

Oral History Interview

with

JAMES W. RIDDLEBERGER

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Washington, D. C.

April 6 and April 26, 1972

by Jerry N. Hess, Harry S. Truman Library

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#### NOTICE

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HESS: All right to begin, Mr. Ambassador, let's advise historians to refer to your biographical data, which we will place in the Appendix, which will inform them about your background, and then move on to our other questions for this morning.

What are your earliest recollections of Mr. Truman?

RIDDLEGERGER: I never saw Mr. Truman, to the best of my recollection, and certainly did not know him, until after he became President. I was still in Germany until the spring of 1941, and then was assigned to Washington, but went to London in 1942, so therefore, I had read about him as the Chairman of the Senate Committee to Investigate the National Defense, but I had no...

HESS: No direct knowledge.

RIDDLEBERGER: No direct knowledge, or no personal contact

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with him.

HESS: Where were you when you heard of the death of President Roosevelt and what were your impressions?

RIDDLE BERGER: I was here in Washington when he died. In fact, I was in the hospital, I was sick. And I think like so many of us, was greatly distressed at the news. But it might be well if I told you frankly that I was not surprised. The last time I had seen the President I thought he looked fatally ill.

HESS: When did you see him last?

RIDDLEBERGER: You know that question is very difficult for me to answer for the simple reason that I would see him occasionally, officially, but I had seen him a great deal in the sense of looking at him. It so happened that in those years, my office in the Old State Department Building, which is right across...

HESS: State, War and Navy.

RIDDLE BERGER: State, War and Navy, the Old State, War and Navy Building was right across from the rear entrance to the White House, and from my office I could see the President coming out to get in his car, or being carried

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out. Of course, this was not something that could not be seen from the sidewalk below, but from my office I had a view of it. But of course, I was not close enough to have a very precise idea about his physical state, but I saw him I don't know how many times, and I don't know the last time I did. It must have been, of course, in '45.

HESS: What kind of a job did you think Mr. Truman was going to do? On April the 12th of 1945 when he took over, just what were your thoughts about the new man that was coming in? Just what did you know about him?

RIDDLEBERGER: I knew, in effect, nothing about him. I did know that Roosevelt had not kept him informed with the development, shall I say, in international fields. But that was rather common gossip in Washington. I think I knew it primarily from the fact that his name never appeared when it came to, let us say, distribution of very important or very secret documents. Now, of course, my experience in that case was limited to Germany and Austria. But of course, Germany and Austria were...

HESS: Pretty important.

RIDDLEBERGER: ...rather important countries and--at that time. And of course, I came back to Washington in 1944

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when I took over the Division of Central European Affairs and therefore, was deeply engaged in all of the planning for the occupation of both Germany and Austria. In fact, that was the reason I was brought back from London, to become chairman of this State, War and Navy interdepartmental committee to which was given the task of--I guess the right word would be "backstopping" the work here for the negotiations in the European Advisory Commission in London, and I was the chairman of that committee, which had a cover name.

HESS: What was the name?

RIDDLEBERGER: It was called the Working Security Committee, which of course, meant nothing. But it had been set up in 1944 simultaneous with the establishment of the European Advisory Commission in London, which was to do the negotiations between the United Kingdom, the Soviet Union, and the United States on the occupation of Germany and Austria.

HESS: Good, we'll get into that further when we come up to it.

RIDDLEBERGER: We'll get into it further, yes.

HESS: But I want to go back and ask you some questions about

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what you observed in Europe, as you were in Geneva, Switzerland as Vice Consul and Consul from 1930 to '36...

RIDDLEBERGER: That's right.

HESS: ...and then you served as third and second secretary of the American Embassy in Berlin from '36 until '41.

RIDDLEBERGER: To '41.

HESS: And, of course, that time span covers the rise of Hitler. To lead into that subject, when did you first hear of Adolf Hitler? Do you recall?

RIDDLE BERGER: Oh, in the 1920s. But, of course, I don't recall exactly when. I traveled in Germany, I think, even before I entered the foreign service. It was always a country that interested me. And this is back, I would say, in the late 1920s. And of course, he was known then because of the attempted Putsch in Munich, and that on top of that of course, by the late '20s he was beginning to become a political force, not always taken seriously by a lot of people.

I went to Germany, on a number of occasions, after I was assigned to Geneva in 1930, I recall distinctly being there in 1932, I think in 1933. I recall making

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a rather extensive trip in Germany in 1934, and then of course, we went to Berlin on assignment to the Embassy in 1936. In the meantime Hitler had come to power in 1933. And I was actually in Geneva at the time he announced the German withdrawal from the League of Nations, which of course, created a great sensation in those days. And of course, because of the rise of Hitler and the possible effect upon the League of Nations, his power and his potential as a possible Chancellor of Germany, were under constant discussion in Geneva in the early '30s, That was only natural.

HESS: What were your impressions when you would visit Germany during those times, you mentioned in the '32, '33, and '34, could you see a progressive, totalitarian takeover?

RIDDLEBERGER: Hitler had come to power...

HESS: In '33.

RIDDLEBERGER: ...in January of '33...

HESS: That's right.

RIDDLEBERGER: So, from that point on he was running the Reich himself with his little coterie of intimates.

But I recall very well on earlier trips that I

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thought the political situation in Germany was potentially very dangerous because of the extraordinarily large number of unemployed, and that the economic situation in general was so distressing, that in my opinion, at least, I thought that something was bound to happen. I was not certain in those years that Hitler would necessarily win, and in effect, he never really got a majority in any free election. Hitler did not come to power as a result of a majority in a free election. Later on he had these so-called elections which were in my opinion completely rigged. But I think that a number of us that lived, let us say, in and around Germany, and who had some knowledge of the country, were very cognizant of the danger of Hitlerian takeover which indeed was what came to pass. Now, of course, part of that may be hindsight.

HESS: You went to Berlin in 1936. What were your first impressions when you got there as to Hitler's power?

RIDDLEBERGER: His power was in my opinion practically complete, but to give you what I think is an apt illustration of the way Germany was going, we had barely settled in an apartment in Dahlem before we got the notice (this was by that time the autumn of 1936), that there would be a blackout exercise within the next month, and that everyone was

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obliged to purchase and prepare dark curtains to be put before every window and door where from which light might show. And in the middle--I recall this very well--in the middle of trying to get unpacked and into this place, a typical old German house with high windows, we had to run out and buy meters and meters and meters...

HESS: Of black cloth.

RIDDLEBERGER: ...of black cloth, yes. But I always took the German rearmament very seriously, and I'll tell you why. For the simple reason that when you live in a country, as we did, it's quite impossible, in my opinion, to hide extensive military preparation. I think it can't be done, there are too many indicators. To take a very simple example. As we would drive outside of Berlin and in the countryside, you might see an airplane, let us say, coming down into what might look like a forest. There might be a fence around and signs up saying "Streng Verboten," nobody could drive through there, but we all knew that plane didn't come down and land in the trees, there must have been an airfield there, or an airstrip of some sort, and that was a rather frequent experience as time went on and I happened to travel a great deal in Germany.

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In addition the economic indicators were so marked in showing that a constantly higher proportion of German production was obviously going to military purposes, to the Army, or the Air Force, or the Navy.

Take a very simple case, Germany even until very late continued to publish the statistical yearbook, and it was remarkably detailed. Furthermore big firms would publish their financial statements in the press, which would show that their consumption of raw materials was constantly increasing as their number of their employees was going up. But yet if it were an automobile factory, you could turn to the statistics on the automobile production and find that practically the same number of cars had gone to the civilian market. So it doesn't take any great mind to figure that one out. The Germans were not so inefficient that it took three times as many people and four times as much raw material and a financial turnover say three or four times as great to produce the same number of cars.

HESS: Now Germany suffered some very severe inflation following World War I, did you see evidence of their fight against inflation when you were there?

RIDDLEBERGER: Well, by the time we went, which don't forget

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was 1936...

HESS: That's right.

RIDDLEBERGER: ...the great post-World War I inflation of Germany was over, and the currency had been stabilized after the Dawes and Young loans.

HESS: That's right.

RIDDLEBERGER: ...and we went in a very different era. By the time we got there, of course, the Hitler controls under Dr. [Hjalmar] Schacht were already in effect. Now internally the currency was stable, and maintained at a fixed value, even if it may have been somewhat of a fiction. In other words the reichsmark was in those days, officially 24 cents, but tourists could buy it cheaper. Schacht put in effect a long series of currency control measures, but internally the mark was stable, there's no doubt about it.

HESS: The '36 Olympics was held in Berlin. Hitler made quite a show out of that. Were you there at the time?

RIDDLEBERGER: Oh, a tremendous show! No, I came in just after the Olympic games.

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HESS: All right. Were there any contingency plans being drawn up by the State Department, with the help of the Embassy in Berlin, about matters that were going on in Germany at that time that you were there? It was in '38 that Hitler met [Neville] Chamberlain at Munich.

RIDDLEBERGER: Yes.

HESS: ...and in '39 came the invasion of Poland. Just how involved was our--how close a look, close a view, did our State Department and the Embassy keep on matters that were transpiring in Germany?

RIDDLEBERGER: I think that the reporting on German developments, both from the Embassy and consulates, and we happened to have a number of consulates in Germany, was both accurate and adequate. I don't think it had the effect that many of us hoped it would because of those of us who lived there (and this would apply that to a large majority of us I think), were absolutely persuaded that Hitler was preparing for war, and as I recited earlier, we held this opinion for very good reasons. All of this went forward to Washington, and in addition there was a really tremendous volume of reporting by the press on developments in Germany. And to me it was always a matter of not only

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concern but of surprise at the reaction to a lot of this was, "Oh, well, he doesn't mean it," or "make this concession and everything will be all right."

HESS: And it was not.

RIDDLEBERGER: And it was not. But of course, I can understand that neither governments nor peoples were inclined to take Germany's re-armament as seriously as those who lived under it were.

HESS: What time of the year in 1941 did you leave? Did you stay until the Embassy was pulled out?

RIDDLEBERGER: No, I was home when Pearl Harbor happened.

HESS: You were?

RIDDLEBERGER: I was not interned. George Kennan and I were both second secretaries and both of us were scheduled for leave in 1941. We hadn't seen our families for a couple of years and he went first. And then that held up my departure because we were two of the Embassy officers that could speak German--don't forget we had no Ambassador since November of '38 after Roosevelt pulled out Hugh Wilson during the Jewish riots in Berlin. George Kennan went and got back, and so I must have gone in the late

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spring of '41. I went to see my family, whom I had not seen for months. I was told to report to the State Department, at least temporarily, which I did. But by that time it must have been the summer of '41, and I was kept on the German desk--provisionally--although later formalized. You know how those things go sometimes, one thing after another came up, and since I had been in Berlin, they said, "Well, you just stay on for a while," and my family was already in this

country. I don't think we set up a household here though until late in '41 when I knew I was going to stay on. Then came Pearl Harbor, and of course that took care of my return to Berlin.

HESS: Did you ever personally meet Hitler?

RIDDLEBERGER: Oh, my yes, certainly:

HESS: What was your impression?

RIDDLEBERGER: Well, I met him in a sense that a second secretary meets a chancellor.

HESS: At functions.

RIDDLEBERGER: At functions, yes, but of course, when Hugh Wilson came, as, the Ambassador he was accompanied by his staff for the formal presentation of credentials and I

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was included. And we all, after the exchange of courtesies was done, more or less, we all chatted a bit in the chancellory. I also met Hitler on a number of occasions, official occasions, when diplomats were invited to be there.

HESS: What was your impression of him at the times you met him?

RIDDLEBERGER: I could never understand his appeal to the German people, but he obviously had it.

HESS: He didn't appeal to you?

RIDDLEBERGER: He didn't appeal to me and of course, I heard him speak a great number of times. In my opinion he was not nearly as accomplished an orator as [Joseph Paul] Goebbels was, not nearly. I found him extremely repetitious and longwinded, but the Germans certainly didn't feel that way about him.

HESS: And then what were your duties before you left for London?

RIDDLEBERGER: I came here before London.

HESS: What were your duties here in Washington during that period of time?

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RIDDLEBERGER: I had the German desk.

HESS: You had the German desk.

RIDDLEBERGER: Yes, I had the German desk, and whenever it was when I really took it over, in '41, I've forgotten the exact date of my assignment, then I was assigned to London, I think in the summer of '42. So, roughly speaking, I must have been home about a year, but part of that was not on a permanent assignment.

HESS: One of the things they had you working on at that time was as chairman of the Committee on Neutral Trade.

RIDDLEBERGER: After Pearl Harbor, after the war came. Yes, I had a double function then, I was appointed technically as liaison to the Board of Economic Warfare that had just been set up under Wallace. Actually organized and then became chief of the Neutral Trade Division, and got that going.

It was largely because of that that I was later assigned to London, because [Winfield William] Riefler, who had been appointed as the head of the section of Economic Warfare in our London Embassy demanded that some foreign service officer with German experience be sent over, I was chosen. So I, as soon as I could get this

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division really underway, I went to London and took over the, what they called the Blockade Division.

