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RITCHIE: The last time we mentioned Vietnam, it was about your trip there in 1962, with Senators Mansfield, Pell, Boggs and Smith.

VALEO: Right, Smith of Massachusetts.

RITCHIE: After that trip, the situation in Vietnam really began to deteriorate very badly. I wondered where you saw things going in 1963, as there were all the demonstrations in the streets . . .

VALEO: And the Buddhist monks, those immolations. I'm trying to remember now whether we reacted initially the same as everyone else on this. The main thing I think that Mansfield was concerned with in this period, and I would have certainly shared that concern, was that Johnson was going to get in deeper.

RITCHIE: This was still Kennedy's period. It was '63. This was after your trip in '62 when Mansfield came back and saw Kennedy.

VALEO: He gave a report to the president. Kennedy didn't like it. The main thrust of that report was to try to prevent a

deeper involvement. But the pressures on Kennedy, particularly within the administration, were going in the other direction, and he was slipping into it, whether he liked it or not. I think they raised the military aid group in Vietnam to several thousand in this period. It was getting heavier and heavier. Mansfield would make an occasional speech and try to keep some lid on it, but he was not able to stem that tide. The pressure in the other direction was there. People like Hilsman, and Walt Rostow, I don't know how much the Bundys were involved in it, but basically the pressures on Kennedy from his own intimate group were to deepen the involvement. So I think Mansfield sort of stayed away from it, other than occasional statements.

RITCHIE: Do you think he had given up hope on Ngo Dinh Diem by that stage?

VALEO: No, except that he recognized that Diem had slowed down quite a bit and that he didn't know how much longer he was going to be up to it. He certainly had no alternative in mind. At the same time, in the administration—they were looking for some good Vietnamese administrator who would follow our instructions a lot more readily than Diem. Basically, that's what they wanted, and that was the administration's dissatisfaction with Diem. He was too stubborn, he would not go our way.

There was one incident that I don't know if I've related already. It was an extremely important one that came up in this period, because it shows how the administration was pushing, in what direction, that is, the Kennedy advisors were pushing. That was a visit from Diem's brother, who was the Catholic bishop of Hue. He asked to see Senator Mansfield, and Mansfield had him to lunch. (He was coming through the United States.) We had him to lunch, with just the three of us present. The bishop said that the situation was difficult, but it was certainly not unmanageable. The problem was his brother's (Ngo Dinh Diem) stubborn attitude that was difficult; he didn't want to accept a number of ideas that were coming from the United States. He said that just before he left Saigon to come to the United States—I think he came by way of Paris—he had been with his brother. He said, "We had dinner and I argued with him for hours. He said the problem was that the United States wants him to take several thousand advisors in connection with a higher aid amount, but the Americans had linked the two together. Diem said, 'I'll take the increased aid, but I don't want the soldiers. I can do without them.' And I said, you have to take both, that's the way it was put. And I finally convinced him that he should take the advisors as well as the increased aid."

Now, that gives you an idea of the kind of pressure that was on Diem from us, to change the way he was handling the situation.

But the changes we were advocating were basically those which would give us a much greater role, a much deeper involvement, a much more commanding role in it, because once you put that number of advisors in, obviously the whole nature of the aid operation would undergo a change. Diem's argument apparently against it, according to his brother, was "I don't want to look like just an administrator for the United States. That will not sit well with my own people." Diem was an authentic nationalist and that was not the way a nationalist should or would behave. But the situation must have reached the point where he was persuaded by his brother to take the U.S. advisors. That was the last thing he wanted, apparently. He thought he could do it on his own without them.

There's an interesting parallel with the Philippines, where Marcos has also recently resisted American pressure to put a larger group of military aid people in there to tell him how to handle the insurgents; in my own judgment, very wisely, from our point of view as well as his own. But in any event the Bishop's comment was a reflection of what was happening in the executive branch, the kinds of pressures they were putting on Diem. Again, I don't think any of them fully appreciated the force of nationalism in Vietnam. They thought of the problem essentially as technological-administrative and that somehow or other if you could find the right figure over there, someone who would follow

our instructions, the whole thing could be cleaned up rather quickly. That was a prevailing attitude in our own country at that time, and it hasn't disappeared yet. We still think very often in the same terms.

