

Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training
Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

AMBASSADOR DONALD F. McHENRY

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy
Interview date: October 1, 1998
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INTERVIEW

Q: Today is 1st of October 1998. The interview is with Ambassador Donald McHenry. Don, the place where there was a break, something was wrong with the tape, you said, "I took a fellowship with the Council of Foreign Relations and a guest scholarship and the Brookings Institute." This is 1971. You were there until when?

McHENRY: Until late '73 and then I went to the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, where I stayed from '73 until late 1976 at which time I left and went to work on the Carter Transition Team.

Q: When you were with first with the Brookings Institution, '71-'73, what were you working on?

McHENRY: I did some research on South Africa. This was a period of time when there was a great deal of awakening in the U.S. in terms of the role of corporations in the apartheid regime in South Africa. We had the so called "Polaroid" experiment which came along I think in the early 1971. In essence it was pressure from churches and universities to have American corporations with investments in South Africa hew to a standard which was befitting American corporations. I went of to Brookings and one of

the things which I tackled was the question of the operations of American owned corporations in South Africa. I spent a great deal of time, I made two trips to South Africa during that period of time, and spent a lot of time both in the U.S. and in South Africa looking at corporations. I did everything from tramp through bathrooms and look at the bathroom facilities and cafeterias and talk to people about their housing and job promotion treatment and so forth. It was an interesting period. Rather fascinating discovery stories during that period. This is also the period, as I said, that we had the “Polaroid” experiment, where Polaroid announced that it would not allow distribution of its film through its distributor in South Africa unless they met certain standards. They took a very high profile position on that. That whole movement evolved into the so-called Sullivan Principles. Which eventually evolved even further to the point where American legislation set standards for American corporations in South Africa. One of the interesting things about what came out of that experience was that when I did go back to the State Department in 1977, one of the first things that I worked on was the effort of Secretary Vance to pull together American corporations and get them to sign on to the Sullivan Principles.

Q: Weren't there two sort of separate streams of approach and quite a lot of argument between them? One of them was that America should set example, American corporations, and they try to encourage other ones to do this promotion of native Africans and treat them equally and move them up the ladder in fair competition. And the other one was “screw you all and get out.” What did you think on this?

McHENRY: There were those two things. One was “look at the standards of operation”, and the other was “get out”. My feeling all along was that even if eventually one campaigned to have people dis-invest and also had an interest in how they conducted themselves while they were there, it was clear to me that they weren't about to get out under the then circumstances and that the corporations would not withdraw until there have been significant changes in South Africa, which in essence put additional pressure on them to withdraw. And I think one saw that over a period of time. Unfortunately I think many of the advocates of dis-investment tended to listen to their rhetoric more than observe the facts. Case in point is that long before American corporations finally started pulling out of South Africa, the big banks concluded that this is not a normal risk, so instead of large loans on very good terms and over a longer period of time, banks started making modest loans to South Africa, higher rates, and over a short period of time. The result was that by the time the South African situation had deteriorated further and Chase Manhattan decided it wasn't worth the risk, they didn't have to go very far, in terms of really jerking the chain of the South Africans. They simply cut off even the short term loans and of course result on the South African government at that stage was enormous. But I think most of the advocates of dis-investment who continue to criticize the banks missed it.

Q: It is easy to get caught up in your own ideology and have a simplistic way of treating a problem.

McHENRY: I didn't mean to suggest that they shouldn't be advocating dis-investment. Because my own view, which I expressed and wrote about, was that without the pressure for dis-investment we would not have gotten adherence to standards of operations while they were there. The dis-investment push was useful both economically and politically in terms of change in South Africa.

Q: During this early '70s period, while you were studying this, I remember I was in INR back in the '60s, dealing with Horn of Africa, but I listened to my colleagues who were dealing with South Africa. And the conventional wisdom was, "Well, South Africa obviously is not going to continue the way it is, and there will be a night of long knives." In a way as it happened in Algeria with the French. But when you were looking at this closely, did you see this as a scenario?

McHENRY: No, I didn't. I think one of the things that one had to constantly be amazed with was the strength and the maybe ruthlessness of the South African government on the one hand. But on the other hand, the enormous patience which was demonstrated by the black community in South Africa. I am constantly reminded of that section in the book Cry the Beloved Country, by Alan Paton, where there is that dialogue where the old man says that he is concerned that by the time the whites learn to love, blacks will have learned to hate. Well, we didn't get that far in South Africa. The perfect example of that is Mandela, who comes out of prison after 27 years, the best years of his life, and speaks kindly of his jailor. All of them did not have that experience, but there was a remarkable sense of tolerance, even among those who were pressing very hard for change. The ANC, as you will recall, had all these debate about the extent to which violence should be used. Whether violence could only go against physical objects, and you had to make sure that no one was present who might be injured. Over to the point where physical objects, hope that nobody is there, but if they are, too bad. They really never got to the point where there was a wide-spread belief in terrorism. Car bombs and that kind of thing. It did not occur.

Q: Did you find that your experience when you came back, did you find within the academic and government community, was your thinking parallel with most of the people or were they quite divergent ways?

McHENRY: When I was at Brookings at the Council of Foreign Relations, period "71 to '73, I was still technically at the State Department, I was on leave. I had great deal of contact with the Department during that time. And I would say that the fact that I was on leave facilitated some of the access which I had when I went to South Africa. I went as a private citizen but the South Africans were well aware that I was on leave, and government agencies and corporations were well aware. So I got a level of cooperation that I might not have gotten otherwise. It also meant that I kept up with the thinking that was going on in the Department and within the U.S. government at that time. I would say that at the period when the policy of the government, '71 to late '76, I think that the policy of the U.S. government was neither to encourage nor discourage investment in South Africa.

The difference between my own views and those of the government was that I took the position that there should be no new investment in South Africa. I tried to recognize that those who were already there went in under different times, different values, different sensitivity. And when they went in I wouldn't say that what they were doing was perfectly respectable, but there was no raw feeling in the U.S. against it. And in a sense they were now there and the world had changed, politically, economically, its values, and so forth. So, I felt quite strongly that you could not suddenly apply today's standards to what went on yesterday. At the same time, it seemed to me that two things were in operation. That business was for the most part going to exercise some risk of judgment. They don't get enough credit for that, and that they would be very careful about extending their operations into South Africa, or enlarging their operations. And I didn't see them doing either one of those on a significant scale. Except in some narrowly defined industries.

Secondly, as a practical matter, they would pay a large penalty to pull out, because South Africans had restrictions on repatriation of profits, investment, and it did not seem to me during that period of time that as a practical matter dis-investment was going to take place. And I think those observations were proved to be correct. There wasn't a hell of a lot of new investment in South Africa. There was a lot of reinvestment of funds which they wouldn't have been able to get out anyway. Secondly, as I said, the banks put restrictions on. They didn't shout about them, but any South African investor knew that they were there.

And third, it seemed to me that while you criticize them in terms of new investment, and there was this group outside which wanted dis-investment, it seemed to me to be advantageous to push the establishment of standards and to push those standards as far as you could. And, as you know, by the time the "Polaroid" experiment came to its not end, but it sort of petered as Polaroid pulled out, or wouldn't allow its distributor to work any longer, the Sullivan Principles went so far, having participated in that meeting I can tell you that it was very difficult to get people to sign on them initially. And Sullivan had to compromise in terms of those first principles.

Q: What meeting was this?

McHENRY: This was the one I referred to which was held in the State Department where they got company officials together to persuade them to sign on to the Sullivan Principles. Eventually those Principles were strengthened over time, they were institutionalized, professional staff oversaw the application of them, and of course by the late 1980s Congress itself passed the anti-apartheid Act. That even more institutionalized and made in the U.S. law factors on investment.

Q: How did you find, this was during the Nixon period, really towards the end of it, how did you find the approach and work of the Embassy?

McHENRY: The Embassy went through a series of changes. I think in 1971 we had John Hurd there, who as a cattleman, and had done well by the Republican party. I got along with him. I was there as a private citizen when I went into the Embassy. They had some problems in the late '60s and '70s. The Ambassador was criticized for going hunting on Robben Island and using political prisoners to retrieve his catch. He had been accused of socializing with one of the most horrible of South African ministers. There were some problems. On the other hand, they did some useful and interesting things. They kept up a certain amount of pressure. The South Africans knew clearly that they were being pressured. They weren't nearly as pressured as they had been under the Johnson administration because the Nixon administration immediately relaxed some of the arms embargo for example. Whereas under Johnson if it was a dual purpose you didn't sell it. If there was any doubt about it, you didn't sell it.

Q: You might explain what we mean by "dual purpose".

McHENRY: Something which can be used for by civilian and military use. A jeep could be a dual purpose item, a light aircraft could be a dual purpose item, Cessna could be a dual purpose item. For us a Cessna plane is something people jockey around in on weekends. But in the terrain of South Africa, when they are doing border control, light aircraft is very useful, for military purposes. Johnson wouldn't sell them, Nixon of course would. And so to that extent in that period, '69 to '74 it was a very definite loosening in light of that administration.