The Economic Warfare section of the Embassy was set up in what you might call two divisions. One was primarily intelligence and the other was blockade. And the decision had been taken several months before my departure to integrate the Economic Warfare Section of the Embassy completely with the British Ministry of Economic Warfare. In other words, it became an operation of not only cooperation, but of joint responsibility and joint decisions. We sat on the same committees (joint committees), our office was across Berkeley Square. That part of the Embassy, in effect, became part of the economic warfare operation. It was an interesting experiment because it was in effect the combining of officials of two governments in a joint operation.

HESS: Did you find it effective?

RIDDLEBERGER: Yes, I think it was effective.

HESS: Were those your principal duties during the war?

RIDDLEBERGER: In London, of course, but not in Germany. In Germany I had very different duties because I organized all of the representation of foreign interests in 1939,

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which the Embassy had taken over upon the outbreak of war. Before I left it was a large section for the simple reason that after the fall of France there were an enormous number of POWs

(prisoners of war), brought to Germany and then later on a large number of civilian workers, for whom we were the protecting power for over two years from the outbreak of the war until Hitler declared war on us in December 1961.

HESS: 1941.

RIDDLEBERGER: I beg your pardon, 1941, did I say '61?

HESS: Yes.

RIDDLEBERGER: 1941. So, for over two years we had that work and you can imagine the extent of it. Of course, I relied upon a lot of local help as well, but when I left Germany in the spring of '41 I recall we had certainly thirty or thirty-five people in the accounting office alone. I remember making up the last budget for this particular work (because under the Geneva Convention there were certain duties that we performed and certain rights that we had, right of inspection, and there were certain payments to civilian internees and so forth), I think it was in six different countries and seven different currencies.

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Because Hitler, as the war progressed and he conquered more and more countries, kept the local currency, but the Reichsbank forced us to do everything through Berlin. So you can see, it was a very large operation there...

HESS: Yes, it was.

RIDDLEBERGER: ...and complicated.

HESS: What are your main recollections, your principal recollections about the war years in England?

RIDDLEBERGER: Well, my principal recollection is it was an awful lot of work. It was hard to get around and I, except for occasional official travel, stayed in London. Once for example, I was asked to interview some captured German Consular official outside of London. For the most part, I was primarily in London with my nose to the grindstone day and night, seven days a week. It was a terrific job, you see, and as the war went on the extension of financial controls that sort of thing, made it vastly more than just operating a navicent system in shipping.

Then what became very important, was the control of trade with neutrals where we negotiated lengthy agreements with countries like Switzerland and Sweden. On top of that came the whole problem of pre-emptive buying in

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countries like Spain and Portugal. After all the British and we still had virtual control of the sea as far as trade was concerned, and so we had a certain leverage.

HESS: Did you meet Churchill during the war?

RIDDLEBERGER: Yes, I met him, but you know, only at some function, or something like that. I never knew him really.

HESS: What do you recall of the attitude of the British people towards the bombing?

RIDDLEBERGER: Well, I thought--I was not there during the Blitz, you see I came after that.

HESS: That's right.

RIDDLEBERGER: And I stayed until the...

HESS: The V-2s?

RIDDLEBERGER: No, the V-1s.

HESS: The V-1s.

RIDDLEBERGER: The V-1s. I always admired them greatly for their fortitude and courage in this. By the time I arrived in London, the daytime bombing was finished, the British by that time had control for the most part of the air space over Great Britain, but the nighttime

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bombing was still very heavy. And we had raids when there would be a hundred planes at a time over London and drop their loads of high explosive.

HESS: Is that a disquieting feeling?

RIDDLEBERGER: I don't recommend it.

HESS: Don't recommend it?

RIDDLEBERGER: I don't recommend it. There are those who said it didn't bother them, I didn't believe it. I think that I wouldn't call it a pleasant vacation, and of course, it's very disruptive. It wasn't only the bombs themselves, but by that time London was ringed with anti-aircraft batteries, and one of them just happened to be behind the house where I lived, so you didn't get much sleep during this I can tell you.

HESS: You got the noise coming in and going out.

RIDDLEBERGER: And going out, yes.

HESS: All right, and then you came back in '44.

RIDDLEBERGER: I came back it must have been the beginning of '44, I forget just exactly.

HESS: Is that when you were working on the coordinating

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committee?

RIDDLEBERGER: That's when I became chief of the Central European Division which included Germany, Austria, and Czechoslovakia too. Of course, Czechoslovakia was occupied at the time, as Austria was.

HESS: At the end of the war did you pay a visit to Europe?

RIDDLEBERGER: I went almost immediately after the war.

HESS: What were your impressions? On your first trip back to Europe what were your impressions of the physical devastation, and the economic conditions?

RIDDLEBERGER: My first trip to Europe after the war was when I went with our delegation to the Potsdam Conference. And since I was the one in the delegation who knew Berlin best, I took a lot of the brass, so to speak, around with me. When I left Berlin I had experienced some bombing, but it wasn't to be compared with what came later. In this city where I had lived for five years and which really I knew very well, I was appalled to see the devastation.

I remember taking around some of the members and so many of the bridges over the Landwehr Canal had been blown up that there were only certain routes we

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could go. It's a very queer sensation to go into a city and find that so many landmarks are no longer there. I don't think one realizes it when you live in a place, but the background governs where you go. In a way you look up and you see a building and you know automatically that street and you know where you are. I don't think we go along the streets of Washington looking at every sign to know what street it is, once that you know a city. In Berlin not only were the street signs gone, but many of the landmarks were gone. Several times I had to get out of the car, to orient myself, to ascertain where we were exactly.

The Army had told me the bridges that were open, and of course, I knew them all and theoretically I knew how to get there, but it's a very queer sensation to go into a town that one knows so well and has been so destroyed.

HESS: What are your recollections of the economic conditions?

RIDDLEBERGER: They were just appalling, I don't know any other word to describe it. In the meantime the Army had gotten some food in, but--I went into Berlin shortly after this. I went into Berlin, Potsdam was in...

HESS: July.

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RIDDLEBERGER: July. I went in June I guess, the end of June.

HESS: What is your general opinion of Mr. Truman's handling of the events at Potsdam?

RIDDLEBERGER: I thought that under all the circumstances that he did extraordinarily well. Here he was dealing with Stalin and Churchill, who had been deep, of course, in all the war issues for some years, while Truman in effect, really had to be briefed between April and the time we went to Potsdam. Stettinius, who had been Secretary of State, continued until after the conclusion of the San Francisco Conference to establish the U.N. We all knew that Byrnes was to be the next Secretary of State, in fact arrangements were made within the State Department for the principal chiefs of divisions to go out and brief him before he became Secretary of State, and he in turn was trying to keep Truman informed about the principal issues that would arise, but you know there was not a great deal of time and there was indeed a vast background. So several of the principal divisions chiefs in the State Department would go out to the what is now--what is now this hotel...

HESS: The Wardman Park?

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RIDDLEBERGER: No, the Shoreham.

HESS: The Shoreham.

RIDDLEBERGER: The Shoreham, and we'd go out at night and we'd spend hours briefing Jimmy Byrnes on all the aspects of the current international situation. This is not the military, that was done a different way, but this was the what you might call the political situation, the foreign affairs situation, and of course, there had been an enormous history built up by that time. It was decided to do it that way. I think Truman never wanted to put Stettinius in an invidious position, but of course, technically it would have been his job to prepare the President for all of this, but he was still tied up. My recollection is that Byrnes did not take his oath as Secretary of State until the night before he and Truman got on the cruiser to set out for Potsdam.

HESS: What is your general opinion of Mr. Byrnes' ability to assimilate all of this information that you and the others were giving him?

RIDDLEBERGER: He assimilated very fast, he had to, but of course, it could not be expected that he would have always at his fingertips the precise information that

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might be required, either by him or by the President at the conference table. That's why we always had planted right behind them somebody who was conversant with a subject that might come up. And don't forget that in this case, from our point of view, the fact that there were no simultaneous translations was an advantage. There was Stalin who spoke Russian. Of course, Churchill who spoke English, and the French were not in on it. So, we only had two languages, and naturally understood everything that the British said.

HESS: Did you sit in on most of the meetings...

RIDDLEBERGER: Oh yes.

HESS: ...the joint meetings.

RIDDLEBERGER: Yes, I sat in on all of them except the few top level meetings just between (they had a couple of them that weren't at the conference table), between Truman and Stalin, or Truman and Churchill at dinner, for example.

HESS: I presume that Mr. Truman met with the American delegation before and after the joint meeting.

RIDDLEBERGER: Well, we'd had a...

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HESS: Or is that correct?

RIDDLEBERGER: ...a very extensive preparation. That was just left more or less in Byrnes' hand as to how he wanted to do it.

HESS: How did he handle that?

RIDDLEBERGER: He usually handled it himself. By that time he had had at least a couple of months to get ready, either as the Secretary of State designate, or Secretary. He hadn't had much time to get ready as Secretary of State, but he was pretty well prepared. He would call meetings with the various staff members, sometimes he called the President and sometimes not depending on what the question was.

HESS: Did you ever sit in on any of the meetings where President Truman was in attendance? The preparation type of meetings?

RIDDLEBERGER: I suppose I must have, yes, there was so many meetings.

HESS: What was your opinion of Mr. Truman's ability to fathom all of the information and the complex situation that he found himself in at that time?

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RIDDLEBERGER: I thought he did very well. He could not be expected, of course, to know the intricacies of all the subjects that came up there, but I thought that he really had a good grasp of the essentials. Obviously he could not be regarded as an expert on many of these things, but there was no reason to assume that he would be, and that meant that we had to condense a very complicated background for him because the question of time was so very important. We would endeavor either through the Secretary of State, or with the President, to present in capsule form, what the main issues were, and what to watch out for. Naturally, Truman could not possibly have the background that Churchill and Stalin had on all of the very complicated, long, drawn-out interchanges between these governments, starting from the time we went into the war in 1941. And of course, starting with the British long before that.

HESS: What was your personal opinion at that time about the agreements the Russians had made? Did you think that the Russians would live up to those agreements?

RIDDLEBERGER: Did I think so?

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HESS: Yes, did you think so.

RIDDLEBERGER: I thought they'd live up to them to the extent that they regarded them as in their interest. I never thought so beyond that, but then of course, in that respect don't forget that I may be highly prejudiced because I was in Berlin at the time of the [Joachim] Ribbentrop-[Vyacheslav] Molotov dispute. I was in Berlin at the time of the Soviet invasion of Poland, I was in Berlin when Molotov came during the winter of 1940 and '41--I beg your pardon, '39 and '40 to try to decide about how they are going to divide up Europe and so forth. So my skepticism of Soviet intentions was indeed very, very great, not only at Potsdam, but earlier as I'd seen so much of the day-to-day developments.

HESS: At another time it had been decided to divide Germany into the various sectors, and Berlin was placed in--of course, Berlin is in Eastern Germany, so it was placed in East Germany. Do you recall if thought was given at that time to access and corridors to Berlin? Later, as you know, there occurred the Berlin blockade when the Russians shut us off.

RIDDLEBERGER: Oh, yes.

HESS: What do you recall about discussions as to whether or

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not we were providing ourselves with adequate access to Berlin?

RIDDLEBERGER: This is almost a subject for a separate history. There were very, very strong, and indeed violent feelings about this whole question of Berlin and the problem of putting the Control Council behind the Soviet lines. Now that goes back to the long and complicated, and sometimes rather bitter argument over these zones of occupation, and whether the Control Council would be situated in Berlin. But that's a subject that I'm afraid would take a number of hours...

HESS: A long time to go into.

RIDDLEBERGER: Yes. I happen to be very conversant with it, because I was chairman of this committee, but let me just indicate to you some of the complexities of it. For example, it turned out to be completely impossible to resolve between the U.K. and the U.S., the question of which government, which country, would occupy which western zone, the northern or the southern. And this was the subject matter of a long debate and discussion between Roosevelt and Churchill, which was not decided until the Quebec Conference of September of 1944.

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The outline of the three zones--the French again were not in it yet--seemed to be fairly well agreed upon in the European Advisory Council, let us say, by the spring or early summer of 1944. And the Soviets appeared to be reasonably well-satisfied with the what seemed to be an agreement, a possible agreement on the eastern zone. But the whole problem of Berlin complicated this because Roosevelt and Churchill could not settle the matter of western zones. Roosevelt was determined to have what was called the northwest zone, the Ruhr, and the British were equally determined to have it, and Berlin really got caught up in all that.

Now, on this subject we could go on for hours because...

HESS: It is a rather complicated subject.

RIDDLEBERGER: Oh, it's terribly complicated and we also got into domestic policy. In the end, the choice of the zones wound up being highly influenced by a fact that it had little to do with the subject matter itself, such as the Morgenthau plan and the postwar lend-lease.