RITCHIE: Did you have any warnings that the Kennedy administration was trying to remove Diem from office?

VALEO: Not at that time. One had that feeling later on, but I don't think at that point they were prepared to try to get rid of him. I think they really wanted to simply increase our role because Diem obviously did not know how to handle the situation and we, not so obviously, but we by implication understood how to handle it. Don't forget, this was the time of the Green Berets and Kennedy's views on anti-guerilla activities and how to combat insurgents. We were greatly under the influence of this chap who had worked in Malasia, the Englishman who had worked in Malasia, I think his name was Thompson. He was giving out a lot of advice in this country on how to beat insurgencies anywhere, because of his own success in Malasia, in quite different circumstances. I'm trying to think of the name of our equivalent of Thompson.

RITCHIE: Colonel Lansdale.

VALEO: Lansdale, yes. My own feeling is that Lansdale was not much different, that he thought it was a problem of technique

that you could do it if you went about it in the right way. There was a book written at that period called *The Ugly American*, and presumably Lansdale was the model for that. Well, I knew Lederer, who had written the book, and Lederer was a great character, but he didn't understand beans about what happened among other people, except that he recognized in a vague kind of way that the problem was not just a military problem, that you had to deal somehow or other with the needs of the people in the country in which you were attempting to produce a situation of stability that was satisfactory to you.

But I did not have at that time any feeling that they wanted to get rid of Diem. I think they thought they could still work with him. Hilsman was working with Diem's brother, or had been in touch with his brother on the strategic hamlet approach, which was developed at about this time. There are other people who can give you better judgments on the value of these things as a technique. It seemed to me that any situation in which you have to uproot people because you can't trust them not to protect your opponents, whatever the reasons, is one that is not based on the needs of the people but again is essentially, as the name strategic hamlets would suggest, some sort of a technological solution to a problem which has much, much deeper social roots. I was skeptical of this.

I thought the best thing was to keep—and I know Mansfield shared these feelings—to keep our own involvement minimal. But this was exactly the opposite of the way the administration was going at this time. I thought: if Diem can make it on his own, fine; if he can't, really the best thing to do is to cut our losses and get out. But this was very early in the game and people had not yet seen what could happen if you didn't take that approach. There was a lot of over-estimation of our capabilities you know, Kennedy's inaugural speech set the tone: we were going to make any sacrifice for freedom. Well, freedom is a vague word in some parts of the world. Sometimes it has more to do with a rice bowl and an honest leader than it has to do with rights of free speech or anything else. But we didn't fully understand it. Really, our ignorance of the situation in Asia at that time was immense. So the situation moved in the direction of deeper involvement.

I guess by throwing in a little more American involvement in Vietnam there may have been some expectation that it would help to solve the Laotian problem by negotiation. I think Harriman at that time was busy trying to negotiate some kind of a solution to the Laotian problem on the basis of neutralization, which was one certainly Mansfield would have endorsed fully, and I certainly endorsed fully. We wanted to see Souvanna Phouma back in power. He

had been the best prospect that we saw for keeping some kind of a meaningful national situation in Laos.

RITCHIE: Why is it that the administration was moving towards neutralization in Laos, and yet was absolutely resisting the idea of neutralization in South Vietnam?

VALEO: That's not clear to me. I'm not really sure why that was the case. Probably because they recognized, or they were afraid, that a neutralization situation would result very quickly in the full absorption of the South into the North, which was probably a correct assumption. I don't think that Diem could have lasted very long in a peaceful situation. Ho Chi Minh was far too important a nationalist leader. He towered so far above everyone else that I would think that it would have been almost for Diem. I suppose Ho was a Communist as well as a nationalist but his identity in Vietnam was not necessarily with a Communist ideology, it was an identification with the cause of nationalism in Vietnam, which extended from Tonkin down to Saigon. He was universally recognized as the leader in the struggle against French colonialism.

