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INTERVIEW WITH MARX LEVA
ASSISTANT TO THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE, GENERAL COUNSEL, AND ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

by

ALFRED GOLDBERG, SAMUEL A. TUCKER
AND HARRY B. YOSHPE

WASHINGTON, D.C.
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GOLDBERG: [After preliminary remarks]. You know that there is currently or has been now for sometime a revisionist idea about the nature of the Cold War.

MR. LEVA: My son is one of the leaders!

GOLDBERG: There is a tendency on the part of revisionist historians to maintain that our political and economic policies and actions forced the Soviets into an adversary role. Some or most of these historians focused on the Truman Administration in the years 1945-1950, with which you are most familiar. Do you feel that there is any basis for this interpretation of our post war relations with the Soviet Union? Can you think of any specific instances where there appeared to be a conscious and deliberate effort on the part of our leadership in the White House and Defense, in State -- government in general -- to create a situation which would in effect put the Soviets into such a role, to make conditions, for instance, in connection with the Marshall Plan which would virtually force them to reject it because they couldn't accept our conditions?

LEVA: I think that quite the reverse is true; I think that the Marshall Plan, which is certainly not the first of the events I would like to touch on, was the response to a felt need. It was the utter despair in Western

Europe and I think that at the highest level of government -- the utter despair in the Soviet Union itself, because the earliest intention was to extend credit to the Soviet Union. You may criticize that as a mistaken idea now, but I don't think that there was any deliberate attempt to create conditions -- I think the Russians made the conditions -- they didn't want any part of it.

I'd like to go back a little bit before that in a personal sense. I was on sea duty for two and a half years during World War II. When I came back from sea duty, I landed in the Navy Department. While serving out the rest of my tour of duty, I met Secretary Forrestal -- skipping over a period -- and became his personal counsel while he was still Secretary of the Navy. Speaking of the immediate postwar period, my feeling at the levels at which I was then operating -- both the low levels where I was operating when I was still in uniform and the much higher levels I operated at soon thereafter -- was a very profound concern that the total vacuum in Western Europe created a condition of chaos and despair. On the military front, the situation might encourage adventurism on the part of the Soviets, if they were so disposed. As popularly stated in those days, nothing except sufficient shoe leather kept the Russian Army from the Channel.

I think that the things we did stemmed first from the humanitarian sense but second from the real need, once the problem emerged as a military problem, the very real need to contain -- to use that bad word -- the Soviet power - both when Communist power thrust into Greece and Turkey, and when Soviet power would not withdraw from Iran in the immediate postwar period. It was a consideration of what countermeasures might be posed. When in 1946 a question

arose -- while I was still at Navy -- of dispatching a fleet to the Mediterranean, this was turned down by Secretary of State Byrnes on the ground that it might antagonize the Soviets. I don't know if this particular event has been discussed with you.

My recollection may be faulty - but let me give you my recollection of that. In 1946 we had withdrawn everybody -- the movement to bring the boys home was deep and profound and since I was one of the boys, I thought it was a great idea that I be brought home. We had virtually no forces left. We had some forces on the continent of Europe; we had no forces in the Mediterranean which is where I had been operating with my landing craft for that period of time. The Navy Department proposed sending a fleet to the Mediterranean. Byrnes' response to Forrestal, then Secretary of the Navy, was that the Secretary of State was conducting very delicate negotiations with the Soviets -- this might antagonize the Soviets -- we shouldn't do anything to antagonize the Soviets, etc. So I think in terms of the revisionists' theory of history, it was only when the Russians began thrusting that we sought to put up something of a protective cordon.

Moving on from the events of '46 to the events of '47 -- and I may have my dates wrong -- when the British told us they could no longer carry the financial burden of Greece and Turkey and Truman's Greek-Turkish Aid Program emerged, it emerged as a program to take the place of Britain in order to keep the Soviets from flowing ever farther into the Mediterranean and ever farther beyond the Iron Curtain, to use Churchill's phrase.

May I give you an aside on that which you may be aware of -- I say an aside because it's to me a humorous aspect. The Office of the Naval Historian can certainly furnish you with dates and details which will verify, or if necessary, correct what I am saying. The initial turn-down of the proposed Mediterranean Task Force was by Byrnes as Secretary of State. Admiral Forrest Sherman, then Assistant Chief of Navy Operations for Operations, and Admiral Chester Nimitz, Chief of Naval Operations, came to Forrestal after the turn-down. The essence of their visit to Forrestal was -- I don't want to make this too dramatic, but it always seemed to me a dramatic event. The essence of it was that the Turkish Ambassador had died in the United States during the War and had been temporarily buried at Arlington. It was necessary to return the body home in proper state, and we could have used one of our lumbering four engine bombers, converted for the purpose, I guess. They said Mr. Forrestal should go to Truman and suggest that the battleship Missouri, just back from the Japanese surrender in Tokyo Bay, should convey the Ambassador's body. This was done despite a very reluctant State Department which had just turned down the frontal approach and which was now outflanked. So when we say the military doesn't make foreign policy, we have to make due allowances for maneuvers. In any event, the sequence of events after that was that Truman said "Fine, great idea, Battleship Missouri." Then Admiral Sherman next said, "Well, you know, we can't send the Missouri without an accompanying screen of destroyers" and so forth -- "We've got to send six destroyers." I think that was cut down to four, so she went accompanied

by four destroyers. Then the next statement was, "Well we really, now she's there, ought to show the flag, and she ought to call at Piraeus, and she ought to call at Naples," and by this time, time is elapsing and you can't have a battleship and four destroyers out there without a carrier. So they sent a carrier and we have never been without a fleet in being in the Mediterranean since. I've always thought that we shouldn't be too critical of the Russians for doing largely the same thing a year or so ago, but I thought the 1946 deployment was really an important event in this sense. It preceded the Greek-Turkish Aid Program by 8, 10, 12 months. Accordingly, when the British threw in the sponge, which they had to do from a fiscal standpoint, we had a fleet in being and could enunciate a Greek-Turkish Aid Program with some force there -- not much force -- but better than no force. But this I think, going back to your question about revisionism, was still in response not merely to the Soviet threat but to the Communist presence.

GOLDBERG: What was your role in the events leading up to the passage of the National Security Act in July of 1947?

LEVA: I mention names again because some of these are people you may want to interview. While I was still in uniform, I met a lot of my old friends who were back from naval or military duty. One of them was a friend named Jack Connor. Jack Connor, later Secretary of Commerce, was a year ahead of me in law school. He was back from Marine duty in the Pacific and he was serving as Forrestal's counsel. He asked me if I could relieve him as Forrestal's counsel so that he might go to Merck and Company where he had an offer to become secretary and counsel. He is now chairman of Allied

Chemical, should you want to get in touch with him -- a wonderful person. Jack was working on the early phases of what became the unification act. I succeeded him in February or March of 1947. Therefore, his recollections of what was going on within the Navy Department before would be better than mine.

My own role was at the culminating phase really after President Truman had said to Secretary of War Patterson, Secretary of the Navy Forrestal, look you fellows I'm not joking about this -- get together, and Clark Clifford is my man for the get-together -- now do it. So from that point forward, I worked with Clark Clifford of the White House, with General Norstad, who was the designated representative of General Eisenhower for the War Department, including the Air Corps at that time, and with Admiral Sherman who was the designated representative of the Navy. That essentially was the team that worked on the ultimate legislation which, after being threshed out back and forth, went to the Congress and became the National Security Act of 1947 that was signed by the President in July of '47 and which took effect in September of '47 when Forrestal took office.