The decision to put the Control Council in Berlin, I think, was very much influenced by the attitude of Winant, who was our Ambassador in London, and also the

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American member of the European Advisory Commission. But that proposal to go behind the Soviet lines in a distance of a hundred miles, roughly, of course led to a lot of opposition inside the State Department, particularly mine.

HESS: Particularly yours?

RIDDLEBERGER: Particularly mine, yes. I just couldn't believe it, and we fought that one up and down the streets of Washington practically for six months.

HESS: But you lost the fight.

RIDDLEBERGER: I lost it, yes.

HESS: All right, what are...

RIDDLEBERGER: ...but there were many, many ramifications of this, you see, it went on primarily from the time the first proposal on zones was made, to the powers of the Control Council, and then finally to the seat of the Control Council.

So, Mr. Hess, on this one I can answer a great many questions, but as I say, I'm afraid it would take us a long time, and I would have to go back and trace all the dates on it.

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HESS: Fine. Fine. Let's move on then. What other activities did your coordinating committee have?

RIDDLEBERGER: We were basically set up to get out the coordinated instructions to Winant in London, but in addition to that, we were given the work of preparing at least what turned out to be the first draft of the directive to the commander in chief for the treatment of Germany. And that was the famous JCS-1067. I mean that's the way it finally came out, but that was worked on for a number of months in this committee.

Then we moved into the whole era of the intervention of Morgenthau into the picture.

HESS: What did you think of the Morgenthau plan?

RIDDLEBERGER: I thought he was cuckoo, to put it bluntly. I didn't think it would work, I thought it was silly, I thought that quite apart from Germany, or the effects on Germany. To me the mere idea that Germany could be turned into some kind of a pastoral country was just too ridiculous to be discussed, just as if we decided over here that we turn all of Pennsylvania back into...

HESS: Back to the Pennsylvania Dutch?

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RIDDLEBERGER: Back to the Pennsylvania Dutch. I suppose that to me it seemed a very simple question. Europe was so dependent in those years on German coal and the almost immediate effect of the plan would be the flooding of the German coal mines. Unless we wanted to send over West Virginia coal at the landed price of \$25 a ton. In those days \$25 was a pretty hefty price, and we would pay for it.

Now, quite apart, as I say, from the guilt of the Germans and Germany for their crimes and so forth, to me the whole idea was just so superficial and silly that I thought Morgenthau was crazy. I thought it was a triumph of vindictiveness over commonsense.

HESS: Did you ever discuss it with him?

RIDDLEBERGER: Oh my, yes. Oh, yes. They tell me that in the Roosevelt library--didn't he put his papers in the Hyde Park library?

HESS: I think so.

RIDDLEBERGER: Well, I think so, I'm not sure, but some professor came through here, when was it, some years ago and told me I should go up there sometime and read it. Morgenthau kept a tape recording you know...

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HESS: So I understand.

RIDDLEBERGER: And I was the bête noire in the Treasury for a long time, because I thought this was all completely ridiculous. It had little to do with my feelings about the Germans, because...

HESS: Just completely impractical.

RIDDLEBERGER: Just completely impractical, and I thought it would be dismissed out of hand, but it wasn't, it took a battle royal.

This old question of flooding the German coal mines was not decided until very late and Morgenthau had great influence. I recall very well a meeting in Stettinius' office shortly before the armistice. We couldn't get agreement between State and Treasury over this issue. In the meantime Morgenthau muscled into this committee, or he set up another one, gave it another name, but it was essentially the same committee, and insisted upon writing directives that would have compelled the occupying powers to flood the German mines.

Unless one were in on the early days of the Morgenthau plan, it's hard to visualize now the scope of it. I was there at the original unveiling which was done by Harry White in Harry Hopkins' office in the White House and we

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had before us a map of Germany.

Just to give you one example of what the thinking was, Harry White had this map of Germany and he had line drawn a line, I would say from about Kiel to Basel, and he had some name

attached, West Germany or something like that. Then across the middle of the eastern part he had drawn another line to split the rest of Germany. What was west of the Kiel-Basel line incorporated the principal industrial area of Germany, with exception of Silesia and Berlin itself, including all the Ruhr, and all the big industrial cities of West Germany.

In all of that region west of this line, the mines were to be flooded and put out of operation, the factories were to be leveled, and this territory was to be converted into what White called a "pastoral economy" whatever that means. Its population was to be expelled and pushed east of this line, to be settled in the eastern part of Germany, which would be carved into two states; one north German state and one south German state with a prohibition on uniting. At first I didn't take any of this very seriously, but it became apparent that White meant it and he said Mr. Morgenthau was in favor of it.

I said, "Harry, my impression is, although I can't

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tell exactly as you have not followed any provincial boundaries, but at least 30 million to 35 million people live in this area that is to be completely pastoralized." And then I said, "You're going to push all of the Germans out, is that correct?"

And he said, "Yes," he said, "most of them in any case."

I said, "You know land is rather valuable in Europe. Do you think this area will remain empty with no population?"

"Oh," he said, "no, no, we realize something has to be done there. We thought we'd resettle Yugoslavs on it."

HESS: Do you know what President Roosevelt's attitude was when he first heard about the plan? What seemed to be his attitude?

RIDDLEBERGER: I think it's very hard to say what his real attitude was. He indignantly denied, subsequently, that he signed this memorandum, which he had approved at Quebec. Most of this story was written up in Cordell Hull's book.

The Secretary of State was Cordell Hull and he had just sent me the memorandum from the President telling him that he had approved the Morgenthau plan at Quebec. This paper was before me at the same time the press

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started to call to tell me the President denied signing it. Well, that was a rather awkward situation.

HESS: How did you get out of that?

RIDDLEBERGER: His denial, of course, had to stand, as Roosevelt was President and so I had to deal with that as best I could.

HESS: All right, now moving on, Mr. Truman's message to Congress on Greece and Turkey, his Truman doctrine speech, came on March 12th of 1947. At what time in 1947 did you leave Washington for Berlin? Did you become involved in the Truman Doctrine, aid to Greece and Turkey matter before you left?

RIDDLEBERGER: No.

HESS: You were not.

RIDDLEBERGER: No. In fact, while I was still assigned to Washington at the time of the Truman speech, I think I was abroad on a trip to Europe, is my recollection. I can't be entirely certain about it, I was away a great deal. What date was the speech?

HESS: On March the 12th of 1947.

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RIDDLEBERGER: It's possible that I was not only abroad but I was trying to remember when the Moscow Council of Foreign Ministers met. I think it was late March of '47, but I may have gone abroad somewhat earlier to talk to Clay and Murphy in Germany before going on to Moscow. I'd have to check that one. Of course, I knew about the preparations for it but as Germany was not particularly affected I was not involved in it.

HESS: Do you recall anything about the background of the Marshall plan and the people involved?

RIDDLEBERGER: Yes, I was there. You know I was there at the time of Acheson's speech, where was it, was it Mississippi, I've forgotten.

HESS: Cleveland, Mississippi.

RIDDLEBERGER: Cleveland, Mississippi, and that was in one sense the forerunner of it, but I was not involved with it. I was only involved with it in the sense that I was involved with the whole European situation, and because of Germany, and the importance of Germany.

HESS: What's your general opinion of the success of the Marshall plan and the Truman Doctrine?

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RIDDLEBERGER: Speaking as one who later on worked for the Marshall plan in Paris, I think that it was an unmitigated success. You can see that today.

HESS: We'll get further into that a little bit later, but first I would like to cover another subject, and that deals with the resignation of Henry Wallace in 1946. In the *Forrestal Diaries* there is a memo starting on page 207 from the Under Secretary of the Navy, John R. Sullivan, describing the events of the meeting in the office of Acting Secretary of State, Will Clayton. The meeting was held on September the 12th, the day of Wallace's speech at Madison Square Garden in New York City, and was attended by Clayton, Sullivan, Captain Robert L. Dennison, who at that time was Assistant Chief of Naval Operations, Robert Patterson, Secretary of War, Loy Henderson...

RIDDLEBERGER: Loy Henderson.

HESS: Loy Henderson, head of the Division of Near and Middle Eastern Affairs, and yourself. What do you recall of that meeting?

RIDDLEBERGER: My recollection is that the account given in the *Forrestal Diaries* is substantially correct.

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The night before I had been playing bridge with some old friends, including a Washington columnist named Constantine Brown, whose column often included a comment on foreign affairs. And late in the evening he asked me if I had heard of or seen the Wallace speech that was to be delivered that night?

And I said, "No," I'd neither seen it nor heard about it. And he indicated that it might be well if somebody looked at it before it was delivered, by which he meant somebody in the State Department.

I recalled this when I got to the office the next morning and immediately tried to find out about the speech, but we had no copy in the State Department, and of course, not having seen the speech, I was totally unaware of the implications of it. Later on we found out about that. However, I thought it might be well to tell Will Clayton, who was Acting Secretary of State what I had heard. But he was tied up. I think it's mentioned in the *Forrestal Diaries* that I left a message for him as I recall and said I thought I had better come and talk to him just as soon as he was free, which I did. I then told him the story.

In the meantime, I suppose as a result of my efforts, we had gotten a copy in the State Department and as soon

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as I read it, I was absolutely appalled at some of the statements that Wallace had made, and particularly that sentence where he indicated the President had approved the totality of the speech.

It had not been cleared in the State Department. In fact, I don't think that anyone had seen it until I came down and asked to get a copy. But of course, since he had White House clearance perhaps he thought he didn't have to worry about the State Department. And then we got busy as is recounted in the Forrestal book, and I think what happened after that is substantially as described.

HESS: In the *Forrestal's Diaries* it is mentioned that the people who were at the meeting were in communication with Charles Ross at the White House, but they weren't sure if Mr. Ross was communicating their feelings to the President. Do you recall that?

RIDDLEBERGER: My recollection is that Ross said he would get in touch with the President. I was not on the telephone, Will Clayton was on the telephone, but he could not reach the President right away. The President either had somebody in his office or was--I think Ross said busy on something else. There were several telephone conversations

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back and forth.

HESS: I believe at that time James Byrnes was out of the country, he was in Paris at that time.

RIDDLEBERGER: He was in Paris, yes, he was in Paris and...

HESS: And became a little upset over the speech when he read it.

RIDDLEBERGER: He became upset all right. We foresaw that one correctly. Oh yes, very much so, because the speech was in effect a denunciation of a policy that Byrnes had been pursuing with the full approval of the White House. And this is by another Cabinet member.

HESS: Creates problems for one department, does it not, when other departments start infringing on their territory?

RIDDLEBERGER: On their territory, especially without an attempt to clear it. Of course, the State Department is rather accustomed to that.

HESS: And then in 1947 you returned to Germany as counselor of Embassy and Chief Political Secretary for the American Military Government, correct?

RIDDLEBERGER: Well, I became the chief of the political section

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in what was called OMGUS, O-M-G-U-S, Office of Military Government U.S., you see, and then in 1949 I succeeded Bob Murphy as political adviser to Clay. I stayed on until the end of military government and then I spent another year as political adviser to McCloy, the high commissioner.

HESS: All right, just a couple of questions about those two gentlemen, first General Clay. What's your evaluation of his handling of the position as commander in chief of the U.S. forces over there?

RIDDLEBERGER: I have a great respect and admiration for Lucius Clay. As you may have heard, he had his difficulties with the State Department, and because he had the enormous responsibility of the overall command in Germany, with all of the negotiations prior to the blockade with the Soviets, with the British and with the French under the Control Council arrangement. In 1948 came the blockade, and I think he was not only a remarkably astute and intelligent man, but also a very strong and courageous man, I say this having worked very closely with him for approximately two years.

HESS: And then in 1949 and '50 you were political adviser to John McCloy.

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RIDDLEBERGER: To John McCloy, yes. He wanted me to stay on, in fact that that was one stipulation at the time McCloy accepted the appointment as the American High Commissioner. He wanted some continuity and there were so many changes that were coming up during this transition that I, who had rather hoped to be transferred from Germany, agreed to stay on, and so I spent another year, or more than a year with McCloy as political adviser.

But that assignment included the operation of considerable part of what was called HICOM, the Office of the High Commissioner in Germany. I had not only the political section, but displaced persons, combined travel board, the Civil Aviation Board, etc., as well. There were a number of operating responsibilities conferred upon that particular segment of the high commission.

HESS: I believe that the Berlin Blockade took place just before you went over with Mr. McCloy. That started in the midsummer of 1948.

RIDDLEBERGER: '48--no, that came after--I mean Clay stayed through the blockade.

HESS: That's right, yes.

RIDDLEBERGER: And McCloy came just after the blockade was lifted.

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HESS: Let's see, the blockade started in midsummer of '48 and lasted until May of '49.

RIDDLEBERGER: May of '49, that's right.

HESS: Just what was your involvement in countering that blockade and what actions did you take? Did you have any particular involvement with the blockade?

RIDDLEBERGER: Well, I had all kinds of involvement.

HESS: You had them all?

RIDDLEBERGER: No, the basic responsibility was with Clay during this period. I'm not sure I understand the question. I was there, and deeply involved in the blockade in the sense that things were coming up all the time. But the whole question of the airlift and so forth, was run by the military.

