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UN INTERVIEW  
Joseph Johnson  
June 10, 1985  
Interviewer: William Powell

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Interview with Joseph Johnson,

Conducted by William Powell,

10 June, 1985

POWELL: (We are extremely pleased,)\* in the Fortieth Anniversary Year of the UN, that you should be taking part in this Oral History Programme.

JOHNSON: Well, thank you, so am I.

POWELL: Well, you began your career teaching history at Bowdoin and at Williams.

JOHNSON: That's correct.

POWELL: And then, after your service with the State Department, you became President of the Carnegie Foundation.

JOHNSON: Well, first of all, I went back to Williams, for three years, and then I became President of the Carnegie Endowment For International Peace, which is only one of many Carnegie Foundations, and one of the others is called the . . . Carnegie Foundation. (Powell laughs)

\* Editor's insertion because of tape inaudibility.

POWELL: Well, let's begin with your State Department Years. Now, I presume that you joined the State Department--I think it was about '42.

JOHNSON: That's exactly right. December 16, 1942.

POWELL: Now, how'd that come about?

JOHNSON: Well, after Pearl Harbor, I tried first to get a commission in Air Force Intelligence--Air Combat Intelligence. I had a wife and two children, and I was taking care of two English children at the time, and I didn't want to in as a GI; couldn't afford to. Well, I was turned down by them in the spring of '42. A friend, who had been one of the faculty of Williams was then in the State Department, in what we call "RA"--American Republic Affairs, and he got me a job in his section. And I finally went through. I also applied for a job in military history, and I said I was going to take whichever come first, (laughs) as they were beginning to teach navigation to naval air cadettes at Williams, and I didn't want to do that. So I went to work at the State Department on December 16, 1942, and I've forgotten whether it was the Bureau or the Division, of American Republics Affairs, later called ARA. And, I was there for a couple of years, exactly two years, as it turned out, and the way I got into UN things is, they set up a committee between Pasvolsky's office--you know, Leo Pasvolsky--and the Inter-American Republic Affairs Division, preparing, perhaps, for a new meeting for the American Council of Foreign Ministries, or whatever they called it--The Pan-American Union, in effect. And, I was on that committee, and that was my exposure to the UN staff, at that time. That was in the spring of '42.

And, in--well, that was in the spring of '43, I guess--in the summer of '44, they had Dumbarton Oaks. And, every geographical division of the

department had a liason man, or whatever you wanted to call him, attached to the delegation at Dumbarton Oaks.

POWELL: I want to get to Dumbarton Oaks in just a minute, but I would like to ask you about this group that you were working with on International Organization Planning. Leo Pasvolksy, was he the sort of brains behind it all?

JOHNSON: He was indeed. He was known sometimes as "the brain who walks like a man" (Powell chuckles); he was little; he was a very able person; he was Mr. Hull's personal choice, and he had the status, but not the title--I guess he did have the title--of Special Assistant to the Secretary. And, under him, there were set up, there were a number of changes during--he came back at Hull's request after the war was declared in Europe in 1939. Hull said, we're going to need some planning for the future. And he set up a bureau under him, which was called Special Political Affairs, which was headed by Alger Hiss, who reported to Pasvolksy, and . . . on the sixteenth of December, Stettinius' new team--he'd just become Secretary in September. Well, this is going back--this is after Dumbarton Oaks but, they decided to divide a division that had grown too big, into three divisions: one on UN security matters, one on general affairs, the General Assembly and everything else, and one on trusteeship affairs. They brought me in--I had met Pasvolksy at Dumbarton Oaks, since that I hadn't seen him, and they brought me in as Acting Chief of the International Securities Division. And . . . they were going to reorganize the department as soon as Stettinius' new team of assistant secretaries was named. And, I was told, three days earlier, that I was on the charts already for that job. (chuckles) I was the last perosn around to learn about it. I transferred over to that division in December, and worked at first, considerably, on Latin American affairs. By somewhere in there, the

idea had come for the Inter-American Conference, which took place in Mexico, in February and March of '45.

POWELL: Yes, I want to get to that in a minute, because--

JOHNSON: Yes, well that's the story, in essence. That little group was set up just for some early planning. Who was responsible, I don't know. Cabot may have been responsible himself, or he may have gotten our then Chief, who was Norman Armour, who was a great citizen, a great ambassador, in my view--they may have gotten Norman Armour to do it, I don't know. Then they set up this Committee because Pasvol'sky's boys had to be in it, and the relationship of the UN and the Inter-American System was going to be a very crucial issue, nobody knew how crucial at the time.

POWELL: Now, we were just beginning to talk about Dumbarton Oaks. You went there as an Advisor.

JOHNSON: What happened was that Cabot was named by Norman Armour as the advisor on Latin American affairs, ARA Advisor. There was one for the Middle East; there was one for Europe, and there was one for the Far East. I've forgotten who they all were. Dumbarton Oaks was in two parts: the Soviet part, and the Chinese Part. The Soviets wouldn't sit down with the Chinese. In the Soviet part, the Charter was hammered out, and then the job of the Chinese came; the job was going to be to--

POWELL: To sell it to them?

JOHNSON: To sell it them, exactly. I didn't use the word "sell"; persuade

them to accept it. (Powell laughs) And, Cabot saw--this was October--he saw the months ahead looming heavy, and said he wanted a vacation. And, he told Norman Armour that he thought I could take his place, since there wouldn't be anything substantive that I had to do (chuckles)--he didn't say it that way, but, there wasn't going to be anything substantive. So I became the Latin American advisor for the Chinese section, the last two or three weeks, whenever it was, of Dumbarton Oaks.

POWELL: Did the US come to Dumbarton Oaks with a pretty detailed set of proposals?

JOHNSON: Quite detailed, yes.

POWELL: And had they been transmitted in advance to the Russians, and the British, and so on?

JOHNSON: As far I know, they had. I was not in enough to know, but I can remember . . . Pasvol'sky had a number of tales. He took over proposals of various kinds to--well, the first time we talked to the Russians about them, of course, was when Hull went to Moscow in '41, and the question of the veto, I guess, had come up then. And, Leo said, he went into see the President with a memo which had a whole list of choices. And the President made his choices, and Leo sort of checked them off on his copy, and then as they were going, Roosevelt said to Pasvol'sky, "Don't you want my initials on that, Dr. Pasvol'sky?" And Pasvol'sky says, "Yes, Mr. President." And so, he said, (imitating Roosevelt's enthusiastic tone) "O.K.--F.D.R.," meaning OK to the whole damn thing. (laughter) But that's the only story I have of that particular time. But they were very well prepared. I don't know how much the

British and the . . . Soviets were, or the Chinese. They certainly had done a lot of homework.

POWELL: And was it difficult for the US to persuade the British and the Soviets?

JOHNSON: Well, no. The Soviets, well, one thing, there was no agreement there, so they put off the issue of voting in the Security Council.

POWELL: I was going to ask you, did that come up there, or was it just deliberately left over for Yalta?

JOHNSON: It probably had some discussion. See, I wasn't there during the Soviet part, so I don't know. But the draft of the Charter, the so-called Dumbarton Oaks Proposals, had, "the voting format of the Security Council has been left for further decision," or something like that.

Gromyko had been in Washington, I guess, for some time, by that time. They had Sobolev, who was the number two to Gromyko, the expert, so-called. And, I can't remember who all the British were there.

POWELL: Well, I know that Lord Halifax, the British ambassador was there, and so was Sir Alexander Cadogan, the Permanent Undersecretary of the Foreign Office.

JOHNSON: I guess that's right. As I say, I don't remember them. I know Cadogan was there, and I know also that Jebb was there, because the only sort of experience I had was listening to Jebb and Pasvolksy selling the Dumbarton Oaks Proposals to the Chinese, who were represented by Wellington Koo, and by



Victor Hoo, primarily. And that was a most incredible intellectual performance, I've ever seen, on the part of both Jebb and Pasvolsky.

POWELL: Well, they were both very, very capable men.

JOHNSON: They were indeed very capable men. I saw Pasvolsky do three things that were at the very top. One was that. The second was his handling of the--what did they call it--the Drafting Commission at San Francisco that put the Charter together, he was chairman of that. And that was a marvelous job in his part. And then, selling the Charter to the Senate, was another one. I was present on all three of those occasions, and I want to tell you, it was something.

POWELL: And of course, Jebb had had a long experience in this. He was at Yalta, and he had worked in the Foreign Office on it, so you had a pretty formidable team, when you put the two of them together.

JOHNSON: You know why Pasvolsky wasn't at Yalta?

POWELL: No.

JOHNSON: He wouldn't travel in an airplane. He flatly refused to travel in an airplane--

POWELL: (laughing) Phobic, eh?