The original expectation, because I was very gun shy on this -- I had been trapped before -- was that Patterson would be Secretary of Defense and Forrestal assured me of that. I said, "I have commitments to these fellows with whom I'm forming a law firm and they formed the firm in '46 and I'm overdue for getting out and so forth." Well you know, as soon as we got this done and legislation was enacted and the President appointed Forrestal, Forrestal said to me that Mrs. Patterson didn't want Patterson to take the job of Secretary of Defense. He should go back to New York and practice law.

Forrestal said to me "Now that you helped get the law passed you've got to help me implement it." I said, "That wasn't part of the deal and I can't stay." He said, "Well, stay a year -- I have an arrangement with the President, I only have to stay a year."

My arrangement was supposed to be that I would only stay for one year. Tragically enough, Forrestal stayed for 18 months. A number of us kept trying to get him to take vacations which he said he couldn't do because the original legislation provided for no Deputy Secretary of Defense, no Under Secretary of Defense, and so on. So his ultimate period of duty was 18 months and he asked me to stay on with his successor to help him with the transition, which I did, specifying at that time it couldn't be more than three months. Well, it became more than three months; then we got into the Korean War and what with one thing and another I was there finally until through the good offices of Robert Lovett I managed to get out in the Spring of '51. I had told him when the Korean War reached a plateau, any time I could decently get out I wanted to get out. So I was there, counting Navy and Defense, from the end of 1945 to 1951.

GOLDBERG: During the period that you were working with Clifford and Norstad and Sherman on the legislation, did you develop some independent views of your own on the nature of the organization and the role of the Secretary, or were you pretty much in agreement with Forrestal?

LEVA: I was really a technician at that point. I had come back from being an Ensign, a Lieutenant junior grade, and a Lieutenant and suddenly I found myself with Secretaries and Admirals and Generals and I really didn't have any independent views. I met on many occasions with

Ferdinand Eberstadt, who was Forrestal's representative at an earlier period in working out the Eberstadt plan. To the extent that I had any views I was an advocate for the Navy's views. I don't remember having any independent views of my own and I was really functioning as counsel for Forrestal or for the Navy or for both in this particular matter.

TUCKER: In view of Mr. Forrestal's later change of views -- about '48, '49 -- was he fully supportative of the '47 plan or was he to some extent a captive of the positions of the Admirals and the Navy Department?

LEVA: I don't believe he was a captive of the Admirals. I think he was fully supportive of the '47 plan in the sense that "This is a compromise -- let's give it a try." Of course, he didn't think he was the one that was going to have to give it a try. So that if you had said to him earlier -- you are going to be the Secretary of Defense -- might he have said, "Well, I really need a little more authority than this?" Possibly so, but that is highly speculative. I think that what he was interested in -- knowing the intransigence of some of the Admirals on this issue -- was achieving some sort of compromise so he could go forward with the President's mandate and get legislation which could be enacted by the Congress because he was a very skillful Congressional negotiator and had a very clear view of what was within the realm of the possible. He had a number of constituents that he had to satisfy; he had to satisfy the Admirals, he had to satisfy the House committees, he had to satisfy the Senate committees, and he had to satisfy his boss, the President of the United States. I think he wove a difficult but successful path in getting the legislation enacted.

When he testified 18 months later before the Hoover Commission and before the National Security Committee of the Hoover Commission, he was extremely frank in talking about the shortcomings. If there is a transcript of that you should certainly have it. In his testimony before both House and Senate Armed Services Committee on the amendments of 1949, even though he was very tired by that time, his testimony was extremely good. He handled the questions extremely well. He was very, very tired and a lot of us were urging him to take a vacation and suggesting various devices by which he could deputize somebody else to hold the job while he did so, but that did not work.

GOLDBERG: Did he have much of a say in the appointment of the Secretaries of the Services and the Chiefs of Staff?

LEVA: My impression is that he had virtually none. I am sure, for example -- this is just on the basis of personal friendship with the individuals -- that he would have been much happier having John Kenney as Secretary of the Navy rather than John Sullivan. It was quite a task since John Sullivan had a political base and John Kenney didn't. It was quite a task to persuade John Kenney to serve as Under Secretary of the Navy when Sullivan was named to succeed Forrestal as Secretary of the Navy. I don't believe, even though Forrestal was a close friend of Stuart Symington's for many years, he would have chosen Stuart Symington for Secretary of the Air Force because he knew that Stuart was a gut fighter and a tough inside man to deal with. I don't believe he would have selected Kenneth Royall. I'm just speculating. Indeed there were people within the Navy he would have preferred to have rather than Admiral Nimitz, but Admiral Nimitz was sort of

foreordained, and I think an extremely happy choice. So I would say that Secretary Forrestal really had very little voice in those selections.

GOLDBERG: Do you think that the strain on him would have been a good bit less had he been able to select people for those jobs whom he thought he could have worked with better?

LEVA: You know I'm not a psychiatrist by training and I don't know how much of the ultimate denouement was from strain on him. There were other factors, family factors, religious factors. He was born a Catholic, left the Church to marry a divorced Protestant; his family raised unshirted hell about this every time he heard from them. But I think the strains were not really solely or perhaps even predominantly the strains of office. And I don't think it would have been any different. I rather think the work he did was more of a tonic than anything. I sort of take it as an article of faith that each of us has a breaking point and each of us has a threshold whether to pneumonia or to mental depression; if you pile up enough individual items you can reach your individual threshold. I think he had a relatively high threshold. Certainly, the strains and the lack of a Deputy Secretary and the lack of any Assistant Secretary entered in, but no one thing is determinant about that.

YOSHPE: Some of Mr. Ohly's notes of the meetings of the War Council suggest that there was some misunderstanding and confusion in terms of relationships between the DoD and the NSRB, and even the National Security Council. Would you comment on the adequacy of definitions of missions and roles?

LEVA: I don't have any recollection about that. Also, it was in Jack Ohly's area of responsibility. We had reasonably clear areas of responsibility --

McNeil for fiscal, Leva for legal and legislation, and Ohly for National Security Council, NSRB and miscellaneous. And it worked extremely well when you had only three. By the time you get 11 Assistant Secretaries, I don't know.

GOLDBERG: Forrestal used a number of groups; he had a top advisory group and a War Council and a Committee of Four Secretaries and other Committees of this kind, and of course they existed afterward too. But he instituted most of them. How effective were these as instruments of advice and counsel in terms of helping to form policy?

LEVA: My impression -- and I attended a lot of meetings, although Jack Ohly was the secretary -- was that they were extremely effective in airing an issue, but they were not much help in making decisions and that actually Forrestal perhaps didn't want too much help in making decisions. Frequently, as with the War Council, I think it was largely the matter of going through procedures and not insulting the Secretaries, and this was more of being a diplomat. Because Forrestal was consummately good at that.

GOLDBERG: And he believed in keeping them informed and having them feel that they were being informed.