HESS: When did the possibility of a blockade first become evident to you?

RIDDLEBERGER: General Clay and Ambassador Murphy and I had all attended the last session of the Council of Foreign Ministers in London at the very end of '47, in December 1947, and I think all of us left there feeling that

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something was going to happen. But we were certainly not informed as to what the nature of the Soviet pressure would be. In other words, we anticipated something, but didn't know quite what.

Then, as you know, this blockade developed over a number of months. There were pressure tactics and for example, there would be an announcement in the Control Council by the Soviet Commander-in-Chief, that there would be ground-to-air firing in the corridors at a certain time on a certain day. And General Clay's response to that was that he had to go to Frankfurt that day, at just that time, it so happened. And we went too at the announced time.

This went on over a period of months and finally in the Control Council came what was a very vigorous denunciation of the whole western policy by the Soviet commander, and after that we more or less anticipated that something would happen. Then the blockade came down gradually. There'd be an announcement that this bridge had to be repaired, and in driving to the US zone, we'd have to go off the Autobahn and go over and cross on another bridge which would seem to me to have some kind of work going on, and one-way traffic. We would be held up for a couple of hours and that sort of thing.

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Then the announcement that there had to be repairs along the railroad and so forth.

So, the imposition of the blockade, as I recall, really came on as a sort of a slow tightening over a period of maybe six weeks, two months. Then a complete cessation of all traffic. Oh yes, there would be announcements that barge traffic along the canals would be delayed, but the Soviets couldn't delay the air traffic unless they shot at it. But there would be buzzings in the corridor and that sort of thing, yes.

HESS: And it was broken with the airlift.

RIDDLEBERGER: With the airlift, yes, which was a story in itself, and a fascinating one. You know there were times after it was completely organized when we had planes landing every four minutes at Tempelhof. This went on day and night, weather permitting. Those of us who had to go frequently to Frankfurt had a special card and we would go to Tempelhof and get aboard the first plane that came along. Coming back to Berlin, because the scheduling was so tight, every plane was allowed one pass at Tempelhof, if you didn't make it the first time, back you went to Frankfurt, to get into the pattern again. So, our wives all knew that if we were in the zone on

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business, and that if we weren't there for dinner, it just meant that we hadn't made it and had returned to Frankfurt. The flight took an hour and a half in those days and that meant to return to Frankfurt, get into the pattern, get up again, required at least another three or four hours. That's sort of a sidelight on life during the blockade.

HESS: During that period of time came the political events in 1948 and Mr. Truman's re-election. Did you think Mr. Truman was going to win re-election in 1948?

RIDDLEBERGER: Like so many people abroad, and like so many people here for that matter, from reading the press you'd think not. But I had a great friend in the State Department, he's dead now, but in any critical judgment I had great confidence in him. He used to write me about the progress of the campaign and I recall vividly one letter he sent me, saying, "Pay no attention to all of this poll business and newspaper accounts and so forth, Truman is doing fine, and his chances of re-election are really pretty good."

HESS: Who was the gentleman?

RIDDLEBERGER: Francis Williamson, who was later on counselor

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in Rome, he died a couple of years ago I believe.

And then my father, who traveled a great deal in this country, also wrote me and said about the same thing, he said, "Don't think that Truman isn't going to make it, he is." My father had a sort of a great feel for the American middle class reaction and that sort of thing. He had traveled so much in this country and his feeling was that all the talk about Dewey being in was just a lot of nonsense. After reading these letters I wasn't so sure.

I remember one day at one of these centers in Berlin talking about it and everyone was saying, "Well, he's finished."

And I said, "No, I don't think so," and told them why and I got quite a reputation as a political prophet which I didn't deserve at all on that one.

HESS: What seemed to be the reaction among the German people to Mr. Truman's victory? Do you recall anything in particular?

RIDDLEBERGER: Well, I think by and large they were very, very happy about it, because Truman was so identified with the blockade and the airlift I mean the attempt to break the blockade.

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HESS: All right, and then in 1950 you went to Paris with the Economic Cooperation Administration.

RIDDLEBERGER: That's right, with the Marshall plan.

HESS: That's right. What were your principal duties there?

RIDDLEBERGER: I went as political adviser. It had been arranged that I was to go as political adviser to Averell Harriman, and he and I had talked about it and the State Department agreed to it. In the summer of 1950, I stopped by Paris, I was enroute to the United States for some reason, we more or less arranged what my duties would be. However, before I got back from the States to go to Paris--I mean to finish in Berlin and take my family to Paris--he had been appointed the head of the Marshall plan in Washington. So, actually, I worked in Paris with Milton Katz, who succeeded Harriman. This was our central office in Europe. I think it was called the Office of the Special Representative, SRE, and I worked there.

HESS: Office of the Special Representative-Europe.

RIDDLEBERGER: Office of the Special Representative-Europe, is that right?

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HESS: Yes, according to the *Official Register*.

RIDDLEBERGER: Special Representative in Paris. Well, I was originally attached to him as political adviser. Therefore, I worked with Milton Katz who is now, I think, a professor in the Harvard Law School. I was there for two years.

Now my principal occupation for the first year I was there was again on Germany. I had no sooner gotten to Paris than I was assigned to this terribly difficult negotiation, what was known commonly as the German Deficit in the European Payments Union, and since I had come straight from Germany, Katz turned that over to me after the first preliminary attempt had failed. And for about a year, I think, or at least eight months, I did little else but work on that.

Meanwhile, David Bruce had been appointed as the U.S. observer (he was our Ambassador in Paris) to the European army negotiations and he wanted an alternate who knew both German and French and who knew both France and Germany. I worked with him on that, but shortly after I

did some work on it, and I was used largely as a liaison with the Germans, because I knew so many of them, Ambassador Wood, Tyler Wood, who was number two in Paris,

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had been recalled to Washington to work on the Marshall plan in Congress and I had to take over his job as well as my own, on top of the European army negotiations. That got to be too much as I couldn't properly do all three. Bruce got somebody else after about four or five months and I could drop that part of it.

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Second Oral History Interview with James W. Riddleberger, Washington, D.C., April 26, 1972.  
By Jerry N. Hess, Harry S. Truman Library.

HESS: Mr. Ambassador, in our last discussion, you mentioned being at Potsdam. Let's go into that a little further. Tell me what you remember about your trip to Potsdam during the summer of 1945.

RIDDLEBERGER: First of all, I remember the preparation for it and the vast amount of material that had to be put together for the conference. It was particularly difficult, as Roosevelt had died in April of 1945, and Stettinius was still Secretary of State. However, several of the division chiefs, who had been told they would go to Potsdam conference had been commissioned to commence the briefing of Mr. Byrnes because it was anticipated that he would be appointed Secretary of State as soon as the San Francisco Conference on the UN was concluded. Therefore, a number of us had to go out to the hotel where he was living and brief him at night, because of course, it would have been rather awkward to have done it in his office in those days. The decision had been to keep Mr. Stettinius on until the conclusion of the United Nations Conference. This meant that we had to brief, not only a prospective Secretary of State, but also prepare as well as we could,

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the papers for the White House. They were completed in good order, and I think in good time.

The real complication was naturally that President Truman had only come into office a very short time before and it had not been Roosevelt's practice to keep the Vice President very well-informed about the developments on both the war front and the diplomatic front, so to speak. This made it all the more necessary that we prepare the documents and do the preparation in the form that would recite at least a sufficient background to be comprehensible. Therefore, I spent many hours with Mr. Byrnes in his hotel, the Shoreham, preparing him for the upcoming Potsdam meeting.

HESS: Did he absorb the material readily?

RIDDLEBERGER: I was just about to say he had a great capacity for absorption. He would ask many questions, and it was largely through him that the State Department views were transmitted to President Truman. The Secretary of State, Stettinius, of course, was not in town, he was in San Francisco, so therefore, the preparation was directed toward Mr. Byrnes with the idea that he would then transmit it to the President. There may have been a few meetings with the President before we went to Potsdam,

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but not very many, he didn't have time.

HESS: Did you attend any of the meetings held with President Truman before Potsdam? Who from the State Department met with President Truman besides Byrnes?

RIDDLEBERGER: Well, it was done mostly through Mr. Byrnes.

HESS: Mr. Byrnes himself.

RIDDLEBERGER: Yes. Now it may have been that several of the higher officials went, but I don't recall being in any myself, because this system had been set up through Byrnes and the President preferred to do it that way. Now he was meeting constantly with Mr. Byrnes on a large number of matters, domestic as well as foreign.

HESS: About how many of the higher officials went to Potsdam at the same time that you did?

RIDDLEBERGER: Oh, there was a vast array. In the meantime General Clay had been appointed Military Governor, not Commander in Chief, that came later, but Military Governor. Eisenhower was still the Commander in Chief of the U.S. forces.

HESS: How did you get over there?

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RIDDLEBERGER: Well, I flew with Will Clayton, and there was a considerable delegation from the State Department.

HESS: The President went over on the *Augusta* I believe.

RIDDLEBERGER: In the meantime, Byrnes had become Secretary of State, he had taken his oath of office I think the night before he and the President got aboard the cruiser to go to some Atlantic port in Europe. This was also done, I think, for the purpose of giving some time to prepare the President and go over a lot of these papers that were on board--I mean that were sent with him on board.

HESS: Did you ever hear Secretary Byrnes give his impression about how readily President Truman was absorbing the material that he was passing on to him?

RIDDLEBERGER: No, I don't recall, but I think it was obvious in the Potsdam meeting that he also had absorbed a vast amount in a very short time. And Truman had in my opinion a very great advantage, he never pretended to know something he didn't and had no hesitation in asking, you see.

HESS: If he didn't know it he would say so and ask.

RIDDLEBERGER: He'd say so, and ask. That of course, from

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the point of those of us in the State Department was an admirable trait, because there couldn't be confusion you see about something. If he weren't sure about something, he'd just say, "I don't understand that, tell me more," and so forth. He was very forthright in things like that.

HESS: Did you attend the meetings in Potsdam?

RIDDLEBERGER: Oh, I was in every meeting, yes.

HESS: Fine.

RIDDLEBERGER: Except the very top...

HESS: Except the top level...

RIDDLEBERGER: ...the top three, yes.

HESS: When the Big Three would meet on matters.

RIDDLEBERGER: When they only had the Big Three, they had only...

HESS: Tell me about the meetings and how they were conducted, and your opinion of Mr. Truman's handling of the meetings. Of course, he had been asked to be the moderator, right?

RIDDLEBERGER: Because he was the only head of State there,

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he was in one sense the chairman too.

HESS: That's right.

RIDDLEBERGER: You see, Stalin was technically at that point, not a head of State and Churchill was not either, nor was Attlee when he replaced Churchill after the British election.

HESS: That's right.

RIDDLEBERGER: Therefore...

HESS: The Prime Minister is not the head of State.

RIDDLEBERGER: The Prime Minister is not the head of State, and Stalin was not--whatever his title was...Chairman of the...

HESS: Chairman of the Central Committee of the Communist Party.

RIDDLEBERGER: Not the President. Now I should make one correction. I said I attended all of the meetings, I did not attend the military meetings. That was confined to the top military people.

HESS: All right, now, briefly, just how were the meetings conducted and how well did you think Mr. Truman handled them?

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RIDDLEBERGER: The agenda had been worked out beforehand, and it was a round table, and the President more or less opened the proceedings, he did not necessarily make the first statement, he would turn either to Stalin or to Churchill and ask if they wanted to open it up, and after that they would all start. It was not in any sense an affair where the Chairman had to more or less recognize people. There were only three who would talk for the most part. Occasionally a foreign minister did. So, therefore, the duties of chairman were not onerous and the foreign ministers--or the deputies got together the night before and established the agenda for the next day. But in addition to that there had been a general agenda established before we left Washington as I recall.

HESS: Now at that meeting was the time that...

RIDDLEBERGER: This was a series of meetings.

HESS: That's right. I mean during those meetings was when the atomic bomb was tested back at Alamogordo...

RIDDLEBERGER: That's right.

HESS: ...and it worked and Mr. Truman told Mr. Stalin that there was a new weapon...

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RIDDLEBERGER: That's right.

HESS: ...and perceived no great surprise on his part...

RIDDLEBERGER: That's right.

HESS: ...because he knew about it.

RIDDLEBERGER: But that was done at a military meeting, not at the other meeting.

HESS: Yes. I think this was done even informally, if I'm not mistaken.

RIDDLEBERGER: Informally, maybe it was.

HESS: If I'm not mistaken, I think this was just an informal discussion.

RIDDLEBERGER: With Stalin of course. The British knew all about it. Stalin was told at Potsdam and who was with him or Truman, I don't remember.

HESS: It's in his *Memoirs*, but I'm really not clear on that.

RIDDLEBERGER: It's in his *Memoirs* I know.

HESS: But what did you know about the bomb? Did you know anything about the bomb or our work on atomic energy?