JOHNSON: --and that's why Alger Hiss went to Yalta.

POWELL: That's fascinating, yes.

JOHNSON: It was just that particular decision. When we went to Mexico City, we went by train. When we went to San Francisco, we went by train. Pasvolsky insisted.

Well, after the Dumbarton Oaks Proposals were adopted and published, my job, incidentally--I don't know how much detail you want on all of this--

POWELL: Why, I think that it's absolutely fascinating.

JOHNSON: My job was not to deal with substance, but to set up the machinery to get copies of the Dumbarton Oaks Proposals to our ambassadors in all of the other American Republics, so that they would be able to present them when the Proposals were announced officially, ten days hence, or whatever it was. And I goofed, on one case, I couldn't get them to Bogata--I don't mean Bogata--to La Paz in time, and there wasn't any transportation. (laughter)

POWELL: (laughing) Well, it wasn't as easy in those days as it is now, absolutely.

JOHNSON: Well . . . there was a lot going on from--that was in October, as I recall--

POWELL: Yes, I think it was September-October, there was a meeting.

JOHNSON: We soon heard that the President was going to have a Summit Conference, as it is now called, with the Soviet Union and the British. We didn't know where it was going to be, at least, I didn't know where it was

going to be, and only Alger Hiss, I think, from our office, went to it. My recollection is, Charlie Yost went. He was a Foreign Service Career Officer who was sort of tied in with the . . . UN people. Then also, it was decided that the Inter-American Conference would be held.

POWELL: That was in--

JOHNSON: --February-March.

POWELL: February-March, yes.

JOHNSON: Stettinius come by there on his way back from Yalta to report on the decision about the voting procedures; I don't think publicly, but I can't remember that. But he told us, and he remained as Chairman of the delegation during the rest of the Mexico City Conference.

POWELL: Now, this Inter-American Conference. At whose initiative--was it the US initiative?

JOHNSON: I can't tell you that. It probably was.

POWELL: I have heard it said that the US, in effect, set it up because of the exclusion of any Latin American representation in the Dumbarton Oaks Conference.

JOHNSON: That was certainly a part of it. But you know, immediately after Dumbarton Oaks, the British took charge of reporting to the Dutch, and all the other European Allies, and Canada. And we took the charge of reporting to the

Latinos, and I guess we did some of the reporting to the Europeans, too. People like Jack Hickerson were working on that.

But, it was set at that time. We had the job of setting it up. It wasn't formally a conference of foreign ministers, because we weren't going to let Argentina in.

POWELL: Now that was a point I was going to raise. Did that question of . . . an invitation to Argentina at the San Francisco Conference come up in Mexico?

JOHNSON: (chuckling) Boy, and how. We didn't know, of course, where the Conference was going to be at that time. But that was a major source of trouble. Nelson Rockefeller came in as Assistant Secretary in December of '42, having been head of the . . .

POWELL: I don't know what we called it at that time.

JOHNSON: CIAA . . . something Council . . . Commissioner . . . on Inter-American Affairs. And he came in. Mr. Hull would not really have him in the State Department building. He disliked him intensely. And you've got to remember that Nelson, in those days, Nelson was just a few months younger than I am, so he was young, at that time. I can't remember who Hull's Assistant Secretary had been. At any rate, Rockefeller came in with his usual take-over style, and he became, until Stettinius got there coming back from Yalta, he became the head of our delegation down there. And this is a part that never has been written up by anybody that I know of. They then began a struggle for priority. Was the establishment of the UN more important than reconstituting the Inter-American System?

POWELL: Or maintenance of what they had, I guess, too.

JOHNSON: Well, you see, the Argentines were not in--I don't know whether you recall, and I can't remember what the timing was, but the invitations to the Conference to be held at San Francisco were sent to those who had, at least, broken diplomatic relations with either Japan, or Germany, or Italy. And Argentina hadn't broken diplomatic relations; she was in the pocket of some of them. And so, no invitation was to go to her. And Nelson's first job, which he succeeded in, I'm sorry to say, was to get Argentina admitted to San Francisco. That's what held up San Francisco really starting work as soon as we got out there. And also, of course, the Soviet desire to get the Poles invited.

POWELL: That's right--the Lublin Poles.

JOHNSON: Yes. And this was a clash, and Nelson won, and the rest of us lost, and so did the Russians, if I can put it bluntly. I don't mind having that on the record. But, that started at Mexico City.

POWELL: But, the Latins, on the whole, wanted Argentina back.

JOHNSON: Yes they did. They did indeed. And, Nelson was put in charge, was made the senior member of the US delegation in the committee dealing with the admission of Argentina, the committee dealing with, yes, with the reconstruction, or re-solidifying of the Inter-American System. And I, having worked for that division, up until December sixteenth, and then gone over to the other division, was, shall we say, caught in the split willow's stick. I

was the Secretary of the US group on that Committee. I won't go into any more of that, but that started then. Nelson had all kinds of support. One thing that I don't know the answer to, but you may want to find out. That's the first time that I know of that the US had a delegation consisting of a lot of public citizens. Adolph Burley(?) was there, he was already Assistant Secretary of State, that was right, but, the head of the Chamber of Commerce, Eric Johnston, I think it was, at that was there, and Patton(?) of the Farmer's Union, and somebody from the AF of L. There was a kind of a--

POWELL: Quite a broad spectrum, in other words.

JOHNSON: Yes. . . . And there were a lot of military people. There was one guy who had been military attaché in Latin America, who was a Major-General, who was the Chairman of the Inter-American Defence Committee, which was set up at the Rio Conference, back in '92, to keep the military attachés in Washington happy, because there was nothing for them to do (chuckles), except the Brazilian.

POWELL: On the whole, was the US satisfied with the outcome of the Inter-American Conference?

JOHNSON: I think so. . . . Nelson continued to fight for what he wanted, dirty or not, as it might be. But you had a real conflict--Stettinius knew that his key to history was writing the Charter of the United Nations. And Nelson Rockefeller knew that his key to history was reconstituting the Inter-American System. At least at that time, he knew that. And there was a real fight between two men, any they brought in everything they had. As I say, I was caught in the cleft stick.

POWELL: Well, at Mexico, were the Latin Americans pretty well unified?

JOHNSON: Yes, I think they were. I didn't see much of the people from the Caribbean, or the islands. The person I saw most of, was the then Foreign Minister of Colombia, Ilaeres Camargo, who later became President of Colombia. He was building his own reputation at that time. He was a young man, I think he's younger than I am. I think Nelson had done a pretty good job of uniting them. He'd promised them things that they wanted. The real thing--I had nothing to do with this--but the real thing going on there was a struggle, I gather, between us and them on the future of economic relations. They wanted all American post-war supplies as quickly as they could them, even though they hadn't participated much in the war. And Will Clayton was the guy who handled that particular set of issues. And they're two guys alive who--well one guy alive, at least--who were involved in all of that. If you haven't talked to him, you might not think of him in this capacity, Emilio Colliado(?), was the Spanish-speaking advisor to Will Clayton, and he was in on all the negotiations, translated things to Clayton as they were being said, and it's quite a story that Emilio could tell you.

POWELL: I can believe it, yes.

JOHNSON: He's still around. Link Gordon(?), did not go there, but his boss did, and he heard a lot about it from his boss, afterwards. But, it was fascinating, the political side of things. The Latinos, at one stage, in our Committee, proposed that we really have an operative clause in the Inter-American Resolution that would call for everybody's going to war at once. And, this was just impossible. Warren Austin was there, representative

from the Senate, at that time. And it was so tight that we had to get them to hold off until Tom Connally came down, who was the Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee at the time. And we had to rewrite, and did rewrite, the language so that it would take care of our constitutional requirements, that phrase was in there. But this was a solid attempt of the Latinos to get us involved into a military alliance with them, as they were trying to get us involved on the economic side, that way, you know. This is Johnson's judgement; I don't know--

POWELL: But you would say that they weren't being easily led by the nose.

JOHNSON: No, they certainly weren't being easily led by the nose. And I've forgotten whether we there promised to have a . . . Inter-American Conference right after the war or not, but this led to Bogota. Any more, go ahead, because I'm talking freely for the last more than two hours--

POWELL: No, that's fine. What I do want to do is now go on to San Francisco. Now you, I remember, in the delegation list, at San Francisco, you were, along with Ben Gerig and Durward--

JOHNSON: Sandifer.

POWELL: --Sandifer, were designated as Chief Technial Experts.

JOHNSON: That's right.

POWELL: What does that mean?