Q: In '73 you wet off to...?

McHENRY: I resigned from the Department in 1973 and went to the Carnegie Endowment.

Q: What the resignation a carrier choice or because of political reasons?

McHENRY: One of the reasons for going on leave in '71 was political frankly. I didn't like what was going on in Southeast Asia, I didn't like the Parrot's Beak invasion and various things. I didn't like the effort to ram through the Supreme Court those two chaps who were nominated for Supreme Court. I didn't like the way they were treating the Secretary of State and I was working with the Secretary of State '69-'71. I just had it by '71. What I tried to do was to go on to retain the presence but to go on leave, to put some distance between me and that group.

On Southeast Asia I'd had just a constant philosophical problem, when all those demonstrations took place, people marching around Washington. Every time I had a house-full of young people who would come to Washington and I would volunteer for them to stay. I had 25-30 people staying in my house, marching. They were all surprised when late in the evening we'd sit around and they'd discover that I was in the State Department. Part of the enemy as far as they were concerned. It was good that they discovered that the enemy wasn't what they thought the enemy was. But it was a difficult

time. So I went on leave. Then in '73 I resigned. To be quite candid, I might not have resigned in '73 if the kind of job that was available to me had been better. I was offered a Deputy Assistant Secretary position for Africa, and it was pulled back. Not because I didn't have qualifications, it was for age. I wasn't old enough they thought.

Q: How old were you then?

McHENRY: 35. Now you have Assistant Secretaries who are 31 years of age! The feeling was that there were so many other people around who were much older. And the Department you have to remember was more top heavy. They simply weren't about to do it and I wasn't that inclined to go back anyway, and when that didn't come through I left.

And then you went to Carnegie Endowment. It was a good time to be there. Tom Hughes was there as a head. Hughes had been in INR at State, had been a DCM in London and he'd just gone to the Endowment, and he was pulling in very young, sort of aggressive staff.

Q: The Carnegie Endowment at that time, what did it represent as far as, you know, it's an endowment for world peace, but essentially what role did it play?

McHENRY: Hughes was changing the role. The Endowment has gone through any number of roles over the years. I would say that it probably isn't doing today what Carnegie may have envisioned it doing. But Tom was in process of making it more policy oriented as opposed to research oriented. Research with policy. As opposed to research-academic, as opposed to research-reference. And he wanted more participation in policy dialogue. Whether it was conferences, publications, or Op-Ed pieces, it didn't matter, he wanted more of that. He was also trying to pull it further away from its identification solely with international organizations and law, where it was oriented from the beginning. I think he ended up pulling it too far away so that the organization which was identified with those institutions, with those aspects of foreign affairs, disappeared and we paid a price for that.

But in any event, Tom gathered around a lot of people from State, David Biltchik, Tony Lake, Dick Holbrooke, and the good thing about working with Tom was that he got his bright young folks around him, you persuaded him what aspect of policy you wanted to look at and he'd let you do your own thing; he didn't interfere. He was indeed a cheerleader. I worked in a section which we called Humanitarian Policy Studies. We were looking at sort of the human side, the soft side of policy problems. And we did everything from looking at the situation in Zimbabwe, Tony Lake did a study which was called "The tar may be option", much more serious than in sounds.

Q: This is from Joel Chandler's The Cry of Brer Rabbit.

McHENRY: What he was actually doing was looking at the policy choices that Nixon and Kissinger had made in the late 1960s with regard to southern Africa. Basically he said

that once you started down that road there was no going away from it. Because you put your hand on one side and the other hand on the other side, and you were stuck. And you put your foot there to kick it away, and that foot was stuck too. Roger Morris worked on the Burundi situation and one of the perennial ethnic conflicts there and the role of American commercial enterprises in U.S. foreign policy in Burundi. I lead a study initially on Micronesia. The role of the U.S. in determining Micronesia's political and social future.

Q: This was before we reached the Compact Program?

McHENRY: This was before the Compact, and one of the issues which we addressed was whether there ought to be a Compact. The study came out with very strong reservations about the approach which the U.S. was taking. Reservations, which I might add, have been borne by the facts.

Q: It's a sad situation.

McHENRY: It's a very sad situation. I can't guarantee it would have gone differently had they followed the approach which we outlined, but some of the things that we warned against in the considerations which the U.S. were using, turned out to be correct. We warned against the heavy emphasis on the future military use of the area, and allowing the military's desire to have tenement in the Marshals and the area in Palau; that was sort of tail wagging the policy and we felt that it was incorrect thing to do. We also warned against allowing portions of Micronesia which were well off by virtue of their military attractiveness to go their own way leaving the less well off areas to suffer. There were economic and cultural and social advantages of trying to encourage some kind of political arrangement which kept them going. You simply can't have seven first rate hospitals for a 100,000 people. You can't do it. Or seven first rate institutions of higher education for a 100,000 people. It can't be done. Well, they didn't do that, they went on their way and we have a fragmented situation out there which has in fact been embarrassing to the U.S. The labor practices in the Marianas, for example, have been very, very embarrassing to the U.S.

Q: I went and spent a week there. It's poor and impoverished, living off the dole essentially.

McHENRY: It's one of the poorer places whereas the Marianas and the Marshals came off better and Palau came off better because they had something the military wanted. But in any event, we did that. Later on, that is where the book Micronesia, Trust Betrayed was developed. I did a study on terrorism, and specifically with question of how you get hostages back. Do you follow what was in the Kissinger theory that we're not going to negotiate, we're not going to have anything to do with you, or do you try to find some pragmatic way of getting hostages back. The interesting part of that period was that we used young people in that research process. We had a very large paid internship program and every year we had a contest, if you will. We selected interns form all over the country

and we brought them to Washington to work at the Endowment for 6 to 12 months, under Tony Lake or me or Roger Morris or a number of others, Martin Carpenter who later went back to State Department. Those young people were able to look at the research in a very different way. It was not just detached academic research. They went into the departments, they talked to the organizations, they went to the Hill and they delved into and then gave some life, some meaning to things which might have otherwise been very unattractive.

Q: You know, one of the things you mentioned the people who were there and it sounds like Carnegie Institute at that period represented you might say the democratic, I won't call it left, shadow government or something.

McHENRY: There were a number of articles that were written along those lines, talking about the rise of Carnegie Endowment and how it was giving Brookings and a number of other institutions a run for their money.

Q: Yes, because Brookings before had been considered...

McHENRY: And we were different. Because we were publishing and we did pay some attention to the impact of what we wrote and what we researched. We didn't simply write for somebody's bookshelf. It was a very different time and of course everybody who was there went on to do other things. In fact on the Transition Team alone for the new State Department, I went on with the Transition Team, Tony Lake was there. By this time Roger Morris had moved further, further, further left, and was writing zingers against some of us by the way, but it was an interesting time.

Q: You know, you speak about books ending up on bookshelves. Particularly in the field of contemporary political science, when I do these interviews I see people and their bookshelves are lined with books that have come out and you could almost tell by their titles when they were written. Did you find that the writing and the research had an impact anywhere? How did this translate into policy?

McHENRY: It's always difficult to be precise in terms of policy. But when the Compact for example was being debated on the Hill they held up the Compact. And they had a theory in which the book and the findings were gone over pretty thoroughly. The strength of the Pentagon and the Micronesian lobbyists was enormous during that period of time and everyone went on their merry way. But the same thing is true with Roger Morrison's work on Burundi. I think that had something of an impact. "The Tar Baby" option which Tony Lake did, was more of a look back, but it also was important in exposing the kind of thinking which had gone into the policy of the Nixon administration on South Africa. And that kind of thinking the U.S. had started moving away from over the next ten years.

Q: In '76 you got involved in Carter campaign. Was this...?

McHENRY: It was a strange kind of relationship. I was asked to serve on the Advisory Committee for Carter. This was a group that was put together ostensibly to educate him on foreign policy to bring together papers that he might use on foreign policy or to answer his questions. The committee didn't meet that much. You always wonder how useful these things are. I started on that from about September of '76 until the election. Before that period, the summer of '76, I was away, I had a European Union fellowship and I spent the summer of '76 on that fellowship. Dick Holbrooke and I were together in the same group and I spent my time looking at the role of guest-workers in Europe and traveled to Italy and Germany and Netherlands and the UK and so forth, with the guest-worker program problem.

Q: When you were on this advisory group when Carter was sitting in did you find that there was a significant focus on Africa?

McHENRY: One session was held on Africa and I was not there. I was off on the European Community fellowship, but he did hold a session about Africa. The Advisory Group was broader, was addressed to the whole realm of foreign policy, and then he and they set up some individual sessions on the Middle East and Africa and so forth on military policy. I did not participate in the one on Africa, it was held in airplanes. I was in Germany or some place.

