

#79

Oral History Interview

with

Mr. John J. McCloy

Conducted on

October 24, 1983

by

Dr. Maurice Matloff

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This is an oral history interview with Mr. John J. McCloy, held in New York City on October 24, 1983 at 10:00 AM in Mr. McCloy's office.

Matloff: We are very grateful to you, sir, for granting us the time to ask you some questions on your long and varied career. May we begin with some selected problems of World War II? There has been much discussion in the press recently about the Japanese relocation program. I wonder if you could summarize very briefly who made the policy for relocation? What was the President's role, Secretary of War Stimson's role, your role? How did the problem come to the War Department? What was the basis for this decision, and, in retrospect, how you view the policy and its execution?

McCloy: You know, this isn't the first time I've dealt with this subject, I have been questioned about it a good many times. And I must refer you to some of the prior oral histories that I have given. I think I did something for Columbia University and for Eric Severeid. More recently, I testified before a Commission and some Congressmen came to interview me just the other day, at considerable length, about this matter. So this is a rehash and I'm not sure that every time I say the same things, because I've been asked to repeat it so many different times. There's no master copy of all my recollections on this subject. I am, I would remind you, 88 years old, and I've been around a long time. I was in the regular army in World War I, and I have had much to do with Defense matters for a long period of time. So, it's hard for me to be very brief about it, because I feel very strongly about it, and I would like to get the salient

features of it as clearly expressed as I could. I got to be involved in it by pure accident. I was "cleared" for Magic, which involved the breaking of the Japanese code. We were reading the messages practically every morning. There were not many of us who were cleared for Magic traffic. Mr. Stimson was cleared for it, and he used to send it to me and I would read it. I also had the advantage of reading his diary from time to time. Having read the communications mainly coming out of Tokyo and sent to Japanese leaders throughout the world, ambassadors and so forth, and seeing the tension rising in the Pacific zone, I was certain that something was going to happen that weekend [December 6-7, 1941]. I had a date to go down to Virginia with my wife to some dinner party -- I think it was with the Assistant Secretary of the Navy -- and I said, "I can't do it, something's going to happen over the weekend." We had had a number of reports about the existence of a subversive agency on the West Coast. At any rate, I went down to the War Department that morning, and I think I was the most senior of the civilian officers in the Department present on that Sunday morning [December 7, 1941]. I did not have the faintest idea that the Japanese were going to attack Pearl Harbor. I did not think they had the nerve. There were some things that would have made you a little suspicious, but there were two factors that I felt made it likely that it was not Pearl Harbor--one, Pearl Harbor was presumably our strongest base, and two, we had done something about getting the radar there. This is a long story in itself. And, at any rate, I had been reading the intercepts. I was sure that something was

going to happen, and for that reason I went in early. Gen. Marshall was off riding somewhere--I think it was in the Fort Myer area. Mr. Stimson had not been feeling very well and he wasn't in this early. Frank Knox came in later. While I was working there with a sense of tension, my aide, who was on the General Staff, came to me and said "Mr. McCloy, there's a report around that they're attacking Pearl Harbor." I replied, "Don't kid me, they're not attacking Pearl Harbor. Perhaps they're attacking someplace else further west, Singapore or some of the other areas that we thought might be threatened, but they wouldn't dare attack Pearl Harbor." He said, "No, but there is a report that mentions Pearl Harbor." This was early, and after a little while he came back again and said, "Mr. McCloy, they are attacking Pearl Harbor. They're attacking some of our ships in Pearl Harbor. I don't know that I ought to be disclosing this to you, but it's coming through." I replied that I just couldn't believe that; that I knew there was going to be difficulty over this weekend, but I didn't think they were going to do that. At any rate, I was somewhat comforted by the thought that we had radar out there, through the work of the British scientists--Sir Watson Watt, "Tizzie the Wizard" [Sir Henry Tizard], to some extent, and "the Prof", [Professor F.A. Lindemann], although "the Prof" and "Tizzie" were at sword's points. Mr. Stimson himself had gone to London, and arranged to bring it back and have it installed up in the north of Pearl Harbor.

Matloff: May I ask, Mr. McCloy, are you going to relate this background to the question of the relocation of the Japanese?

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McCloy: Yes, sure. So that's how I happened to be there that morning. Of course, I was then the Assistant Secretary of War. I had been called in by Mr. Stimson mainly because I had known so much about German espionage and sabotage as a result of my exposure on the so-called Black Tom case. I believe that the real reason that Mr. Stimson got hold of me and told me that he wanted me to look over the intelligence business was because of my success, which had been somewhat at his expense when he was Secretary of State. He did his best to defeat me in that case, and said, "You've had your day in court, Mr. McCloy, and the other claimants would say that you shouldn't continue this thing any longer." I replied, "Mr. Secretary, I can prove, if you will let me do it, that the foreign office put in fraudulent evidence, and that it knew it was fraudulent at the time and did it deliberately, in order to frustrate the arbitration." He said, "It's rather hard to prove that against the foreign office." I responded, "I can do it." One way or another I did it, and we won the Black Tom case. As a result of that, Mr. Stimson called me down there to look at his intelligence. I think he also called me down to look me over and to see whether I was fit to be an Assistant Secretary of War. At any rate, that's the reason I was there, and then suddenly this attack on Pearl Harbor developed, and I was the only senior official in the War Department present at that time as far as I can recall. Maybe Bob Patterson, the Under Secretary at that time, who was in charge of procurement, was around. I was not in charge of procurement. I was not in the chain of command. My connections were with the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Combined Chiefs

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of Staff. Mine was a sort of a tactical job; whereas his [Patterson's] was procurement. He was very much concerned about those airplane factories on the West Coast and the congestion of the Japanese around them. When he began to get word of what was happening at Pearl Harbor, he was fit to be tied. It was very difficult to get information that morning. But suddenly we realized that the ships of the Pacific Fleet, which was our first line of defense, had been sunk and were at the bottom of the harbor. And the second line of defense were those factories along the West Coast where the congestion of the Japanese existed, Bob Patterson was particularly concerned because, as I indicated, he was in charge of procurement. I had to go out and get a guard to protect the President. I did not know what you did as Assistant Secretary of War when Pearl Harbor was attacked, but I thought that we were at war, and that we had to protect the President. So I got a guard and went around to see Frank Knox, who was in by that time and was hearing all about this development. I picked up Ulysses S. Grant III, who was the grandson, I believe, of Ulysses S. Grant, and was in charge of the defenses of Washington. I also got hold of Sherman Miles, whose uncle was William Tecumseh Sherman. I took them around to see Mr. Knox. His aide [LTC John W. Thomason, Jr.], a Marine and a southerner, who wrote Fix Bayonets, and addressed his chief as "Colonel," said, "Here you are, Colonel, here's the whole god-damn Union Army."

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Look out, they're going to take you over." And that's how we got the Marines started and put an extra cordon around the White House. Then we began to think what we had to do in order to protect the country. Word began to come in from the West Coast of the serious extent of the disaster. I remember that the President was excited. With his beloved Navy sunk at the bottom of Pearl Harbor and his great friend, Admiral Kimmel, charged with negligence, he was fit to be tied. He was the only one who could sign an order that could move these people [the Japanese on the West Coast]. The theory was that there was danger; that our first line of defense was gone, and that our second line of defense was along the Pacific Coast. The [Japanese] fleet had disappeared, apparently unscathed, and we thought that it would be coming back. And then the agitation began to move the Japanese on the West Coast because, unlike the French, the Italians, or the Germans, they were congested along those particularly sensitive military areas there. We were aware of the fact that there was this alleged, and not only alleged, but probably very real, subversive agency that was dealing with them then, and we thought that we'll move them out of that area, and let them go any place else they want to go. We paid their way, gave them a stipend, treated them like Dresden China, and finally did move them under the President's order. It was only the President who could do it. Even Mr. Stimson could not do it, and certainly I could not. As Assistant Secretary of War I could not move a soldier, let alone a civilian, from one place to another.

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Matloff: In effect, you were executing a decision, a policy made by the President himself?