Diem was not that well known a figure. He had some recognition in Ho Chi Minh's circles and in other places as a good administrator, and as a nationalist, but he was a totally reticent man and had great difficulty in mixing with his own people. He

was basically a recluse. He would certainly not have been able to stand in any kind of election against somebody like Ho Chi Minh, who really was in full rapport with the prevailing political trends within the country.

RITCHIE: Senator Mansfield was one of the few American officials to advocate neutralization in that period.

VALEO: Yes. He tried to move in that direction because he thought it would be a kind of decent way to get out of the situation, but again I think we come back to China and the point Meloy made which I mentioned to you earlier, that the fear of that same slogan, "Who Lost China?" "Who Lost Vietnam?" "Who Lost Korea?" "Who Lost Malasia?" "Who Lost the Philippines?" that was basically an overriding factor in the political life of our own country. It was largely irrelevant to what was happening in Asia, but it was very, very meaningful in terms of American politics.

What happened, in my judgment, was that the professionals in government, who should have known better, ceased to be professional when that fear of possibly being tagged with the loss of a whole country took over, the irony of it, and the egotism of it—it's so ridiculous in retrospect—but you have to see it in the context of that time. Everybody was looking over their shoulder and saying "I didn't lose it." I mean, that was the kind of reaction you got. I think this affected the professionals in the

government. There were very few, occasionally you found somebody like Frank Meloy, who knew better, and there must have been others who had the courage in the situation in which we found ourselves, and the trust that it would not be betrayed by Mansfield or myself to be honest in the situation. But it was very difficult to find many like that.

RITCHIE: Didn't that undermine his career for a while in the State Department?

VALEO: Yes. That came later, and I'll get into that at a later point. The kind of thing you ran into more commonly from professionals for example, occurred to me this morning: on the Johnson trip I talked with John Holdridge, whom I had met before in Singapore and knew slightly. He later became one of the early heads of the liaison office in Beijing, I think before it was an embassy. Holdridge was a careerist whom I had first met in Singapore, where he had been in the consulate. Strange man. His father had been a general in the army and then became a militant pacifist after World War II. Holdridge was so afraid of being tarred with that brush, of being soft on anything, particularly communism, that again it affected his whole judgment. I remember meeting with him in Taiwan where he was assigned at the time of the Johnson trip. I was trying to work on the departure statement for Johnson at the time. Holdridge wanted to make it a lot more militant in its anticommunism than Frank Meloy and I had

originally. The thing that appalled me though was that he was talking about an invasion of the mainland from Taiwan, as though he believed it were a real possibility. Now, anybody with even an ounce of judgment at that time would have recognized that that was totally out of the question. Even with three million American soldiers it would have been an incredible thing at that early period against the full force of the Chinese revolution, which had already swept into Korea, had swept down into Southeast Asia in its extremities. The force of the upheaval in China was incredible in its power. A whole rural system fell apart and regrouped around a whole new idea in those years, and to expect some kind of technique, an invasion of the mainland from Taiwan, to change that, was an absolute pipe dream. Yet that kind of thinking was fostered by the politics at home which spoke of "unleashing Chiang" to such a degree that it affected even professional judgments, to the point where they vaguely began to think that this was really going to happen, or something along those lines.

Well, of course a man like Eisenhower was extremely important in that period because he knew that wouldn't happen, and there was no way that could happen in any kind of meaningful way for the United States, in any kind of course which would be even vaguely commensurate with whatever benefit that would flow to the United States from it. Eisenhower was a very, very key figure in this

period. I think he saved the country from going really off the deep end, and there was a great danger of that in that period. Kennedy himself, I think, probably didn't believe his own rhetoric. I don't think he believed that we were going to pay any price, and certainly after Cuba he didn't believe that. I think he learned very quickly that there were some prices you don't pay. He recognized the limits of power. But I think there were forces in the country, and forces within the professional structure, and among his own advisors, which were pushing him reluctantly in the other direction.