JOHNSON: Well, it means that we had a lot of Technical Experts under us. Well, you see, there was a group, a second-level group, who were Advisors, I guess. That included such people as Poster Dulles, and Ham Armstrong, and two generals, and an admiral. And I don't know whether Jack McCloy appears on the list, or not, but he was there for a good part of time. At any rate, I thought it would be a good idea who knew something about the military, and was bright. And I got the navy to lend me a young Lieutenant who had written a couple of books on naval history, named Bernard Brody.

POWELL: Oh yes.

JOHNSON: And Bernard was a Technical Assistant. And the colonels who worked for the generals, and they included people like Tick Bonesteel, I don't know whether that name's familiar to you--he became Commander-in-Chief at NATO, sat there , for a while, and also a commander in Korea. There were four or five very bright colonels and captains, and so forth. And then there was a whole--well, Sandy (nickname for Sandifer) had most of his division out there, which was the biggest of our three divisions. And, I had most of my division out there, because there was nothing to do at home, except the read the cables that we sent, I guess. There was Ben Gerig, of course, and Ralph Bunche, and--

POWELL: They were dealing with trusteeship . . .

JOHNSON: They were dealing with trusteeship, and that's where they had a major fight with the US military, and navy. There was a real battle there. Larry Finklestein was working for Ralph at that time, you can learn something about that from him, if you wanted to.

POWELL: That's a good idea.

JOHNSON: He is, incidentally, interested in this Fortieth Anniversary. He's chairman of a committee of the International Studies Association. He happened to call me up . . . to tell me about this. He's planning a panel on this Fortieth Anniversary, in March, and they're meeting in Southern California.

POWELL: That's very interesting. Well now, were you assigned to a specific committee or commission?

JOHNSON: Yes, we were. They broke the Conference up into four commissions, and I don't know how many, twelve or fourteen committees. And there were four committees dealing with security matters. There was the committee dealing with what became Chapter Six. And another committee dealing with the military, Chapter Seven. And then another committee, dealing with regional arrangements, because you know, there was a reference to regional arrangements even in the Dumbarton Oaks Proposals. So they were there. And I was Chief Technical for those three. I worked with Connally, mostly, on the military stuff. Stassen was the delegate who handled the deal the peaceful settlement of . . . things. I really didn't have anything serious to do with the regional stuff. That was Vandenburg, and Dulles.

END OF SIDE ONE

POWELL: How was Connally to work with?

JOHNSON: He was good fun. You never knew what was going to happen.

(chuckling) You drafted something for him to say, and this was true at every conference I ever heard of, he said that, but he always said a hell of a lot more, as well. (laughter) I can never forget, Bernard Brody--I told Brody that Connally was going to speak on the following Monday, and that we had to have a draft for him to speak from. And, Brody had planned to up to Yosemite, and he was very, very angry with me, keeping him there. He said, "I know that he won't use anything I write, anyway." And he didn't. . . . (laughter) But, he performed, you know. He stood up--I don't know whether you the physical facts about San Francisco, which I think were terribly important.

POWELL: No, I don't.

JOHNSON: One is, we had an elongated, or widened "E". The chairman sat here, and then there were three rows of tables going from the outside and the middle, and the delegation sat at those tables. And, as you know, there was no simultaneous translation at all. We had those two wonderful interpreters who later came to the UN, two brothers--

POWELL: The Kamikare (?) Brothers.

JOHNSON: --the Kamikare Brothers, that's right. And we had a number of others, as well. And also, we met in private. None of those meetings were public, of the committees which hammered out the Charter..

POWELL: It was only the plenaries that were open to the public, is that the idea?

JOHNSON: No, it wasn't the plenary, it was that each commission had a public

meeting, yes. But the commissions really didn't do anything very much. Ask Grayson, he was the Secretary for . . . our commission. . . . Bill Fox . . .

POWELL: I mean, they just passed on the hard work that the committees had done.

JOHNSON: Yes, and one of the things was that they wanted to have enough rapporteurs, and chairmen, and vice-chairmen to give every delegation --

POWELL: A seat?

JOHNSON: An office. (Powell laughs) And that was a real fight--whether the Argentines should have an office or not. And I think . . . we won that battle, those opposed to it. At any rate, so, we did meet in private. There were a number of delegates who were very good at briefing the press afterwards. Herbert Vere Evatt, who was the Foreign Minister of . . . Australia, and he was as disliked as any man I've ever seen in public life. Evatt always gave his report of what went on in the meetings, with a twist in his favor, which worried some of my Australian friends, like--what's his name--Paul Hasluck, who was later, you know, the first representative here. . . . And, Messrs. Dulles and Vandenburg talked to the public a good deal, and so did various other delegates of ours. I don't think Miss Gildersleeve did very much, but there was a lot of talking to the press. . . . I had dinner one evening with Scotty Reston and Ham Armstrong. And Scotty said, "Ham, you know that story you told me this morning, I checked it with nineteen people before I found you were right." (laughter) Now that's how much checking a guy had to do. The Times, you know was published during the Conference--

POWELL: In San Francisco.

JOHNSON: And, the large majority of the delegations didn't meet at the delegation meetings. I almost didn't get in. I had to push to get into the delegation meetings, even though I was Chief Technical Expert. Sandy and Ben got there because they were Secretary and Assistant Secretary of the delegation. But I had to be there, so I finally got in, but not at the very beginning.

POWELL: Well, I was going to ask you about that, the working . . .

JOHNSON: And, also it happened with the Big Four, the Big Five, such meetings that were--few people went.

POWELL: Yes. But the US daily delegation meetings, of course.

JOHNSON: We had daily delegation meetings.

POWELL: Who presided? Stettinius?

JOHNSON: Stettinius did. And did very well. You see, it was a big delegation. We had all of these Advisors, as I say. Military, civilian . . .

POWELL: Now, we've talked about Connally, we've talked about Vandenburg, we talked about Stassen. What about Cordell Hull? Was he just sort of a senior--

JOHNSON: He never was there.

POWELL: Wasn't he? He was listed.

JOHNSON: He was a delegate, named as a delegate, but he never left Washington, as far as I know.

POWELL: Is that so?

JOHNSON: Or wherever he was living at that time. Stettinius consulted him a few times, and reported to the delegation, and maybe even, only sometimes, to very few people, what Hull had said.

The biggest crisis, as you probably know, was over the veto. And, if you're familiar with it, you will know that we adjourned all meetings of Committee III/III, whatever it was, for ten days, or two weeks while we thrashed out the Declaration by Four Sponsoring Powers.

POWELL: Now, that was one of the kind of things that, presumably, Stettinius had to refer back to Truman.

JOHNSON: On that one, he didn't have to refer it back to Truman. He said, "Mr. President, Harry Hopkins, I understand, is going to Moscow."--This is the message that I heard, and it ought to be on the record somewhere--"Will you please ask him to tell Stalin that if they do not accept this draft, I shall adjourn this Conference." That's the story, now somebody else could check it for you.

Charlie Noyes was around. Do you know him at all?

POWELL: I know the name.

JOHNSON: Charlie was very close to Stettinius, and both before he came to the State Department and when he came up here afterwards, something very much like that came up, he said.

That document was drafted . . . we worked hard at my level, within the delegation, on that, night after night after night. And then it went up to the alternate delegates, who were Jebb, and Sobolev, and Pasvolsky. And when they got it thrashed out, then we went back into--they reconvened, the Conference Committee, and that was presented at that meeting, and there, fur . . . did . . . fly. God knows what would have happened if there had been a public meeting. At one point, the representative of New Zealand--well by this time, incidentally, Cadogan had had gone back, of course, Eden had gone back much before Cadogan had gone back--

POWELL: So Jebb, effectively, was heading the delegation?

JOHNSON: No, where was Jebb? I can't remember--I guess he was heading the delegation. But the person who was the British representative in our Committee, was Sir Prof.

POWELL: Oh, Charles Webster.

JOHNSON: Charles Webster. And Charles Webster--did you know him?

POWELL: Yes, I did.

JOHNSON: I tell you this, as a diplomat, he was the greatest policeman on the beat. He had heavy feet, (imitates the sound of Webster's walking) plunk, plunk, plunk, going down. And, at one point, to this Foreign Minister

of New Zealand, when he was defending this statement, when Webster was, "Oh come now, there's enough lying done already, you don't have to lie about that, too." (Powell laughs) This was in a meeting of representatives of fifty countries, and to one member of the Commonwealth to the other. And, at the end of this rather hot session, Mike Pearson, who sat in that Committee for his country, got the floor, and he said, "Mr. Chairman, I do not rise to make another speech on behalf of the unity of the well-known British . . . Commonwealth, but to suggest that we adjourn until tomorrow." This was 11:30.

POWELL: That was very good, very good indeed.