LEVA: At the first meeting of the War Council, as you may have been told by someone already, which was held immediately after Forrestal was sworn in at the Navy Department -- by Chief Justice Vinson as I recall -- Forrestal had a meeting of the War Council in one of the rooms just off his office there and I think that either Jack Ohly or I -- I think I had done this -- prepared an agenda at Forrestal's request before Ohly was really officially on board, as he was still Patterson's special assistant, I think. On the

agenda or under the head of other business was the item of tactical air. Are you familiar with this?

YOSHPE: I believe I have seen that, yes.

LEVA: Because the discussion, if there are any minutes of it went something like this. Forrestal raised a question and addressed it to General Eisenhower and said in effect, "Ike, are you really sure you want to give up tactical aviation?" This was the day the new Air Force was supposed to come into being --"Are you really sure you want to give up tactical aviation? You know there was no question about bombers etc., etc., but are you sure of TacAir?" He had also similar questions to the Navy concerning Naval transport planes and other things, but it was tactical aviation that I remember. Before Eisenhower could answer, Stuart Symington said, "I'm going to leave this meeting if we're going to discuss that -- that's one of the compromises, one of the things we agreed on before we had unification, if that's to come up again," and so on and so on. I think Forrestal was a little dumbfounded by Stuart's reaction. But he said "I'm just asking Ike for his views on whether he's really prepared for the ground forces to give up tactical air." Ike said, "I gave my word." So as to getting any help out of these you sometimes got pyrotechnics, but you seldom got any help. Forrestal didn't give up. At the second meeting of the War Council he brought up the same issue -- he wanted Ike's views on the merits. So -- how many years later? -- everybody has tactical air.

GOLDBERG: Well, Ike did state his views on the merits both before and after on a number of occasions.

LEVA: But in terms of what went on at meetings I remember that particular one. After that meeting Jack Ohly was really functioning as secretary -- I think I did serve as secretary at that first meeting. So I'm not that familiar with it.

GOLDBERG: Well, obviously once the National Military Establishment was set up and the Office of the Secretary got going there were a lot of things happening. What do you remember from your own experience as being major problems that you became involved in on behalf of the Secretary? What are the big things?

LEVA: You would have to look at the First Report of the Secretary of Defense for the things we did in the first year and we got all sorts of things launched. The most difficult to get launched probably from the legal standpoint was the Uniform Code of Military Justice. The Navy was quite sure that if they didn't continue to have the right to use bread and water punishment you couldn't maintain discipline on a ship. The other Services were sure of this and sure of that. By that time Felix Larkin -- if I may give you another name -- had become my deputy and at that time was either Deputy General Counsel or Associate General Counsel --perhaps Assistant General Counsel. He succeeded me in 1949 as General Counsel. Felix took over that particular assignment and did a brilliant job with it and with a number of the other things in the legal area.

My own particular problem was to try to prepare a coordinated legislative program for the Department of Defense as a whole so that you didn't have each of the military departments, or indeed each of the Services or

corps, running up to the Hill with its own legislation. We tried to do that in the same way that McNeil was trying to do the budget, to have a coordinated legal program. That was an interesting operation; you still had people on end runs but you held it down to a degree.

GOLDBERG: This meant then that you had a good deal to do with Congressional Committees.

LEVA: Yes, I had the dual assignment of legal and legislative. My deputy for legal was or became Felix Larkin. I say was or became because my first deputy was a fellow named John Noble, now dead. He was succeeded by Felix Larkin. Felix Larkin is now President of W.R. Grace and Company, if you should want to get in touch with him.

GOLDBERG: One of the most important relationships obviously for the Department of Defense is that with the Congress, specifically with the Congressional Committees which handle legislation and the budget. Obviously, it is important for the Department to do its best in dealing with the Congress. Did any specific problems or difficulties arise during this period? Were there any particularly big ones that arose because of legislation, itself?

LEVA: I would really rather talk about techniques for dealing with it at the moment, first. In the legislative area I arranged to have as my deputy General Wilton B. Persons, who had been General Marshall's representative for legislative relations. General Persons is, like me, an Alabamian. He is, unlike me, a man at that time with many, many years of experience with the Congress. He organized on behalf of Forrestal the legislative relations setup so that we could have one office instead of a proliferation of offices. It wasn't easy and it didn't happen over night. He had a Navy

deputy, then Captain Harold Houser, and an Air Force Deputy, then General James McIntyre.

We tried very hard not to have the Admiral working on naval matters solely and the General working on Air Force, but to have them all working on Defense matters. Our attempt was to maintain legislative offices in the three Services, but to work in coordination on this coordinated legislative program. Obviously the theory is better than the actuality. You had continuing problems. But I think the problems diminished. When General Persons left he was succeeded by General McIntyre and then we got an Army Deputy. When General McIntyre left, he was succeeded by Admiral Houser by then an Admiral, and then we got another Navy deputy so we continued that format, and it did help us very greatly with our legislative relations -- our relations with the Committee Chairmen, Chan Gurney, the Republican Chairman of the Armed Services Committee at the time of the '47 Act, and Ham Andrews, the Chairman of the House Committee. After Truman's election in 1948, I think Millard Tydings became the Chairman of the Senate Committee. Carl Vinson was almost always the House Chairman. We had very good working relations with the staff and with the Chairmen on those committees. Then, and I think now, there is not too much revolt against the Chairman. So we had good relationships.

Where we didn't have good relationships primarily was in the appropriations area, where it was dog eat dog. That was and is the prerogative of George Mahon, because he was the Chairman of the Military Appropriations Subcommittee way back, long before he was Chairman of the full committee.

And that was really McNeil's responsibility, though I worked with him because of the interrelationship between legislation and appropriations.

Basically, McNeil had extremely good relations with the Appropriations Committee. But then you got into the major areas where Symington and the Chief of Staff of the Air Force would be urging that there be a lot more planes than the budget could possibly provide for. Mr. Truman had imposed, I think, a $13 billion ceiling on the military budget. You know, if you have an unlimited budget, it's easy to slice up. If you have a drastically limited budget, it's very hard. Mr. Forrestal made several efforts to get Mr. Truman to lift that ceiling, but they were basically unsuccessful, and therefore the troubles in that area on the Hill were predictable. Everybody wanted all the money.

GOLDBERG: When did Forrestal know that he was through as Secretary of Defense? Do you have any recollection of that?

LEVA: I think around the 1st of March 1949. He originally made his resignation date the 31st of March and at Forrestal's request that was later moved up to the 28th of March. I did not then know the reason but I think in retrospect he felt he could not hold himself together any longer. I think he must have known -- it was not apparent to me, all that was apparent to me was that he was exhausted -- before his resignation and after.

YOSHPE: Some of the press material seemed to imply that even earlier . . .

LEVA: There was a great deal of press speculation on the subject.

YOSHPE: Was there any validity to any of these speculations?

LEVA: I thought that was a typical White House palace guard ploy -- if we leak the story often enough, it will come true. I don't believe that Truman had made that decision earlier -- that is, not appreciably earlier. I am sure he made it a few days earlier, but I think there was a press campaign. I think it was tied to the Air Force business of wanting more money, might even have been tied to the Navy business of wanting more money, but I don't believe that it was a fait accompli at a much earlier date.

You know we heard all sorts of things. The election was in November of '48. Forrestal as Secretary of Defense and Marshall as Secretary of State had a very clear understanding with Truman. They would stay out of the campaign. If the conduct of the Defense Department or State Department were attacked, they would defend, but otherwise they thought and Truman thought that those two departments should not be involved in partisan politics.