Q: What was the feeling as the election was approaching about Carter taking foreign affairs, was there enthusiasm, sort of "Anything but the previous administration"?

McHENRY: I don't think there was "Anything but the previous administration", but this is a period of time in which there was a concern, pretty broadly held, that we had a foreign policy that was without values. Particularly on the human rights side. We'd gone to far emphasizing the strategic issues, the communist threat, that kind of thing. It wasn't that people weren't concerned about strategic issues and communist threat. But there was a concern that in Pakistan or in our relations with the Shah we weren't thinking enough about the Kurds, that we were too cold when it came to the southern Africa, that there was a whole strain of dictators that we were too close to.

Q: Did you feel that as the campaign moved on, that Carter would be a different creature in the political, international sphere?

McHENRY: I felt that way, or maybe I hoped. But there were reasons to believe that. His speeches tended to inject a human rights element. And certainly the human rights community rallied around him. Now, that ended up being good and bad. Because, when you get people, advocates of the cause, involved in any campaign they sometimes want to move so swiftly that you have not yet established your policies to implement the new approaches. That was true with Clinton on the gay issue. People were pushing him on gays before he had even gotten into the Pentagon. Before they'd been able to articulate a framework in which they were going to operate. It was true with Carter on human rights. Before Carter's people, before the Secretary of State had a chance to say how we're going

to get from here to there, there were those both inside and outside the administration who were already there. That's a formula for disaster.

Q: I know that campaign pledge, I was in Korea at the time, campaign pledge to withdrew our troops at the time. It sent shivers, because it almost guaranteed a war.

McHENRY: Korea was a perfect example. You might adopt the overall goal, but there is a long way between adopting it and getting it. Korea was an excellent example of where the administration got into trouble. But it wasn't the only one. There were other examples. By the time they sort of rushed to put out a more thoughtful speech on foreign policy, on human rights, it was late in the game. Even though it was early in the game, it was already late.

Q: This of course is always the problem with a new administration coming in. They get caught up in their own rhetoric and have true believers, and then you are up against the practicalities of governance which is quite different matter.

McHENRY: One of the problems is that people you need to help you get elected are not the people you need or can afford to help you govern. That is the real problem.

Q: This is true in revolutions too. You have to get rid of the people who caused the revolution, even if they won. With a guillotine or some other way.

McHENRY: Hopefully, you don't have to go that far. But it is a real problem. And you had the example early in administration a young chap, not so young, by the name of Brady Tyson, who had been a professor at American University and close to Andy Young. He was put on the American delegation to the Human Rights Commission. He didn't know anything about how the government operates. So, Brady Tyson goes off to Geneva and he makes a speech in which he apologizes for the policies of the U.S. government in Vietnam. Now, there are reasons for criticizing the U.S. government and there may even be an occasion or circumstance when one wants to apologize. But that is a thoughtful decision and it is not made by Brady Tysons of this world. The result was just an absolute horrible circumstance. Very strong criticism of the administration early on as being undisciplined and having people going out doing their own thing.

Q: When you were working with this were you thinking in terms of coming back in?

McHENRY: When I went on the Transition Team, right after the election early in November, Cyrus Vance who had been designated Secretary of State pulled around him a group. Tony Lake was I think the person who was the first one there, and I was there and Dick Moose, and Dick Holbrooke and a whole group of others. We had the responsibility of not only trying to help on the personnel questions, to staff the new administration and foreign and defense affairs, but we had all kinds of policy questions that one needed to try and get a grip on for the beginning of the administration. What do you have to do when you walk in the door, that first week or the first two weeks. And before it we had to do

staffing. We divided up the foreign affairs and defense community on the basis of some expertise. Bill Maines who was also in that group was in charge sort of the UN system, and the Bureau of International Organization Affairs and a number of others. I had responsibility for USIA and Latin America. I had AID as well. I spent a lot of time working with the various outgoing heads and those various bureaus and organizations, trying to get some accurate knowledge of immediate policy decisions, trying to find out who the good people were, trying to look at the whole question of organization. Do you want this structure? Beginning of administration is a good time to make organizational changes. We did that until the end of January. Very long hours, extraordinary long hours and time put in.

It was my second transition. I served on the transition team from Johnson to Nixon. I had served on that transition team while I was in the State Department quite by accident. Because Johnson had appointed Bill Rogers, who was then a private citizen, had been Attorney General in the Eisenhower administration, close to Nixon, Johnson had appointed Rogers to serve on a delegation to the UN. And I had been detailed on the State Department to serve on that staff. So, when Nixon is elected, sets up the transition team, selects Rogers as his Secretary of State designate, Rogers naturally reaches out for people he knows in the Department. I was one of those and I was pulled away to serve on that transition team. So, ironically I was on two transition teams, the one from Johnson to Nixon and one from Ford to Carter.

Q: The transition team period was very interesting because it often sets the attitudes. Can you do a little compare-and-contrast, sort of, the approach or attitude of Nixon to the Carter one?

McHENRY: Yes. Let me just take foreign affairs. Because that's the one I know. Transition to Nixon. Nixon in the first place operated out of the Hotel Pierre in New York and he had a number of people up there around him. There was immediately tension between the State Department people who were on that transition team and Nixon and what was to be the White House staff. Nixon took the advantage of the time to restructure the Foreign Affairs Bureau. Nixon/Kissinger, as Kissinger was up there with Nixon. They came up with a whole series of re-structure for Foreign Affairs. Which when we saw it in Washington sitting there with Rogers, we said, "This is a formula for disaster." That in essence the White House is taking over Foreign Affairs and leaving State with day-to-day administration. Rogers felt that even if this was true, it didn't matter. That he was a personal friend of the president and when it came to the real issues, he would be taking it up with the president. But, from the very beginning, having seen that, everyone in State recoiled against it. It wasn't just AID. The Pentagon had a problem with it too. And you got immediately that we-they approach. Now, in the Carter administration, there were some things which started off looking as if they were going to be we-they. And I don't know what Brzezinski was saying to his transition group, but I know what Vance was saying to his. Vance said to us, when we saw something we didn't like, he said, "Look, we are not going to have this we-they approach. I do not want you guys knocking them and I do not want them knocking us. You guys work with it. If you have a difference, sit

down and work it out. That was Vance's approach. I must say that I think Vance kept his part of that bargain, but in my view, Brzezinski did not. You see it come out clearly in Brzezinski book, you see it come out clearly in Carter's book, and certainly those of us who were watching it on a day-to-day basis felt very strongly that it was not working as Vance would have wanted it. And as you know it was significant in Vance's resignation. Because it was the White House "do something" crowd, which not only overrode Vance but made a decision when he wasn't present.

Q: When you have something like this, if you're playing by the gentlemen's rules and the other side has its own agenda, the gentlemen usually lose.

McHENRY: I regret to say, I think that's true. It's easy to do in the State Department and vis-a-vis the White House. Power rests over there in the White House. The President ends up with a foreign policy structure, the foreign policy that he wants or that he gets by default by his own lack of interest in it. Secondly, you can sit there with a very small staff in the White House and the NSC, and you have freedoms which a Secretary of State will never have. You will never have to see every Tom, Dick and Harry who arrives wanting to see the Secretary of State. You don't have to go off to all of these meetings around the world. You can be very, very selective. You are not swamped with the day to day bureaucratic structure on the Hill and all the things that go with it. As Secretary of State you start off, I think, at a distinct disadvantage to someone sitting in NSC seat who really wants to be the Secretary of State.

Q: That in a way the Kissinger legacy spilled over, one has the feeling, that Brzezinski watched what Kissinger did and was going to copy and do it better.

McHENRY: There are those who say that he spent his life trying to compete with Kissinger. I won't comment on that.

Q: Did you find in this Transition Team as so often happens, we talked about this before. The people who help to win the campaign, the ideologues, particularly I would say in human rights, and getting troops out of Korea and all this, were they present or was this a more professional group?

McHENRY: I think Carter made the same mistakes that Clinton has made later, that Nixon made earlier. I think the nature of the American political process requires increasingly a group of people who get involved in the campaign at a very early stage, sometimes four years early. When the election is over there is a feeling that you owe them something. The tendency is to get them involved in the new administration, frequently in the wrong jobs, and you pay a price for putting in the position of responsibility people who simply shouldn't be there. They had a role, their role was to help you get elected. Their role is not necessarily helping you govern. You see this with Ham Jordan in the Carter Administration, you saw it in the administration of Ronald Reagan where he eventually had to bring in people to run his various aspects of the government, the White House. His first National Security Advisor didn't last very long. He'd been involved in

the campaign, but he didn't last very long. And you also see it now with Clinton, who's had to go through many changes in order to get the kind of people around him that he needs. It's very unfortunate and people don't learn that lesson.

Q: As the Carter Administration came in dealing with the transition in the State Department, did you see any areas that concerned you? I mean, people coming in who were...?