JOHNSON: Well, that was quite a session.

POWELL: Now, one other person on the delegation that we haven't mentioned was Dean Virginia Gildersleeve. Was she active?

JOHNSON: I think she was. She dealt with social questions, largely. I didn't have much contact with her. Of course, I had enough to do in my own bailiwick, as it were. But she was a very personable individual. I think she made her cases more in private than in public, and I don't think, frankly, many of the delegates really cared about those issues she was dealing with. You know, there was no social-economic proposals in the Dumbarton Oaks Proposals. . . . Pasvolsky, and people like him, tended to think that was taken care of by Bretton Woods, by the establishment of--

POWELL: FAO, Hot Springs--

JOHNSON: FAO, Hot Springs, yes, and so forth. So, a lot of the people



working on that were the private citizens, who were the Advisors.

Incidentally, I started to say something about Mexico City. I think Mexico City was the first conference of importance in which the US had private citizens as observers, or associates, or something like that. And I think the idea was picked up possibly by John Dickey, to whom the job in the State Department was Public Affairs, at that time, and carried it out to San Francisco, because we had a whole lot of people. The Carnegie Endowment had two representatives out there, the National Council of Churches, B'nai B'rith, the Catholics. There was an enormous number.

POWELL: It was sort of the genesis of the representation of Non-Governmental Organizations. . . .

JOHNSON: Exactly, it was. I think, as I said, I think it went back, really, to Mexico City. . . .

POWELL: You were mentioning John Foster Dulles. Did you get to know him out there?

JOHNSON: Not really. He was not dealing with the things I was dealing with. He was primarily concerned with the Inter-American System, at that time. And I guess, Tom Connally made it clear that he wasn't going to let, you know, Mr. Dulles handle this. He was famous among all of us. As soon as meeting, whether of the delegation, or of the Big Four, ended, Dulles would go to his office and he would be followed by a stream of journalists, and he'd give the information. You know about the creation of . . . Operation Leak, did you ever hear about it?

POWELL: No.

JOHNSON: Well, Dulles and Vandenburg were not exactly non-partisan in their approach to the press, and what was going on. And most of the news seemed to be coming from them. So, somebody proposed to Stettinius that he bring somebody to help him talk to the press. There was one man already with the delegation, who was Acheson's--Acheson was an Assistant Secretary; he was not at the Conference; he lent his assistant, Eddie Miller, who later became Assistant Secretary himself, as a member of the delegation, just to keep an eye on things, I guess. Eddie Miller was already there, but then they brought in a fellow named . . . he lived in New York, his father-in-law was a great musician . . . Finlader, Tom Pinlader(?). And, the head of that group was a man named Adlai Stevenson, whom nobody ever knew. He was never a member of the delegation officially, but Adlai, and this was called "Operation Leak", (laughing) Adlai was responsible for getting things into the paper with a--

POWELL: Stettinius point of view--

JOHNSON: --the US Government point of view, (laughter) not with the Republican point of view. But, that was just toward the end of the Conference. It was very amusingly done. That's where I first met Adlai, and where we all did, I guess.

POWELL: And then, of course, you knew him in London, when he was advising the US delegation to the First Session of the General Assembly.

JOHNSON: That's right. And even before that, when he was representative of the . . . well, he was heading the delegation to the Preparatory Commission.

POWELL: That's right. Now, you were at the Preparatory Commission?

JOHNSON: Nb. I sent my number two, who was a fellow named Don Blaisdell. . . . Well, we had a rather, confidentially, we had a difficult relationship. He should have been made the head of the division, but he was passed over, and I was brought in from outside, and he decided to stay on. But--

POWELL: It wasn't easy.

JOHNSON: It wasn't easy. But he went to the Preparatory Commission; he came back, when that work was done, in time for Christmas, and I went over to the first meeting of the Assembly, and the Security Council.

POWELL: Now, you were mentioning one or two names, for example, when we were coming in, you were mentioning Andy Cordier. He was at San Francisco, wasn't he?

JOHNSON: Yes he was, very much so. And he was furthermore, on the Preparatory Commission. He went over there. Technically, he was in my division in the department, and I never quite know how this happened, but he worked out at San Francisco with Sandy. He was under Sandy's orders out there. I knew him least well of my division at that time. He'd been a very quiet, research type, and I had passed him over for promotion, because it looked to me as if he didn't want to run anything.

POWELL: (laughing) You didn't know what he was going to run later on--from the UN Secretariat to Columbia University.

JOHNSON: That's right. And I've always admired Andy, because as far as I can tell, he never allowed that to effect his relations with me.

POWELL: You kept contact with him, literally, over the years.

JOHNSON: Oh yes, literally, over the years.

POWELL: What about Ralph Bunche, he was working Gerig, you see.

JOHNSON: He was working with Gerig. We had very little--but he was also working with the Military. Ralph was a very important--he had to deal with . . . Vandenburg, and Dulles, and Jack McCloy, and all of the tough babies from the Pentagon, and he did a magnificent job there. Now I could only see that. I didn't have any role in it at all. . . . I think I'd met Ralph before we went out, I'm sure I had, because he was in Sandy's division, even before the split, I think. And I became a great admirer of Ralph. And Larry Finklestein got his training from Ralph. Larry was a nineteen year-old kid with a 4-F, and he got into the Department, I guess, about a year, less than a year after he graduated from Columbia, and became very close to Ralph.

POWELL: And Phil Jessup was on the delegation too, wasn't he?

JOHNSON: Phil Jessup was. Phil was working on the legal questions. . . . He was technically under me, didn't pay any attention--well, I guess he wasn't, really, as a matter of fact. I guess he was under Sandy. And Alger Hiss, as you know, was totally an international figure, as far as I can see.

POWELL: He was not a member of the delegation, he didn't attend delegation meetings, or anything like that?

JOHNSON: No, he did not attend delegation meetings. I think, maybe he did once. The FBI had a man attending the delegation meetings, I think because of Alger.

POWELL: Was it for that, or was it just general security problems in San Francisco? . . . Was Alger under suspicion then?

JOHNSON: Yes he was. . . . I can't tell you when I knew he was under suspicion. I did not know it then. But I knew it almost immediately after Burns became Secretary, because Burns was faced with the problem of what he would do with Alger. I didn't have anything to do with it, ever. But he was my boss, because, you see, he was under Leo. But I never saw any sign. Alger stayed in the same hotel we stayed in, and I think he was in pretty close midnight touch Stettinius, and top members of Stettinius' staff. Charlie Noyes could answer that question very easily.

POWELL: Earlier we were speaking about the Latin Americans. Were there other regional groups that met fairly regularly and consulted at San Francisco, like the Commonwealth, or the Arabs, or any other group like that, as far as you can recall?

JOHNSON: They certainly weren't as formal as the Inter-American groups, but there's no question but what the Canadians and the British. And even before that, we used to say the reason Scotty (Reston) had such good stories on Dumbarton Oaks was that the British told Escott Reid, who was then in the

Embassy in Washington, all about what had gone on at Dumbarton Oaks, (chuckling) and Escott told it to Scotty. The Canadians were and the British were very close. And the Australians, well in matters of security, and I say, Evatt was--members of his staff were quite close; I was quite close to the Australians and the Canadians. I had a lot of contact with them, got some friends still around.

POWELL: What about some of those delegation leaders that we read about? Did you have any contacts or any impressions, say, of Mackenzie King?

JOHNSON: No, I don't think he was really there. You know the story about that.

POWELL: No--

JOHNSON: The Canadians had a general election in the middle of the San Francisco Conference, and all the politicians went back to campaign.

POWELL: Well, that's why Eden left, and the rest of them.

JOHNSON: Well Eden--the British didn't have a general election.

POWELL: Well, they were going to have one in August, and so . . .

JOHNSON: But, what you had was, Mike Pearson, Hume Wrong, Rasminsky, and . . . Norman Robertson left in charge of that Canadian delegation. And they got everything they wanted! They didn't talk about it, they just did it. I mean, they set their sights within reason. And, Evatt went around, talking

big publicly, and got nothing out of San Francisco, except a lot of publicity. But the Canadians were there, and working very hard. And it was a very interesting thing. The Australians, the same thing. Evatt was one man, but you must remember . . . the one who later became Governor-General . . . I'll think of him, and the other one was Kenneth Bailey, do you remember Kenneth Bailey?

POWELL: Yes, I remember the name.

JOHNSON: Well, he was there. We became life-long friends, as a matter of fact, we still exchange Christmas cards with his wife.

POWELL: Did you see Field Marshall Smuts?

JOHNSON: No. I did not. He didn't play much of a role in the issues I was concerned with. The people I saw mostly were Soviets, and Jebb,--

POWELL: --What about Molotov?