As soon as the campaign was over, the stories began that Forrestal was really for Dewey. Drew Pearson and Walter Winchell and many of that ilk were fed things by people -- including people at the White House -- that Forrestal was really for the other guy. I knew of no evidence that Forrestal was for anybody other than Truman. He certainly tried to stay aloof from the campaign because he had a very strong belief that Defense should not be embroiled in political campaigns.

He unwisely felt that Truman should stay aloof from the Israeli situation, and I think that was probably the ultimate source of many of the leaks, because Forrestal asked the Joint Chiefs, long before the election --

'47 perhaps -- for an opinion on the national security implications of the United Nations decisions. The Joint Chiefs were then as now a little oil conscious, and they did not give much weight to the importance of having a viable democracy in the Middle East. Their answers were probably less good than other peoples' answers might have been but then I have never thought that the Joint Chiefs were the repositories of all wisdom.

Forrestal, I think, gave the only advice that a Secretary of Defense could really give to Truman. He said in effect that "America's national security interests as reported to me by my Joint Chiefs of Staff are thus and so," and I think that's a position that an American Secretary of Defense should take. A lot of Zionists attacked him and the basic feeling that I have concerning ultra-Zionists -- God knows I am Jewish, pro-Israel, and a few other things -- but basically they feel that if you're not for us, you're against us.

The position that Forrestal took meant to them that he was anti-Semitic and was so construed in a lot of places. This was, I think, the big factor in the Walter Winchell stories and vendetta. Drew Pearson's story was a pro-Symington thing. These main streams converged and ultimately I think -- plus Forrestal's deteriorated health -- forced Truman to say, "We've got to look elsewhere."

GOLDBERG: There's also a suggestion by Arthur Krock, who wrote an article in '48, that Forrestal was concerned -- deeply concerned about the problems of transition in the event of a Republican victory and that he apparently proposed -- this is according to Krock -- that Dewey's representative be briefed in preparation for that possibility.

LEVA: If that were done, Jack Ohly might know it. I don't have any knowledge of it. I remember that Krock wrote a lot of things. Arthur was a very good friend of Forrestal's; they went to Princeton together. So he may have been rationalizing too. You know these things are funny. To skip to a later date, after Forrestal was succeeded by Louis Johnson, whom I had never previously met and whom I expected to dislike both for taking Forrestal's job and because he had been a big factor in the Democratic National Committee, and we shouldn't have politics and so on. Louis Johnson's instructions to me were -- he said, "I hear from the Democratic National Committee you've got a lot of Republican lawyers on your staff." I said, "I don't know. I've got a lot of good lawyers on my staff and I don't know who is a Republican and who is a Democrat." He said "Keep it that way. So, I had complete backing from Louis Johnson.

To skip still further into that period after Forrestal's death, when Pearson no longer had that target or the Air Force boys no longer had that target, there came out a column -- God knows the date -- saying that not only had Forrestal done thus and so but Leva had approved the use of $6 million to build a special plane for Dewey, the Dew Drop, after he was elected. I went to see Stuart Symington, as I recall and I said, "Look I don't care what you say and I don't care whom you say it to, but if you authorized that plane, don't blame me. I just want you to know, in your own favorite phrase, that if you want to get into a pissin' contest, you got a good skunk here." I never had any more trouble from that particular source.

YOSHPE: Professor Rogow in his biography of Forrestal makes reference to the fact that Johnson kept repeatedly saying that he didn't want Forrestal's job, in fact Forrestal offered him the job. There was a feeling on the part of many people that Johnson had been planted early -- as early as January -- to take over Forrestal's job. Was there anything from your experience about this?

LEVA: No, but I think this is probably true, and it might be somewhat inconsistent with the other impression that I just spoke of. I think that Truman desperately needed money during the campaign and nobody would raise it. I think that Louis Johnson said to him, you know if I raise these X dollars, can I have any position that I want? I think he pretty well had a blank check on the Cabinet and it turned out this was what he wanted. That's my own feeling now. Then he said, "Okay, Mr. Truman I'm going to cash my blank check; I want to be Secretary of Defense." That is my impression.

It is also my impression that the real reason Louis Johnson wanted that -- as I say I came to have a very high regard for him -- was that he had been fired by Roosevelt when he was an Assistant Secretary of War and this rankled in his soul. He used to tell me about Secretary of War Woodring and all of the earlier episodes before World War II. This was vindication. I don't think it was against Forrestal in any sense. It was -- I, Louis Johnson, having achieved this age and this position in life want to be Secretary of Defense and that will show them who was right in 1937 or whenever it was. That's my impression, but you know I have no documentation. I had a lot of conversations with Louis Johnson later on in which he always praised Forrestal

in the highest terms and certainly never said what I've just said. It's my impression that as the leading fund raiser he had his choice of jobs. This is the one he wanted.

TUCKER: Would this carry over into his relationships with Acheson at State? Minutes of meetings over there and also Acheson's book show he was extremely nasty. Do you think there was any of what you just talked about in his treatment of Acheson?

LEVA: Did Acheson have anything to do with the earlier episode? I don't know. I was not impressed by Rogow's book. When he came to see me, I wasn't impressed by him, but that's neither here nor there. I would say that Johnson, being a pretty earthy character, fought his way to be national commander of the American Legion and at a time when the king makers of the Legion presented a little different picture than is the case now.

In Johnson's day, it was a wheeling-dealing fighting operation. Having fought his way from Clarksburg, West Virginia, to his law firm in Charleston, to his law firm in Washington, and having Dean Acheson, the very patrician son of the Bishop of Connecticut, looking down his nose at any normal human being like Louis Johnson or you or me, I think Johnson resented him. I don't think you have to go back to the firing. I just think that Johnson thought he had a pretty good set of intellectual equipment, and you really could never talk with Dean Acheson for long without getting a put-down feeling. Now, Clark Clifford, I will say, was an exception because he spoke for the President. That was different. Truman was an exception; he was the President. Normal mortals could never talk with Acheson long without getting the feeling that this was a big-me-little-you syndrome. I'm sure Johnson got that; God knows I got it.

YOSHPE: Were there frequent meetings between Johnson and Forrestal during those three months?

LEVA: Not to my knowledge. Johnson always said they had a series of secret meetings and so on, and in the Forrestal diaries I think the two authors of that, Millis and Duffield, spoke of meetings. I didn't know about them. In the Forrestal diaries there is one sad reference to me -- there are several -- but there is one sad reference to me. The night before he submitted his resignation, Forrestal phoned me and wanted me to come over to his house. I wouldn't remember that except that it's in the Forrestal diaries, and I said I couldn't come because I was baby sitting. I had two very young children, 3 years and 2 years at that time, and my wife is a doctor and she was out to a medical meeting. So I asked if I could come in first thing the next morning and work with him. I did work with him on his letter of resignation the following morning, but I was not available to go that night which was a source of great regret, but I had a 2-year old child and a 3-year old child and couldn't leave the house.

GOLDBERG: One of them has become a revisionist since then.

LEVA: One of them is interning in Rochester. He's going to be a physician in general practice which is wonderful. He thinks the United States really did put upon the Soviet Union and China and so forth and so on. He believes what he reads, in short, and I argue with him.

