North Vietnamese input, I never really felt that that was really very bona fide. And I always felt at that time, rightly or wrongly, again from what I know, that there was more of a Polish input than there was a North Vietnamese input. But then that's a judgment again that might be a faulty judgment based on not having all the information. But, as I view that entire period, I think the one I would single out was that occasion in London.

M: That was the best one?

S: That's the one that I would think.

M: What about the individuals we used periodically, people like the [J. Blair] Seaborns, the one that got all the publicity in the Pentagon Papers?

S: The Canadian?

M: There were others, [Chester A.] Ronning and [Edmund] Gullion, and numbers of others.

S: Yes.

M: Were those considered peace initiatives by people over here or were they threats as the Pentagon Papers implied that they were?

S: I just have no way of judging that. You see, because, while I participated regularly in a number of the NSC meetings on the Middle East, I was not a participant in the NSC meetings or in the informal gatherings of the President and the top officers on a number of these Vietnam peace feelers. That was not my responsibility. My input, whatever input it was of a very limited character, was at a much lower level, and therefore, I just have no judgment about that I think would help.

M: We're coming to the end of this tape.

[End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview I]

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This assignment is subject to the following terms and conditions:

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

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

(3) I hereby assign to the United States Government all copyright I may have in the interview transcript and tape.

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

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Joseph J Sisco
Donor

Dec 2, 1978
Date

James B. Rhoads
Archivist of the United States

December 22, 1978
Date