McCloy: A decision of the President of the United States. He was the one who was most agitated, because it was his Navy that was sunk, and that was the main factor. Bob Patterson, who was by law charged with procurement responsibilities, might have been in the chain of command, but I was not in the chain of command. I just happened to be there. So that gives you the explanation as to why I happened to be there.

Matloff: You have had such a rich career, and I don't want to tax you, so I'm going to ask you if I can move on just briefly to the policy toward bombing, or rather not bombing, the death camps in Germany, and the railroad tracks leading to those camps--another big question. If you had to say just a brief sentence on this matter, what would be your comment?

McCloy: I'd say that people are around that never knew Moses. There was a Jewish group that went to see the President and the British. They tried to importune the British to bomb this alleged extermination camp. We did not know as much about it then, as we do now. They got a turn down from the British, but they went around to see the President. The President was then advised by Sam Rosenman and Harry Hopkins. Sam Rosenman, who was the President's counsel, was Jewish. He said that these groups have come around and have importuned the President to bomb what was going to be an extermination camp somewhere over in Poland. The President was opposed to this idea of bombing it; he declared that it didn't make

any sense. He said that if the rumor were true, the victims were destined for extermination anyway, and bombing it would probably be only more provocative; and that, at any rate, it would involve very high and deep penetration from 30-40 thousand feet altitudes and a thin communicating line, a very unprotected form of bombing, and don't for goodness sake divert us from our production bombing. And so, Mr. Rosenman said, "Will you check with Arnold [General Henry H. Arnold, Commanding General, Army Air Forces]." I checked with Arnold and Tom Handy, [General Thomas T. Handy, Assistant Chief of Staff, Operations Division] and both of them said they did not want to divert the bombing. So I reported their view back to Sam Rosenman, and to Harry Hopkins, whom I saw every day. One of them, I don't know which one, said, "Look, Jack, you take the boss off the hook; you reply to these fellows." So I replied, "I'll tell them the same thing that I'm telling you," and he said, "You write the letter." I wrote a letter, and by damned if it didn't turn up sometime later under the Freedom of Information Act. In that letter I tried to state, as best I could paraphrase, what the soldiers had told me about the lack of viability of that type of bombing, because it was such a high altitude and was unproductive, and that the other productive bombing should not be diverted. They thought the latter bombing was better than it actually turned out to be. So that was it. I never heard about the matter until 40 years afterwards, when this question came up again.

Matloff: That's what happens when a document lies around.

McCloy: I had forgotten that I had never done anything about it.

Matloff: Do you recall whether the War Department got in on the question of not increasing the number of Jewish refugees? There was a proposal in 1944, apparently, to increase the number of Jewish refugees admitted to the United States, and the answer given by the American Government, by the Roosevelt Administration, was not to increase that number.

McCloy: I don't know anything about that. That matter did not come within my bailiwick.

Matloff: Let me move on to a question which is somewhat close to my heart, the question of the founding of the Army's official historical program.

McCloy: I was very much interested in that.

Matloff: How did you get into this?

McCloy: Because I had been in World War I, and I had stayed over. I was in the regular Army, the lowest form of animal life that you can think of, provisional second lieutenant. (Beetle Smith, whose picture is in my outer office, and I were provisional second lieutenants in the First World War.) I wanted to go back to college and finish my course. I had gone to ROTC and I had been to Plattsburghs, to all the Plattsburghs that had ever been. A man named Van Fleet, who was a rather well known soldier, interested me in military history. I said that we didn't have any kind of military history worth a damn in World War I. I looked into it and found how haphazard it was. When I got to the War Department later, I said, "Now, by George, in this war, we're going to have a good record." I got hold of Douglas Freeman, biographer of Lee, and others that

were interested, and some soldiers. They got the historical section started. I said, "This time we really ought to have a record. This record is going to be more expansive than World War I. We made a very poor job of it in World War I. Now let's get started on it and get it well organized this time."

Matloff: You've answered a question that has puzzled me, whether your World War I experience had something to do with it?

McCloy: It had very much to do with it because I was interested in World War I.

Matloff: Can you pinpoint this? Was this before World War II was over, or after the war?

McCloy: When I first came down to be Assistant Secretary of War.

Matloff: You put it that far back?

McCloy: I put it far back, because I felt strongly about it; I'd seen what a poor job we'd done in World war I. And I had thought that this time we're going to do it better. I knew Douglas Freeman quite well, and I was something of an amateur Civil War buff. I had taken Halifax around to the peninsula campaign areas with Douglas Freeman. I was determined that we would get well organized, and I got some appropriations for it.

Matloff: I was going to ask you whether you had any trouble getting the funds. How did you get the funds?

McCloy: I didn't have any trouble, because everybody admitted, "You're right, Mr. McCloy. We didn't get started early enough and we didn't get

it planned well enough." And I said, "You ought to do it this time." I was in contact with various individuals and I interested the Secretary in it. The Secretary got interested, because he prided himself on being a military figure. We used to call him "Colonel". He was a Colonel of a regiment in World War I. We never called him "Mr. Secretary"; we always called him "Colonel". And he encouraged me.

Matloff: Did General Marshall get in on it at all?

McCloy: Yes, a great deal. I knew Marshall in World War I. I also knew Georgie Patton. You'll see my pictures in World War I are all out there (in the outer office).

Matloff: How did a provisional second lieutenant get to know Marshall in World War I?

McCloy: Because in World War I I served with a man whose name was Guy Preston. He had fought the Indians on the plains. I was his operations officer in an army field artillery brigade in World War I. He was a great friend who had been in the same class as Pershing. He introduced me to Pershing one time, and also introduced me to George Marshall.

Matloff: This was over in France?

McCloy: In France, in the Place Stanislaus in Nancy. George Marshall came in there one time and sat down. Pershing turned to me and said, "You see that man there? He's going to be Chief of Staff of the United States Army one day." He took me around and introduced me to him. I got to know Marshall very well, and I got to know Georgie Patton very well.

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Matloff: Did you meet up with Dr. James Phinney Baxter, in connection with this work?

McCloy: Yes, I knew Jimmy was a historian at Williams College. I got him very much interested.

Matloff: Did you have any thoughts at the time about writing a narrative history of World War II?

McCloy: No, I didn't think that I was going to write it. I just said, "Now, for goodness sake, this time let's have the Army do something that's worthy of it, so that we have a record, because this is going to be a bigger show than the first one. And we didn't do a very good job in the first one."

Matloff: Yes, I recall that on the American occupational experience, in which you were involved personally in World War I, there was only one short account by Colonel Hunt. When World War II broke out, that was the only document the American Army had of that experience.

McCloy: I remember that. And I got involved in World War II in the occupation problem very quickly. I got involved in that terrible fight with Morgenthau over the Morgenthau plan.

Matloff: We'll come to your experience in Germany in a short while. You've cleared up a question in which I have long been interested, your relationship with the historical business. The Army will be very interested in your recollections.

McCloy: I was the fellow that started it, and I had great encouragement from Marshall.

Matloff: Let me shoot one question at you about unification. I know that you've been in and out of government, after the war period. What was your attitude toward the unification of the services based on your experience in World War II? You recall the National Security Act of 1947 and the subsequent amendments and revisions?

McCloy: Yes. It got all enmeshed, of course, with all sorts of Army politics. I was always thoroughly imbued with the necessity of eliminating interservice rivalry which I had seen pop up on so many occasions and frustrate what I thought was constructive action. I used to talk to Marshall about it a great deal. I was always a strong advocate of unification, and still am. There was so much politics involved with it. The Navy was so damned intransigent. Maybe that is not the right word. But the Navy was backward. The Navy men were terribly afraid that the Army was wanting to absorb them and take them all over. It was as jurisdictional a problem as it could be. The services fought each other harder than they did the enemy, it seemed to me. I did everything I knew how, always on the side. I was too busy running around. I was a young man; Mr. Stimson was an old man. I was the leg man in the War Department. When we'd go to see the President, I couldn't come back home and write something about it. I was too busy. I had to get the action done. I had to put my hat on and go see somebody, and get something started. So I wasn't a recorder, like Henry Morgenthau, or like Henry Stimson, for that matter. Stimson had a diary. I didn't have the time to keep a diary. I was as busy as a one-armed paper hanger getting

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things done. They called me "Blitz McCloy"--"Blitz" was my name. I was an instigator, mainly because Mr. Stimson, who was, as I look on it now, a young man, but he was an old man when I was 39 or 40 years old. He was 70 or so. I had to do the leg work. I put on my shoes and my hat and went running around. I was on the streets more than I was in my office.