GOLDBERG: Then from what you say I would gather that Forrestal did not say prior to the election that he would not stay on in 1949.

LEVA: I don't think he said either one. He had certainly said to me that he was going to get out as quickly as he could. I tried -- you can check the dates, I can't -- I tried to work out a great scheme when the owner of

the Washington Times Herald died. Cissy Patterson died, leaving the paper to five employees. I said to him -- he had been interested in newspapers since Princeton where he was the editor of the Daily Princetonian. He and Krock worked together. I wrote a memo on it, you may find it in your papers. I said, why don't you buy 51% of the interest of each of the five? I said they're all minority holders by definition. They're used to a strong leader, Cissy Patterson, and you buy 51% of the interest of each one. These are people who don't have money -- they can get some money and they'll still be minority holders. They'll have roughly half as much -- 49 percent -- as they used to.

That's a great idea, he said. He said, I don't have that much money. Maybe he didn't have that much money readily available, and I said you know your friends in New York would be delighted to back you. I mean that's no reason; if you want me to talk to Ferd Eberstadt, we'll talk to Eberstadt. You want to get out of here, you like newspapers, you can be a publisher in the Nation's Capital, and you can get back at some of these sons of bitches whose stuff you don't like. He said, that's a great idea. Like so many great ideas nothing came of it. I thought that was a great idea. He was very clear that he was getting out. Of course, he was always very clear that he was getting out. He was clear he was getting out before the unification act. He was clear that he was getting out after a year. He was clear that he was getting out after the election no matter what happened. But he liked it. I mean he clung. We all see people who cling. I clung too long. I kept saying I was getting out.

GOLDBERG: One of his big problems with Truman, of course, was the budget. You mentioned that already. Do you think this seriously affected the relations between Forrestal and Truman?

LEVA: I didn't think so. He argued strongly for it. I think Truman may have gotten annoyed when Forrestal came back the third time with a compromise. I don't think it worsened the relationship. He was never really one of Truman's intimate inner circle. He played poker with him sometimes. I flew down in November or December '48 to Key West with Forrestal and General Gruenther for a meeting with Truman. His inner circle was there; his inner circle was not Forrestal. Forrestal had lunch with Truman and flew back the same day. In '48 it was a hell of a flight to leave here before breakfast and come back late at night, but I went on that trip for just one purpose. I went on the trip because Forrestal asked me to go. What I tried to sell on that trip didn't come off. I told him he had to demand Stuart Symington's resignation. At that point I thought he was the constant irritant. It's a very funny thing; Symington was a very good friend of his on a personal and social level, but Symington was fighting the battle of the Air Force and as long as he was there this was going to be a running sore.

GOLDBERG: And Symington was fairly close to Truman also -- closer than Forrestal.

LEVA: Much closer. And through Clifford, very much closer. And through Matt Connelly, much closer, and through quite a few of them. Through practically everybody. Stuart worked at it hard. He worked at the White House palace guard much harder than Forrestal did in later years.

TUCKER: Forrestal had put Mr. Clifford in the White House in the first place though as Naval Aide?

LEVA: I don't think so. Oh no. I think Vardaman put Clifford in the White House. No, Vardaman had known Clifford as a trial lawyer in St. Louis. Clark, who is one of my better friends, and whom I admire so tremendously, played a role in getting Mr. Forrestal out, but that doesn't alter the fact. I think he did it on the basis that it had to be done because Forrestal's health had deteriorated. People who knew Clark in St. Louis before the war thought he was a magnificent trial lawyer. I never heard him try a case but I would imagine that he would have been. Vardaman from St. Louis apparently got Clifford from St. Louis in as his assistant, and then Clifford sold himself to Truman and succeeded Vardaman. I don't believe Forrestal had anything to do with that. In fact, I would doubt that he had met Clifford. I don't know the facts. That's before my time. I was sea-sick in the landings at Sicily, Salerno, Anzio, and Normandy at that time.

GOLDBERG: No, Clifford did not tell us otherwise. I am sure that your version is the correct one. One of the questions that Harry here has run across in the course of his work had to do with Forrestal's attitude toward integration in the Armed Forces. I was wondering whether you recall anything about that.

LEVA: He had very strong feelings and he worked very closely with the head of the Urban League in New York, Lester Granger -- a very dynamic figure of a man. But Forrestal relied very heavily on him for advice and worked very hard on integration matters.

It was not easy to work hard on integration matters when the Navy felt that blacks, Filipinos, etc., should only be mess attendants. I thought he brought about great changes given the climate of the time. He did run into some problems with what is now the Department of Health, Education and Welfare. What was it then?

GOLDBERG: Federal Security Agency.

LEVA: Yes, Federal Security Agency -- and who was the head of it then? He wanted to put out -- in Forrestal's opinion -- politically-motivated Executive Orders and decrees for voter effect right before the '48 election.

GOLDBERG: You mean Oscar Ewing.

LEVA: Yes, Oscar Ewing, because I remember once going up to take some papers to his apartment at what is now the Sheraton Park. They were drafts which Forrestal thought were hortatory rather than practical. He felt he had made progress in the Navy, under his direction they were going to make progress in the Army and the Air Force. He used to talk with Kenneth Royall about the Army, and Kenneth being from North Carolina, was not the best person to talk to, although he always professed to understand. I being from Alabama was not necessarily the best person to talk to, but he felt that Oscar Ewing's proposals or the proposals of his people were just proposals looking to black votes rather than to progress.

He was extremely interested in integration. I think he made very great contributions in the Navy and was well on his way to making them in the Department of Defense. He wanted them to be practical and soundly based. He didn't want to promise people pie in the sky this year if he thought it

was going to take six years to achieve it. He did have some troubles within the Administration on that ground, as I recall. He worked extensively with that very fine fellow of New York who may still be living, who was the head of the Urban League, Lester Granger. In any event, he was down very frequently working with Forrestal. Forrestal had an extremely high regard for him and there was I think, a Navy lieutenant by the name of Evans who worked on this. Jim Evans, for a long period of time, who did very good work.

GOLDBERG: You mentioned earlier the problem that arose from Forrestal's position on Palestine, and you said that he really represented his position as being that of the Joint Chiefs. Do you think he had strong views himself on this subject? You remember the press was against him on this.

LEVA: He may have had strong pressure from his friends in the oil industry, etc., but I don't know. I never was aware of that.

GOLDBERG: There were allegations of that.

LEVA: Yes.

GOLDBERG: Were you involved very much in the Palestine business?

LEVA: None at all -- I expressly said the last thing anybody over there needed was to have me involved in anything relating to Palestine, so any thing that came up I referred it to Jack Ohly. It was not just a matter of ducking, it's just that anything would have been suspect at that time -- that may sound silly at this time when you have Kissinger as Secretary of State. I remember that at the time of the fighting, and I don't remember if it was '47 or '48, that some people came to see me and I know who they were -- it was Eliahu Elath, to give his Israeli name - his name was then

later
Elijah Epstein -- and Moshe Sharett,/the foreign minister, whose name was Moshe Shertok, and what they were then looking for was tents, blankets, anything. They were looking for non-military items, and I told them it would be the worst thing in the world for me to try and deal with it and also it wasn't my bailiwick. I took them to -- it might have been Tom Hargrave and Jack Ohly -- the Munitions Board. Except for that one occasion when I tried to put them in the hands of the proper people. I didn't think that it was a good idea for me to be involved.