McHENRY: Let me just take the area which I know best of all, which is the UN. I was asked to go to the U.S. Mission as the Number Three person. There still are people, and if you get this on-line information about people in the news, you'll find that these inaccurate stories are still there. There are people who believe that I went to U.S.-UN because I had been a long time friend of Andy Young, or because I had been active in the civil rights situation in the South. I did not know Andy Young, I had not been active in the human rights movement. I had consciously decided that I was going to be involved and concentrate on foreign affairs. But I was persuaded to take that job. It was Vance's effort to try and persuade Andy Young that he really needed to surround himself with people with some professionalism, some specialized knowledge. So Vance persuaded Andy to take Jim Leonard, who had been in the diplomatic circles who had retired, brought him back as Number Two, I was brought in as Number Three. Melissa Wells was brought in as the person in charge of economic and social affairs, and then there was Al Lowenstein, former Congressman, who was there. If you look at it, we had three of the five people who had very long, deep background in foreign affairs.

Q: Leonard, you and Wells.

McHENRY: Andy had none, and Lowenstein even though he'd been active in all kinds of causes had no background in foreign affairs and had no discipline of bureaucracy. There were others who they brought in. I mentioned Brady Tyson. Brady was only one of several who came in because they'd known Andy, or they'd known Al Lowenstein, or they'd been active in the campaign, or they'd been active in some kind of process, and now were there in the U.S. mission to the UN, or some place in the UN system. It was clearly a mistake. Or if they were to be brought in, they should have been reined in early. Most of those people eventually left, left quite early, because of putting their foot in their mouth, or because they became disenchanted about the difficulty of translating the ideas into policy, of getting from here to there. But it's a problem. It really is. And I suspect that you find the same thing in any number of places in the administration. You had it in the Reagan Administration, the same way. The Bureau of Latin American Affairs was simply wiped out and they brought in ideologues after ideologues.

Q: There was blood in the corridors.

McHENRY: Absolutely. Including the mistreatment of one of our most distinguished carrier diplomats, Bill Bowdler. Who was simply told by Reagan's people to clear out his

desk in 24 hours. In his place, in the place of that Bureau of experience, they put in ideologues.

Q: You were at the United Nations '77 to what?

McHENRY: To '81. I was there the first two years in the role as the U.S. deputy representative to the Security Council. Sort of curious position, which had organizational problems. The theory was that the responsibilities in the Security Council were so great that you needed three people there: a permanent representative, the deputy permanent representative and the deputy for the Security Council. I never felt that we needed three people. That if the permanent representative wasn't there the deputy permanent representative was around and I was concerned about the duplication of responsibilities between the deputy of the permanent representative and the head of the Political Section. Basically, they were both in the same area. I know how the job got created, I know why it got created in the Stevenson Administration, but it still was not something that I was..., if I were doing it I would redo it. And I tried to redo it. But if you ever want to bump your head against the stone wall, try and get rid off a presidential appointment position. They want to add them. But nobody wants to get rid off them. No administration wants to get rid off them. What I decided to do was to concentrate on some issues. Sure, I exercised oversight over the political policy activities of the Mission, but I got deeply involved in a series of events. Mostly having to do with southern Africa.

We took on some initiatives on Namibia and Zimbabwe and South Africa. We tried to push those through. We didn't select those issues lightly. There were three issues which the U.S. faced during this time. Three issues which took all of our time. One was southern Africa, the second one was the Middle East, and the third was the North-South dialogue on the economic questions. Those were the issues which took our time and we found ourselves constantly in the minority and what we sought to do was to take the initiative on those areas, and not react to others, but to act.

Q: Before we move to the issues, how did you find Andy Young in these things? He had great prestige as both a charismatic person, a real personality, certainly not a hacker, or somebody who was hiding his life under a bush or something.

McHENRY: It's interesting, the relationship with Andy. As I said, I didn't know him personally. I had not been active in the civil rights movement, no matter what the on-line reference services say to this day. In fact, when there was an indication that Andy was going to be a person designated as permanent representative, we got a call in the State Department from an airplane on Saturday. It was late on Saturday and we were all tired. And the call said, "Andy Young is going to be designated, someone has to brief him." There were only two logical people to brief Andy Young. One was Bill Maines, who had been in IO, written widely about international organizations, one of the authorities. The other was Don McHenry. Neither one of us wanted to do it. Because, as I said, it was late in the week, none of us had seen our families, we flipped the coin and Bill lost. He had to

stay there and brief Andy Young. So, I still didn't know Andy Young. Obviously, I met him later on when there was a discussion about going to U.S.-UN.

I was asked, for the record, to go to the White House to work with Brzezinski. I went over to see Brzezinski, to find out from him what it was he envisioned in terms of the operations of the NSC and specifically what he wanted me to do. He outlined what he wanted, the way he saw these operation, and he outlined what he saw me doing. And he had, as I recall, three areas which he wanted me to oversee. One was Africa, where I had no particular expertise. I mean, I spent a lot of time on the South Africa project, and Africa questions had been part of my daily week when I was in charge of Dependent Areas Affairs in the State Department, but that's a long way from having the specific knowledge of countries. The second one is the wide area of interdependence, of the North-South questions, these questions that cut across nations, regional lines. And that was somewhat intriguing, in that particular era. The third was never clear to me, it had part responsibility for Latin America. But it was only part, because I knew that he was also talking with Bob Pastor. In any event, I went back to the State to the Transition Team, I had a session with Vance, and Vance was, to put it mildly, dead-set against it. I had my own reservations about doing it, but he was dead-set against it. He started talking with me about the new Human Rights Bureau in State Department and I was not interested in being Assistant Secretary for Human Rights. So it meant that transition was just about over, and most transition staff has been assigned some place, and I was not. And then as I said, the heat was put on me to go to New York. It meant moving and it meant working with somebody I didn't know.

Andy was a charismatic figure, there is no question about it. He had been in the civil rights movement, close to King, and done very well in the Congress on issues which were outside human rights. He'd done commercial issues in Congress for example. He'd never been in any organization that required discipline. The Congress is the last place to do work to prepare you for that. You're your own boss in a sense. He brought with him a staff that had been with him. A number of people that he brought came from the same sort of ideological movement of very liberal human rights, they can do anything, they can change government. Many of those attributes are very positive, very good, you want them around. However, you want people to learn how to get them done. Andy himself had a style and a charm which had many positives. He got attention in terms of the Mission, he got attention in terms of the foreign affairs community, he got attention particularly in terms of the developing world, and that was very important to us. Both North-South and Africa. Andy got attention on the Middle East because there was a view "This is a man of fairness, who will be concerned about the rights of the Israelis, but he would be equally concerned about the rights of the Palestinians." So, on the contentious issues of our time, Andy just came in with the kind of charisma that you want and kind of the head start that you want. And he was very energetic.

Some of those things had their negative side to them. He's there for the first time in bureaucracy, needs to work as a part of the team. They are needing some degree of discipline. Some need to get expertise to delve into issues, to sit patiently in long,

interminable meetings, and he is now not one of 535 Congressmen where there is a premium on your speaking your mind, you are now The Representative of The U.S., and there is no such thing as your speaking personally. So, it created in some sense a series of problems. Andy was always making some kind of statement which was so loose that it could have been misinterpreted or it shouldn't have been said in the first place. There was an impression that he was at odds either with the State Department or the White House on this or that. He found it difficult to say "no" to some of the people who had been sort of political and ideological soul-mates for him. He had some difficulty with staffing. He stayed with people who had been his friends and close to him, stayed with them for much too long. Andy was good at getting attention, at opening the door, but it was always necessary for someone to come along and do the detailed negotiation. I ended up being that someone.

Q: I was wondering, just as this early fit. Here comes Andy Young of the Civil Rights Movement. And he brings with him the like-minded. Here you were, a bureaucrat during the Nixon Administration. In a way "Where were you?" and that sort of thing. Did you find this was a problem initially?

McHENRY: I didn't find that a problem. I had crossed that bridge. Not in the Nixon Administration but in the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations. You have to decide, everyone has to decide what their particular role is in life, and their particular contribution. The Civil Rights Movement was going on. I wasn't unconcerned about it, but after all, one of the objectives of the Civil Rights Movement was to open up the government to give opportunities to people. One of those areas that needed opening up, and there was the shortage of opportunities, was the foreign affairs community. So I saw myself as doing my particular role. I wasn't denigrating anybody else's. But it was mine, and it was a conscious decision on my part to do what I could to develop expertise and to bring perspectives into foreign affairs. And that's what I did.

Q: But I was thinking, there is nothing more intolerant than a young person who is part of a time that has accomplished something great.