I remember when I first came to the War Department, Marshall sent for me and said, "I want to talk to you, McCloy; I remember meeting you in World War I, and I would like us to just get to know each other. I want you to know that that door's always open, whenever you want to come in." A man, a youngster, came in then, and Marshall said "Just a minute, Mr. McCloy, I've got to sign an order here." This fellow who brought the order spoke very pungently about it, and Marshall signed it. As the young officer left, Marshall turned to me and said, "McCloy, did you see that man?" I replied, "Yes, I noticed him. I thought that he was a very articulate and impressive young man." Marshall said, "That man is fit to be a corps commander today." You know who it was? Lawton Collins, probably the greatest corps commander the United States Army has ever had. He was in all the tough actions, including Guadalcanal and Cherbourg. When they were choosing a corps commander to go ashore at Utah Beach, Marshall said, "Try Collins."

Matloff: Do you recall whether you were drawn in on the debate and discussions leading up to the National Security Act of 1947, the basic act, or whether you got in on any of the subsequent revisions?

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McCloy: I got in on that, but I was coming toward the end of my career. I'd been in the war, and then the war was over, and I had to go. I went off to the World Bank, and then I went off to Germany, There was a period when I was called in to talk to committees. I was not one of the instigators, although I was always called on to give my favorable attitude.

Matloff: You were in favor of unification?

McCloy: Yes, strongly.

Matloff: I'll ask you a little later whether you think the acts have gone far enough, but we'll hold that for a little while. Let me shoot a question or two about Germany, in which you had such a long and varied experience. How were you appointed and who appointed you as High Commissioner (HICOG)?

McCloy: I was sitting in my office one day, when I was the Assistant Secretary of War, and the war was progressing pretty well. Suddenly I was called over to the White House. I went in to the oval room and the President was there. I remember thinking what a handsome man he was. He had already had a stroke or something, and he wasn't as heavy as he had been. As I came in the door, he held up his hand to me in a Hitler salute, and said "Heil, Hoch Commissar für Deutschland." I didn't know what he was talking about. He rather fancied himself as a German scholar, because when he'd been Assistant Secretary of the Navy he had gone over and liquidated a lot of property over there. And he picked up a little German in the meantime, and he thought he knew all about Germany. He

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thought that he had all the answers in regard to Germany. He said, "You're going to be the first High Commissioner for Germany." We hadn't won the German war then, and I said, "Don't you think we're a little premature, Mr. President. In the first place, I don't think that it's just a good idea. We haven't won the war yet. In the second place, the first thing you ought to have there is a military governor, not a high commissioner. The soldiers are going to be parading around, marching, and counter marching and a civilian would be out of place there. It's also a logistical problem, like a Mississippi River disaster." The more I talked about it, the more I thought I was right. He said, "There's nobody in the Army that can do the job." I replied, "I know of one. He's Lucius Clay," The President said, "I don't know anything about him. He works with Somervell, doesn't he?" I said, "Yes, he was a pageboy on the Senate or House floor." That intrigued the President. I said, "What you need is a fellow that is accepted by the soldiers. You ought to know Lucius Clay better. He's a better man than Somerwell. He's a 'toughie', and can do anything. There is going to be a problem of bulldozing and making ends meet there. It will be a distressful situation, like a Mississippi River disaster. You're going to have to have an engineer who is a soldier and who can move with his colleagues." He leaned back, and said, "McCloy, I'm too tired to argue with you. I don't know that you're right, but go down and talk to Jimmie Byrnes about it." I went down to talk to Jimmie Byrnes; I knew that Jimmie Byrnes knew Clay. Jimmie Byrnes had known Clay's father, because he'd been a

senator from Georgia. One thing led to another. We had a hell of a time getting Clay appointed, but we finally did, and made him Deputy to Eisenhower. He was appointed and he was a star. I wanted to get back to making a living. I was only making \$7500 a year, and I had a family to support. I couldn't have a nickle to rub against another, but I wanted to see the job done well. I was fascinated with Lucius Clay, because I had dealt with him a great deal. I got behind Lucius Clay but there was a hell of a cabal trying to put somebody else in, Bedell Smith. Bedell wanted the job the worst way. At any rate, I said, "Don't deviate from this at all, because you've got a darn good man here, a highly competent fellow, an excellent high class, elite West Pointer and an engineer. Some day you'll want a high commissioner, but not to start off."

Matloff: Let me take you to the role that you played as High Commissioner. What instructions did you receive when you were given the post?

McCloy: High Commissioner? I was sitting over in the World Bank then, and I was informed by phone that the President wanted to see me. I went over to see the President, who was then Truman, and he said, "Mr. McCloy, I'm going to make you the first High Commissioner for Germany." I replied, "This isn't the first time that I was offered that job." He said, "I never heard of it; you don't tell me that Mr. Roosevelt offered it to you," and I answered, "Yes, he did." This is what I said: "Now, maybe, it is the time for a high commissioner, because there are political situations that are developing there, and we have gotten rid of this verdampte Morgenthau plan that vi-victus reduced Germany to a pastoral state." They wanted to make the Ruhr a lambs' gambol. Those were the

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actual words they used. And that was drawn, by the way, by Churchill himself. As Mr. Roosevelt said to Mr. Stimson in my presence, "Listen, Colonel, I didn't have anything to do with that; that was one of Winston's whimsies. I never would have thought of the word 'pastoral'." "Pastoral" was a good Churchillian word, and that was his signature on the document. He said, "He drew it." And that's how the "reduce Germany to a pastoral state" came along. We had to fight that concept all the way through. In the meantime we had a good man sitting there in Lucius Clay; and I was able to introduce Lucius Clay in all that 1067 business, because my brother-in-law, Douglas, who later became Ambassador to the United Kingdom, was then working for Clay.

Matloff: Did your instructions come directly from the President, when you were appointed HICOG?

McCloy: Yes, sure.

Matloff: Let me focus a little on some of the problems that you encountered in that role. I know that one of the first problems that you had to worry about was the problem of dismantling, whether you should go forward with the dismantling or stop the dismantling? Do you recall what your thoughts were on it?

McCloy: Yes, I remember very clearly. Dismantling was mainly up in the British zone. That's where the Ruhr was, and where the big problems were. We didn't have the problem so acutely down where we were. But we had the Morgenthau plan. That was the Morgenthau plan--and that vi-victus business--and it was entirely negative. It lacked any affirmative note.

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But these fellows abroad didn't know what was going on with Morgenthau, like Mr. Douglas and Lucius Clay did. I told Clay to use the formula on distress and disease, if it gets to that point there. I put that in the 1067 directive. If we find that rebellion was threatened, or that the distress was reaching such a degree that it had to be dealt with, that clause should be used. I said to Clay, "There's your out, and we'll get along because Mr. Roosevelt and Mr. Churchill have now repudiated the Morgenthau plan."

Matloff: What would you consider your principal achievements as HICOG?

McCloy: When I came along, I changed the whole damn vi-victus business into a positive form. In other words, I was responsible for the elimination of the lambs' gambol (of taking an industrial state and changing it into an agricultural state). It was a fantastic idea, when you stop and think about it, to take the Ruhr, and make it into a lambs' gambol. At the bottom of it was the need of Britain for post-war credits. Lindemann got hold of Morgenthau and talked about the postwar credits. He cottoned up to Morgenthau, because Morgenthau was Secretary of the Treasury and would get the credits that he knew Britain needed. Britain needed the credits, as we showed later on in the Marshall Plan, and the transfer of that cheap labor from the east to the west.

Matloff: On this very important point, do you recall what motivated you to turn from the treating of Germany as the conquered country to fostering its recovery? Was it the threat of Russia at the time?