The thing I remember most about Kennedy's views on this was a final press conference, shortly before his death, in which a reporter asked: well, suppose all this doesn't work in Vietnam; suppose these thousands of people we're sending in as advisors don't work, are you going to send in more? Or something to this effect. And his response was: there are other solutions and he added: I think we need to look at the Burma example and the Cambodian example of neutralism. That was the first time I had a sense of Kennedy being wiser than his words sometimes, that he recognized that there were some limits you did not go beyond, no matter what happened, that you looked for other solutions. That was the first reference he made in a positive way, and the first reference which was made by anyone in the executive branch in a positive way to the situation which existed in Burma, which was

one of neutrality, and the situation which existed in Cambodia, which was also one of neutrality. So I think had he lived longer he may not have gone the way Johnson went. Obviously, this is speculation, but that one comment, I thought, was a tip off as to the way his mind was working. It was a very important one. We never got Johnson to say that. We tried many times, but we never got him to say it.

RITCHIE: You had told me the story about Mansfield taking his report to Kennedy, and that Kennedy read through it and at first was angry but then had an amicable conversation with Mansfield about it. According to Kenneth O'Donnell, who was there, Kennedy said that he got mad at Mansfield for showing him the report, and then he said, "I got mad at myself for agreeing with it."

VALEO: Yes. I suspect that's the same concept.

RITCHIE: It wasn't what he wanted to hear, but it wasn't necessarily something he disagreed with.

VALEO: I think that, again, is indicative of the difference between rhetoric and what he was really thinking.

Oh, there was another incident I wanted to talk about. I got a call, I don't know just when this came. It may have come just about this time. But I got a call from the Vietnamese ambassador

here in Washington, whom I knew. His name was Tran Van Chuong. His wife was the mother of Madame Nhu. The ambassador decided shortly after this conversation to resign, which I thought was indicative of the way the situation was going. Tran Van Chuong, like many of the Saigon leaders, had worked with Ho's Viet Minh in the early days of the freedom movement, just around the end of World War II. He was a lawyer. He's still alive, by the way, and I still know him and his wife; they're getting very old. But on this occasion she called me and asked me to come to dinner.

The dinner was for just three of us. Afterwards, we sat down to talk. She talked in French; she always did. She had just come from Vietnam, where she had seen her daughter, Madame Nhu. She said, "The situation is very bad and it's getting worse. They really should resign and leave." She didn't mean Diem, but she meant her daughter and her husband. "Otherwise," she said, "I'm afraid they're going to be assassinated." Now what she was referring to at this time, I do not know. Whether she had picked up something in Vietnam which suggested this to her. I said, "Did you tell her that?" "Oh," she said, "no." I said, "Well, why didn't you tell her?" "Are you crazy?" she said, "I'm afraid." "J'ai peur, J'ai peur." That gives you an idea of the character of her daughter, who was an imperious person, very strong willed as only Asian women can be when they are. It reminded me a little

of Tsu Tse, the last empress of China, who had the same kind of reputation for being a fierce influence on the way the government ran.

But that was an indication—you asked me whether I had any indication of it before, that was the one. Then shortly after that, Tran Van Chuong resigned as ambassador and stayed in this country. I had a friend at that time who was one of his highest assistants here in the embassy. He was a personal friend. He later became part of the governments which followed Diem's, and he rose to a very high place and became an advisor to one of the later presidents, I forget which one. We used to exchange ideas frequently and I could catch from him the same kind of feeling that there were people who wanted Diem out. I kept pushing the other idea: what's left? He said, "There are many people that could do it." But again he was essentially foreign educated. He was educated in Paris and at Harvard, and his views were quite different from Diem, who basically was still rooted in his own people.