GOLDBERG: Were you involved in the work on the 1949 amendment to the National Security Act?

LEVA: Very much so, but I can't remember the details. I worked with Forrestal on his testimony before the Hoover Commission. I worked with Forrestal on his testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee. He was scheduled to testify before the House Armed Services Committee, but something happened that bottled up the legislation, and by the time of that testimony Johnson was the Secretary of Defense and testified. I worked with him on his testimony. Forrestal was very much convinced that there needed to be a stronger form of centralization. I guess his testimony before the Hoover Commission was perhaps the strongest and most explicit statement of it, because he could testify a little more specifically there than in the quite different environment of the Senate Armed Services Committee.

GOLDBERG: By this time you had formed views of your own about what the Department ought to be like and what the Secretary's powers ought to be?

LEVA: I think I had helped form the views that Forrestal expressed. I think the views he expressed were my own, but they were hammered out among a lot of us. I felt very strongly there was a need for a Chairman of the

Joint Chiefs of Staff. At that time, you had only a Chief of Staff of the Army, Chief of Staff of the Air Force, and Chief of Naval Operations. General Al Gruenther had done a fantastic job as head of the Joint Staff, being junior to all of them, but clearly you needed somebody in a position above them. Much of the negotiations that I remember related to the position of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. There were those who wanted him to be just a titular head, and then there were those who really wanted him to be a single Chief of Staff. Much of the discussion going into the compromises centered around that. There was also a lot going into the question -- I think this was '49 rather than '47 -- over whether the military departments would become little "m" little "d" rather than Cabinet departments. Uncle Carl Vinson gave me a very rough time both privately and publicly on that. There was the great question about where the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff would sit at a dinner party -- whom would he outrank? I suggested we write an amendment that none of them be allowed to go to a dinner party.

There was a lot of talk about an Under Secretary of Defense. I think that finally came as separate legislation. Later the Under Secretary became Deputy Secretary. A lot of discussion concerned whether there should be Assistant Secretaries of Defense. That emerged as three Assistant Secretaries. There were a lot of other provisions. There was discussion ad nauseam about "general supervision and control" versus "supervision and control." I'm sure there are millions of papers in the Pentagon, most of which deal with how many angels can stand on the point of a pin. I was very much in the thick of the '49 amendments as I had been in the thick of the '47 Act.

GOLDBERG: Did those amendments go as far as you and Forrestal wanted in strengthening the office and making other changes?

LEVA: I think they went far enough. They did not go quite as far in some respects, but that's the necessity of going through the legislative process. That's why I say you have his recommendations in their purest form in his recommendations to the Hoover Commission, which ended up with a split opinion.

Have you seen or have you looked at the opinions and dissenting opinions of the Hoover Commission's committee on military security? I remember that Lewis Strauss had a separate opinion which he argued with me forcefully and at length. Some of the others had differing opinions. But, basically there was a general consensus on the need for a Chairman of the Joint Chiefs and a need for somebody at the Secretarial level in addition to the Secretary of Defense.

Just take a little thing. I'll go back to what I said about urging Forrestal to take a vacation. Others had urged him to take a vacation. His position in '48 or early '49 was that he didn't have anybody to turn it over to. I offered the suggestion -- finally made it into a memorandum. True, he could not say Stuart Symington would be in charge while I'm away; he was the Secretary of the Air Force. He could not say Kenneth Royall would be in charge, he was the Secretary of the Army. He could not say John Sullivan, Secretary of the Navy. So I suggested to him that he could select one of the Presidentially appointed, Senatorially confirmed Under Secretaries or Assistant Secretaries of Army, Navy, or Air Force and designate him to represent him while he was away. Someone who had universal respect, to the extent.

that that was possible. I suggested Gordon Gray, who was an Assistant Secretary of the Army, because he got along well with all of the others. Obviously, it's a caretaker operation for a week or two. He is Presidentially appointed, he is Senatorially confirmed, he can exercise department-wide responsibility, and the other Secretaries won't resent him as they would resent your selecting one of their number. And I put in writing the opinion that he could serve. Very dubious whether I was right, but I was trying to get Forrestal out of town on a vacation. Eberstadt had invited him to go fishing in upstate New York. This must have been in the summer of '48. Nothing ever happened. He desperately needed to get away. This may be inconsistent with what I was saying about strain before, but this was just one of many strains.

Yoshpe: One of the things that comes out in reading Ohly's notes on the War Council and the Committee of Four proceedings is Forrestal's strong feeling that he needed men who had a broad view of the Defense problem and weren't Service-oriented. And he had all kinds of suggestions on how to meet that problem. For example, he had the idea of having the admirals and the generals interchange jobs and get to appreciate one another's problems before the ...

Leva: ...Eliminating the services academies for undergraduates, and having graduate Service academies.

Yoshpe: Having some of these senior officers, generals, and admirals, who no longer care about their careers come in and help him so that he could have this broad-gauged approach and not a Service-oriented approach to his problems. Could you elaborate on this?

LEVA: I knew this was a very strongly held view. It was something he worked on with various expedients. I think he was very disappointed about what really came of it. You know this ran all across the board and also the Munitions Board in terms of procurement -- didn't have to be a common uniform. In five years they couldn't agree on a common belt buckle.

YOSHPE: Now on that point, Forrestal liked to look upon the Munitions Board and the R&D Board and the JCS as his staff, and yet his so-called staff was very heavily imbued with the Service problem and they reflected the same Service difficulties that you had even before unification.

LEVA: I thought he made a basic original mistake -- and I told him so -- in taking McNeil and me as his first two Special Assistants. That's one reason that with his permission I went out and hired Jack Ohly at Army, because McNeil was Navy, I was Navy, and this immediately gave rise to suspicions within the Air Force and the Army. But certainly the staff was Service-oriented in its origin. You speak of the R&D Board and what not -- when we had all of this trouble with Congress on the Joint Chiefs of Staff and who would be the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, I think Vannevar Bush was the head of the Research and Development Board. I suggested we broaden the legislation and appoint Vannevar Bush Chairman of the JCS. I almost got killed. I think it would have been a great idea. Great man. You can't get total agreement on anything like this, but General Bradley was a magnificent first chairman. He made one great mistake. He went up to one hearing and called the Admirals a bunch of "fancy Dans." But, you know, nobody bats a thousand. I thought Bradley

had a magnificent tour of duty as the first Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

GOLDBERG: I don't know how you survived.

LEVA: I almost didn't.

YOSHPE: Well, I gather that was the reason they brought Ike in on a temporary basis.

LEVA: Temporarily. And he was very good during that period. One anecdote, which is true. When it was decided to see about getting Ike back from Columbia University where he was President, and I've forgotten who made that decision, Forrestal asked me if I'd go up and talk with him. Something else had come up and I was somewhere else, and I asked Felix Larkin to go up and talk to General Eisenhower who said certainly he would do it. And then General Eisenhower came down and talked to Forrestal, and then he came in and talked to me. I said this is a very formless operation, we're not really sure what we want to do. I said, you know what space is in the Pentagon, where do you want to sit? And he said -- as best I can recall -- "Well, you know everybody wants this outer ring and all this space." He said, "I'll tell you, give me a little office on the A ring and you'll see the damnest rush of generals to the "A" ring you ever saw in your life." We gave him an office on the "A" ring. That's the sort of thing he was magnificent at. So he came down, he had a little office, no pomp, no circumstance, and he did quite a job.