McHENRY: Oh, many of them looked on me as a part of the enemy. There's no question about that. They looked upon me as sort of set in the ways, and have to be watched because I'm not going to be strong enough and aggressive enough and so forth. Not all of them. One of Andy's young people that came there ended up being my closest aid. Stayed with me when Andy was gone and I became permanent representative. Tall chap, sort of gangly and awkward and shy, by the name of Henry Miller. Henry turned out to be very, very hard working, pragmatic, idealistic person who was extremely important in the Namibia negotiations. I can't underscore how important he was. There was the suspicion. It worked both ways, though. Later on, in dealing with the South Africans, South African Foreign Minister, Pik Botha, was quoted, I can't remember where, saying, "The difference between Andy Young and Don McHenry, Andy Young wants to hang us, McHenry wants to hang us with finesse." That was his way of differentiating between the two of us.

Q: How about Al Lowenstein, how did he fit in?

McHENRY: Al never fit in. Al never understood the operations of government, never bothered to learn how he could pursue his policy objectives in way in which he had a chance of getting them adopted. Some of them could never be adopted because they were just outside the realm. But, he never understood that, and he eventually resigned in frustration and the government was The Government and the people were trying to handicap him and all that kind of stuff. He didn't understand it. He would allow groups and individuals to come in and use his office. No security clearance, nobody knows who they are, it was almost as if they were hanging out. And when you pulled his chain on something like that, instead of his acknowledging that he might have done it differently, you were part of the enemy. He didn't understand it. Al and Brady Tyson were very close together. It was a mistake, just absolutely a mistake.

Q: Did Lowenstein concentrate on the Middle East, being of Jewish origin that might have been his thing?

McHENRY: No. It was human rights. Which is a very broad license.

Q: Human rights had been on the agenda for some time, but this is really the first time that you had an administration that was interested in it.

McHENRY: That's right, that was really interested in pushing it in terms other than broad principles.

Q: Human rights actually turned out to be an extremely potent thing. But at the time, how did this play when you first came into the UN with the delegates of the other countries. Because I'm sure you would be talking more to the professionals in a way, since you are a professional and all, what were you getting?

McHENRY: Don't forget, most countries had professionals.

Q: Yes, that's what I mean.

McHENRY: Most countries do not have the sort of constant changes and refreshing injections of outsiders as the U.S. has, they don't follow that as a practice. I think we got a view among many that this is a new administration, human rights very high, care about the developing countries, care about North-South, and we had a very positive reception. There is no question about that. For a while, there was a sort of a suspicion, can they translate their zeal, new policy directions into policy?

Q: Did you find the Soviet Union on some of these, particularly the African issue, were they playing much of a role?

McHENRY: They played a role, but on the three big issue that we were concerned about, southern Africa, North-South and the Middle East, our strategy was to isolate them. We didn't want them involved and screwing up the process by the introduction of ideology. We had to deal with them but we intended to isolate them. It was easiest to do on North-South. Because whereas they would give all kinds of speeches criticizing The Western Countries, and the policies followed by The Western Countries, the countries of the South knew that the Soviet Union's economic policy was an absolute failure and that they weren't contributing towards development either. So, they didn't have much credibility on the North-South questions. And they didn't want to make some of the changes in their own policies which would have been necessary for some kind of North-South dialogue.

On the Middle East, there had been a longer history of trying to isolate the Soviet Union, at least from the Israeli-Palestinian question. That goes back to Kissinger days, where the view was that the U.S. was going to be the principal actor. We had to keep worrying about the Soviet Union and what it was doing in Syria and so forth, but it was pretty isolated down there.

On southern Africa you couldn't leave them out. They were close to the liberation movements, they were very close in Mozambique and Angola. What you had to do was to pursue policies which though they didn't like they were not in a position to oppose because the Africans liked them. So we constantly found a situation where if we got the Africans on board, the Soviets would not favor what we were doing, would not like it, but they wouldn't, couldn't block it, because to block would have incurred the wrath of the African countries. The classic example of that is Resolution 435 on Namibia. That Resolution was passed and the Soviet representative in essence said, "We think you are stupid, African countries, to go along with this."

That was an approach which was reasonably successful for us. We had used it from the very beginning on the Namibia negotiations, where we got together the five western countries, U.S., UK, France, Germany, and Canada to take a lead in those negotiations and while we kept the Soviets informed, we went out of our way to keep them informed, we were not aiming to get their support. We were aiming to make sure that they couldn't torpedo.

Q: As you saw it, was the Soviet long-term strategy to hope all hell would break loose in South Africa, and they would take advantage of a revolutionary situation?

McHENRY: No, I don't think so. I think, unfortunately, the Cold War clouded our analytical abilities in Africa and any number of other places, in fact most places, I must say. Except those places in which there was a direct threat. I don't think Africa was ever a high priority of the Soviet Union. It was never something that they were going to make a hell of a lot expenditures to get. If they could do something on the cheap, gain an advantage, fine, but there was nothing that they were going to make a great sacrifice over. I believe even in the case of their involvement in Angola that that was largely the Cuban initiatives which backed the Soviets into it, rather than a Soviet initiative and then the

Cubans were brought in. It was the other way around. For those who don't believe that the Soviets had reservations about making any great sacrifice, just look at what they did when they dropped Mozambique in Mozambique's hour of real need. South Africans virtually gave Mozambique an ultimatum in the late 1980s and the Soviets said "Don't come to us." I think the only place where the Soviets really made an effort was Ethiopia. Even there I wouldn't say that their policy was the bravest thing at all. They were backing Somalia, and found themselves backing a country which was going against one of the cardinal rules of Africa, which is territorial integrity. So they got off that horse, and went up to Ethiopia, and then we stupidly got on the horse they just abandoned.

Q: Was it mentioned at all on the policy level, if the Soviets are so concerned about national identity and trying to bring about changes in Angola and elsewhere, maybe we can mess around in Azerbaijan or someplace like this. Was this...?

McHENRY: No, I never heard that. That doesn't mean that the Agency may not have been doing something like this, but I don't think so. I think the Soviets exploited internal conflict and chaos in development, and we tended to conclude that any place they were was some kind of test of our manhood, and they tended to conclude that any place we were was a test of theirs. Neither of us had a policy which in my view was coherent. And it was dangerous, because my own view was that there was never an overwhelming danger that we or the Soviet Union would consciously decide to use nuclear weapons or to attack the other, or to go consciously or directly into one of the other's sphere of influence. There was always a danger that we would back into some kind of a conflict, in Angola or some place. The two times where you could say that there were exceptions to those two generalizations were Cuban missile crises and that 24 or 28 hour alert which occurred in the Nixon Administration over Middle East. And I'm not sure that those were exceptions, I think both of those two were backing into.

Q: Your concentration then was pretty much on Namibia, and... Was Zimbabwe settled at that time?

McHENRY: No, Zimbabwe was still wide open, and Andy worked a great deal on Zimbabwe. We had an initiative going there which was handled by Steve Low who was our Ambassador in Zambia at the time and Johnny Graham, a British diplomat. Johnny and Steve Low traveled around back and forth, talking to the parties, trying to come up with what they believed was a set of principles which would constitute the basis for settlement in Zimbabwe. One of the sad things of the history is that as one looks back on the settlement in Zimbabwe, there is a tendency to believe that it took place at Lancaster House. Well, Lancaster House would not have been possible without that one-and-a-half, two years of bouncing around that Steve Low and Johnny Graham did. Because they had gone a very long way hammering out the principles. Lancaster House hammered out the last of them, but it was the last of them. It wasn't as if everyone came to Lancaster House with a blank slate and they sat down and they hammered out a deal. It didn't occur that way. But they did Zimbabwe. Andy participated in a number of those things. He went to

the meetings in Malta and Cyprus, and Zimbabwe and South Africa. I did some of those, but I tended to do them on the edges of the negotiations which I was doing on Namibia.

Q: I wonder if you could explain why the importance of Namibia. Because Namibia is, what I gather, is a hunk of desert. And has disappeared completely off the foreign policy radar, and unlikely to reappear. What was there about Namibia in the '77-'81 period?

McHENRY: Well, it's more than a hunk of desert. It's a very attractive place in many respects, but a lot of desert, no question about it. A lot of diamonds too. Lot of animals. No, Namibia was important in terms of the whole, solving the southern Africa problem. And it had always been looked at as even the key or one of the keys to resolving their southern Africa question. Why? In the first place, unlike South Africa or Angola or Mozambique, it was a well established argument that the international community had a responsibility for Namibia. It had been a German colony, then a mandate under the lead of the UN succeeded to the responsibilities of the mandate. The Courts had always upheld that. The courts had blocked South Africa in all of its efforts to take over legally. This had been the place that the international community concentrated its efforts on. Feeling was that it was the easier thing to do, it was the area where one could trace responsibility most directly in terms of the international community, and it was looked upon as South Africa's Achilles' heal in a sense. Because if you could detach Namibia from South Africa you were going a long way towards a) stopping them from extending their practice of apartheid, and b) possibly setting an example of democratic non-racial government right next to this citadel of apartheid. Those were some of the reasons for trying to tackle the Namibia question. But there were other reasons. One of the reasons, which South Africa gave for its involvement militarily in Angola was that Angolan territory was used as a basis for attack on Namibia. Eventually, South Africa would have argued that Namibia was being used as a basis for attack on South Africa. So, it was connected in any number of ways. We believed that if we could resolve the Namibia question, we could take care of, or go a long way towards resolving a number of problems. A) We'd get rid off the question of self-determination in Namibia, people want their own business. B) By doing that you get the South Africans out of Namibia and back over in South Africa. C) If there are no South Africans in Namibia then Angola can't use South African presence in Namibia to argue for Cuba's or anybody else's presence in Angola. So it was a whole series of things. If you could solve the Namibia question, you remove the basis of South Africans' presence in Namibia, Cubans' presence in Angola. The Angolan situation then would have been reduced to what it is, what it has always been in my view, a dispute among Angolans between UNITA and NPLA and any number of other groups. That was the reason that we spent so much time on it.