McCloy: No, it wasn't that. It was just because you couldn't make any sense out of turning a highly industrialized country, like Germany, with a Ruhr and all the factories, into a lambs' gambol. It was ridiculous. You could fault it on every note.

Matloff: So you didn't premise this on the coming of the Cold War?

McCloy: No, I didn't. Go back to the Atlantic Charter, signed by Churchill and Roosevelt. The Atlantic Charter was an idealistic statement of how Germany should be treated after the war. At that time we weren't even in the war. Roosevelt and Churchill were on their battleships up there at Argentia, and the Atlantic Charter they put out was 180 degrees away from the Morgenthau plan. Eden and Stimson attacked that plan very heavily. You ought to read On Active Service by Mac Bundy. I wrote all those memoranda. Stimson made Roosevelt repudiate the plan. Once it was repudiated, then you had a positive means. In other words, you could do something about the recovery. That was where I came in. I was the positive fellow. I then began to advocate returning a lot of sovereignty to the Germans, because they were capable of running a country. They were sophisticated people. They knew how to make the things that Europe was athirst for at that time.

Matloff: Let's come now to the question of the rearmament of Germany, another question in which you got involved. Did you at first have doubts about rearming Germany?

McCloy: Yes, I had doubts about it. That was a government policy, determined after that split with the Soviet Union. The split came long before

I got there. The split came, while Lucius Clay was there, in the bi-zonal business.

Matloff: Let me take you back approximately to just before the outbreak of the Korean War. I think that you had written that at that point you had some doubts about the rearming of Germany.

McCloy: Yes, I always had some question about the return of the militarismus.

Matloff: But then came the Korean War. Did this lead to a change in your thinking about the role of Germany? about German rearmament?

McCloy: This was government policy. This policy was made in Washington.

I may have had some qualms about it, but I had the feeling that I could see what was developing. This mighty new force was developing, and it appeared as if it was going to overwhelm. I could understand why the then President and government were pushing out these instructions. I was following those instructions. That doesn't mean to say that I thought that they were all wrong. I had the feeling that they had some justification, even though I had some reservations.

Matloff: The question of how to get Germany to join with the rest of Europe in some kind of defense system came up while you were still HICOG. The first proposal was for the European Defense Community (EDC). Do you recall what your role was in connection with EDC?

McCloy: Yes.

I was always in favor of doing more with DeGaulle than we did. I said that DeGaulle was the nearest thing to a hero that the French had and what business did we have getting this general from North Africa,

General Gireaud, in there? I knew that DeGaulle was a difficult fellow, but I said three or four times to the President, "Look, get behind DeGaulle, because DeGaulle is the nearest thing to a hero that you can build around. He's indigenous; he's not artificial. This other man, Gireaud, is our creature. That's wrong." That's when Harry Hopkins sat down and wrote a little note to the cabinet meeting, which is still extant, and in which he says in his own handwriting, "One more crack from McCloy to the President about DeGaulle and McCloy leaves town." But I was always urging the President to be a little more sympathetic. I argued, "I know how arrogant and difficult he is, but he's indigenous, and you're going to be always on the left foot if you try to pick a puppet."

Matloff: So you were in favor of EDC?

McCloy: Yes, I was in favor of EDC, but the French finally threw it over.

Matloff: Did anything constructive result from those negotiations?

McCloy: Yes. There were many cooperative staff officers and good officers in the French army, and they collaborated very well with us under the surface. DeGaulle was very difficult. I don't blame the President for getting irritated. I think De Gaulle could get awful stuffy, but he was a darn sight better than for us to put a puppet in there, in my judgment.

Matloff: You lived a very dangerous life in those days. This is a logical point to shift to NATO, in which I know you have been interested for many years. Do you think that in the beginning NATO was designed as much

to contain Germany as to contain Russia? Do you recall the policy on that in the early days?

McCloy: There was an element of containing Germany involved. We had had this experience with irredentism, not only once but two or three times--after 1870 and 1914. We had made some mistakes. There was always the feeling that, if Germany was going to be rearmed, it ought to be rearmed in an allied context. There was no doubt that that thought was a factor, but, of course, the other matter was looming up as a very powerful influence. Dean Acheson was, of course, the father of all that. I was also a father, I mean I went up and testified in favor of it at great length.

Matloff: In favor of the treaty?

McCloy: In favor of the treaty, yes. I was on the Hill a good deal. I went up there and posed as a pageboy myself. I sat amongst the pageboys during those great isolationist debates. I had a great deal of admiration for the Senate as a deliberative body. They were very good.

Matloff: Did you foresee at that time that NATO was going to be a long-term alliance, and that the American military role in it would be a permanent one? These are questions which have been raised.

McCloy: I never thought that we were going to have our troops over there forever. Mr. Roosevelt would turn over in his grave at the thought that those troops were still there. He wanted to get them out as quickly as he knew how. If you study the matter--and historians ought to study it--our commitment under NATO, when you read it, is not very good or

very solid. It wouldn't support consideration for a contract. The guts of NATO is the earnest of the troops being there. They are actually there. It isn't a question of whether they're going to be or not. If there's an outbreak of a nuclear exchange, that's the vulnerable bunch they're going to jump on; and that is the earnest of the commitment. This is what sticks in everybody's craw now. The trouble with the Germans today is they haven't quite made up their minds whether their destiny is to the east or to the west. In Bismarck's day it was to the east; in Adenauer's day it was to the west. Now they don't quite know.

Matloff: I was going to ask you that very question, whether you had qualms about it, knowing German history as you did, and the background.

McCloy: Yes, I have qualms about it.

Matloff: Did you also have them back then? In the days when you were testifying?

McCloy: No, no, because then I was sort of fatuous about it. I thought it was only going to be temporary, and I thought we ought to have that commitment then. We needed it badly then, to convince the Russians that we meant business, but I had no idea that it was going to last this long.

Matloff: You may remember when Acheson testified on the Hill in favor of the treaty he was asked directly--"Is this going to be a permanent alliance, and are American troops going to be kept there permanently?" And he said, "No." But then came the Korean War, and the shift there, and from that time on the commitment's been there and it's been very strong.

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McCloy: That's right. And there was never a good time to take them away.

Matloff: Do you see the problems in NATO having changed a great deal from the early 50's, as they are now?

McCloy: Yes, of course. They've gotten to feeling more secure now than they ever did before. After the big fights around Berlin, you could do no wrong in Berlin. Down in the zone you could do wrong, but up in Berlin it was, "Guten Tag, Herr McCloy, thank God you're here." This feeling exists to this day. 610,000 people turned up the other day to demonstrate. The Greens are against the United States. They never knew Moses. Now you've got this conflict and the pipeline issue. This is a severe test of the alliance. They can't just sit back and say, "Very well, look, we want you and the Russians to conduct this nuclear exchange, but ohne mich. I tell them every time they come through here that that's just not good enough. I tell Helmut Schmidt, "You can't ride both sides; you can't ride the horse both ways." I think that we are coming to a very critical stage in the development of NATO.

Matloff: You feel that NATO is still necessary as an alliance?

McCloy: Suppose you pulled those troops out now. NATO would collapse.

Matloff: Does the alliance need restructuring?

McCloy: It definitely needs restructuring. We need more faith from our allies. We can't have them sitting back saying, "Look, we want you to defend us but we don't want you." Unless we can bring a note of unity to

the alliance, NATO is just not going to prevail. That's extremely important. We're at a critical stage today.

Matloff: How about your perception of the Soviet threat, both to the alliance and in general? Do you feel the nature of the threat has changed over the years, say from your experience at the end of World War II?

McCloy: It's changed here and there. I have hopes every now and then. I'll show you this little memorandum that I have on my visit to Churchill. It's just as apropos as it can be. I found this the other day when I was trying to redecorate my house. I found it under a bunch of paint pots and things, when they were put under a pall in the living room. There was this little notebook of mine in my holographic writing, loose-leaf, and it says on the top of it, "Visit with Churchill."

Matloff: What year is this?