TUCKER: Did he deal primarily with the budget, was this the problem he was brought in for?

LEVA: Yes, that's right.

GOLDBERG: What was your relationship with Johnson, then, when he came in?

Leva: I didn't know him at all and I feared the worst. I did know Steve Early whom he brought over, and I sort of looked on Steve as the fellow who was going to be my ambassador to Johnson. But I established a very early and a very good relationship with Johnson. And since he was a lawyer, he was really wonderful to Felix Larkin and me. When the 1949 amendments came along and he recommended to Truman that I be appointed Assistant Secretary of Defense, he asked me what about General Counsel? I recommended Felix, and he appointed Felix Larkin General Counsel. So he gave us every backing and the relationship was fine. I never got personally close to him in the sense that I did to Forrestal.

Goldberg: Did you continue to handle primarily legislative matters for him?

Leva: Legal and legislative. No, I was Assistant Secretary for Legal and Legislative, and it really was an upgraded title, and I continued to do largely what I had done before. I had a legal office and a legislative office. No, I didn't branch out.

Tucker: Was there any great variation in relations with the Hill under the two Secretaries?

Leva: It seemed to me they were constantly suspicious of Johnson. Yes, personally. They had known him too long. You talk about Krock. If you will look at Krock's column the day after Forrestal was appointed or sworn in as Secretary of Defense, September 1947, I think that what he said was that Forrestal will enter on his new duty with a degree of public esteem and so on unmatched by any recent Cabinet appointee in Krock's memory. This was true in '47. I don't think the same was true of Johnson. True of Lovett, to come into a later period, true of Marshall; they practically revered Marshall on the Hill.

Goldberg: Did you handle any particular problems or anything special that came up under Johnson?

Leva: Well, our legislative problems became even more multiple after the Korean War began. And, of course, he had been going around the country making these speeches about if we were attacked at such and such an hour we would retaliate, and we were, and he was in hot water from the very beginning. I think in retrospect probably there's nothing that could have bailed him out of that except earlier military victories, perhaps, which were not in the cards. I don't remember any particular legislative matters during that period other than the routine ones.

I remember one episode, since I seem to be giving these personal vignettes. I remember once when Carl Vinson early in Johnson's tenure, certainly before the Korean War, called me and asked me to testify on something, I've forgotten what. I had a long record of not testifying. I would help work on anybody else's testimony, I'd go up with anybody, I'd sit with them or behind them, but I didn't testify. Carl Vinson called me on something. He peered over his glasses at me, it had to be after September because I was then Assistant Secretary. "Now, Mr. Secretary, we could have called Secretary Johnson, and we could have called Secretary Early, but they would have just asked you, and we thought we would cut out all that by just calling you". Not the best introduction you can have. That's one of the few occasions when I testified.

Goldberg: Sounds like him, too.

Leva: But he was always very good to me. In part, because he looked on me as an extension of General Persons and Admiral Houser and he was very fond of both of them. Houser was from his district in Georgia.

Persons was from Alabama. Houser literally called him Uncle Carl. I never called him Uncle Carl, but when Houser was with him he'd say, "Well, Uncle Carl." So I think it was sort of a reflected aura. He was very good to me except for that one episode.

GOLDBERG: What was the OSD role in the B-36 carrier business?

LEVA: That's one I should remember a lot more about than I do. I really don't remember. I think I testified on that. I think the Defense Department had a very distinct role in the whole thing when the controversy between the Navy and the Air Force came up. I remember all the general discussions earlier about the B-36 can do this and the Navy saying that a Banshee can shoot it down any morning before breakfast. That is really why the Weapon System Evaluation Group was established by Forrestal. He brought General Hull in as the first head of WSEG from the Army, which was then neutral ground, before you brought in outside scientists. But, unhappily, I remember very little about it. Maybe because it was such an unhappy period I blotted it out. Terribly unhappy. I think McNeil, if you haven't talked to him, will have much more recollection of that particular one. He took a very distinct and pro-Navy position on that.

GOLDBERG: What I'm really getting at is the OSD attitude on the issue.

LEVA: I was going to say to Harry, if he is collecting the documentation, that Frank Sherlock, when he was head of the Legislative Reference Office, pulled together and gave me a copy of all of Forrestal's statements on everything while he was Secretary of Defense. I think there're some B-36 things there. It isn't the testimony of others, but it will provide the leads to the testimony of others because he was frequently asked, do you agree with so and so.

GOLDBERG: I think we have the equivalent of that in our office.

LEVA: I know that you do. Sherlock made up this one for me when I left, and I haven't looked at it much but it's a useful compendium of the first 18-months anyway.

YOSHPE: Does the manuscript that you drafted cover the Johnson period also?

LEVA: This was going to be "Secretary Forrestal and his Post-War Contributions to National Security," an unworkable title, but that was the subject.

GOLDBERG: What was your understanding of the circumstances of Johnson's departure in 1950?

LEVA: I don't have any understanding of it now. I assume that Truman, realizing the great unpopularity of the Defense Department in a losing war, as it was at that time, though we did have a toehold in Korea, and were coming back from a bad licking, and needing someone of national esteem, somebody told him, probably Clifford, that Marshall should be Secretary of Defense. Since Marshall never said no to anything Truman asked, he came over and Marshall was -- the first time I had really known him other than to meet him in inter-departmental meetings -- certainly beyond his prime. I think that he clearly knew he had to leave things to Lovett as his Deputy; he did leave things to Lovett as his Deputy. Lovett I had known pretty well because he was Forrestal's close friend and had shuttled back and forth between State and Defense. So working with Lovett was a great joy. I worked with Marshall, but that was a very austere relationship. The only time that he was really more

or less "human" was when he wanted Anna Rosenberg to be Assistant Secretary of Defense, and Felix Larkin and I got her confirmed over some opposition in the Senate. Then he was very appreciative.

TUCKER: Was the nature of the opposition that she was a woman?

LEVA: Oh no, the nature of the opposition was the allegation that she was a Communist, and finally we blew that out of the water with the help of the FBI. It was another Anna Rosenberg, but there was very pronounced opposition. I would say that the opposition was compounded of a number of things. She was very liberal, she was a woman, she was Jewish. She was a good target, and you would throw into that various reports from the raw files of the FBI that Anna Rosenberg was a member of the Communist Party, etc. There are probably a few thousand Anna Rosenbergs. It took a little effort to prove that was another Anna Rosenberg. It was a tough one. I got great help from Admiral Strauss on that because he had known Anna for years in New York. I said to Lewis, there are a lot of people I could reach, there were a lot of people I couldn't reach -- Senator Hickenlooper, friends of his, Senator Harry Byrd, Senior, etc., -- and asked if he would attest to the bona fides of the good lady, whom I had never previously met and whom he had. He was a big help on that particular confirmation.

GOLDBERG: Why was Marshall so insistent on having her?

LEVA: He had been extremely impressed with her in his Red Cross and World War II days, apparently. She's a fantastic person. She was the only person I ever heard him call by the first name. He said, "Lovett, Leva, Persons." People he had worked with for years, you know. "Anna." So she was a good influence to have around him, and it worked out all right. To have her as Assistant Secretary for Manpower was most peculiar.