And obviously given sensitivity in this country towards anything Cuban, it was very important for political purposes, in terms of keeping the Cubans in check. Since the Cubans were looked upon as surrogates for the Soviets, it was also a way for keeping the Soviets in check. I have already indicated to you, I do not believe that the Soviets went into Angola on their own initiative. I think the Soviets went into Angola largely under

pressure from Cubans and there is ample academic research which backs this up. Jerry Lowe's very long piece, which was done at Brookings, is an example of research on this.

In any event, we felt that we came out, ironically, out of the Ford Administration with the basis of a possible resolution of the Namibia question. The Security Council then, during the latter days of the Ford Administration, had passed Resolution 385 which sought to establish the terms under which the self-determination would come about in Namibia. It was a pretty good resolution. It didn't have any ideology that one normally has in these things, it was moderate in tone, it was pretty good.

We started out in the Carter Administration. We had on one hand that resolution which was passed by the Security Council, and on the other hand we had Kissinger's on-going initiative with the South Africans. Kissinger, in the latter days of his administration in the last year got involved in the southern Africa issue. He had one initiative on Namibia, which he was doing I think as a trade-off for trying to get the South Africans to cooperate with him on Zimbabwe. Our view unanimously, with this new team coming in, was the UN Resolution offered an opportunity and that the Kissinger initiative was a disaster. The Kissinger initiative was a continuation of a kind of hard hearted policies which had characterized much of that administration. They had agreed with the South Africans on a number of things which we felt were inconsistent with the responsibility of the international community for the area. And we wanted to try and build on the UN Resolution 385. How could you do it? There was the Kissinger initiative outstanding. What we decided to do was to start a new process, where we would come up with this idea of building on 385. That's immediately vetoed. On the grounds that this is the U.S., we've changed governments but the country hasn't changed. We have an initiative out there and we need to follow through on it. We may have to mold it, massage it, change it, but it is out there and the South Africans had been given it, and we need response from them on it, you guys, get the response. I for one thought if they came back and said they wanted to continue that I had no idea what I was going to do. Because it had things in it that I just felt were horrible. They were so horrible that I can't remember precisely what they were, but they were pretty bad. I feared that South Africans would come back wanting to continue. We were lucky. The South Africans had no values or principles, and they felt, I think, "This is a new administration and it's an opportunity for us to start all over again. We don't even have to take a few concessions we gave to Kissinger. We got a lot out from those concessions, but maybe we can get even more from the new crowd." So, they said they weren't willing to continue on the basis of their prior discussion with Kissinger. They didn't realize that we were joyful when they came back and said that. It gave us a chance to start with a clean slate and that's what we did.

Q: What was the attitude of the National Security Council, Brzezinski and with Carter, but particularly Brzezinski? Did he see things as "How to stick it to the Soviet Union?"

McHENRY: At this stage he wasn't a factor on Namibia or southern Africa, and in fact I would say that throughout the administration he was not a factor except in as far as he

could kill things. He became an expert in using bureaucratic ways in delaying things. I'll give you several examples.

On Angola, it was here that he wanted to inject his own staff. Whenever I went off to Angola usually there was one of the NSC staffers there. It didn't bother me. But he was looking at it from Cold War days. I mean, if you had really been interested in the whole questions, he would have had a staffer when we went to Namibia, to South Africa, to Zimbabwe. But Angola was the only place he was looking at.

Secondly, we had a debate about recognition, in the Carter Administration, do you recognize Cambodia, Vietnam, Angola? Brzezinski was a no-recognition person. Or if you did you would have to get something from them. So every time we moved on recognition of Angola, he would find some way of stopping it. He would say, in the little note he attaches to a memorandum going off to President, "Mr. President, I think you ought to consult the Hill on this." Knowing that would kill it. "Mr. President, why don't we tell them that we will recognize them if they do a), b) and c)." It's a non-starter. Absolute non-starter and he knows that. Or, "Mr. President", this is a variation of the second one, "we will recognize them after they have done a), b), c)." That's a variation, but still a condition. So it's in that kind of way that he was a factor, and usually it was on Angola. I don't know, because I wasn't that involved what went on in terms of Somalia and the Horn. But that was his participation.

In any event, we took 385 and proposed to the South Africans a... We decided to establish among ourselves a contact group. That is the then five western members of the Security Council. We were ourselves going to undertake the initiative to negotiate this whole Namibia question. We were as close to any of the parties as anyone, had some degree of credibility, and we had some power of authority. We proposed this to the South Africans.

Q: When you say "we", this is the American delegation?

McHENRY: The American delegation, State Department involved, too. There is a long story to dispute this where the idea for the Contact Group originated. Some people say I originated it, some people say Andy originated it, it really was the idea that was originated by Jerry Helman. He became Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for International Organizations. Jerry later became U.S. representative to the European offices. But it was Jerry's idea. Jerry came up with the idea of taking 385 and building on it, putting together this Contact Group which would try through contact with the various players to come up with some kind of framework for Namibia. We tried it out, the idea, first on the Germans, the British, the French, Canadians, at a breakfast which Andy had at the Waldorf. And the reaction of the various representatives was quite positive, except that German representative said, "You know I think this is pretty good, I got to go and check this back in Bonn and get back to you." Normal procedure. Even the Frenchman who was sitting there, was going to do the same thing. He didn't put it that way but he was going to do it the same way, because you have to.

That evening, Andy sitting around with press, talking about these new experiences at the UN and things he had to learn, said “Some of these people can’t go to the john without...” That wasn’t his language, but that was the essence of it. Needless to say, it was in the newspapers the next morning. The German representative, to put it mildly, was pissed.

Q: Did you find yourselves going into Andy Young’s office, saying “Here’s the world.”

McHENRY: We did it all the time. You did it all the time. When I was with him and he’d say something with the newspaper reporters around, I’d quickly add “That’s off the record, fellows.” But I couldn’t be with him all day, Jim Leonard couldn’t be with him all day, and when Andy got on a theme, even when we told him, “Andy you don’t want to do this, you don’t way to say this”, you know that at some point in the day he was going to say it around the wrong people. Some of the reporters were extraordinarily good with Andy. That is, they learned that some things Andy would say they simply shouldn’t report. Because Andy didn’t have the experience, Andy wasn’t phrasing it the right way, so they wouldn’t do it. Lou Croff, from ABC who ended up being extremely close to Andy, he was very careful about what he would report. But the stringers around, the small newspapers, the guy who was trying to sell a story, those were the ones that you could be sure would pick up whatever Andy said. Sometimes, would adapt it themselves so that it was even further out, and they would write it and there was a problem. That plus the tendency of Andy to speak in shorthand. Andy was excellent in giving the first sentence and the last sentence of his thoughts. And you missed sentences two, three, four. If you heard sentences two, three and four, then the first and the last sentence aren’t so bad. But if you haven’t heard them, sentence number five was a horror. It got so, that Hodding Carter, who was then the State Department spokesman, starting telling the press as they asked him to respond to something Andy had said, Hodding would say “Look, I am not going to have a comment unless I have seen the whole thing, because I have had experience on this situation before.” There were these instances. Fortunately, as in the case of the German Ambassador, they liked him. They liked his background, they liked him personally, they liked being involved in things he was involved in. In a sense to the extent that the Sun shone on him it reflected on them. And so it was a positive thing. That doesn’t say he didn’t drive them up the wall on many occasions.

Anyway, we got agreement of these western countries to join us in this initiative. The next thing we had to do was to persuade the African countries that they should in essence sit on the sidelines and moderate some of the resolutions and postpone some of the things they were doing while we pursue the initiative. So we had another breakfast, again at the Waldorf. Again, the special status of Andy was important. Andy convened them, I explained the details of the initiative, and Andy then made a comment about it and they in essence agreed and they said to us at the time “Look, don’t do this inside of the Security Council, don’t come to the Security Council for the mandate. Because if you come for a mandate we will have to take a position which will either shoot it out of the water or water it down or what have you. Do it on your own. And keep us informed. As Members of the Security Council, as the OAU, keep us informed. When you find need for action and have to come to the Security council, that’s OK. But don’t come to us to bless this

undertaking.” It was good advice. So we then set out on this effort which took the better part of three and a half years. In fact, in the first two years we were able to negotiate Resolution 435, which was the basis of the settlement in Namibia. It was and remained the basis even though the Reagan Administration came along and in my view stood in the way of settlement, helped the South Africans to drag their feet for another almost ten years. In the end they still had to come back to 435. It was a fascinating period, fascinating experience with multilateral diplomacy. The Contact Group, made up of five countries acted for the most part as one.