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RIDDLEBERGER: No, I didn't know anything about it in the sense of knowing anything about it technically. I knew something big was up, but I did not know the, let us say, the enormous possibilities of it. That secret was very well kept, but at least some of us knew in the State Department that there was something being prepared something of enormous scope and power:

HESS: Jumping ahead just a little, and we'll want to come back on Potsdam a little more, but that bomb was used twice in the following month, on August the 6th and on August the 9th. What is your general opinion, should that bomb have been used?

RIDDLEBERGER: Oh I think it was right to use it, yes. Given all the circumstances.

HESS: There are those that say it was not necessarily the last bomb of the last war, but the first bomb of the next war. It was not used against primarily Japan, we had already defeated them, it was used to show Russia what we had. What do you think about that?

RIDDLEBERGER: Well, Russia had been told that, and it...

HESS: It was a demonstration though of power. I mean they knew we had it, yes.

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RIDDLEBERGER: Yes, but I don't agree with that.

HESS: It was a demonstration of power?

RIDDLEBERGER: I don't agree with that theory that Japan was defeated.

HESS: You do not agree with it?

RIDDLEBERGER: I think that Japan would have been defeated, but I think it was a long, hard, rough road ahead before the final capitulation of Japan.

HESS: Do you think that it would have taken the invasion, the invasion of the islands of Japan?

RIDDLEBERGER: I think so, yes.

HESS: Which were planned. The Olympic Coronet invasion was planned.

RIDDLEBERGER: It might well have taken that, I do indeed. I do think it shortened the war, I don't know by how long, but I do think it did.

HESS: All right, now moving back to Potsdam. Is there anything of interest you might say about just the physical surroundings, your housing, for instance?

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RIDDLEBERGER: Yes. The meetings were held in the Cecilienhof, which is a palace, an ex-Hohenzollern palace in the vicinity of Potsdam. We did not live in the Cecilienhof but we were housed in the vicinity, in requisitioned places that had been taken over. I mean requisitioned by the Soviet forces. We were provided with food and that sort of thing by our armed forces. They had already moved up and made those arrangements.

HESS: When the meeting opened, Winston Churchill, of course, was the representative from...

RIDDLEBERGER: Great Britain.

HESS: Great Britain, and when it closed it was Clement Attlee.

RIDDLEBERGER: Yes.

HESS: Did that come as a surprise to you?

RIDDLEBERGER: It did to me, very much so. I was amazed after being victorious in such a long and bitter struggle, that he would be defeated. Yes, it was a surprise, perhaps not entirely so as I had been in England during the war too. I had left Germany in '41 and then came home for

awhile and then in '42 I went to London and stayed until '44, so therefore, I recognized that some of the opposition

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to Churchill was increasing, but I did not think it would reach the point where he would be defeated in the election.

HESS: There has been a good deal of criticism of our handling of both the Yalta, and the Potsdam conferences. Perhaps more criticism regarding the Yalta Conference than the one at Potsdam, but criticism of agreements that we made with the Soviets that were not kept. That we placed too much trust in them, and they didn't live up to their agreements. Did you personally think that the Russians, the Soviets, could be trusted, and would live up to the agreements that they were making?

RIDDLEBERGER: No.

HESS: What led you to that viewpoint?

RIDDLEBERGER: Well, the whole history of the relationship between the Soviet Union and Germany and what I thought the real intentions of the Soviet leaders were. Don't forget, I was still in Berlin for both the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact at the outbreak of the war and also for the famous Molotov visit in the winter of 1939-40 when he came down to carve up Europe, so I didn't have many illusions about it. And then also during the war it didn't strike me that the Soviets are cooperative in a

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number of ways, so I didn't anticipate that there would be a high degree of cooperation, never did.

HESS: All right, now one of the things that the Soviets tried to do, as I see it, was to try to surround their country with what they would call a friendly or neutral zone.

RIDDLEBERGER: Yes.

HESS: Poland, Lithuania, and some of the other areas. Is that surprising in international politics that a major country wants to have a buffer zone around them?

RIDDLEBERGER: I don't say that it's surprising in international politics for one moment, but of course, there had been the Moscow declaration of 1943 on liberated areas. Therefore, I think that the Soviets promptly violated their own commitments as taken at that conference, and I think that applies to Austria, I think it applies to Rumania, I think it applies to Bulgaria.

HESS: They had agreed to free elections in Poland which was one of the main sore points that came up.

RIDDLEBERGER: Yes, and Poland. I'm not talking about Germany, I'm talking about the victims of Germany.

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HESS: Yes, that's right. The adjacent areas to the Soviet Union.

RIDDLEBERGER: Yes. And as these went on I had no reason to think that they were going to get out. And of course, don't forget that I'd still been in Germany at the time of the Katyn Massacre, too. And whatever...

HESS: The massacre of the officers in the forest, right?

RIDDLEBERGER: Yes, in the Polish army. And while I always discounted the Goebbels propaganda, nonetheless, I think that there was a great deal of evidence produced at that time respecting that massacre, which was hard to contest, quite apart from the Nazi propaganda on it.

HESS: Do you think President Roosevelt and President Truman gave up too much at the different conferences, as is quite often stated?

RIDDLEBERGER: I don't know that Truman did. I think that Roosevelt did, but that's an opinion. I don't know that Truman did because I think he was already faced with a fait accompli. I mean Yalta had been a fact.

And then I think that over and above that Truman had the enormous political difficulty of changing the

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American policy because I think that he was left with the legacy of Roosevelt, which was far from being a frank exposé given to the American people, therefore, he was faced with a very difficult problem there.

HESS: Was Mr. Roosevelt often less than frank with the American people, in your opinion?

RIDDLEBERGER: I think he was much less than frank, but I'm talking now about the relations with the Soviet Union. I think he was much less than frank. I think that while a lot of us knew the true state of affairs, I don't think the American public did. You know this is another whole history in itself...

HESS: It really is. It really is.

RIDDLEBERGER: ...the U.S.-Soviet relations during the czar, but I wouldn't undertake to go into that in a short time.

HESS: Yes, I know. Just one further question on that, but in your opinion do you think President Roosevelt really expected the Soviets to abide by their agreements?

RIDDLEBERGER: I often wonder if he did in the end. I think that he had this enormous confidence

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in his own ability to influence the developments of Soviet policy, a confidence which I personally did not share.

HESS: I have read that toward the end of his life his views were changing. What's your opinion, do you think that he thought perhaps he had been in error in trusting the Soviets to the degree that he had? Just as an opinion.

RIDDLEBERGER: Yes, I think there's some evidence to that effect. I don't know how persuasive it is because I didn't see the President often enough to know, myself. But I've heard various things that led me to think, well, perhaps he had been overoptimistic about his power to influence Stalin, because that became so evident towards the end of the war, particularly in respect of Poland, and then the whole history of the other countries there is nothing but one disappointment after the other, as far as living up to the obligations of the Moscow conference were concerned.

HESS: Just a brief question about your opinion of some of the other advisers who the President had at the Potsdam meeting. I believe Admiral Leahy went along.

RIDDLEBERGER: Oh, yes, he was always with him at all these meetings.

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HESS: What's your general opinion of Admiral Leahy and his advice?

RIDDLEBERGER: I never knew him very well, he also, at the Potsdam meeting seemed to confine himself largely to the military side of it. I don't know what went on. No, I'm talking about the Potsdam meeting, I wasn't at Yalta.

HESS: That's right, that's what I'm talking about.

RIDDLEBERGER: Yes.

HESS: He was at Potsdam, too.

RIDDLEBERGER: He was at Potsdam, too.

HESS: That's right.

RIDDLEBERGER: And there I had the impression that he--he didn't intervene often on the political side of it. Now maybe he did privately with the President, I don't know.

HESS: How about Charles Bohlen? He was along.

RIDDLEBERGER: Oh my yes, very much so: Yes, the State Department delegation was James Dunn, H. Freeman Matthews; and Bohlen, and [Charles W.] Yost and I and Tommy [Llewellyn E., Jr.] Thompson, who died recently, we were all on the delegation. [Emilio G.] Collado, an economist, and Will

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Clayton, who was Assistant Secretary of State for Economic Affairs, was there.

HESS: Pretty high level group. I won't ask you to run down the entire group.

RIDDLEBERGER: It was more or less assistant secretaries and division chiefs, or bureau chiefs then, but in those days they called them division, you see. Oh, yes, I imagine Cavendish Cannon was there, he used to head the Southern European Division.

HESS: Do you recall the statement that Stalin is supposed to have made when they were talking about the Pope, and Stalin is supposed to have said, "How many division does he have?"

RIDDLEBERGER: No, I wasn't there. I've heard it often but I don't know. I don't recall whether it was Stalin.

HESS: Is that true, have you heard it from some of the other people who may have been in the meeting?

RIDDLEBERGER: Oh, yes. Sure, I've heard it from people that were there, but I don't know when it was said.

HESS: I've heard that the statement was made and that the statement was not made.

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RIDDLEBERGER: Yes, but I don't know, I never heard him say it. But there were, you see, we must not forget that in addition to the formal meeting there were dinners and informal get togethers and...

HESS: Many opportunities.

RIDDLEBERGER: Oh yes, so therefore...

HESS: Picture taking sessions and the like.

RIDDLEBERGER: That's correct, so you can't go entirely by the formal meetings I mean, because often, as you well know, compromises may be arranged informally and then merely registered by the formal meeting. Or informal understandings might be arranged that are not included in any formal papers. We were there several weeks, and it is possible that high-level understandings were agreed upon, particularly on the military aspects.

HESS: What is your opinion of Mr. Truman's handling of the matters that arose?

RIDDLEBERGER: I thought he did extraordinarily well. Given his lack of background--having to make replies before others to people like Churchill and Stalin who had been deep in the war from the outset. Although one may be

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surrounded by advisers nonetheless it's not always easy in a meeting of that kind for any head of State or any head of government to have to give a public demonstration of his dependency on advisers, and I don't blame them. I wouldn't want to do that either.

That's why the preparation for the conference for Mr. Truman was much more complicated certainly than it was for either Churchill or Stalin, of that I'm sure. But I thought given all the circumstances and the shortness of time which he had, and all the responsibilities which evolved upon him immediately after the death of Roosevelt, I thought he handled himself in a remarkably capable and astute way.

HESS: Any other thoughts on Potsdam?

RIDDLEBERGER: I think that whatever criticism may be made of Truman, as you mentioned earlier, the possible giving away too much at Potsdam, I feel that he did not himself make concessions that were deleterious to the American interests. I think he was caught in situations where he felt obliged to go along with a certain decision or certain decisions, because of commitments that had been made earlier, and this is not a position that could be--on the part of the United States--be readily turned around.

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I think he would have been subjected to very violent criticism if he had tried to do it too fast. I think he was exceedingly astute in both his understanding of what the Soviets were really after, and his great appreciation of how far he could go in changing policy without drawing too much fire within the United States. Now what I mean by all this I think was shown later in the Wallace affair.

HESS: In September of '46 when Wallace left.

RIDDLEBERGER: '46, yes.

HESS: This is just asking for your opinion, but do you think that when Mr. Truman first became President he had a greater suspicion of the Soviets' motives than Roosevelt had had? Now what I'm leading to is Molotov stopped by Washington on the way to the San Francisco Conference...

RIDDLEBERGER: The San Francisco Conference, yes.

HESS: ...and as has been very well recorded, was spoken to by Mr. Truman in rather blunt terms.

RIDDLEBERGER: Because of Poland.

HESS: As I understand it, Molotov said he had never been spoken to in that manner and Mr. Truman said something to the nature, "Well, if you would live up to your agreements, you

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wouldn't have to be spoken to in a manner like that." Just in your opinion, do you think that Mr. Truman was coming in with an attitude of great suspicion of the Soviets' motives?

RIDDLEBERGER: I don't know that he came in with an attitude of suspicion, but I think that the facts were so early revealed to him, that I can well understand his resentment about Poland in his conversation with Molotov, but I think it was a question of facts by that time and a complete unwillingness of the Soviets to go along with what they had agreed to.

HESS: And how did you get back, did you fly back from Potsdam?

RIDDLEBERGER: I flew back.

HESS: Do you recall conversations that you may have had with other State Department officials and their reactions to the meetings? You mentioned you flew over with Will Clayton.

RIDDLEBERGER: Will Clayton.

HESS: Who did you fly back with?

RIDDLEBERGER: Well, I said Will Clayton because we happened to share the same seat going over, I remember that, and

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coming back I don't remember anymore.

HESS: Do you remember any...

RIDDLEBERGER: Oh, I beg your pardon, I must stop to say something. I stopped off in Germany on my way back I think, yes, to go over a number of things.

HESS: All right.

RIDDLEBERGER: In Berlin--no, of course, this wasn't Germany. I beg your pardon. May I stop to think a moment?

HESS: You certainly may.

RIDDLEBERGER: No, I flew back. Now it comes back to me, I now remember what happened. I shouldn't say I stopped over in Germany as we were in Germany.

HESS: You were in Germany.