In the same way, one must say, that Chiang Kai-shek was rooted in his own people. He knew his own people, but he knew an older version of his own people. The same thing was true in a way of Diem, he knew an older version of his people. Neither of them had the capacity, or the capability, or the character, whatever it might be, which would have put them more in tune with the changes

that were happening in their own country. Politically, both of them understood the importance of the nationalist movement. But what they didn't understand were the important social factors underneath it, which were also churning and moving their countries in new directions, that people were simply not going to put up with the old kind of exploitation anymore, even from people of their own color, and their own language, and their own race. That's where their failure was. Neither of them paid sufficient attention to that aspect of it.

RITCHIE: So when Diem was finally overthrown, you really didn't know that the United States was involved in anyway, or you just suspected it?

VALEO: I suspected it. I thought it was a plot that went awry, that there must have been some understanding that Diem would be gotten out of the country, because I cannot accept the idea that we would assassinate our friends. Even the worst picture of the CIA does not suggest to me that we would do that. But I think that we may very well have made it clear that if there were a change in government, it wouldn't affect our policies at all; if anything it might make us work a little harder to keep. Now, how deeply we were involved in that plot, I have no way of telling. I wouldn't even want to speculate.

RITCHIE: Senator Mansfield was in a private meeting that President Kennedy had with a few congressional leaders in October of 1963. There's no record of what was discussed at that meeting, but there's some indication that the congressional leaders got some idea that we were putting a lot of pressure on Diem and leading up to a change in government in Vietnam.

VALEO: If he got that, he was certainly still putting the counter-pressure. He never went with that, and when Diem was assassinated I recall we did a statement of great shock at it, while again, pushing for a reduction of our involvement not the other way which was obviously the way it was going to go after that.

RITCHIE: Do you remember talking to him after . . .

VALEO: I don't remember that particular meeting.

RITCHIE: I meant after hearing the news that Diem had been overthrown and assassinated.

VALEO: No, I do not. I'm sure we talked about it, and if I remember anything of it, it would have been in the direction I was saying, that we've got to make some kind of a statement here to try to curb our own involvement. It would have to have been that way. That was part of the pattern of the view of policy which we were following at that time.

RITCHIE: Once Diem was removed, did Senator Mansfield have any optimism at all that a new government could change directions?

VALEO: No. He thought it would not work, and as events proved, of course, each successor to Diem became less and less in touch with the Vietnamese people and more and more in touch with us. It worked exactly the way we expected it to work. They became much more amenable to our direction, each government in succession. Big Minh came in next; he was still essentially out of our control. He didn't last long because we wanted somebody who was even more in our control. Then we had the whole string of other, lesser generals, who came in afterwards. Interestingly enough, I met Nguyen Cao Ky on a Philippine Airlines flight about two or three years ago. He was still blaming us for the failure, that we had just let our friends down. In a way, I suppose you could say that. If a general puts all his eggs in your basket and then you remove the basket and let the eggs fall, why sure he has a right to be bitter.

But the fact was that any kind of policy in Vietnam was doomed to failure unless it was rooted in its own people, and unless the leadership was rooted in its own people. Diem was the last one who had even the degree of rapport or connection with the people that had any hope of success, in much the same way that Chiang Kai-shek was in China. At the end of the Nationalist regime, the Kuomintang regime, there were all sorts of alternatives

offered. They offered the Guangxi generals, and then they tried various other warlords, then they said we needed to fight the Communists with silver dollars, we'd buy off everybody. All efforts to bring about the results we wanted without the one and the only one that would work, which was to look to see what the people themselves wanted in those countries.

You know, you'd think we would understand that, as a democracy, but it seemed impossible for us to understand it. So the same thinking prevailed in Vietnam, as in China, even among people who should have known better. I don't know about [Arthur] Schlesinger and a few of the other historians who were connected with the Kennedy administration, but there must have been people there who would have recognized that, that we were dealing with leaders who had no real connections with their people, that it was not just an administrative problem or a military problem per se. Again, it comes, I think, from a kind of hubris, and a failure to recognize that Asians are fully human and that their reactions are universal human reactions.