McCloy: This must be about 1947. The memorandum is not even dated; it's not even a diary; it's just in my handwriting. "With Pug Ismay [General Sir Hastings Ismay], I drove down to Westerham (on Friday, October the 17th) to see Winston Churchill. Mrs. Pug, or Lady Pug, also came along. We arrived at about 1:00 and had a little chat with Mrs. Churchill before he came in from his painting. The place is a rather angular brick house, on the large size. One part of it really old, and the balance of it extensions. He must have 40 or 60 acres and he does a dairy farm business. "Enough to pay the wages," he said. I understand the home has been purchased by a syndicate of rich men, giving him the life tenancy, after which it reverts to the state. Mary, who is

married, lives on the place, and her husband is a sort of farm manager. She, by the way, is about to have a baby. He came in in his zoot suit, and immediately plunged into heavy talk. What is Ike up to? What did I think of things in Europe? And without waiting for a reply, at that stage began to stress the strength and vigor of England, a loyal ally, and in the future it looked as if there might not be too many. He became eloquent about the extent of England's strength. And when restored, it would again exert its benign influence throughout the world, in conjunction with the great vigor and influence of the U.S., etc., etc. He spoke of the actual contribution of troops as compared with the U.S. in the last war. Said he had a table which showed it. The conclusions, he said, were rather remarkable, for it was only in late '44 that the United States' effective strength moved ahead of the English. In the meantime, they'd held the gate, he was trying to say.

We talked about Germany, and the dismantling, and I brought up the Morgenthau plan. He hastily repudiated it. Damned Morgenthau and the Prof. Said that they were shylocks and too importunate. He said that he was not beyond saying that he had made a mistake and would so acknowledge it publicly. Turns out that Lindemann didn't have a Jewish drop of blood in his body and he was using the word shylock in a different sense there. He knew that FDR had said the same thing, but he then rather slyly remarked that the postwar credits of the British were not unrelated to the action. This was the Prof trying to get postwar credits and to line up with the Secretary of the Treasury. He said it was all a bad

business, with which he had ought to have had much less to do. He signed up with the Prof on that and induced Churchill to sign it to him.

As to Eisenhower, he said he thought he would run, if the chance presented itself, for the presidency. I had just seen him a short time before we were coming, and I was convinced he would run. I gave him something of my conversation with Eisenhower, and the basis for my reasons, but he said there might be a secret wish or a secret hope there. I told him I did not agree with him. At any rate he began to speak of Eisenhower with the greatest warmth and respect. But I gathered from what he said and did not say that he rather doubted that Eisenhower would make a good president. To be a president, one had to be a politician. One had to make fateful decisions, casting off friends and loyal adherents from time to time in great pain and with great consequences. This Ike would find it very hard to do. He was disposed to compromise or to attempt to please both sides without decisive effect. He would find that running a great country was far different from being a pleasant, though firm, arbiter of SHAEF. Surprisingly enough, he spoke with great admiration of Tom Dewey, with whom he said he had had a long talk. He said he was more impressed by him and his knowledgeableness in politics and statecraft than any of the other political candidates with whom he had talked in the United States. Stassen did not impress him at all. He also mentioned Vandenberg.

Another item of interest was his reference to Eisenhower's failure to support him on the Island of Rhodes. He clearly had rather harbored that rebuff. I don't know what I meant by that--he sort of mulled it over. He said that Ike would not give him the lift; that he was right, however, and Eisenhower was wrong on that issue. In retrospect, I must say that I do not feel the deep significance of the capture of Rhodes. We did not bring up the old issue of the straight across the tack, that is, around the end, about the soft underbelly business.

He was strong against the Soviets. He had thought that Stalin would have acted differently, but he had looked in vain for any sincere attempt to collaborate in the action which had been taken by the Soviet Union. He saw only the ugly face of the post-war seekers, the devices of the police state--in short, the same instincts against which he had inveighed when the Nazis were in the ascendancy in Berlin. It was a fell grip, in which the eastern states of Europe now find themselves, etc., etc. My efforts to talk about Poland, in terms of saving her from the complete submergence, did not get very far. He overruled with words any argument with which he did not agree, or rather seemed not to agree; or seemed not to listen. To Poland he would give no loan. He would raise up Germany, and I gather that he looked to a revived Germany as the hope of stabilizing the whole European situation. 'My attitude (he's got this in quotes) toward a state while an active enemy is quite different than my attitude toward a state conquered.' He often repeats that. I had to tell him about the city of Warsaw, and the feeling of that area toward Germany, etc., but I think

that I made no impression.

As for the United States, he rather assumed that aid would be given and that the major share would be directed toward its most loyal friend and ally, that is, Great Britain. The significance of the decisions, which were coming up in U.S. history, did not impress him, as they do me, but there again I think I made no headway in getting him to listen to me on what I thought were some of the chief forces determining the United States' position.

We saw his study full of trophies, gifts, souvenirs of war; a fascinating place, a great historical museum in itself. He had a room adjacent to his study that is a combination of bathroom and bedroom, rather a good idea. The view is out over the weald of Kent, and it is magnificent. I smoked one of his enormous cigars, and when he offered me a second, I kept it as a souvenir. We walked about the grounds. He showed off the cattle, brick wall, and his trick waterfalls, as the things that the Prof put on his place. The Prof was a great water engineer. It's apparent that he takes great delight in being a host. He likes people and wants to be hospitable. He looked better than I had seen him. He's cheerful, witty, and human. We also saw his pictures; some I thought were excellent. He asked my criticism of one, which he was painting for his Christmas cards. Knowing he was best when he was provoked, I said I didn't think much of it; I didn't think a still life became him. 'That shows you don't know anything about painting,' he

said. Then I talked about her [Mrs. Churchill?] for a while, and said he was most fortunate to have her about. I had bought the volumes of his speeches in London and I took the first volume of it with me to have him autograph it. When I showed it to him, he said, 'But you should have all my secret session speeches,' and he promptly produced a copy of them, and autographed that book, too. So now I have three autographed copies of his works, two of them presentation copies.

The other items I should like to record. He built an arbor at the end of which there's a sort of small summer house, on the walls of which are painted some rather crude murals of Marlborough's battles. But it was most apparent that the concept had been his throughout, and it gave him a great deal of satisfaction to have it there."

That is the best transcription I can make of my holographic entry in my loose memorandum book. Westerham must have been the town Kent, where Chartwell is located. "The Prof" was Lindemann, an Oxford Don, who was the chief scientific adviser to Churchill; "the Prophet," a brother named Charles Lindemann, who was attached to the British Embassy in Washington. He was a man with whom I fished from time to time. Prof is now dead. The above excerpt from my notebook confirms the fact that he had something to do with Churchill's support of Morgenthau's drastic treatment of Germany after the war, a plan which was initiated by Churchill and FDR and which Stimson so vigorously attacked. See Mac Bundy's book, On Active Service, which is an account of Stimson's wartime services.

Matloff: If you have an extra copy of that memorandum, I would appreciate having it, and I'll check the transcript then against that.

McCloy: OK, this is the only copy I've got. I'll give you one in due course.

Matloff: You agreed with Churchill in general about the view of the Soviet threat?

McCloy: Yes. He had the same idea that Mr. Roosevelt did. Mr. Roosevelt said, "I can get along with Joe." They all thought that that was the thing to do, and Churchill thought that was the thing to do. But both of them were disillusioned. They said that, when they got down to it, it was the hard core of domination. Now whether that's true or not, I don't know. I've dealt a lot with the Russians. I never have been with Russians when I didn't have somebody on the other side that I felt was almost as reasonable as I was. But, generally speaking, they were tough. Generally speaking, they were dominating. They wanted the biggest. Khrushchev said, "I don't give a damn, Mr. McCloy, you talk about the quality of your missiles. Let's argue on the battlefield. I want the biggest. I want to deter any thought. I want to act like a dreadnought did when the British were on the ascendency."

Matloff: This is a good time for me to take you back to the Cuban missile crisis, which is a case in point where you played an active role. Do you recall when you first learned of the crisis? How you got drawn in on that? Do you recall the EXCOM committee that met in Kennedy's administration, the executive committee of the National Security Council,

the ad hoc body that was set up to handle the Cuban missile crisis and advise the President? I know that you were drawn in on it.