RIDDLEBERGER: I stopped in Frankfurt, that was it, and with Dunn and Matthews and I went to see General Clay, to give him a complete fill-in of what had happened at Potsdam. That's what happened. Then I flew back. I don't know that I flew back with the entire delegation, but I flew back with Dunn and Matthews. The three of us, I think flew back in an Army plane.

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HESS: What seemed to be the general opinion, consensus of opinion if indeed there was one among the State Department officials, as to how things had gone, after it was all over and you were leaving? And what did you tell General Clay?

RIDDLEBERGER: I'll take the last question first, because General Clay and I, who were great friends, and I worked under him for several years in Germany after the war. I told him exactly what I thought the real Soviet intentions were.

HESS: And what did you think they were?

RIDDLEBERGER: I thought they had no intention whatsoever of carrying out a lot of these agreements that had been arrived at either in the European Advisory Commission or at the Potsdam Conference, and I particularly thought they did not intend to carry out the agreement to treat Germany as an economic entity. Clay didn't like all this at the time, but I think later on he got over it. But he said, "You're suggesting that I should deviate from the line that has been laid down by our President at the conference meeting."

And I said, "Well, no, I'm not suggesting it, I'm

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merely telling you what I think is going to happen."

HESS: And warning you what may come about.

RIDDLEBERGER: What may come about, what I think the real Soviet intentions are. There was an acid disagreement at that point, but I don't think Clay ever held it against me. Later on, of course, that's exactly what transpired, and he had to struggle for over a year with this whole problem of us putting things in through the West and the Soviets taking it out through the East. I went over the major decisions, or Dunn and Matthews and I all did, I in more detail because I worked directly on Germany all the time while they had other responsibilities, and gave Clay what I thought was the real meaning behind the Soviet words.

HESS: What did the other men seem to think at this time; Mr. Dunn and Mr. Matthews?

RIDDLEBERGER: They were a little more hopeful than I was, a little bit, and I don't know that any of the State Department people were very hopeful. I think most of them foresaw it was going to be very rough going indeed. Don't forget we had the great advantage of having to

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deal with the Soviets, if you can call it that, during the war period, and there was too much information within the State Department, which we knew about, but which was never disclosed to the public, about the Soviet attitude.

HESS: Bringing things up to today, what do you think are the goals of Communism today, have they changed?

RIDDLEBERGER: I don't think they have changed, no I think their methods are somewhat different, but I don't think they've changed. I think they still look forward to what they would call a world revolution, their form of government will become standard so to speak.

HESS: World domination.

RIDDLEBERGER: Well, domination, not necessarily through a military conquest, but through the evolution of Communism, and the development of Communism throughout the world. I don't think they will get there, but I think that's their desire. But it's all written down in their philosophy and their doctrine.

HESS: They don't make any secret of it do they?

RIDDLEBERGER: No, I'm not revealing any secret on this at all.

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HESS: One point I want to make, even after they have made clear what their goals are, a lot of people say they don't really mean it, and they now believe we can coexist.

RIDDLEBERGER: Yes.

HESS: But they have said full well they don't intend to coexist.

RIDDLEBERGER: Yes, you can coexist if you're strong enough.

HESS: Yes.

RIDDLEBERGER: But of course, I mean Hitler said it all, too, in *Mein Kampf*.

HESS: In *Mein Kampf*, that's right, and people didn't believe that either.

All right, everything on Potsdam?

RIDDLEBERGER: I don't think of anything else. The agreements have all been published and the territorial issues as we know have never been resolved and the German peace treaty has never emerged. All this was contemplated as you know in the Potsdam agreement. I personally did not have much confidence the Soviets were going to carry any of it out, and of course, they didn't.

HESS: Which they have not.

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RIDDLEBERGER: And then the Austrian discussion was not very profound at Potsdam, that was deferred more or less to another date and the Soviets showed no intention of evacuating their troops from Austria even though they had already recognized the Government there. So to my mind, I could not see any evidence of the Soviet intentions to withdraw from Eastern Europe in the immediate future and indeed they wanted to get a Ruhr Authority in which they would be a full member, in which they could be a full member. But that's for later, you know, that all shows up much later.

HESS: Yes, it does. All right, moving on to our second topic for the morning, unfortunately Governor James Byrnes just died, I believe this month in fact, and in the obituary that I cut out of the news, I would like to read just a little bit, but it says in effect that General Lucius Clay credited a speech Byrnes made in 1946 in Stuttgart, Germany as largely responsible for the failure of Communism to take root in Western Europe after World War II, and that was when Byrnes assured Europe that U. S. military forces would remain as long as there was a Soviet threat. General Clay said later that this was Mr. Byrnes' "most significant contribution in a lifetime

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of service." What do you recall about Mr. Byrnes' views and also of that very famous speech.

RIDDLEBERGER: The background of the Stuttgart speech was indeed very interesting. By that time I think that both General Clay, and let us say the higher echelons in the American government, were absolutely convinced that there was no possibility of executing the decisions at Potsdam in the way that we had hoped that would be done.

Now the preparation of the speech went over a considerable period of time. I recall very well that we first discussed this during the peace conference in Paris in the summer of 1946. I think to understand the background of it we have to remember that the Byrnes proposal for the forty year disarmament treaty with Germany had been brought forward at the Paris peace conference, and this speech was not made until after that.

Secretary Byrnes had gone to Moscow I think it was late in 1945 in an endeavor to find out what were the basic Soviet fears and see if there was some way that they might be met. I think that he was persuaded that the Soviets realized that the French and the British were far weaker than perhaps even evident to the public at that time and that there were only two great military powers, namely the U.S. and the Soviet Union, and that

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Byrnes who had a great appreciation, I think, in many ways of the fears of the Soviet Union wanted to find a key which would unlock the door to some kind of a security system. Therefore, after a long private conversation with Stalin, he decided that maybe the way to do it was to commit the United States to a lengthy period of enforcing disarmament of Germany and preventing the rise of any kind of German militarism for a very long period of time until effective and fundamental political reforms within Germany could be accomplished.

Now that was the real point of the forty year disarmament treaty. I speak categorically on it, because I wrote the first draft and Mr. Byrnes would not even permit me to discuss it. I was in a rather awkward position and not being an authority on military matters, I finally pointed out to him that at some point it seemed to me it must be vetted by someone in the Pentagon. So with some reluctance, and after some hesitation he finally took it directly to George Marshall. Before it was presented in Paris, we had the approval of some of our own military people, but it was kept a very close secret until it was unveiled at the session on Germany in the Council of Foreign Ministers during the Italian Peace Treaty Conference in Paris, as you may remember.

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We know this proposal got no kind of favorable response whatsoever in spite of Byrnes' enthusiasm for it.

HESS: Why didn't it, what seemed to be the major opposition?

RIDDLEBERGER: Either because Stalin changed his mind, which I think perhaps he did if he ever had really intended to go ahead with it, or that the upper strata of the Soviet government decided that it was better to hold onto what they had rather than go into a system that would in effect enable them to carry out the commitments of the Potsdam conference. In other words, hang on to their territory. By this time there had been a lot of developments in what we now call the satellites, which reinforced the power of the Soviet government within those countries.

But there was still a hope as early as the spring and summer of '46, that there might be a way of diminishing some of this tension and still meet the legitimate Soviet demands. Clay understood

all this very well and so did Murphy (Murphy was Clay's political adviser). I was the chief of the division back here and the speech was worked out primarily by the four of us in Paris. Even then Byrnes didn't deliver it until September. But the broad outline of it had been determined, let us say, as a result of Clay and Murphy's report on the actual

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situation in Germany; my report on what I thought was the situation in Washington. Byrnes had been in Paris for some weeks, and we undertook our joint work on the drafting of it in Paris.

Clay came over with a draft, as I recall, and we all went to work on it, and Murphy contributed substantially as he always does, and in the meantime I had done the work on the forty years disarmament proposal. The speech was in pretty good shape I would say, and ready for presidential approval by the late summer of '46--and then it was decided that Mr. Byrnes would go over to Stuttgart and give it on German soil.

Now that's roughly the background of it, and it was a great turning point of course, in our whole policy. Up to that time Clay was still attempting to ascertain if there were any possibility of coming to an understanding with the Russians so that the Potsdam agreement could be implemented within Germany. But the Control Council was in a constant stalemate and the Soviets spent most of their time hurling accusations and little else. The speech itself is history now, but it will show the distance which Truman and Byrnes had come since Potsdam. In about a year.

The speech itself, I won't comment on that, because anyone can read it.

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HESS: That's the background to it.

RIDDLEBERGER: Yes, that's the background of it.

HESS: In your opinion did Secretary Byrnes think that the Soviets might live up to their agreements, or could be brought around to living up to their agreements?

RIDDLEBERGER: He had a highly pragmatic mind. He thought that if some of the Soviet suspicion could be removed, if some of their fears could be removed, by a formal U.S. commitment, that that was worth trying. That was one reason we didn't make any great changes in our German policy before the speech, but by that time, it had become apparent to everyone that the Control Council would be unable to agree on any important decisions within Germany and that the Soviets were continuing to haul off anything they wanted to. At the same time, they were still accusing us of the most pro-Nazi policies.

HESS: At the last of this obituary it says:

Mr. Truman and Mr. Byrnes halted cordial communications after Mr. Truman's *Memoirs* called Mr. Byrnes soft towards the Russians.

Would you think Mr. Byrnes was "soft towards the Russians?"

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RIDDLEBERGER: No, I never thought that. No, I did not. I don't know what caused the break, I think that partly it was the inclination of Byrnes to go on without always telling the President.

HESS: Was that just the nature of his operation or did that express a degree of dislike for Mr. Truman, or disrespect for Mr. Truman?

RIDDLEBERGER: No, I never had that impression. I think it was just his way of doing things and he had been such a power, both in the Congress and particularly in the Senate, and then on the Supreme Court. And he really was sort of the organizer for war of American industry and that sort of thing with Clay, and I think it was just his way of doing things.

I think they were very close in the beginning, that's the impression I had, and I thought Truman had great confidence in him.

Byrnes, unlike George Marshall, was inclined to really go ahead, you see, and without always making certain that the State Department and the White House were informed. Now sometimes that has a great advantage, but he went ahead on this, for example, this forty year disarmament treaty, you know, and didn't tell anybody. And he

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gave me orders not to tell anybody. I had to draft it at night in the State Department and he didn't let anybody, even my chiefs were not allowed to know about it, which of course, was embarrassing later on, but he had made up his mind that this was to be held closely and by God, it was.

HESS: Did you or did you not at that time point out to him that something of this nature should be checked with others?

RIDDLEBERGER: Oh, I certainly did. I used to do that every time I saw him.

HESS: What did he say?

RIDDLEBERGER: Oh, he just laughed. I said, "Well, we can do that later Jimmy, don't worry." We have plenty of time on that.

HESS: One further question on Mr. Byrnes, concerning his resignation. What do you recall of the background leading up to his resignation and replacement?

RIDDLEBERGER: I recall the resignation, in fact he told me during the Council of Foreign Ministers meeting in New York in December of 1946 that he was going to resign. He

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wasn't well and he was exhausted, literally exhausted, and I remember after one of these very long and tiring sessions he went back to the Waldorf where--back to his suite there, had a bourbon and branchwater I guess he called it, and he told me that this was his last meeting. Of course, I had worked so closely with him on all these matters (on Germany and Austria). So when he told me I did not have the impression even then that it was because of any particular break with the President, but I did not necessarily know about that.

HESS: There was a time, I believe he was coming back from the foreign ministers meeting in Paris, and on his way back, made the announcement that he was going to request radio time to address the American people, even before seeing Mr. Truman.

RIDDLEBERGER: Even before seeing Truman and...

HESS: And Mr. Truman informed him to cancel that and to come down to see him on the *Williamsburg*, which was docked down at the Navy yards.

RIDDLEBERGER: Docked down there, yes.

HESS: Was that after you had talked to him?

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RIDDLEBERGER: No, no, this must have been after the Paris meeting.

HESS: Yes.

RIDDLEBERGER: No, he was still Secretary of State during the December 1948 meeting.

HESS: I see.

RIDDLEBERGER: But he was there, I remember very well.

HESS: Did he ever say anything to you about that meeting with Mr. Truman aboard the *Williamsburg*?

RIDDLEBERGER: Not to me, no.

HESS: But the impression that you obtained was that he was leaving for reasons of health, is that right?

RIDDLEBERGER: Yes, that's what he said. He told me that he was completely exhausted and that he decided that he had better resign, but of course, there may have been other reasons too. Now, of course, there had been rumors about the parting of the ways between the White House and the Secretary of State, but I never knew personally exactly how serious they were, they always have these ups and downs you know. I recall something of what you said, but

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that's the way Jimmy Byrnes was. I think in many ways he regarded himself as the mentor of Truman and was in a certain sense maybe more experienced, which he had been up to the time Truman became President. In other words, he had had more important positions and a wider variety of experience than Truman had had.

HESS: He certainly had. Now as you recall he wanted the 1944 nomination as Vice President, which Mr. Truman obtained.

RIDDLEBERGER: Which Truman got, yes he did.