RITCHIE: Are you indicating that there was a racist attitude?

VALEO: It wasn't so much racist, even. It's just the acceptance of the idea that America is better than everything else. I mean, I think it's not even racist. It's basically that

somehow or other we know how to do it, and nobody else really does. It's buying the American Dream with a vengeance.

And I think the basis for it, as it applied to Asians, at least in this period, was the enormous success in World War II of the United States as the source of the technical genius that won the war. We did win the war, and it was universally recognized that we were the decisive factor in winning the war, and I don't think we ever got over it. We did not realize that that was a set of circumstances in which the kind of effort which we made was peculiarly suited, and then after that, times changed, particularly in under-developed countries, and that the same kinds of approaches were not necessarily going to be effective. I think it's kind of like carrying a long tail of the past with us, from World War II.

RITCHIE: But we never learned the lesson of the Korean War, which followed right after.

VALEO: That's right, we didn't learn it in the Korean War. It showed up immediately there. That in itself, in retrospect, I think historically will also be seen as some kind of a disaster. But again we didn't learn it even there.

RITCHIE: I was reading in the CRS history *[The United States Government and the Vietnam War*, Senate Print 98-185] that when Johnson called you on Christmas Eve in 1963, he had said in the phone conversation that he didn't want any more Chinas.

VALEO: Yes.

RITCHIE: And Mansfield responded the next month—I assume you wrote the memo to Johnson—saying that while it was true we didn't want anymore Chinas, we also don't want anymore Koreas, which struck me as a very important point.

VALEO: Yes, I remember that memorandum.

RITCHIE: But nobody else was saying "No more Koreas."

VALEO: And yet they forgot how quickly the initial patriotic blush went off that rose and how people said, "What are we doing in Korea, anyway?" Just as later on, "What are we doing in Vietnam, anyway?"

RITCHIE: So that lesson was totally forgotten.

VALEO: Yes.

RITCHIE: Well, with Johnson entering the White House within a month after the revolution in Vietnam, did Senator Mansfield think he had any hope of influencing Johnson?

VALEO: We started writing a lot of memoranda trying to do it! I thought it was futile. I was afraid Johnson was going to go deeper. Having seen him in action on the '61 trip and not being persuaded by some of the things he said about his pacifistic nature, I had a strong feeling that we couldn't stop it, there would be no way. But Mansfield said, "Let's keep trying." And we just kept trying. We kept on writing memoranda of one kind or another. Of course, he was giving Johnson every support he could in other ways, but on this Vietnamese thing Mansfield didn't change at all. I don't know how much Johnson agonized. I think Johnson still was under the influence of that early trip, that he could do this thing quickly. I remember a Johns Hopkins speech that he made. Mansfield told me about this. Johnson was going to make a speech at Johns Hopkins which was really a step in deeper, but at the same time he put in this dream about how our efforts could restore Southeast Asia. We could build, I guess it was that river project.

RITCHIE: The Mekong Delta.

VALEO: Yes. We were going to light up the whole area and all of this beautiful stuff. Mansfield said, "He gave me the speech and he said, 'Be sure Frank sees it, especially that part about the Mekong.'" So that to me was the tip off. We looked at the speech and we both kind of smiled. You knew which way he was going to go. Yes, he meant the Mekong part of it. I think one

has to understand that in Johnson, just as you have to understand it in the United States. We meant it, in a way. If you just let us do it, we'll do everything for you, and then you'll be happy just like we are. That basically is the underlying theme. It was like the Relief and Rehabilitation of Japan and Germany. After you've yielded and surrendered, then we can do everything for you, but you must do that first. That was, of course, where he failed to understand the psychology that was running in Asia at that time, that there were some things they would not do.