McCloy: Yes. I was in Germany having lunch at the Frankfurterhof, when the telephone rang. And someone said, "You're wanted on the phone, Mr. McCloy." I went to the phone, and the first voice I heard said, "This is Jack Kennedy." I didn't know any Jack Kennedy; I never had anything to do with Kennedy. I thought somebody was kidding me. He said, "This is President Kennedy." Then I recognized his voice, and I said, "This is about Cuba?" He said, "Yes, when can you come home?" I replied, "In about a week's time." I had signed up for a shoot somewhere in Portugal for some birds. I had never had a chance to shoot over there, and I had been told it was very good. I had it all set up. I was all ready to go and was just about to pack my stuff. But he said, "I'm not talking about next week, I'm talking about today." I informed him, "The plane has left Frankfurt." He said, "Stay right there, I'll have a plane pick you up in a few minutes." He got a plane from Paris to come down, and first thing I knew I was on the way to New York. I got over here, and all these people were talking about what they were going to do about the missiles. The first thing I said when I got here was, "Accept that first telegram that came through. Just assume you didn't get the second one." That's what they did.

Matloff: Do you recall what course you favored when it first became clear that there were Soviet offensive missiles there?

McCloy: I said that we had to get them out.

Matloff: How far would you have gone in trying to get them out?

McCloy: I'd have gone the limit.

Matloff: Does that include the use of nuclear weapons and everything?

McCloy: We had to get them out.

Matloff: Do you recall if there was a division between the civilians and the military on that executive committee of the National Security Council?

McCloy: No. By the time I got there, they wanted me to deal with the U.N. They thought Adlai Stevenson was a "softy". When I got here, I found he wasn't a "softy", because in the meantime Gromyko had lied in his teeth to him and made the idealist in Adlai Stevenson a raging hawk. You didn't need to worry about Adlai Stevenson once he was convinced that Gromyko had lied to him.

Matloff: How effectively, as you look back on it, did the national security apparatus work during that crisis?

McCloy: Most of it took place while I was over in Germany. I was just called over when they said, "Look, we're going to get somebody to come over here to talk to you, and we want you to represent the United States to get those missiles out of there." They sent Kuznetsov over to see me, and I talked to him. I went to my place up in Connecticut. He didn't

want to talk to me down here. He wanted to go up in the country. He wanted to get rid of these plug-uglies he had with him; he didn't trust these fellows.

Matloff: This was the Russian diplomat?

McCloy: The Russian Secretary, and the Russian secret service people. So he [Kuznetsov] came up to my place in Connecticut. He looked around up there and said, "Can't we go someplace else?" He thought that my house was bugged. I said, "You can sit down there on the rail fence." We went down and sat on the rail fence and we conducted our business there. He looked at the rail fence to see if it was bugged. We talked it out right then and there, and we got the missiles out. Then they said they wanted those Ilyushus, too, to go out. So we got them out. And then we worked on the business of how the Russians should come along-side and expose the weapons so that we could see and count them. I said, "You'd better give us a manifest in and a manifest out. And it had better be right, because we know what came in." So he did do that. By George, they had brought in about six more than we had accounted for.

Matloff: What was your conclusion about dealing with the Russians as a result of this experience?

McCloy: That Kuznetsov, who was then the deputy to Gromyko, had been educated in this country and spoke English as well as you do. He was quite a fellow, and his word was his bond. When one of those tramp ships didn't come close alongside, and wouldn't lift the pall up, I told him that we wouldn't let it get home, and he'd better do something

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about it. He replied, "We'll take care of it." Two or three days later, back it came into Havana harbor and performed all the things that it should have done, in accordance with our agreement.

Matloff: One more question on this point. What was your conclusion about what had made the Russians retreat?

McCloy: Our preponderance everywhere.

Matloff: Was it our conventional power? Our atomic power?

McCloy: I think it was a combination. We had them on the hip at that time, as we do not now. Our superiority, strategic and conventional, was so impressive that they did respond.

Matloff: Let me turn your attention now to the question of arms control and disarmament. You have been into so many areas that we've got to keep ranging from end of the spectrum to another. Do you recall your general attitude toward nuclear weapons, their buildup, their use, their control? Did you have any thoughts back in World War II about the use of atomic weapons?

McCloy: Stimson was the man who gave more thought to this matter than anybody in the cabinet, more than the President himself. He was a man of great depth of thought and character, and he was plagued with this whole problem. What do you do with the thing, now that you've found it? Do you give it to Russians? How do you control it? He was torn by this problem. He used to call me over every night to the Woodley and sit up there and talk about it. He was very perplexed about it. He was a very devout man. He was very sensitive to the responsibilities and whether we should

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notify the Russians about it or keep it a secret, and whether we should drop it on civilian populations, or some other kind of a target. He thought through all of the imponderables and it tore his soul apart.

Matloff: Certainly the minutes of the Interim Committee reflect that.

McCloy: That's right. He had George Harrison with him, and he had Compton and Oppenheimer and everybody else, but he was talking to me every night. I'd see him in the halls during the daytime, and I knew how obsessed he was with it. I came out with a solution. I said, "Now look, Mr. Secretary, your soul is torn by this thing. In my judgment we have to have our heads examined if we don't attempt to bring about a political solution of this matter at this stage. We can't find another battleship to sink and another town to bomb. We've already told them that they can have Kyoto. I think you can get a surrender from these fellows, and you don't have to drop the bomb." And he replied, "Spell it out." I spelled it out to him. I thought he had agreed with me. He said, "Mr. McCloy, I've got one of my migraine headaches, and I won't be able to go to that meeting tomorrow." (The meeting was on June 18th, a critical date). He added, "You're going to have to go there and expound this thing." I thought that he was telling me that I was to come forward with my suggestion, namely, that we had the bomb, give the Japanese warning of the bomb, and spell it all out in detail. Even though we hadn't had the tests and Alamogordo yet, we knew enough about it to know that that chain reaction was going to work. I felt that we should get the British, and maybe the Chinese, to join with us, and tell them [the

Japanese) that we've got this weapon, that we have no alternative but to use it, and that we will use it. But we should say to them, "If you make a complete surrender, we will let you have the Mikado as a constitutional monarch, and we will let you have access to but not control over raw materials." We had had a hell of a fight over the blockade business. I said, "In my judgment, at this stage, with all of the successes that we have had--our great moral authority over them by reason of their sneak attack at Pearl Harbor, we've sunk everything between Pearl Harbor and the Japanese Islands, and our prestige is enormous--they will grab the offer. You will get a complete capitulation, and you won't have to drop the bomb. And I think you will be better off for not having dropped the bomb." He hesitated a little, but I thought he agreed. So I prepared this whole damn proposal, wrote it all out, and now I can't find the damn memorandum. I gave it to my secretary, who was a male. He went to Cuba, and I've lost all track of him. I don't know where that memorandum is, but this is what I suggested.

Then we had the meeting on June 18. All the king's horses and all the king's men were there, and they all came in and they sat there, and when they got through, Mr. Truman asked, "What alternatives do I have now? How do I close this war? What do I do from here out?" They all voted. The President ordered, "Attack Kyushu but do not attack Honshu, until you come to me again for further authority. We won't give any warning on it. We will just give them an ultimatum that we want them to surrender. They'll turn it down, but we'll drop the bomb."

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They all voted for that proposition. I didn't say anything, because Mr. Stimson voted for it. He was sitting there, and he followed General Marshall. So I didn't say anything. When they were picking up their papers and were starting to go out, Truman saw me there, and said, "Nobody leaves this room without voting on this. McCloy, you haven't said anything. What do you think? Do you think I have an alternative?" I looked at Mr. Stimson, and I said, "Mr. Stimson has voted for the War Department. I'm not going to gainsay what he said." "No," he declared, "nobody leaves here without giving his own viewpoint." Stimson then popped up and said, "All right McCloy, tell him what you think." So I spelled it all out. I said, "I think that we have to have our heads examined, if we don't bring about a political solution at this time. This is the condition I would set--let them keep the constitutional monarch, the man is a semi-deity." It was interesting to me that all the so-called liberals, including Archie MacLeish and Dean Acheson wanted to shoot the Mikado. I was the only one who didn't want to shoot the Mikado, because he didn't signify anything, but you would get the capitulation in return for it. I said that I thought that it was better at least to try it. All I'm saying is that we should have tried it, and we should not have treated it as haphazardly as we did at that particular time.