HESS: There are those that say and I believe that Mr. Truman says so in his *Memoirs*, that one of the reasons he appointed Mr. Byrnes Secretary of State was as a consolation prize, to make up for the fact that...

RIDDLEBERGER: That he didn't get it.

HESS: ...that he didn't get it and if he had got it he would be in the President's chair at that time.

RIDDLEBERGER: He would have been President, yes.

HESS: Did you ever hear of that?

RIDDLEBERGER: Oh yes, you know there's lots of talk about all this back at the time, but that is typical Washington

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conversation.

HESS: What would be your general evaluation of Mr. Byrnes' handling of the Department of State, administratively, etc., and how good a Secretary of State did James Byrnes make?

RIDDLEBERGER: I think on the whole, he did pretty well when you look at what was dumped on him almost without warning. You see, he inherited all of these other war agencies and I think that the State Department, which had up to that time been a very small organization, had one of the worst cases of administrative indigestion that I've ever known. All these wartime boards were just thrown in there, and Byrnes took them on and got Don Russell to come up from Carolina to help him, but he was in tremendous trouble to try to get all that sorted out.

HESS: Going back to 1945, but Mr. Stettinius would have liked to have stayed on, would he not?

RIDDLEBERGER: Well, I think he would have liked to, but I don't think he had any possibility of doing it.

HESS: What was the problem there, a lack of rapport with Mr. Truman or too close association with the Roosevelt administration or what?

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RIDDLEBERGER: Well, I suppose so, and then...

HESS: Mr. Truman wanted his own man.

RIDDLEBERGER: ...Truman wanted his own man as Secretary of State, particularly as the war with Japan was still going on and the big international conferences on Germany were coming up. And Stettinius, whatever his virtues may have been, was no heavyweight, you know. At least he was not regarded as any heavyweight within the State Department. It wasn't entirely his fault, because don't forget that Roosevelt stuck him in there after Cordell Hull was finally allowed to go. He tried to go much earlier, and Harry Hopkins became in effect Secretary of State for the important matters.

Now Stettinius did do the preliminary work, the Dumbarton Oaks, on the U.N. charter, and he really concentrated almost entirely upon that. I recall very well towards the end of the war and on the whole struggle of the Morgenthau plan I dealt directly with Harry Hopkins, so did Matthews, Dunn and McCloy, who was down at the Pentagon.

HESS: All right, and then Mr. Byrnes resigned. Why was General Marshall selected as the next Secretary

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of State, and were there others in consideration?

RIDDLEBERGER: I don't know, but I think that President Truman had a great admiration for him and I think that was the deciding thing,. Of course, he was still in China and came back and then had to prepare himself for the Moscow meeting at the Council of Foreign Ministers in March, 1947.

HESS: Did you help him with that preparation?

RIDDLEBERGER: Poor fellow, he had to listen to me practically every day.

HESS: Would you tell me about that and tell me about...

RIDDLEBERGER: He was very patient.

HESS: ...working with General Marshall, what kind of a man was he, and how readily did he assimilate information? What comes to mind when you look back on those early days just after General Marshall came into the State Department?

RIDDLEBERGER: He assimilated very fast, I'll take that question first. Of course, he'd had a big background on Germany during the war, and that sort of thing, but

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don't forget he had gone out and was off on completely different matters, but with him it was a question of bringing him up to date and, therefore, I knew perfectly well that on Germany and Austria I only had to brief him from the time he left the Pentagon to date, that was all we had to do.

HESS: He had been working on the China matter for quite some time.

RIDDLEBERGER: Yes, because don't forget this was early 1947 and he had been out in China and he, of course, had not pretended to be informed on everything that had gone on in Europe. Therefore, because we had both Germany and Austria coming up at Moscow, and because they were major issues, both of them, I spent hours with the Secretary.

He was a remarkable fellow you know, General Marshall was. He was not a chummy type, who slapped you on the back, and he never called you by your first name or anything of that sort, but I had an enormous respect for him and his questions I thought were always very much to the point and very good, very penetrating.

HESS: You mentioned that you attended some meetings with General Marshall and Mr. Truman in preparation for

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nseveral conferences.

RIDDLEBERGER: Yes, and particularly the last one just before we left for Moscow.

HESS: Tell me about the meetings held between Secretary Marshall and Mr. Truman.

RIDDLEBERGER: We went over some of the latest issues we thought might come up. These questions have by now been recounted and much published about the Moscow conference, but I never have forgotten one thing that Mr. Truman said that's always stuck in my memory as exemplifying his character. At the end, we had finished going over the principal points, and the President turned to General Marshall, "Now, General," he said, "you're going off on a very difficult expedition," I think was the word he used, this was not quoted, it's the way I remember

it. "It's not going to be easy, and I know perfectly well that you may run into some heavy weather because of the political situation back here. Now," he said, "I know also at the conference table how these things go and you would not always be able to consult." He continued, "You keep me informed, but," he said, "situations may arise where you'll have to make a decision

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right then and there, and you have my complete authority to go ahead and do what you think is best for the interests of the United States and for world peace." And he added, "Pay no attention to Vandenberg's polls." That was a topical allusion, but very good at that time. He concluded, "Do what you think is right and best and let me deal with the political situation back here."

I think that's very close to what he said, I don't pretend the words are precisely the same.

HESS: How would you evaluate his handling of the Department of State?

RIDDLEBERGER: Marshall had a very orderly mind, he really gave us the structure that the State Department has today. He brought it up to date, I believe because the State Department then had become a large organization.

Don't forget that when I first took over the German desk, in 1941 I knew practically everybody there, the officers in the State Department, and it had the enormous advantage of being small and that the clearances were almost automatic. The officials who dealt with these things knew perfectly that if they were, let's say, drafting a telegram that might affect another country, then they'd have to go around and clear it with their

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colleagues. There was no elaborate organizational chart, but you knew what your duties were, and what you had to do. And then questions moved up to the Assistant Secretary and the Secretary if necessary. That you can do in a very small organization in a very informal kind of way.

HESS: One of the major things that the Truman administration will be remembered for is named for General Marshall, the Marshall plan.

RIDDLEBERGER: The Marshall plan, yes.

HESS: How much did General Marshall have to do with the formulation of the plan that bears his name?

RIDDLEBERGER: He had a great deal to do with it because he bore the responsibility for it. It had been forecast by the Dean Acheson speech in...

HESS: Cleveland, Mississippi.

RIDDLEBERGER: Cleveland, Mississippi, yes. But it had not been propounded as a--well, I'll put it this way, as a real possibility, I think, that the United States would go that far in aiding these countries, until Marshall made the speech at Harvard.

HESS: Who contributed early ideas toward what later became the Marshall plan? This is a subject that interests

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historians a great deal.

RIDDLEBERGER: Oh, I think it was almost entirely within the State Department, primarily division chiefs there.

HESS: I'll throw out a name, Will Clayton gets a lot of credit.

RIDDLEBERGER: Oh, my yes, yes.

HESS: He took a trip to Europe and wrote a lengthy memo on conditions he found, and measures he thought should be taken to alleviate those conditions, do you recall that?

RIDDLEBERGER: Yes, certainly.

HESS: Would you call Will Clayton's memo one of the early ideas behind the Marshall plan? Why I ask that is because it was not all that early. General Marshall's speech was in June of '47, Acheson spoke at Cleveland, Mississippi, I think, in March of '47.

RIDDLEBERGER: March '47 I think.

HESS: And the Clayton memo was not too long before that. In other words, it seems like such a big operation would need more preparation, earlier ideas, earlier formulation, than just the Will Clayton memo.

RIDDLEBERGER: Let me explain then how these things are generated,

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I guess is the right word, and again here I speak from personal experience. Although on the Marshall plan I did not have really very much to do with it. I'll tell you later on what I did, but not very much, because I had Germany and Austria you see.

But you see, the division chiefs would be meeting constantly with the head of the European office, and with Dunn. So, these reports of the economic conditions and the political dangers within all the European countries were heard practically every morning and then we all read the sort of the important telegrams that were distributed to all the division chiefs in the European "Bureau" I guess it was called at that time. So, this knowledge was being built up really from the

end of the war on. The distressing conditions were being constantly reported upon and the political changes would be underlined at the same time.

So every division chief within the European Bureau, knew that and this information was in turn being brought to the attention of the economic people, of whom Will Clayton was the most important, and then to the Under Secretaries and the Secretaries. So, the whole economic situation there and the consequent political dangers were being discussed ever since the end of the war, and the

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windup of UNRRA.

HESS: Really nothing new at all.

RIDDLEBERGER: Nothing new at all. Then came of course naturally what can you do about it? Now, as I recall there were a number of people that worked very hard on the Marshall plan. My contributions were really very limited.

HESS: What were your contributions?

RIDDLEBERGER: Mostly they had been the situation in Germany and Austria. It was not contemplated that Germany, at the outset, would be a recipient, because we already had the GARIOA fund, which was administered through the Army. But of course, Germany had later become recipient of the Marshall plan. But at this particular phase, no, the aid, the economic aid that we gave to Germany was through the Army, through the military government.

HESS: All right, and then on January the 21st of 1949, the day after Mr. Truman was inaugurated, Dean Acheson was sworn in as his Secretary of State and remained in that position through the remainder of the Truman administration.

RIDDLEBERGER: Of the Truman administration.

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HESS: How would you characterize Dean Acheson?

RIDDLEBERGER: I think he was one of the best Secretaries of State we ever had, to put it in very simple terms. Maybe I'm prejudiced because I was always very fond of him personally and we had worked together on a number of questions. I, in the meantime, had gone to Germany in 1947, and afterwards, therefore, I used to meet Secretary (of course, he had been Assistant Secretary of State when I had been in Washington), primarily at conferences, except at the end of his tenure I came back to Washington as a result of his decision. He ordered me back in 1952 to become a director of the German Bureau. So I served directly under him until Eisenhower came in in 1953.

HESS: You say he ordered you back, were there any specific...

RIDDLEBERGER: Oh, I say he ordered me back, he was Secretary of State...

HESS: He requested that you come back.

RIDDLEBERGER: Well, no, he had me transferred, I'll put it that way.

HESS: Were there any particular problems that were coming up at this time?

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RIDDLEBERGER: Yes. I had left Germany in 1950 and was on loan to the Marshall plan in Paris. That was really the time when I got the most familiar with the Marshall plan, and after I left Germany, the contractual agreements had been negotiated and the big German external debt conference was going on in London, it had been going on for over a year, I think, and practically bogged down.

So, during a meeting in Paris, in 1952, probably a NATO meeting of some sort, the Secretary told me that he was going to transfer Hank [Henry] Byroade, and to become Assistant Secretary for the Near East and that he wanted me to take his place as Director of the German Bureau. The Director of the German Bureau was in effect an Assistant Secretary of State, but since they had used all of the slots that were allotted, I would be called Director, which was all right with me.

HESS: You were there between '52 and '53. What comes to mind when you look back on that period of time? What were your principal duties?

RIDDLEBERGER: In my case it was very simple, I had the running of the bureau for one thing, of course, but over and above that, Dean Acheson had brought me back for two very specific reasons. He wanted the contractual

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agreements with Germany put through the Senate which was the restoration of at least a partial sovereignty to the West German state. And you know they were very complicated documents. I said to the Secretary, "Oh, my God, this was negotiated after I left Germany. I'm not really familiar with the details. I know about the general terms."

"Well," he said, "you can learn it. You have to do it," he said. "You have to do it, I don't have anybody else, and nobody has your background on Germany that I have around there now, and you must come back and do it." And then he said, "The debt conference in London has gone to pot, and we've got to have somebody in that knows enough about the prewar financial arrangements and is capable of running the Washington end of that."

So, I climbed aboard the *Queen Mary*, I think it was, and took the contractual agreements with me and I really prepared myself for the...

HESS: So you really prepared yourself on the *Queen Mary*, that right?

RIDDLEBERGER: On the *Queen Mary*.

HESS: All right.

RIDDLEBERGER: Then I plunged directly into the hearings before

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the Senate on the contractual relations agreements and they were both formal and informal preparations for the hearings before the foreign relations committee. That all took, I suppose, several months there before they were approved by the Senate, but in the meantime I was very deep in the debt negotiations that were going on in London. And those were not wound up until we came to an agreement at the very end of the Truman administration. This was the first time that I know of in modern times that the total external debt of a major industrial country was negotiated in one conference.

However, it was the end of 1952 before those agreements were finally concluded and signed, and that meant an enormous amount of work here, both preparation on the Hill, but also going back and forth to New York to deal with the American creditors. In the meantime, the bureau was going on, there were lots of problems as usual here.

HESS: Here is a xerox copy of a page from the *Official Register* listing the members of the Bureau of German Affairs, if you will just take a glance over some of the men that you had working for you at that time, anything in particular come to mind--for instance Mr. Geoffrey Lewis, who was your deputy director?

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RIDDLEBERGER: Yes, Geoffrey Lewis, he became Ambassador later on, I think he is retired now.

HESS: Was he a valuable man?