RITCHIE: People said Johnson wanted a TVA-type project, and that he was thinking in terms of the New Deal and the Great Society.

VALEO: Yes, and he meant that. As I mentioned in an earlier conversation, he began to get that feeling, I thought, especially by the time we got to Bangkok on the '61 trip. When he looked around he seemed to be seeing all of the improvements that could be made in that area that needed to be made. He was a populist in that sense. Well, he was Johnson.

RITCHIE: Well, the big event of 1964 was the Gulf of Tonkin.

VALEO: Yes, that of course became the decisive thing. I think by the time of the Gulf of Tonkin it was very evident that without a major U.S. involvement in the area the situation was going to collapse, that there was no way in which you could keep

the governments which in effect we had installed in Saigon—one has to use that term—functioning. We tried, along with General [James] Gavin and a few others to persuade them to the enclave theory, that what you would do was to pull back into four or five coastal enclaves, and try to hold those enclaves as a bargaining point, to get a more reasonable kind of governmental structure when the North took over the area, because we sensed that it was coming. We thought that if you wanted a bargaining tool, this would be it, and it would be defensible because you would then be able to bring, into effect, naval power and air power.

So Gavin put the idea out from the military point of view; we had been thinking along the same lines from a political point of view, of how to reduce the U.S. involvement rather than increase it. This seemed to be the only thing that had any chance of acceptance in the administration, and at the same time would avoid our getting in deeper. Of course, the theory was poo-pooed and laughed at and so forth: there was no way you could do that; we have to go the other way; we have to make sure the government stands in Saigon, and so forth. So we got nowhere with the proposal. I think it was just about where the situation stood when the Tonkin thing happened.

I'm trying to remember how I learned of the Tonkin incident. There were two or three of them at the time. I guess Mansfield had been down at the White House, and I'd seen it either

simultaneously or somewhat later on the news ticker, that there had been some kind of a flair-up, and it looked very bad to both of us at that time. I'm trying to remember whether it was before or after this that McGeorge Bundy was in Vietnam, and there was an attack on one of our outposts somewhere. That was the first significant incident against Americans in Vietnam.

RITCHIE: That was after Tonkin.

VALEO: We took our retribution, such as it was, at Tonkin. The thing came up on the floor. I thought the Senate acted on it with undue haste, but both Fulbright and Mansfield were out there in the leadership trying to get it passed in a hurry. I wondered at Mansfield doing that, but he said, "Well, hell, sometimes you have to do certain things," or something to that effect, "sometimes you have to do things that you may not always agree with, but you don't have any choice." Both he and Fulbright got out in front in support of the Tonkin Resolution. The opposition on the floor was Morse, [Ernest] Gruening of Alaska, and I believe [Gaylord] Nelson. I don't know if they had three votes against this or two.

RITCHIE: Nelson didn't vote against it.

VALEO: He didn't vote against it, but I think he argued against it at the time.

RITCHIE: He was suspicious. He at least asked Fulbright if this was a declaration of war.

VALEO: Yes, and of course Fulbright said no and Mansfield said no, we're just upholding the hand of the president. We're giving a display of unity. Well, this was precisely what we had had under Eisenhower with the Formosa Resolution and of course the Senate had gone along with it at that time but with much grumbling. But now we had a Democratic shoe on the foot and I guess they felt both as leader and as chairman of the committee they had to go along with it. I think neither of them wanted to separate themselves from the president to too great a distance at this point. Are we still in the period before the election?

RITCHIE: Before the election. The conventions had been held but the elections were still to come.

VALEO: Right.

RITCHIE: Now, Mansfield in private was one of the very few senators to speak out against the resolution, but then he turned around on the floor.

VALEO: But that was not uncommon. Mansfield would do that sometimes. He would try to make his point in private, and having failed to do that would then take the position that was expected.

RITCHIE: He felt that as leader he couldn't really take an independent position?