Matloff: That's a very important note to add to history.

McCloy: One of the most important things you ever heard, but nobody knows anything about it.

Matloff: Is there some record somewhere?

McCloy: I haven't got the records.

Matloff: If you ever find it, let's have it by all means.

McCloy: Well, it exists somewhere. I have got some reference to it in my book.

Matloff: Along this same line, you did get involved with disarmament negotiations, on the question at least of banning the testing of nuclear weapons, years later. What did you learn here in your dealings with the Russians? In this case you were dealing with Valerian Zorin.

McCloy: You mean the McCloy/Zorin business?

Matloff: Right. What did you learn in dealing with them? What was your conclusion about the possibility of banning testing of nuclear weapons?

McCloy: We had an agreement against testing, as you know.

Matloff: There was a limited testing.

McCloy: Yes, for limited testing, but we had an agreement. But the McCloy/Zorin affair is something else again. The Russians came forward, if you remember, with a tremendous propaganda ploy for general and complete disarmament. We asked ourselves, "Do they really mean that? Are they in the position where they're ready to convey to an international agency the sovereignty that would permit it to have the inspection that we need? We better try them out." We weren't sure ourselves we wanted to do it. But we sat down and said perfectly honestly, "Maybe they've thought this question through further than we have." So, we got hold of the Russians, and said, "Maybe you've thought this thing through further than we have. We've had difficulty conveying our sovereignty to an

international agency. It's vital on such a subject as this. What's your thinking about it?" At that point, Zorin, who was seen to be in favor of going that far, said, "We'll sit down and see if we can't draft something that we can both agree on." We tried to agree on something. He hedged a little. We finally amended the agreement. Then Khrushchev got involved in it, and slapped the table with his shoes and everything else. He said, "Anybody that thinks that I am here to convey any sovereignty to an international agency over which I don't have complete control, for the full inspection of this business, has got to have his head examined." He repudiated the concept so completely that that was the end of the McCloy/Zorin agreement and of their propaganda on general and complete disarmament. We were sincere about it. We said, "Let's try him out; maybe he's got some thoughts here to which we can subscribe." But when he got up to the top level, with Khrushchev, he just peed all over it.

Matloff: Was it at this point, after the experience that came to naught on the attempt to ban the testing of nuclear weapons in general, that you decided to turn to getting a new arms control and disarmament agency for the United States government?

McCloy: Yes. Kennedy went to the country, made a great to-do about it, and got hold of me. I had gone back to civil life. He said, "McCloy, I want you to undertake this thing." I said, "I'm going back in civil life now. I have no nickel to rub against another. But I've destroyed so

many things in the course of my career, I'd like to take a crack at it."

So he said, "OK, we'll put this legislation forward."

Matloff: What did you mean by "destroyed so many things"?

McCloy: I had destroyed. I'd been through two world wars.

Matloff: I see. You were looking for something constructive.

McCloy: That's it. I'd been blasting everybody in the White House to try to put something together again. I'd been heavily involved with Monnet and European recovery. Monnet is entitled to a great deal of credit, in my judgment. He made it unthinkable that we should have any more civil wars in Europe. So when Kennedy asked me to do this, I said, "OK, I'll do it." I got my firm to release me. I made quite a to-do about it, because it didn't want me to do it. I had quite a time about it. To my surprise one day, after I had said I would do it, Kennedy called me down there, and said, "Mr. McCloy, all my advisers tell me I can't risk, at my stage, a defeat on such a vital thing as this, and I can't make this a national policy."

Matloff: Is this after the election?

McCloy: I guess that it was after the election. He said, "This early in my administration, I can't afford to have a defeat, and, therefore, I can't make it an administration measure. You can do what you can with it yourself. I responded, "This pulls the rug completely from under me. I burned all my bridges. I've told all my partners. I can't go running around and, with my tail between my legs, say, 'Will you please take me back?' I'd like to have a try at it."

Matloff: What did you do?

McCloy: I went up to the Hill, and I gathered all the heroes—everybody from Eisenhower down. I just marched them up the Hill, and I had every one of them testify in favor of it. It went through with a whoop and a holler, and that was the formation of the agency. They equivocated on it and they cut it back, but look at the hearings. Kennedy thought that I was the greatest lobbyist that there ever was. That's how we got it. That's the history of it.

Matloff: That's a fascinating story.

McCloy: More than a fascinating story, it's a fact.

Matloff: Let me turn your attention just briefly to Vietnam.

McCloy: I didn't have anything to do with Vietnam. They did their damndest to get me to go to Vietnam. I was never subjected to so much pressure. Johnson said, "Look, you know McCloy, why I'm coming down here? We're going to organize for victory. I'm going to put you in the biggest job that's in my power to bestow. Do you know why I'm doing it? You're the greatest pro-consul this country's ever had." The next minute he was telling me, "You know why you're not going to do it? You're scared of it. You're timid." I never was subjected to such pressure, and I said, "This isn't my cup of tea."

Matloff: Did he want you to play the role of ambassador?

McCloy: He wanted me to take Lodge's place.

Matloff: This is a question I've been longing to ask you, and I'm sure that historians of the future are going to be interested in what you

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have to say. You dealt with so many Presidents in connection with your own contributions to national security policy and implementation. How would you compare, with just thumbnail sketches, if you will, the attitudes, styles, and personalities of the various Presidents you have known in the field of national security?

McCloy: I used to be very very much interested in this question. I used to ask Stimson, who had advised Presidents William Howard Taft, Herbert Hoover, Franklin Roosevelt, and a whole list of them, more than I had.

Matloff: But you came in for more of the postwar period than he.

McCloy: Yes, that's right too. I said to him one time, "Mr. Stimson, which of all those men was the greatest?" He said, "I can tell you without the slightest hesitation who was the most efficient." I asked, "Who was that?" He said that it was William Howard Taft. I replied, "That surprises me, because I hadn't thought of William Howard Taft as being one of our greatest presidents." Stimson said, "He knew more about the business of government, the delegation of authority, and how you conducted a cabinet meeting, instead of these kilkeny affairs we have here today. He was the best administrator of any of the Presidents under whom I served." "But," he also said, "you didn't ask me who was the most efficient, you asked me who was the greatest." And he said, "I'm sure his name would be Roosevelt, but I'll have to give it further thought, whether it was T.R. or F.D.R." Then he told me a story. Maybe this answers it as best I can; maybe this was the best he could do. He said that one time after Theodore Roosevelt was President, he had left

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for Africa to shoot lions, and then he felt he had some steam left in the boiler. He went around and visited all the crown heads of Europe and began to get full of ambition again. He made up his mind that he didn't like Taft, and he took out after Taft and attacked him. That was the bull moose business. He was so vituperative against his old friend, William Howard Taft, that Stimson stated, "I went down to Sagamore Hill, and I said to T.R., 'You can't do this, Theodore, because this man's a friend of yours; he helped you; and your friends resent it, because he's not what you say he is. We think that you're just too rough on him, and we're uneasy about it.'" Stimson went on to say, "T.R. put his fist under my nose, and said, 'Henry, you know as well as I do, the trouble with Will is that he doesn't enjoy power, and that's an attribute of greatness,' which, by the way, neither of the Roosevelts lacked." I don't know whether that answers your question?

Matloff: How about the post-war period? Would you take a shot at the Presidents that you've known?

McCloy: I liked Truman very much. Truman was always forthright to me. He was thoughtful, frank, candid; no dissembler. You never knew quite where you stood with Mr. Roosevelt, but Roosevelt was a great man, a great humanitarian. I certainly place him amongst the great. But Truman was the more satisfactory man to deal with. He once said to me, "Now, look, I sent you over there to run that country, and you're doing very well. As long as you're doing very well, you've got my

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full support. If I think you're doing wrong, I'll let you know. Now let's talk about the Civil War." He was a Civil War buff.

Matloff: Yes, a great student of American history. How about Eisenhower? Any thoughts?