Q: I would like to ask you about the role of France. Because normally France is the burr under the American saddle.

McHENRY: I said, “for the most part acted as one”. We had differences, and those differences would sometimes come out, but even with differences, we did a pretty good job of acting as one. We had problems with the French, in part because their delegation varied in quality. They had excellent working level quality, but when it came time to do something which was on the stage, they would bring in an Ambassador and put him over that working level chap, and more often than not that chap who was brought in simply had neither the background nor the inclination nor the vibes necessary to work with the group. And this frequently happened. There were instances where we got too close to some of their commercial interests. And it was difficult. There were instances where again some of their Ambassadors in the field were difficult. Where they weren’t up to snuff in terms of their capabilities or their knowledge, or they were too close to the South Africans and too simplistic in their analysis. One of the French Ambassadors, on his tour of duty in South Africa, made some unfortunate remarks in terms of the motives, specifically my motives, and trying to explain why something must be known as coming out of The Civil Rights Movements and so forth and of course everybody who had worked with me and followed me, which he had not, would not have had that little... The South Africans were bitter, and it was the kind of little things they could use when they wanted to cause trouble.

The British had excellent representation all the time. Sir James Moray was there, they could be difficult sometimes. There were occasions when David Owen, who was the Foreign Minister, could be very difficult and when their government changed and Margaret Thatcher came it, it nearly put a strain on the Contact Group. Even with those, the Contact Group pulled on negotiation on 435 and worked extremely well. It started fraying at the edges when Mrs. Thatcher came in, and it went to hell in a basket when Reagan came in. The Germans pulled out in protest of American policy, the French pulled out, Canadians pulled out in protest of changes which Reagan introduced. Even the British didn’t like what the U.S. was doing but it wasn’t very embarrassed. Then by formally pulling out, at that point it didn’t make any difference, anyway, since Contact Group meetings were virtually dead.

Q: But essentially the bones were laid for the final settlement?

McHENRY: There was no change in settlement even though it came ten years later. They will argue that there were changes, they will argue that the settlement came only after they got an agreement for Cuban withdrawal, but Cuban withdrawal was part of the rationale for 435 and it always was our rationale. I explained that to you earlier. They allowed a situation, frankly, where the Cubans were almost invited to stay because in the Reagan Administration they almost told the South Africans, "You can stay in Namibia so long as there are Cubans in Angola." What do you do if you are South Africa and you don't want to get out? You follow policies which ensure that the Cubans stay in Angola. And that's what they did for ten years.

Q: I was thinking this might be a good point to stop this. We'll pick up to finish off this segment next time. We basically talked about Namibia and the staff and the UN and Al Lowenstein, and Brzezinski

McHENRY: Let's do a little bit more on Namibia because I think there are some important things in terms of multilateral diplomacy which are reasonably important. First the term Contact Group which you see later on, you see it on Yugoslavia, Cambodia, it becomes this approach of group of countries working on a problem, dedicated group working on a problem. It then starts to get used. Secondly, just the operation, trying to mold a single policy out of three, four, five countries in this case, it's an interesting thing. I say this because I've just finished in July and August on a delegation which the Secretary General sent to Algeria. Again, five countries represented and done in a way in which one could not operate.

Q: 26th of October 1998. Last time we pretty much finished with Namibia but you mentioned at the end about the development in Namibia of the Contact Group. You said this is an important concept that got started there. I wonder if you could talk a bit about that.

McHENRY: The contact group was a group of five countries put together on the Namibia question, working together. It worked out policies and plans and met together very frequently, and was the group that negotiated 435, the principle document for settlement of Namibia. The group traveled together, met together constantly, worked out speeches, papers, demarches. The concept, we may well see in Bosnia. You saw it to some extent in Haiti. That and the idea of getting antagonists together in one place. To some extent Carter did this at Camp David. We did it with regard to the Contact Group and we called it "Proximity Talks." We got all the parties together in one city, one location, the theory being that it's far more efficient than shuttle diplomacy and to some extent it put a little more pressure on the parties. So we used those two concepts, the contact group and the idea of proximity talks.

Q: Who was in your Contact Group?

McHENRY: Five western members of the Security Council, three permanent members, France, U.S. and UK, and elected members at that time were Canada and the Federal Republic of Germany. It was a quite useful, very close working relationship.

Q: Were you and the other members of the Contact Group given pretty much a very loose rein from your principles?

McHENRY: Yes, we were given a lot of rope. But we worked very well with the principles. On two occasions the foreign ministers from the Contact Group countries came together in New York at the UN, on one occasion the group traveled to South Africa for negotiations that foreign ministers did. So the concept there worked out pretty well. On the South Africa question it was particularly important because these were the countries that South Africa, if it had any friends in the world, had any people who were going to understand its point of view, those were the countries that would. Having a united front among those five countries was very important.

Q: I would think, being an ex-bureaucrat myself, that you would have trouble, maybe not with your top people, not with the foreign minister, secretary of state, but the support staff, the desk, the bureau, and this would be true of every other member of the group, they would see things and being away from the thing that would always look for the perfection, "Why don't you go right rather than left?", and that sort of thing. I mean, this is bureaucracy in action.

McHENRY: Actually, it worked out pretty well. The tensions were there sometimes. We at U.S. UN had to work very closely with the Bureau of International Organization Affairs, in the State Department with the Bureau of African Affairs, with Policy Planning, with the Economic Bureau because one of the things we did as a contingency was to figure out what kinds of sanctions we could use if the negotiations didn't go well. We also had to work with the Defense Department because we used them to provide us with technical expertise in terms of some of the military aspects of the agreement that we were working out. That is, what was militarily feasible to do. I don't say that there weren't differences and tensions some time. I found that on the whole we at U.S. UN were less second guessed than the British. Second guessed by the Foreign Office. We had far more ability and maneuverability. Part of that was my own relationship with the principle actors in Washington. After all I had grown up with these chaps. And my own relationship with first Vance and also the President. And all along the line we used this mechanism to keep them informed and constantly get the feedback. It was a very useful device. Was it complicated? Yes, any time you try to get five countries to agree on the language of the demarche, or a demarche, and so forth, there were some examples where we didn't work so well. These were usually informal things, rather than formal things. But on the whole I think it was a good undertaking and that there were some positive things which came out of it. In terms of how to attack a problem. And of course, the whole way in which Namibia was proposed as a settlement was then copied in the Cambodian settlement. The whole process was copied.

Q: I would have thought, say with the French. The French are not exactly renowned as being team players. Although the French probably had less of a stake in this than most, did this help, or how did you feel about the French?

McHENRY: The French created problems sometimes. Part of the problem was that they had changed governments early on in the process. They did not assign a high-level official to follow things. There was too great a distance between their representative in New York and the staffer working on things. They didn't have a kind of staff support in the field that the U.S. or the UK had. And sometimes they were a little cynical about the process, cynical about the bone-fides of the South Africans. We shared some of their doubts, but he took the position that we had to push the South Africans, that we had to test them, we couldn't assume that they would not do the right thing. At the same time the French had representation in the place that neither the U.S. nor the UK or Germany or Canada, had. Angola. Angola was the key spot. It meant that every time we went to Angola we had to depend on the French for support.

Q: I would have thought that Germans, since they had played such a controlled and modest role in the world scene, at least that's my impression, that they would be under a lot of referring back to Bonn. Did you find that...?

McHENRY: I'm sure they referred back to Bonn, but I think their position was quite strong. When we traveled, someone from Bonn was usually on their delegation. They had a very strong role until... I think their role changed when the principle chap for Africa died early in the process. The Germans got a special interest. They were on the Security Council. It was in a sense a recognition of their role. And second, of course, they had been the mandate power in Namibia, and there were many Germans in Namibia, some of whom could influence German internal politics.

Q: I have a colleague who is doing a sister program with the British Foreign Service, Oral History. I just got a letter from him and he was saying that he was somewhat discouraged by seeing the modest role that the British played in moving Foreign affairs issues. Yet, other people I've talked to said that the British are not only sort of with us but also very much equal guides on things. How did you find the British?

McHENRY: I think that depends on the issue. The British were quite involved on Zimbabwe, as you could expect, on Namibia, South Africa, on Angola. In some instances they were quite delighted to have an interest but to not be too involved, not have to carry the responsibility, to be free to do their own thing. They couldn't get as distant from things as the French, who were able to do it, although there were times when I'm sure they would want to be more distant. The British have historical ties to much of the Third World obviously and some of those ties continue in the form of Commonwealth relationships or in the form of the economic interest. The economic interest sometimes particularly presented a problem to the British. How can you on the one hand do the right thing and at the same time protect your economic interest? They are frequently incompatible.