JOHNSON: I don't even remember his being there. I don't think he was.

POWELL: Oh yes, because when I interviewed Romulo, Romulo said his first baptism of fire was when Molotov got up and said, "why are the Philipinos here?" (laughs) Romulo had an acute memory of that. Did you get to know Romulo at all?

JOHNSON: Slightly, yes. He knew who I was.

POWELL: He still comes here.

JOHNSON: I know he does. Are you sure about Molotov? I would say he might have been there at the beginning, but Gromyko was running a--I remember, my opposite number was an Admiral. What he knew about public affairs, I don't know, but he spoke very good French. And I speak fairly good French, or did then. And we worked quite closely together. And on one occasion, he agreed to some language, and called me up at two in the morning and said, "Peux pas--I can't accept this. And we'll have to change the language, my boss is"--he didn't say--"my boss is," but I know at that time, Molotov's name come in at all, or into my mind at all. Gromyko was the guy who was giving the orders at that time. And this fellow said--just to end that particular tale--we worked out some language that they could accept, and that we could accept, and he said, "Merci beaucoup. Vous êtes la grèse dans la machine." (laughter) I've never been called the grease in the works before, or so to speak.

POWELL: Very nice, yes, very nice. Well, was that a real crisis that Evatt precipitated over the veto, or were you never worried about that part of the outcome of the Conference? I don't mean the Russian thing that Harriman had to go to see Stalin about, but you know, the Evatt-led movement against the Yalta agreement.

JOHNSON: I can't say that I was worried about it, because it was perfectly obvious that the Big Four would not accept anything less. Not the Russians, not ourselves alone, but the British and the French, I'm sure were clear when they came along.



POWELL: And the Chinese..

JOHNSON: Well, the Chinese didn't really--there were for it, but, what we did in that Committee, where I had most responsibility, we just saw to it that there was no change in a single word of the Dumbarton Oaks Proposals, or the Yalta Agreement, on the veto. And we succeeded. I got one word into the Charter. It's in a Chapter head. The provision on Provisional Agreements, you remember, or Provisional Measures? Provisional Security Measures, it became, as a result of Johnson's (laughs)--

POWELL: (laughing) intervention.

JOHNSON: Intervention. But it was quite different. The others were creative in a constructive--the international lawyers were not.

POWELL: I guess when the Charter was signed on June twenty-fifth, there was quite an air of euphoria up there; everybody was slapping each other on the back, what a jolly good job we've done. Did you share that general feeling of optimism, and hope, and everything else?

JOHNSON: Well, I shared it with one reservation. . . . My reservation was, "Oh, what a great day this can be." And that phrase was in Harry Truman's speech at the close of the Conference and it didn't get into the printed versions of it.

POWELL: It didn't?

JOHNSON: I heard about it--somebody said, "it's not in it." And I wrote to

Zelbrist(?), the librarian at the Truman Library. And he wrote back, and said, "You were right. We found, in one copy of the speech"--he said it was in the very beginning of this copy, I remember Truman as having spoken it at the end, but, nobody else caught it, as far as I know.

And he used that very phrase. I did think of that spirit, because I remembered Paris. I mean, I used to be a historian, after all, a diplomatic historian. And I remembered the euphoria of that time, and I really think that the people who planned acceptance of the Charter in the United States did a superb job. Pasvolsky was one of them. I think Dickey had a great deal to do with the public affairs side of things. And, I think didn't have a feeling of euphoria. I mean, not that extreme. We certainly were not yet, at least I wasn't, yet convinced that the Soviet Union was going to be forever blocking. And incidentally, I should say this. I had nothing to do with the negotiations over Poland or Argentina. Those were conducted at the political level entirely, and I was the technical.

END OF SIDE TWO

POWELL: But did you sense, at San Francisco, and this is the point I wanted to make earlier, the beginnings of the Cold War?

JOHNSON: I did not.

POWELL: Certainly, there was tension over the question of Polish representation.

JOHNSON: There's no question about that. I . . . no, I didn't sense that, particularly. It wasn't until a little bit later . . . we began to get

achievement, and the Soviets didn't ratify, and didn't ratify, and didn't ratify, and then that period from June to October, I began to worry somewhat. But then they did finally ratify it.

POWELL: Now, let's go over to London. You got there in January or December of '45 for the meeting of in January of '46.

JOHNSON: Well, we sailed on New Year's Eve on the Queen Elizabeth, from New York. She was still a troop ship.

POWELL: Now, in the mean time, Burns had been appointed Secretary of State.

JOHNSON: Well, he was appointed Secretary of State as early as June. The day that Conference ended.

POWELL: Yes, well he went to London.

JOHNSON: Oh, he did indeed.

POWELL: But he didn't spend a great deal of time there, did he?

JOHNSON: No, he didn't. He was on the ship going over, and . . . oh, there was a good deal of discussion at one point. There was quite a debate--I wasn't in it--between Vandenburg and Burns, on the ship going over, and one of the military people who was on the ship, was a guy named J. Russell Dean, or John Russell Dean, a Major-General, and said, "God, this thing is more explosive than dynamite." (laughter)--A comment in the lower decks.

POWELL: So, in effect, for a great deal of the time, Stettinius was still a head of the delegation.

JOHNSON: Yes, he was. But--

POWELL: Now there were . . . one new important face on that delegation. And I wonder whether you got to know her there: Eleanor Roosevelt.

JOHNSON: Only slightly. I did not really get to know her. She was dealing, again, with other areas than I was.

POWELL: Social matters a lot?

JOHNSON: Social matters a lot, and humanitarian things.

POWELL: What was your role than, in the General Assembly, Dr. Johnson?

JOHNSON: Well, I was . . . I've forgotten what my title was in the book but, my role was primarily working on the Atomic Energy Resolution, which we had worked on before, and which--

POWELL: --That's what established you and Atomic Energy Commission--

JOHNSON: Yes. --Burns took to Moscow with him in November, Truman was very much interested in that, of course, I worked on that. And then the Security Council met, and I was working on that most of the time. We had planned a large, quite a map, of things--Sub-Committee this, and Sub-Committee that of the Security Council, there were a whole lot of them. And they had the first

Meeting of--it was a bibelot, almost--first meeting of what became called the Committee of Experts, in London. And then they adjourned, after we got over here. And I don't know whether you'd know it, but that was the first meeting of the UN on this soil. It was up at Hunter College; the Committee of Experts, in March, nineteen hundred and forty-six. And I was the US representative on that.

POWELL: That's truly fascinating. Well, about the--

JOHNSON: But we did have a--we had the Indonesian question; we had the Greek question; we had the--

POWELL: You had the Iranian complaint about the foreign troops on their soil.

JOHNSON: Yes, that's right.

POWELL: We've still got the complaint; just a different cast of characters.  
(chuckles)

JOHNSON: Well, these three issues came up, and so, we were actually dealing with substantive matters in the Security Council, when we expected to be dealing with organizational matters.

POWELL: And as I recall it, because I attended a lot of those meetings, they were at quite a high level. You had Vishinsky; you had Ernie Bevin, the British Foreign . . .; you had Stettinius, and you had Georges Bidault.

JOHNSON: That's right.

POWELL: Now, it was over the Iranian question, and a Western-sponsored resolution, and I recall very well, it was a Saturday night in February that Vishinsky cast the first veto.

JOHNSON: I don't remember that, but, I can't separate those three questions out (chuckles).

POWELL: Anyway, if you were dealing with this, do you recall the impact of that action on the US delegation? Were they expecting a veto that early?

JOHNSON: I think probably some were . . . I don't really recall, that was strange that I shouldn't recall that, because I was supposed to be the expert on the veto, as a matter of fact, at the working level at least.

POWELL: I recall it. If you ever want to read the Record, it's really very funny, because Malkin of Australia was in the Chair, and the veto was cast, and there was one negative vote, but seven affirmative, and I think one abstention, something like that, or one not voting, and he announced, because of seven affirmative votes, the resolution had been carried. Vishinsky was furious! (chuckles)

JOHNSON: I've forgotten that.

POWELL: Yes, it was very funny.

JOHNSON: I remember that I was talking to one of the Australians who came into the Security Council Meeting late one day, and wanted to know what was

going on, and I told him. He said, (imitating an Australian accent) "Is Malkin making a bloody fool of himself as usual?" (laughter)

POWELL: Of course, one of the jobs of both the Assembly and the Security Council was to appoint a Secretary-General. Were you privy to any of the discussions about the appointment of Trygve Lie, or was that not in your bailiwick?

JOHNSON: It wasn't in my bailiwick. It was under Sandy's at that level. And I guess I heard his name going round. I've forgotten that part of it. Makes me sound like a very unobservant person, but I guess I was busy.