McCloy: I have a high regard for Eisenhower. These mumblepuppies come around and talk about his syntax. He could write. He wrote one of the greatest speeches that was ever uttered in the war. It was the Guildhall speech. He wrote it from top to bottom all by himself. He'd lose the verb when he was talking in a press conference.

Matloff: There's been a great debate lately about Eisenhower's role in national security. Was he an active or a passive president?

McCloy: All I say is that he was an adequate president. I remember that one time Montgomery said to me, "McCloy, your man is no more than adequate." I replied, "Listen, Monty, he's no more than adequate for what I guess is the biggest military job that has ever come down the pike since the days of Caesar. I think I would let it rest at that. That's a job which they didn't see fit to give to you, but to me, if he's adequate for a job of that character, he's a man of great competence."

Matloff: How about Kennedy?

McCloy: I saw Kennedy only in connection with the missile crisis. He was never very impressive in his ability to lead the Congress. He had a great manner and presented a great image--no question about that--but he was powerless on the Hill. He was a very attractive fellow, indeed, and likeable as he could be, but I don't think he was there long enough.

I don't think he was ever tested in the way that you would like to see a man tested in a job like that.

Matloff: How about his successor, Johnson?

McCloy: Johnson was too coarse for me. He would be too cheap, and would exert terrific pressure. I could understand how people followed him, because he really did control things. He was a great politician. But he used to do things that shocked me, as when I heard him saying something which just didn't become a president.

Matloff: What about the Secretaries of Defense whom you have known and worked with? How would you characterize their styles, personalities, and effectiveness?

McCloy: Take the first one, Forrestal. He was a sick man, I think; he was a tortured soul. That Drew Pearson business upset him terribly. I used to see him at night, and I used to feel that he was really unbalanced. I thought, when he was a sort of young Napoleon, when he was running Dillon, Read, that he was a man of great ability and a little austere, but he wasn't the tough guy that he appeared to be. He had some inner doubts that kept him from being, in my view, a very great leader.

Matloff: How about some of his successors--Marshall, Lovett, and other people whom you knew very well?

McCloy: I knew them all very well, of course, but I don't think they were all really tested. I have often said that Marshall came closer to touching the mantle of greatness than anybody that I knew. He was a great staff officer, and he had an authority about him, a reserve, a

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mien. He wasn't stuffy, but whenever he said, "Just a minute, gentlemen," he could stop the whole damn meeting, whether Churchill, Roosevelt, and all the rest were there, and they listened to what he had to say. He was a man of great discernment of ability. He is the man that picked out that kid, Lawton Collins, and said, "He's the greatest corps commander the country's ever had."

Matloff: How about Lovett?

McCloy: Lovett was a very wise man, rather diffident and somewhat shy. He was wise but I wouldn't say that he was a tremendous leader. He liked to deal from the background somewhat. He wasn't a great power. He was a very fine friend of mine.

Matloff: Any thoughts about any of the more recent ones? Louis Johnson, for example?

McCloy: I didn't have contact with them. They didn't stand out, I guess.

Matloff: How about on national security organization itself?

McCloy: Something's wrong with it.

Matloff: We started to speak earlier about that. I wonder whether you have any thoughts from your perspective about what you see as the problems, the weaknesses, the needs?

McCloy: It seems to me that we haven't got the right machinery by which to identify the problems that we know are going to confront us. They are going to be just as exacting as any we've ever had in the past, and we don't know how to go about solving them. We have too damn many of these investigative reporters, too many Flora Lewises, and too many people who pretend to be great strategists and aren't. They don't have the mechanics,

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in my judgment, for coming to an objective determination. They don't choose, they don't select, perhaps because they've got little axes to grind. They don't select between the "bloody dilemmas" that Mr. Churchill talks about. The British have a way of having an elite group who are discreet, who don't want to get their names booted all around, and who don't feel that they have to be thought of as being consulted every time.

Matloff: Do you feel that the problem is in the Department of Defense, in the structure, the organization, let's say, of the OSD?

McCloy: The media has got something to do with it.

Matloff: The media?

McCloy: The media distort everything.

Matloff: How about the structure of the Department? Let's say, the role of the Secretary of Defense? The Joint Chiefs of Staff? The Chairman?

McCloy: It's confused, I think.

Matloff: You think that it needs reworking?

McCloy: It's confused. The British do it better than we do. Once the British got started off on the right foot on the Falklands, they did the same old thing that they've always done. They pick out people that you don't even know, who have been through the mill, have no axe to grind, and are bipartisan. But they have been through "the bloody dilemmas," that Churchill talks about, and they're wise people. They crack down and come up with an answer, which is perhaps 80 percent right.

Matloff: You see the need for reorganization on a national security basis, more than just DoD?

McCloy: I do, yes. I would have civilians in there, and I'd try to build up a tradition and get rid of all this business about the wise men and the investigative reporter.

Matloff: You've been very patient, and I know you are getting a little weary. I'm going to ask one more question about your personal role. How do you assess your main role in American public life? You have done so much work as a negotiator, as an advisor to so many presidents, you've operated behind the scenes, and all that.

McCloy: I think that I was energetic. I was a leg man and an operator. I had no axe to grind. I didn't want anything. There was no job that I was trying to get. I think that has a great deal to do with it. I did like to run with the swift.

Matloff: You see yourself more as a leg man than a policy maker.

McCloy: Yes, that's right.

Matloff: You're being very modest.

McCloy: I think that I tried to make the decisions as they came to me, as objectively as I knew how, without any thought of preferment. I'm not trying to make myself out a great figure, but having no axe to grind, I guess, would be the thing.

Matloff: The very last question: Of all your many achievements and contributions in the field of national security, what do you regard as the most important? This is a hard one for you, because you've been involved in so many things. But if you had to choose one or two, as you look back on it?

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McCloy: One or two? I say one was the part that I played in being useful and being a leg man in the war. I could get things done.

Matloff: Any specific area? Any specific act?

McCloy: Yes. When I saw something coming along, I could concentrate on it and go to the right person to get it motivated and moving.

Matloff: Would it be in the field, possibly, of disarmament? Or as HICOG? Or as Assistant Secretary of War?

McCloy: Of course the experience in Germany was a very great thing. There's no question about that. I knew Adenauer well, and saw a great deal of him. Of course, I think that I exercised some influence over Adenauer. I don't mean to say that I led him around by any means, but I had a good, frank, and candid exchange with him. I had an extraordinary helpmate in my wife. She spoke German as fluently as a native, and knew all the wiederschnacht people and those pupi czars and heroines. I could tell you stories about what she did in the womens groups over there. She talked their kitchen language, and she gave her activities a tone and a character. She was a hard worker, who spared herself no indignity. People liked her. She did some great and small things, supplying the tone needed at the time.

Matloff: Of all the activities in which you became involved in the field of national security, what element or elements disappointed you the most? Something that was perhaps not finished, or left undone?

McCloy: I think probably the failure to work out a good East-West relationship. I always had somewhat the same feeling that Churchill had here--there's

some answer to this thing. People can't be as arbitrary as that; they can't be as massive and as quantitative. There must be some quality in their thinking. And these people are really human, with real attainments. But there is such a mass of them, and they are so distrustful. They are really so timid, like a big bear that's scared of a mouse. They haven't got anything to fear from us. We are not going to attack them. If they could realize that we have a certain unity of purpose and a community of interests with the French, the British, the Western Europeans, and the Germans, that is a protection to them, as well as to the Russians and to the rest of the world. You could have a candid, free description of it and put less emphasis upon propaganda. That's a big thing, I mean, because the Russians have advanced so far with their propaganda, and they have such masters of it. They think that is a great leg up. I think that it is a handicap to them.

Matloff: Thank you very much, Mr. McCloy, for sharing with us your thoughts and your recollections.

April 9, 1985

No access <sup>See history, OSD</sup> ~~with [unclear]~~  
in present form. M. Matloff

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Transcript sent to Mr. McCloy on March 9, 1984

No signed transcript has yet been  
received from him. This transcript  
should be shown to someone providing  
receipt of his instructions and  
instructions re answer.

In reply

(See Dr. Maltby and/or Dr. Tread  
re any requests for answer)