RIDDLEBERGER: Very much so. Very much so. Well...

HESS: Anything else come to mind on some of the other gentlemen?

RIDDLEBERGER: Yes, [Arthur] Stevens retired, [Perry] Laukhuff I think resigned, later went to New York. I haven't seen him recently. [John A.] Calhoun became Ambassador; [Martin J.] Hillenbrand is going to go to Germany now as Ambassador. [Daniel] Margolies is still here I think, he worked on the economic side, dealt with German economic affairs. I don't see the name of Reinstein, Jacques Reinstein, he was the one who did most of the work on the...

HESS: I copied the page from the '52 volume, perhaps he's in the '53 volume, I don't really know.

RIDDLEGERGER: He should be in this one too, I'm surprised, yes. But he and I did most of the German external debt settlement, I mean as far as this government was concerned in Washington. I don't know why his name's not there.

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HESS: All right, just a few questions about the political events of 1952. What were your views when Mr. Truman removed himself from the political scene in March of 1952? Were you surprised?

RIDDLEBERGER: Well, I wasn't here, I was still in Paris.

HESS: When did you come back from Paris in '52?

RIDDLEBERGER: I came back in May or June of 1952.

HESS: And his announcement had been in March.

RIDDLEBERGER: March the 29th of 1952. Who did you think that the Democrats had the best chance with after Mr. Truman took himself out of the race? Anyone in particular?

RIDDLEBERGER: I don't remember.

HESS: Did you watch matters of that nature at all?

RIDDLEBERGER: Oh, my yes, from abroad, but of course, I wasn't here, and I don't remember.

HESS: Of course, the election was between Governor Stevenson and General Eisenhower. How did you foresee the outcome of that contest? Who did you think would win?

RIDDLEBERGER: I thought Eisenhower would win. I thought his

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popularity would carry him through.

HESS: A tough man to defeat.

RIDDLEBERGER: Yes, very much so. I don't take any great personal credit for that perspicacity.

HESS: In the years following the Truman administration you held ambassadorial positions in Yugoslavia, Greece, and Austria. What is your evaluation of the effects of the actions taken during the time of the Truman administration on those three countries? First Yugoslavia.

RIDDLEBERGER: I thought that one of the most courageous decisions that Truman had taken was that of 1949, I guess, or late '48 to extend economic aid to Tito. In saying that, let me hastily repeat that I had nothing to do with it. I was in Berlin under the blockade and knew pretty well what the military situation in Europe was, which of course, was not favorable from our point of view, NATO had not been created and I think Truman showed great courage in going ahead with that. And I think it turned out that he was absolutely right. But I was not involved in it, I was still in Germany.

HESS: Should we have given greater support, perhaps earlier support to Tito to try to split him further away from

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Soviet-Communist involvement?

RIDDLEBERGER: No, I think we gave it as soon as we saw there's a possibility of it. That's why I say I think it took courage particularly, because these were the days of the cold war and if you persuade any American Congress to vote money for...

HESS: For a Communist.

RIDDLEBERGER: For a Communist dictator, you can imagine, it's a pretty rough affair. As I found out later myself when I had to come back and testify.

No, I think Truman was absolutely right and I think it showed, as is customary with him, a lot of courage. You know, when he thought something was the right thing to do, he would do it.

HESS: All right now, about Greece. What was the attitude of the Greek people towards Mr. Truman and the Truman Doctrine?

RIDDLEBERGER: I went there long after that...

HESS: When did you go to Greece?

RIDDLEBERGER: I didn't get to Greece until 1958.

HESS: Was there still an attitude of appreciation for the

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actions Mr. Truman had taken?

RIDDLEBERGER: Oh, my yes, an attitude of admiration, too, for Truman, his willingness to go ahead with it. But don't forget that it was '58 before I went there.

HESS: That's right.

RIDDLEBERGER: I went there because of Cyprus, Dulles sent me there. You see with Tommy Thompson, I had done the Trieste negotiation. I was in Belgrade and he was in London, and between us we more or less maneuvered that one. And then a couple of years later Secretary Dulles told me to go to Greece, we were going to try the same sort of thing on Cyprus. It finally worked in a way. That was during the Eisenhower administration.

HESS: Just a brief question about Secretary Dulles. How would you rate him with the Secretaries of State during the Truman administration?

RIDDLEBERGER: He had a lot of guts when it came to deciding things and I had obviously had to work with him very closely on Trieste and on Cyprus. I'd be called back and forth and particularly on Yugoslavia where we had so much trouble in Congress on the aid appropriation. He was very steadfast in going ahead when he decided the

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policy was right.

HESS: Of course, everyone knows that Secretary Dulles traveled around the world...

RIDDLEBERGER: Traveled all the time.

HESS: ...a great deal. I read at the time that that may have cut into the responsibility of the man on the scene. Perhaps he did not give the ambassadors enough responsibility, and tried to handle problems that arose. around the world with a personal visit.

RIDDLEBERGER: I don't know, I never experienced that. He came once to Yugoslavia...

HESS: He came once.

RIDDLEBERGER: ...just once. But I never had to go through that. No, no he traveled a great deal, but don't forget apart from the NATO meetings which were something else again, he was usually in connection with some alliance or setting up some alliance and sometimes in particular countries where he had been urged to come.

HESS: They even named the airport after him, you know.

RIDDLEBERGER: Absolutely, I mean it wasn't really that he

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was there behind the scene at the wrong time, at least I never noticed it. The NATO council of course, saw a great deal of him because that was only normal, he came to these meetings.

HESS: And you were Ambassador to Austria in 1962.

RIDDLE BERGER: '62 to '67.

HESS: That's right.

RIDDLEBERGER: Earlier I was director of the aid program from '59 to '61.

HESS: And chairman of the Development Assistance Group in Paris from '61 to '62.

RIDDLEBERGER: '61 to '62, it was called "committee" by that time. I was the last chairman of the Development Assistance Group, but then it became a part of the new OECD after the treaty was ratified in 1961, then I went to Paris. The last meeting of the group was in Japan and later I went to Paris and was the first chairman of the DAC as they called it, get it started, for over a year.

HESS: Well, as you were in Austria many years after the

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Truman administration, of course, what are your views on how we handled events in Austria?

RIDDLEBERGER: Earlier you mean.

HESS: Earlier, during the Truman administration.

RIDDLEBERGER: On this, I must explain that while I worked directly upon the Austrian problems right after the war for two years including the--with Francis Williamson--the drafting of the first American proposal for the Austrian treaty. It took ten years, so these are very early proposals. After I went back to Germany in 1947, and I was no longer competent for Austria. So my direct connection with the Austrian treaty was from 1944...roughly '44 to '47, In Moscow in 1947, Marshall had appointed me the American deputy for the Austrian treaty, but I never served because when I got back to Washington (I'd stopped over in Germany after the Moscow Council of Foreign Ministers meeting) to help out on the negotiations for Bizonia, as they called it, the (amalgamation of the British and American zones). I came back to Washington, Marshall told me that he was terribly sorry, but I had to go back to Germany, that Clay had asked that I come back there and that he had agreed. He said he knew it

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wasn't fair, but I had to do that. I had been on Germany so long, you see. Therefore, instead of becoming the Deputy for the Austrian treaty, I went back to Germany for three more years.

But to come back to your earlier question, Sam Reber and Tommy Thompson did do most of the work during the long negotiations, Tommy at the end. He was the Ambassador in Vienna, and I was not at all involved in the negotiations after 1947.

HESS: All right, now just some general questions. As you know, Mr. Truman had a number of Republican people in fairly high office, Paul Hoffman for one.

RIDDLEBERGER: Paul Hoffman.

HESS: John Foster Dulles was special assistant in the State Department during a good deal of the Truman administration.

RIDDLEBERGER: And basically did the negotiation on the Japanese peace treaty...

HESS: He certainly did.

RIDDLEBERGER: ...with Allison.

HESS: So, Mr. Truman had several Republicans in high office. What is your opinion on Mr. Truman's understanding of the

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value of having members of the opposition party in positions of responsibility?

RIDDLEBERGER: He had more than that, he had Vandenberg on the delegation.

HESS: He certainly did.

RIDDLEBERGER: Yes indeed.

HESS: I didn't mean to name all of the Republicans in high office...

RIDDLEBERGER: Yes, I see.

HESS: ...by any means. My question is, in your opinion, how good of an understanding did Mr. Truman have of the value of having members of the opposition in positions of responsibility?

RIDDLEBERGER: I thought he saw very clearly the possible advantages of it. It sometimes had disadvantages too, particularly when it came to discussions, internal discussions within an American delegation, and it's always more complicated to have a member of the opposition party, more or less within the councils there, but I think Mr. Truman understood that very well.

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HESS: One of the risks that must be run.

RIDDLEBERGER: One of the risks that must be run, but I, myself, did not have very much direct contact because while I knew John Foster Dulles (who came to Moscow with us in 1947, for the Council of Foreign Ministers), and I remember talking frequently with him there, I had nothing to do with the Japanese treaty. As for Vandenberg, I think he was at the Paris peace conference in '46, but I was there primarily on Germany and Austria, and not for the Italian peace treaty. I came over several weeks after the others as I remember. So. I didn't myself have much personal or direct contact with Vandenberg. I think Senator [Tom] Connally was also on the delegation, but I had little contact with him.

HESS: I think so.

RIDDLEBERGER: He was a Democrat, and I didn't have a great deal of direct relations with him.

HESS: Approximately how many times did you meet with President Truman during the Truman administration? Not necessarily by yourself, but in a group. Of course, you were in meetings with him at Potsdam.

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RIDDLEBERGER: That's just it. I mean how do you count it? At Potsdam I saw him every day practically. I usually sat right behind him when Germany and Austria came up for discussion. I saw him at practically all of the parties and that sort of thing. I just...

HESS: So you saw him a good number of times.

RIDDLEBERGER: But I was not then an Ambassador, I was a division chief in the State Department. It's one thing to see him, to be in the same room, it's another thing to be in touch officially.

HESS: How would you rate Mr. Truman's general handling of the office?

RIDDLEBERGER: I thought he did remarkably well. Of course, I think Truman was a great President in spite of his, to put it bluntly, lack of background on European matters. I think he had the insight and determination when they were both needed.

I can't pretend I knew the President well, I didn't. I found a picture the other day of Will Clayton and General Hilldreth and me coming out of the White House after we had seen the President on some question.

You asked me the number of times, I don't even know,

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I'd go back and forth telling him what was coming up and so forth.

HESS: In your opinion, how good of a grasp of conditions did Mr. Truman have of foreign affairs. How good a grasp of matters pertaining to foreign affairs did Mr. Truman come to have, say in 1952 and '53?

RIDDLEBERGER: I think in the end he had a very comprehensive grasp. But don't forget he had two Secretaries of State in whom he had complete confidence and who made it a point to keep him fully informed, and also all the reasons why they thought that a certain policy was right for him (Marshall and Acheson).

HESS: In your opinion what were Mr. Truman's major accomplishments during his administration and what were his major failings? What did he do right and what did he do wrong?

RIDDLEBERGER: There you asked me a very difficult question because that covers the waterfront and--don't forget I wasn't always there.

HESS: Would you think that he was somewhat more successful on the foreign field then he was on the domestic field? Will he be known, more or less, for the Truman Doctrine, the Marshall plan...

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RIDDLEBERGER: He would be better known for them, yes, but I think he was successful from what I know, but again, I repeat I wasn't in...

HESS: You were out of the country.

RIDDLEBERGER: ...out of the country.

HESS: You were busy.

RIDDLEBERGER: And didn't come back until the end of his administration. I was about to say the same thing, the Truman Doctrine, the Point IV, the whole direction of American policy for which he took responsibility for after the war, the major decisions on Germany and so forth. Truman had a lot of tough issues and I think he made the right kind of decisions.

HESS: In your estimation, what is his place in history...

RIDDLEBERGER: And then comes the Korean war.

HESS: That's right.

RIDDLEBERGER: Of which I won't...

HESS: That's a different subject isn't it?

RIDDLEBERGER: That's a different subject, yes. But I admire

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him and I think his place in history, to put it simply, is very much assured.

HESS: All right, do you have anything else to add on your role in the Truman administration, your duties, on Mr. Truman as a man, anything else that you would like to add?

RIDDLEBERGER: No, maybe I will think of something later on, but of course, don't forget that I was in Washington during his first administration, but only for about two years, and there I was dealing entirely with Germany and Austria. Then I came back only at the end of his second term really, when I took over the German bureau again. I left in '47 and came back in '52, so I was away five years you see, in fact only came back at the end of the Truman administration, and there I had very specific things to do. They were things that were underway and did not require constant consultation with the White House, so I didn't see the President very often even when I had higher position as director of the German Bureau, because he had this great confidence in Acheson. I saw the Secretary practically every day. I was dealing with things that had to be done, but they were not things that required White House approval. I think that's the

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best way to describe it. But as for Truman in general, I have a great admiration for him.

HESS: All right, thank you very much, Ambassador.

RIDDLEBERGER: Not at all.

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