POWELL: Well of course, as far as I was concerned, at least the meetings of the Security Council on the appointment of a Secretary-General are always held in private, and then they simply send a formal communication to the General Assembly.

JOHNSON: I think that's correct, in fact, I'm sure that's correct. No, I don't recall any of that.

POWELL: But on the whole, would you say that those first Meetings in London of the General Assembly and the Security Council--was the US reasonably satisfied with them?

JOHNSON: I think we were, yes. We were astonished that the Russians had brought up the issue of, whatever it was, Indonesia, wasn't it, that started it all?

POWELL: Yes. . . . They brought up, yes, Indonesia, and the Ukraine brought up, I don't know what it was, Greece, or something else--

JOHNSON: Yes, that's right.

POWELL: --But it was always my impression that they were countering the Lebanese-Syrian about their presence of their troops, you know, up there in Azerbaïdzhan.

JOHNSON: Yes, I guess you're right on that. That is correct. We had, I can remember one thing. We had prepared a lot of briefing papers beforehand, which we took to London with us, on issues we thought might come up. And, when the Indonesian question came up, it didn't apply, our briefing had no meaning in terms of what happened. So we sent a cable back to Washington; I sent it back to my opposite number, and he came back, saying--it was a very brief cable, and I later learned that the Secretary himself had dictated the final draft, and then cut out all of the extra stuff that my friend sent me, (laughs), which was important from my point of view. The Secretary just said, I think he said, "Stevenson has my orders," or words something like that.

POWELL: I remember Stevenson, of course, mostly sitting in that committee on the search for a permanent headquarters, and making the same speech three times a day, but doing it very elegantly. Now, did you, when you got back to the states, did you go up to Hunter College and participate in the Security Council Meetings, and the Atomic Energy Committee Meetings up there?

JOHNSON: A great many of them. That was a very--well, first place, I was assigned up there. I was put US member of that Committee of Experts, and so,



for the whole spring of 1946, I spent five days a week in New York, and then I'd go back Friday Night, by a night train--we didn't fly much in those days--and write my own instructions on Saturday. This was mostly drafting technical language, and it's the language that's still in the Rules of Procedure of the Security Council, with one or two exceptions. So, then I . . . no, it wasn't until June that I go back involved in New York in the atomic thing, you see, because--

POWELL: Were you there when Bernie Baruch made his famous proposal?

JOHNSON: I was indeed.

POWELL: I think that was one of the most important meetings held at Hunter College.

JOHNSON: I think it was. You know the story . . . I'll tell you at lunchtime, I'll tell you a story at lunchtime about Gromyko's leaving the Security Council.

POWELL: The first walkout?

JOHNSON: The first walkout. Do you know that story?

POWELL: When his zipper was undone?

JOHNSON: Yes. OK.

POWELL: Lie puts it in his book! And he said, Frank Begley(?)--

JOHNSON: Frank Begley told me that story, he said--

POWELL: Well, Lie reports it, and he saved Gromyko from a lot of embarrassment, because (laughing) all the press were waiting for him at the door.

JOHNSON: That's right. That was exactly it. I didn't realize that was in print. Trygve Lie put it in his book? Good for him. I've been telling it occasionally, because I--we were at a conference in Cincinnati once, in those early days, and Frank told that tale to a group of us, you know, we were having a nightcap or something.

POWELL: Well actually, I think probably Wilder Foote put it in the book, because I think Wilder wrote most of the book (laughs).

JOHNSON: That's right. I've never even read what--Lie was furious with me, you know.

POWELL: No, I didn't.

JOHNSON: It's in the book. So he told me, once. We were meeting on the question of the rules of procedure when Lie put in his famous memorandum saying that if the parties to a dispute say there is no dispute, then there is no dispute, you remember written by, what's his name?

POWELL: Abe Feller.

JOHNSON: Abe Feller.

POWELL: And it was over the removal of the Iran complaint from the agenda of the Security Council.

JOHNSON: Well, the Security Council decided to not touch that little bit, and somebody said, let's refer it to the Committee of Experts, which they did. And, Trygve Lie came to our meeting when we discussed it, and I can remember two things about that. Everybody in that Committee spoke English and understood French, or vice-versa. Everybody. They were really quite an extraordinary committee. So, the Chairman, who was Li Yang(?), I think, of China, the Chairman said, "Don't call for an interpretation or translation unless you want something special. You just operate on the basis of each speaking the language he knows," of those two languages. And the Pole came in, and made a pro-Soviet speech, in effect, it was obvious that everybody knows that if parties to the dispute say they have no dispute, there's no dispute. And I undertook to answer that. And made my position very clear. But, before I did so . . . the Chairman asked if anybody wanted a translation of the Pole's speech. And I held up my hand and said, "Yes, I do." And the Chairman said, "What you want a translation from English into French?" (laughter) I had been so intent on the substance that I didn't even know what language he had spoken in. And that caused somewhat of a laugh, including the Russian. The Russian on that was Eric Stein, whose French was very good, English non-existent. And Nicholas Lawford was the British representative, Do you remember him? I think he's here in New York, with another name, Lawford, but not Nicholas, at any rate. . . . And the other is, I directly took issue with Mr. Lie on that same subject. And Lie told me later that he almost wrote very bad things about me, but he finally decided I was speaking

under orders, and it wasn't my fault. Fact is, I believed every damn word of what I said. (laughter)

POWELL: Tell me this. Now, a couple of years after that, you were named Deputy Representative to the Interim Committee of the General Assembly.

JOHNSON: That was in the summer of 1948.

POWELL: Yes. This had been established, really, at the initiative of the United States, and bitterly opposed by the Soviet Union. What, if anything, did that Interim Committee accomplish, since the Eastern Europeans always boycotted it?

JOHNSON: Well, I think that it didn't accomplish much, because they did always boycott it. I think it did give an opportunity for an exploration of the . . . Charter, and spell things out. Jim Hyde tried to take advantage of it. See, Jim Hyde was Phil Jessup's deputy. And you know why I got that job. Phil was the representative on that Committee, and then, when Hirschel retired--

POWELL: That's Hirschel Johnson.

JOHNSON: Yes--in '48, Phil was raised to Deputy-Representative under Austin. And so, they had to fill the post in a hurry; that Committee was supposed to finish its work in time for the General Assembly in '48, in the fall of '48, and so they called me down. I came down the day after I handed back my last blue book to my students, and stayed until mid-August, and worked with Jim, and under Phil, you see, because Phil was then with Warren Austin away, he was

the Acting Chief of the Commission. But, I can't remember--Jim would remember much more of that than I do.

POWELL: I wonder whether that Committee has ever been wound up, or whether it's still, technically on the UN books.

JOHNSON: I think it's not. They never . . . well, the Palestine Conciliation Commission has never been wound up.

POWELL: Well, I was going to ask you about that. You served on there in '61 and '62, didn't you, the Conciliation--

JOHNSON: Yes, I retired in '63, in January of '63. I didn't a full time off. I did that, but I still was running the Carnegie Endowment at the same time.

POWELL: Was that Conciliation Commission primarily concerned with the refugee problem, wasn't it?

JOHNSON: Well, it was by that time. You know, it had a charter, which was Article One Ninety-Four, -Two, or -Three, I've forgotten, I mean Resolution One Ninety-Pour or -Three. And there was a list of things that the Commission was supposed to do. And one of them was, deal with the refugee question. That was under Paragraph Eleven; there were ten other paragraphs before that. And the Conciliation Commission had met. It was really based upon the Swede's, Bernadotte's final report, which you remember Ralph brought to the UN in Paris. And, they just took that almost verbatim. I believe Dean Rusk, and . . . Bealy , then the Middle East Expert on the delegation. He later

became ambassador in Cairo, and so forth. Those two guys worked out that Resolution, I believe, and put it before the Assembly in '48, and it was passed in no time at all, and the Commission went to work, and had several meetings. Unfortunately, it didn't do as good a job as it might have. Ralph Bunche opposed having its members, States. Ralph wanted to have a group of three individuals, and needless to say, the UN in those days wouldn't have, probably wouldn't today, allow that to happen, and so it was three, it was France, Turkey, and the US.

POWELL: Now, you went out in the summer of '61 as a Special Representative of the Commission for the Middle East. What was your particular mandate in it?