It worked better than I had thought.

Goldberg: So Lovett took hold then.

Leva: Lovett was Acting Secretary most of the time literally and just about all of the time de facto. And then, of course, Lovett succeeded Marshall.

GOLDBERG: And then, of course, the whole business was Korea and rearmament. If Korea hadn't happened, do you think there would have been substantial rearmament anyway, and Truman might have lifted the ceilings from the budget?

LEVA: I don't think so.

GOLDBERG: You think he would have tried to keep it on?

LEVA: I believe so.

GOLDBERG: You know there was a major study in '49 and '50 -- NSC 68.

LEVA: I know NSC 68, I remember.

GOLDBERG: The burden of that was the growing threat and the requirement for rearmament.

LEVA: The President wasn't paying much attention to it. I know there was a major study and it was a great intellectual issue at State and Defense, but I didn't have the impression that anybody was paying much attention to it. Again McNeil and Ohly I think would be better than I on that.

GOLDBERG: I think they're the ones we want. We will see them definitely on this.

LEVA: Do dig out from Frank Sherlock both for its own content and as a lead Forrestal's testimony before all of the Congressional Committees in 1947-49, and do dig out, though I gather you already have, as much as you

can from the Hoover Commission. The first Hoover Commission, not really the Report, but the committee minutes and anything of that nature. I now think of one possibility I should mention to you. Ferd Eberstadt died two years ago. His firm F. Eberstadt and Company, 61 Broadway, New York, still has as its chairman one of his contemporaries -- Francis Williams. Francis might be able to dig up some of Eberstadt's papers that would be helpful, not only from the Hoover Commission period but from the earlier Eberstadt report. It would be quite all right getting in touch with Francis and saying that I suggested that you do so, because he is a good friend of mine. I would suggest the family, but Mrs. Eberstadt died a few months after he did. Has anyone talked to Bob Lovett?

GOLDBERG: No, we're going to.

LEVA: I exchange insults with him at ten paces every so often; he still writes one of the funniest letters. His great quality was that he brought a magnificent sense of humor to everything. I really equate Forrestal and Lovett as two very similar people. Lovett used to come over when he was at State and entertain Forrestal with these wonderful stories. Can I tell one of these while we're still "on the air?"

GOLDBERG: Yes indeed, please do.

LEVA: He was trying to cheer Forrestal up. This was when Ambassador Bonnet was the French Ambassador. Lovett came in on one occasion and he said "poor Ambassador Bonnet -- He was in today to tell me that he represents yet another government"-- prior to that about 20 governments in 3-years. He said, "he stood in the doorway to my office and he said, 'Mr. Secretary I give you the government of Andre Marie. Pfui!' " Most of Lovett's stories were "poor Bonnet." That's a typical illustration. They're wonderful.

Another one of his -- when he was Assistant Secretary of War for Air during World War II. He said he was flying in a converted bomber from, I think, Oran to Algiers during the campaign in North Africa. They had ripped out the gun in one blister or whatever so they could carry a few passengers. Apparently, they were still manning the opposite gun in case anything happened. He was listening on his headset. Lovett is a great jazz aficionado. He's a great expert. Do you know this story?

GOLDBERG: No, but I heard about his jazz.

LEVA: Oh he's a great jazz aficionado. He's very up to date. Much more so than I. He said that they were listening to Armed Forces radio and they were playing somebody, let's say Dave Brubeck or whoever was the Dave Brubeck of his generation, Satchmo, or whoever. He said he commented to the sergeant in the other seat who was also listening while looking. He said so and so plays the greatest trombone in the United States today, or the greatest saxophone, or the greatest trumpet. He said the guy ripped off his headset, ran up to the pilot and said, "Geez, this is the first guy here from Washington that's known anything about anything". That's typical Lovett, and it carried him through an awful lot of rough spots. He always had an apropos story. Those did not come as abstractions. They came in particular situations. Another one which is a favorite of his, and which I've heard him use to great effect -- all the Service Secretaries sitting around and nobody can find anything, and you did this and you testified against my appropriation and you did the other. Lovett says, "To hell with the cheese, let's get out of the trap". That's Lovett, and always breaks it up. A little humor can be a wonderful thing in a situation like that.

Goldberg: Well, I think that's part of McCloy's secret too, he had a sense of humor.

Leva: Well, Jack McCloy is very good too, but sometimes he takes himself too seriously. Another thing, it was a phenomenal bunch of people, you know, and I keep wondering where is the equivalent. I don't think the equivalent can be these guys who are getting indicted every day. That's what scares the hell out of me. Have we discouraged the McCloys, the Lovetts, the Pattersons, the Forrestals, from taking that sort of position? Of course, they took them under the stimulus of World War II. It's a very real -- I'm not just trying to be philosophical at the end of your record -- but it's a very real problem. I can't give a percentage factor, but what percentage diminution does my young partner Mr. X have on his -- let's don't talk about the old goats -- have on his willingness to serve, owing to the current situation. Not that he's afraid of being indicted, it's just the distastefulness of the situation.

Goldberg: Well, and also you have a lot of people who are in or have been in the government who are going around advising young people not to go into the government.

Leva: Well, I haven't advised anybody pro or con because the Republicans haven't asked my advice on whom they should appoint. Yes, they have, I advised Marty Hoffmann to be General Counsel of the Defense Department. I told him it was a great job. He was General Counsel of the AEC; he and I jointly argued a case before the Court of Appeals, and I acquired a great admiration for him. He came to me before he went over and asked should he do this? And I said by all means. And not merely because I

held it 10,000 years ago. I think it's great. So I'll have to take that back, I did advise one person.

GOLDBERG: Well, good, I hope you advise some more. I think you were right; I think that this was a remarkable group of public servants. Outstanding men who were willing to give their time and their effort, and even subsequently as advisors and consultants. McCloy has been advisor to every President in office since Franklin Roosevelt, and he is still going strong.

LEVA: He has indeed. Indefatigable. Yes he certainly is, I'm fond of him and I've worked with him in various capacities.

YOSHPE: What about the manuscript you mentioned?

LEVA: Well, I will try to locate it; I don't have a copy so if I find it, could I just lend it to you with some hope . . .

GOLDBERG: Would you? Will you trust us with it?

LEVA: This is the oral history interview with the Truman Library and I don't remember what's in it. But will you send it back to me? You can take that one with you.

GOLDBERG: Right, we will definitely send it back. We'd like to have a copy of that and also of your other manuscript.

LEVA: Oh, well, that one is at home and I have to find it, and I say with some apology ahead of time it was in a very early draft stage and also had a great deal of maudlin sentimentality, because this was a relatively short time after Forrestal's death and I was enormously devoted to him.

GOLDBERG: Yes.

LEVA: And, so it has things that I would tone down, not eliminate, but tone down, but you know for any value it may have I'll be happy to send it to you.

GOLDBERG: Well, we're looking for information and not for style.

LEVA: Any value it may have as leads is what I really mean. It has for example, the name of every ship that was sent to the Mediterranean in 1947. I got that from the Office of the Naval Historian. It has the meat on the bare bones of how the Missouri got augmented, etc. So it'll have some facts.

GOLDBERG: Yes, well that ought to be a very good story. We appreciate it very much.