Q: Did you find, with the French, you always have to worry about the French sensibilities of not being acknowledged. Did you find this with the British at all?

McHENRY: No, I don't think so. And I would say that the Contact Group worked extraordinarily well in terms of cultural sensitivities. As a matter of fact I think it's fair to say that there were many times when the group was so close together that it was despised by all foreign offices. Because we had our own view, our own knowledge of one another, our intimate knowledge of what the facts were on the ground, and foreign offices were sometimes deprived. For the U.S. we tried to avoid that, because we usually traveled with someone from the State Department, that is Don Peterson, who was the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Africa traveled with us on the Contact Group much of the time and was able to do quite well.

It was an interesting story, because when we first proposed the Contact Group to the South Africans and they agreed to have discussions, the South Africans, before we had even designated who our representative was going to be, they took it upon themselves and tried to make sure that at least one potential person was not going to be American representative and his name was Don McHenry. And they went into the State Department dropping all kinds of hints, suggestions, not in too subtle way, as the South Africans are known to be. I think it was Bill Edmondson who was then Deputy Assistant Secretary, let them know in no uncertain terms that the U.S. selected its own personnel, and I took over as the U.S. representative on those negotiations and really took over as sort of nominal head.

Q: How did you all deal with the South Africans and Angolans, when they came up against this group?

McHENRY: The Group very carefully decided in advance what it wanted to do. We wrote our demarche together. We decided in advance of a discussion who was going to lead it, who was going to make whatever public statement and what the public statement was going to be, we even decided if there was a particularly nasty questions that had to be asked and we knew that the South Africans were going to be furious, we decided who was going to ask the nasty question because we wanted to pass it around and we didn't want the South Africans to get in the position to pick off any country. If we went into a negotiation and there were five, six, seven aspects of it, we knew who was going to handle each one of them. The South Africans didn't know it, and it may have sounded as if it was unplanned, but it was very planned.

Q: When you were through with this, obviously this continued to be a process, the type of contact group, your think this became a part of diplomatic repertoire?

McHENRY: Unfortunately with regard to the U.S., with regard to Namibia the Contact Group basically died. It technically continued to be in existence but the new administration came in with the view that the Contact Group was too complicated. It had

negotiated 435, but they took it as too complicated. There wasn't enough American leadership, though everyone acknowledged that the U.S. was basically in front of the Contact Group. Instead of having negotiations take place and be led out of New York, Jack Crawford in the Reagan Administration wanted to do it here in Washington. That gave it a bilateral tone, as opposed to a multilateral tone which we had tried very hard to keep in the negotiations. It also raised resentment among some of the Contact Group members that it was the U.S. asserting, taking over the negotiations if you will, and sort of deciding and informing the other countries as opposed to all of us sitting down and deciding together. It may have been the appropriate thing to do, given the policy decisions that the U.S. decided to take. The U.S. decided to push its anti-communism, its own analysis of Angola and southern Africa, an analysis with which I disagreed at the time and totally disagreed with as things developed. The U.S. also decided to put the withdrawal of Cubans ahead of the settlement of the Namibia question, and in essence told the South Africans they didn't have to get out of Namibia until the Cubans got out of Angola. Those kinds of policy decisions lead to the undoing of the Contact Group. The U.S. pushed itself ahead as the bilateral speaker, secondly it took policy positions which others were uncomfortable with. First, the French and then the Canadians and then the Germans, all distanced themselves from the positions that the U.S. had taken. The Canadians and the French decided to withdraw from the Contact Group. The grounds for the withdrawal, for all practical purposes it didn't exist. The Germans also acknowledged that for all practical purposes it didn't exist though they tried to continue to work with the U.S. The British, unlike the French and the Canadians and the Germans, never publicly denounced the policy changes which the U.S. had made, thought they had some sympathy for it, don't forget Mrs. Thatcher has just...

Q: I was just going to say, we are talking about the politics of the leadership, and Reagan was not a strong figure and was very anti-communist...

McHENRY: Yes, Mrs. Thatcher had come in as well. I think on the substance, even the British had strong reservations and were strongly critical of some of the positions which the U.S. took. The CG in essence on Namibia basically died on the vine, and we had ten years of back-and forth negotiations, or nine years, with the Reagan Administration. They claimed that they made a lot of changes and that they enabled them to enter in an agreement, but the fact is that they still based the whole settlement on 435. And while they would say that the pullout of the Cubans was an important key, the fact is again that the Cubans ended up pulling out only after the South Africans had made the mistake of taking on the Cubans and the Angolans, and they were trounced. Or at least lost so many people that they decided it wasn't worth it. I would say that Namibia with the right kind of pressures, Namibia and Angola could have been resolved eight years earlier.

Q: Why don't we talk about your recent use of a group, somewhat similar, when you went to Algeria?

McHENRY: I went to Algeria on so-called Eminent Persons Group for the Secretary General of the UN.

Q: This is when?

McHENRY: This is the summer of 1998. The Algerians had been sharply criticized since the early '90s, particularly around 1992, when they refused to go ahead with the elections because they were concerned that the Islamic fundamentalists would get control of the government. And the Algerians had used some pretty rough methods to put fundamentalists out. And the fundamentalists had in turn used some horrible methods and continue to use some pretty horrible methods as they fight the Algerian government. The Algerians had been criticized by the international community, human rights commission, various NGOs, they had been resistant to any international investigation or oversight of the developments within their country. They finally agreed to a visit by a group of eminent persons under the agency of the Secretary General to look at and report to the Secretary General on the developments within Algeria. The Secretary General put together a group consisting of the former president of Portugal, the former Prime Minister of India, the former Prime Minister of Jordan, the former Minister from France, the Attorney General from Kenya and myself. We went there, the five of us, and spent some time going around the country, meeting with government officials, NGOs, opposition groups, political leaders, the press, business, whole range of folks, and reported back to the Secretary General on our findings. It was a report which the Secretary General then made public. It was an experience which was quite different from my experience with the Contact Group on Namibia. And I would say it was how not to run this kind of multiple participant group.

On the Namibia process, we had no chairman. We sort of informally designated someone to be the spokesperson or to lead the presentation and so forth. And it's true that the U.S. 90% of the time was that, but we had no chairman. Without the chairman you are relieved from all sort of hierarchy which goes into multilateral process. And if you have to ever be reminded that everybody is equal in the absence of the chairman, bring that on. The chairman brings on something of the idea that there is a pecking order. This is particularly true, I found this particularly true with the chairman who was selected. It was Mario Suarez from Portugal. It may have been that a different kind of personality would have done it differently. Suarez in the first place was up in age, that affected our work schedule, how quickly we could do things. Secondly, he had a tendency to treat staff in a manner in which I would not. Staff is staff and they know that but you can learn a lot from the staff. When someone gives you advice on the basis of their experience on how to handle a particular item, you would do well to at least listen and in too many instances the chairman was dismissive to the point of not even listening.

Well, I would say that while the process came out okay, it would have come out much better, we could have made more of an impact in the Algerian situation. As it is, the Algerians have the report, but if the report had been released in a different way in New York with the Committee members present it would have been quite different from the way it was released, sort of passed to the Secretary General who released it to the press without the kind of attention that you'd want to get.

Q: How did you see the situation in Algeria, we're still talking about how it is today, what was the thrust of your Group?

McHENRY: I think that Group believed that the Algerians had a particularly difficult situation. They have made a considerable process in changing the country from one with clear military dictatorship to one where there is a civilian government and various branches of the government. Changing the government from one where there was a heavy state ownership on everything to one where they are moving over for a capitalist society. And changing the government from one party to multi-parties. Those things they have done and those are substantial changes in structure. The trick, however, is to give life and substance to those things. To make sure that the public sees that the civilian government is in charge and is not suspicious that the military isn't still running it. To make sure that there is translation in the micro-economy of the kinds of changes that you have made in the macro-sense. You got to follow through with privatization of business, with competition and so forth. The public needs to see that protection of individuals in society are operating and therefore you've got to have transparency in the government, in the police, people have to have a swift trial and a fair trial, to be seen at those. I guess what I'm saying is they have made a number of structural changes which are very important, which changed the direction of their government, potentially. Now they have to go through the process of insuring that they work, of giving the people the confidence that they actually mean it. Not that it's the same thing under a different guise. And they have to do this under very adverse circumstances.

They have terrorism going on, from the Middle East who don't like the change and want to take the government in the opposite direction. They have very, very high growth rate with unemployment, very high, 40% of the youth are unemployed and the youth make up 70% of the population. They have a severe housing shortage, they have corruption from the past, and they are trying to do all this in an economy which is based entirely on petroleum, at the time when petroleum is down. It's a very difficult process for them. I think they can do it but they are going to have to put their nose to the grindstone, which means they will have to do some things in very different ways than they have done.

Q: Thank you very much.

End of interview