JOHNSON: My mandate was that Paragraph Eleven, which had to do with the refugee question. And, this had arisen, as I understand it, in the later days of the Eisenhower Administration. A guy in the State Department came up with a proposal, and since the Commission was totally stymied, it wasn't going to do anything for various political reasons--France was, after all, having trouble with the Arabs, in those days, over Algeria, and Turkey doesn't ever want to get into a scrap in the Middle East, unless its with Greece, and the US certainly wasn't going to touch that with a ten-foot pole--they said, well let's appoint a special representative to go out and look at it. The previous Assembly had passed a resolution in January--it carried over beyond the end of the year--that the Conciliation Commission should submit to the Assembly, in the following Assembly, a report on what it's done to carry out its mandate. And, they tried to get a fellow, whom you probably remember, the Swiss, who was then Swiss ambassador to Moscow, who'd been the Swiss observer at the UN, had the same name as . . . the previous Swede who was Hammarskjöld's assistant. . . . At any rate, he was approached, and about the first of

August, he finally turned it down, after a month or so of consideration. I knew him very well. And, so this story I've heard is that Rusk, in his staff meeting, was raising the question, what do we do now? And George McGee said, well Joe Johnson is supposed to be interested in peace, and he will do anything you ask him to do, which was true, so he called me and I was named. The other members of the Commission accepted.

POWELL: And how long were you actually out there?

JOHNSON: I was out there, the first time, only about four weeks, and the second time, about the same time, but I worked a lot. I negotiated with both the Arabs and the Israelis here at the UN.

POWELL: Did you have much of a supporting staff?

JOHNSON: No, I had two. Andy named Sherry Mo to be my--I've forgotten the title, but he was my assistant.

POWELL: Well, he'd been with Harry Labouisse.

JOHNSON: That's right. He'd been out there with Harry Labouisse.

POWELL: On UNRRA.

JOHNSON: And then I, the Commission itself had a staff, you know, and may still have one, for all I know and John Galliard, do you remember John Galliard?

POWELL: Yes, he's retired but they may have--

JOHNSON: John is dead.

POWELL: Dead, is he?

JOHNSON: Yes, he died about two or three years ago. But, they had another secretary carrying on for a long time. As far as I know, that's still in existence. But John his work with me, and they had a very interesting Englishman, Jarvis(?), who was a land expert. He surveyed, or had surveyed all of Palestine, I think, or all of the part of Palestine that was occupied by Israel. And they were a staff to me, because the Commission wasn't doing anything else.

POWELL: Well, you resigned in January of '63. And I think it was publicly announced this was for "compelling personal reasons".

JOHNSON: I didn't know who said that, but, the reason I resigned was that, well I said in my letter, a) we did not submit a report. And the reason we didn't submit a report was that we knew damn well that if we'd submitted a report both sides would jump on us, and anything that might be useful in it for future years would be gone, so there was no report. There was a letter of resignation to the Commission, in which I said that I believe the Commission can't do anymore, we've got to find another technique, or something like that. I made it clear that that was a non-starter bit of machinery, as far as I was concerned. I could do nothing more.



JOHNSON: The last time I saw Mrs. Meir, she said, "Your proposals are not acceptable and not negotiable." And I sat up and said, "That being the case, I shall go." . . .

POWELL: Well now, we've got to move on to, let's see, it's '69, when you were an alternate delegate to the Twenty-Fourth Session. And, William Rogers, who was Secretary of State, was head of the delegation.

JOHNSON: That's right.

POWELL: Was he out there very much? Or did Charlie Yost do most of the work?

JOHNSON: Oh, he was here most of the time, I think. . . . I can't swear to that, maybe he wasn't. He was busy working on the problem, because you remember, he made his December 9th speech on the Middle East, which he made actually in Washington, to be sure. But, he'd been working on this problem, some of us on the Mission started that, as a matter of fact. Bob Oakley, who was on the Mission at that time, is now Mr. Terrorism in the State Department, Anti-Terrorism, I should say. Bob and I worked on that under Charlie. And I got on the delegation as a result of Charlie's putting me up. Don't you know the tale about that? I thought everybody knew that.

Charlie asked me if I would join the delegation, and I said, "well Charlie, I would be honored to do so, but I don't think you're going to be able to get my name through the political staff in the White House." And, Charlie said, "Well, I'm going to try, anyway." And one day, in the middle of August, he and I were having lunch over at the Century Club, he was called to the phone, and he came with the most sheepish grin on your face, and he said.

"Well, you're in. But, you're not going to be a delegate, you're going to be an alternate delegate, and Shirley--" whatever her name is--

POWELL: Shirley Temple Black.

JOHNSON: "--Shirley Temple Black is going to be the delegate," which caused a good deal of amusement to both of us, and some of my friends called me the first male on the "Good Ship Lollipop." (laughter)

POWELL: Again, about the working methods of the delegation, you had regular morning delegation meetings, that sort of thing?

JOHNSON: Yes. I think the Secretary was there for a good many of them, but Charlie certainly knew his business, and I gather--

POWELL: Oh, yes, and then you had, you had, Bill Buffum, who was another professional.

JOHNSON: That's right.

POWELL: Was there a great deal of material that had to be referred to various desks in Washington?

JOHNSON: I don't recall any.

POWELL: Because, what I was getting at, basically, what were the working relationships between the Mission and the State Department? That's always been a question.

JOHNSON: Well, I think it varies a great deal. I think when Harlan Cleveland was the Assistant Secretary, he pretty much ran things, even though, well of course, Stevenson gave him a pretty free hand, I think. He wasn't around when he was there. I don't know, maybe that's not true. We certainly fought the Department on a few things. Once it looked as if the House was going to pass a resolution against UNRRA, because of all of the troubles coming out of some of the DNRRA camps. And, we put pressure from both ends, and Joe Sisco was great on this, fighting, it was a former delegate, you know, a New Yorker . . . Bingham. That was his resolution. And, we were on the telephone a good deal to Washington. We didn't get all we wanted. Oakley and I tried to get the President to make the speech that we did get the Secretary to make. We never got Kissinger to back it up.

POWELL: Was, as far as you were concerned, the most important issue before that Twenty-Fourth Session, was it the Middle East?

JOHNSON: It was for me. (laughter) I can't remember. I really didn't think in comparison that way. I can't remember any other issues. I remember Shirley made the most of her position, and she was very good, I thought, a very good delegate. I really don't know. I never . . .

POWELL: Put the whole thing together.

JOHNSON: Put the whole thing together. . . . We published that pamphlet which the UN then later took on, on issues before the General Assembly.

POWELL: And very useful then, very useful now. Now tell me, since this is

the Fortieth Anniversary Year, I'd like to get some general observations out of you, because you've seen the UN, not only, as it were, from the inside, both in the State Department, and from working in conferences, but also from the point of view of the head of the Carnegie Endowment. And, I'd just like to put down a few things like, for example, let's begin. Has the Charter stood the test of time? I mean, is it out of date now, after the explosion of a nuclear bomb, and the explosion of the Third World?

JOHNSON: Well, I think it may be out of date, but any attempt to rewrite it today would be--you'd get a worse document than that. In that sense, it has stood this test of time. I'm sure that it was written at the only possible time, and adopted. I mean, it was touch and go that it was adopted by the Russians. It's been adapted, pretty successfully, on a number of occasions. Even those early Rules of Procedure of the Security Council have lasted, but I'm sure they've been interpreted. One thing, in that connection, I was thinking about the other day, is this. When the Charter was adopted, it was assumed, and it was even said publicly by one of the members of our delegation, Jimmy Dunn, that the voting formula meant that all five of the Permanent Members had to vote. There could be no such thing as an abstention. Leo Pasvolksy left the Department and was succeeded, in that role, by Ben Cohen. And Ben Cohen had the view which the Russians also had. My opposite number in writing the Rules of Procedure, once said, "You know, we have an old Russian proverb: you can lead a horse to water, but you can't make it drink." And I said, "I've heard of such a proverb," but, Ben took that view, and we introduced the concept of--

POWELL: Abstention.

JOHNSON: --abstention? It hurt me, sort of intellectually, to do it, but politically, I thought it made sense.

POWELL: It was very realistic, sure.

JOHNSON: Very realistic. Now, I suppose, there are other adaptations that have been made.

POWELL: Well, I think the whole field of peace-keeping is an adaptation that you didn't anticipate at San Francisco.

JOHNSON: That's certainly right. . . . I get terribly worried. I think one of the things that I thought was so important about the Secretariat, loyalty to the UN. That doesn't exist anymore.

POWELL: I want to ask you about your view of the Secretariat.

JOHNSON: I'm not close enough to know, but I have a very strong impression, that not only the Soviet Union, but almost every other country, and perhaps, even including ours, was unwilling to take an international point of view. I think of Ralph (Bunche), and Andy (Cordier), and Brian (Urquhart) as really quite extraordinary people, and Hammarskjöld, needless to say. I was against Bill Buffum's appointment, because I thought Bill would carry over with him, to the job, the rather very strong US point of view that he'd had on the Commission. And, to his great credit, I think that has not happened.

POWELL: I was going to say, he has done, I think, a very beautifully impartial job.

JOHNSON: Yes, well, I'd like to convey that to him sometime, because he heard that I'd been critical of him.

POWELL: And I thought that was one very interesting thing, some people can make that kind of transition. When Harry Labouisse was going out for UNRRA, he came through London--I was in the UN London Office at that time--and I went on one or two appointments with him, and I said, "You must have been very busy in New York getting ready for this assignment, Mr. Labouisse." He said, "You know, I've spent an awful lot of time in Washington, going around to a lot of my old friends, and a lot of my old US Government offices, explaining to them that they're going to hear a different Harry Labouisse. I'm now an international civil servant. I don't work for the US Government." I've always admired him for that.

JOHNSON: Well, he's a good man. I do feel this way about Buffum. I was dead wrong on that.

POWELL: We were speaking of UNRRA, we were speaking of the Middle East. You've watched this for a long, long time. Are you at all hopeful about a Middle East solution at this juncture?

JOHNSON: Well, I guess hope never dies. I hope that the . . . what happens really depends on the US, there's no mistaking that fact. And I think that he US has been partial from the very beginning, and I don't know why people like Hussein work like the hell, and come over and present proposals to us, and have us turn them down. Just because Kissinger made a secret agreement with the Israelis back in 1975, and we now regard that as a commitment as holy as--

POWELL: Almost a treaty committment.

JOHNSON: Well, more than a treaty committment. Because, Congressmen wouldn't accept any change, and . . . they might accept some changes in the treaty. And I think, as long as we not only have that image, but are in fact, that way, there will not be—I think the chances for peace are diminishing, considerably. I really had some hope when Carter made a statement, do you recall, when he was President, the Clinton Mass Speech, when he was going to do something, but he didn't do it. And then, when Reagan in, I thought there was some chance in his September '82 Proposal, not enough, but I don't think anything's going to be done in the next four years, unless, they say, major fight that we have to get into.

POWELL: And time is running out.

JOHNSON: And time is running out. I don't blame the UN for this.

POWELL: No. What about the Security Council and its effectiveness? That's a field that you've been working on ever since San Francisco. I mean, the Security Council has not been able to solve the Middle East Problem; it hasn't been able to solve the presence of Soviet troops in Afganistan, or all kinds of trouble spots in the world. Do hold out hope for a more effective Security Council?

JOHNSON: I think a lot of people have responsible for the fact that the Security Council has not gotten the chance that it ought to have gotten. I think we were responsible when we yielded to the French, and did not put the

Viet Nam question before the Security Council way back in 1954.

POWELL: At the time of Dien Bien Phu .

JOHNSON: Yes. Of all issues, that was one that was made for the United Nations. And, as Dean Acheson once said, the French blackmailed us. I think he said that publicly. . . . We wanted them in the North Atlantic Treaty.

POWELL: Now, we've spoken of at least two of the Secretaries-General. We've spoken of Trygve Lie, and his anger with you, we've spoken of Dag Hammarskjöld. We haven't spoken of at least two others. We haven't spoken anything about U Thant, we haven't spoken anything about Kurt Waldheim. Did you know either of those personally?

JOHNSON: I knew U Thant, enough to say, "How do you do Mr. Secretary-General?"

POWELL: How did you assess his performance?

JOHNSON: Well, let me go back. I saw a fair amount of Dag Hammarskjöld. I used to have reason to go over there occasionally and he would arrange it so that we talked for a couple of hours. And I had the feeling that he wanted to talk with somebody who wasn't within the shop, but who knew something about it. And, I gave some information about that to Brian when he was working on a . . . book. . . . I had great respect for him, didn't always understand what he was doing. And I wept when I heard he died. I walked into the Office in Geneva for an appointment with the then Chief of that Office, and he said, "Have you heard the news?" And that was the news of the plane going down. And that did hit me very hard.



U Thant, I criticized him publicly in a speech which got before him, for yielding to . . . Nasser over the boundary. I understand why he did it. And I remember Hammarskjöld told me once, "I made one agreement, which if it ever became public, would automatically have disappeared." And that was the agreement he made with Nasser to get that settlement in, I think so. At any rate, he never said that to Ernie Gross . . . I was critical of U Thant about that issue, but not really. I wasn't very close during his presidency.

POWELL: He was a great gentleman, but was very courageous over Viet Nam. And did you get to know Waldheim at all?

JOHNSON: I think I shook his hand, once. Or he shook mine, perhaps I should say.

POWELL: But I mean, it was really, as far as you're concerned, it was Lie and Hammarskjöld.

JOHNSON: They were the two. See, I retired in '71. Now, Hammarskjöld had been dead ten years, to be sure, but I wasn't working on the UN programs. . .

POWELL: No, and in fact, retired in '72. . . Well, a final question, if I may, just in general terms, how do you foresee the future of the UN?

JOHNSON: Well, I guess I'd have to say, first of all, there would have be a man of great courage and great willingness for self-sacrifice to become the Secretary-General, before much could be done. I don't think U Thant was repected by many Governments. I don't know about that. Hammarskjöld was, and I think, Trygve Lie, to good considerable degree, was. And I think next,

there would have to be a determination on the part of the United States to live up to the Charter, which it has not always done.

POWELL: Isn't that true of the large number of Member States.

JOHNSON: Oh, a large number, yes. But the United States, if it had taken a different line on issues when we were--I mean, this line we've taken with respect to . . . UNESCO, the line we've taken with UNESCO, and seemed, at times, to want to take--

POWELL: You think that we should have stayed in UNESCO, and worked internally.

JOHNSON: Yes. And I played a role in our doing that, earlier. I don't know whether you know this, but, in '57, Ike, or rather, his Government, set up a committee to look into the question of US participation in the ILO. There had been questions there, and it turned out, by accident, that I was the Chairman of the Committee, and submitted a report. And we took the line that the US ought to keep on participating and figure that it could do as well as any other country could. We did continue to participate, and eventually . . . well, I thought that was the right line. I think for the US Government not to recognize and make use, effective, positive use of its position is just dead wrong. So, I would say that one could have hoped that when a man like Adlai Stevenson took over a job at the UN, things would have turned for the better. Now it happened that this was a bad time, and he didn't have a chance to do as much he could have done, I think. He had a first class team there. I think we ought to regard the UN as an important tool for our policy. You can do things there that you can't do anywhere else. After all, Phil Jessup and . . . Vishinsky did happen to run across each other in the Delegate's Lounge out

at Lake Success. Do you remember that?

POWELL: And began talking about lifting the Berlin Blockade.

JOHNSON: That's right. Exactly.

POWELL: Yes, it's one of the legends of this house.

JOHNSON: And I think, if that's the kind of thing that could be done, I think Hammarskjöld--well I don't know how he dealt with other people, but he seemed to like to do things privately and, I think he ran a good show. I would hate to see the UN lapse into nothing, because, there's nothing else. As I said, we would not be able to create as good an Organization as this can be.

POWELL: Based on what you people did in San Francisco.

JOHNSON: Well, yes, essentially that. Based on the way it started. I think we made some mistakes in the beginning. When the Cold War hit the UN, we never talked to the Russians on any issue before it came up. I remember, I argued for doing so. I thought we ought to continue to have private conversations. . . . And, I remember Warren Austin saying to me once, toward the end of his term--I had a special relationship with Austin, which was that he and my father were fellow member of a staff tried to build a steel mill in China, back in 1917 (chuckles). He was the lawyer and father was the metallurgist. At any rate, he said, "Joe, you know we're talking things over with the Soviets these days." And I was very pleased, but it took him for him to decide against the hard line at the UN.

POWELL: Well, I want to thank you very much, Dr. Johnson, for giving your time, and this is going to be an important contribution to our archive. You've given us a great deal of perspective on the UN, from 1944 right on down through 1985.

JOHNSON: Well, thank you very much indeed, Mr. Powell, I'm not sure that terminal date shouldn't be about 1971, (Powell laughs), rather than 1985. I've enjoyed it, I would like to look over some of the things, at some time, if could, because--

POWELL: Alright. We will doing a transcript over the summer, and maybe when you get back from your trip to Scotland, we can send you down a copy to Princeton.

JOHNSON: OK, so I want to say this, that everybody used to laugh at General Eisenhower's performance in press conferences. I out-do him. I can put a parentheses inside a parentheses inside a parentheses, (Powell laughs) and never know I'm doing it.

POWELL: Well frankly, I'm getting hungry now.

JOHNSON: So am I.

END OF SIDE FOUR

END OF INTERVIEW