VALEO: He never discussed it with me. Sometimes when he did things I didn't like, why, I never could get a discussion. He just did them. It wasn't until later on he'd say, "I wish I hadn't done that." or something like that. But I'd never get that discussion in advance. That happened during the Bobby Baker thing and it happened in a number of places where I think in part he was trying to keep me out of the middle of it, for my own protection if nothing else, and in part because he wasn't that sure of the step but he knew he had to do it no matter what the reasoning was. After the Tonkin Resolution, of course, the die was cast. That meant we had made up our minds not to let the South fall, in a way that it had never been made up, I think, by Kennedy.

RITCHIE: You mentioned the Formosa Resolution, and there was the Middle East Resolution. There were a number of such incidents in the past, but they had always gone to committee, and the committee debated the resolutions. There was never any committee action on this resolution.

VALEO: No, it was done real fast.

RITCHIE: Was any part of it the sense that they had already debated the issues in the past and it hadn't led to war, and this was going to be a sort of routine action to show support for the president?

VALEO: No. It was not a routine action. It was understood as being something more than routine. But I believe the way it was sold to Mansfield, and probably to Fulbright, was that if we do this now, we make this statement, that will put an end to this and we'll avoid getting ourselves more deeply involved. But we have to do it without debate or without discussion, because if we don't make a unified show of strength in this situation, they'll pluck at our weaknesses or our divisions. As a matter of fact, I vaguely recall Mansfield saying something to this effect: that this was the only way in which it could be done.

RITCHIE: How much was the threat of Barry Goldwater's candidacy involved?

VALEO: I don't know that that was the key factor here. I think one has to look to Johnson. He bought, in a way that Kennedy never bought, a lot of the professional advice he was getting downtown, and against that, you had only people like Mansfield and Fulbright and a few others up on the Hill. And of all of them the only two that he would really listen to would be Mansfield or Fulbright. And beyond that, the most important element was that

he didn't want to appear weak, he didn't want to appear wishy-washy, and I think down deep he always felt Kennedy was that kind of a president, or that kind of a man, and he wasn't going to be that. He had to stand tall with his ten-gallon hat on, and that's what the American people wanted, and that's what he, Johnson, would do.

Still further, beyond that, I think he always had his eye on Nixon. I suspected he knew that Nixon wasn't going to get out of the political situation. He knew that Nixon and Mel Laird had both been pushing the issue of Vietnam in speeches: we have to stand firm here. Mel Laird on the floor and Nixon out in public were making all kinds of speeches about how weak and hesitant and reticent the Democrats were being on Vietnam, implying again that they were going to lose Vietnam just like they lost China. I think he saw all of that as a potential threat in the campaign, not so much Goldwater, but he was thinking even beyond that to his next election. He saw these elements as coming up to haunt him if he didn't make a very strong stand. And of course the Tonkin Gulf gave him a reason. Let's assume that it was as expressed at the time, it gave him a reason for standing firm. He thought he might be able to stop the North Vietnamese that way, but when he wasn't able to do it, then he was stuck with it. What do you do next when it doesn't work, when they don't cower and run for cover? That's where the problem really began.

RITCHIE: After that, Johnson carried around the resolution in his pocket, and claimed that Congress had given him the equivalent of a declaration of war. Was that a reasonable interpretation of the resolution?

VALEO: That outraged Mansfield and Fulbright, and that was part of the beginning of the really serious break between them on Vietnam. Johnson used to carry everything around in his pockets. He used to bring out all the statistics that Bob McNamara gave him about the losses that we were inflicting and so forth. He'd pull them out at the drop of a hat. He'd pull out the public opinion polls. He always had something proving that what he was doing in Vietnam was right and was supported by the public. But Mansfield and Fulbright were angry at that interpretation. When he began to use the resolution as a carte blanche, then he really began to get their ire, because in a way he was making them a part of what had been essentially his own policy, and they felt they had been tricked. Once they thought they'd been tricked into it, their personal responses began to change very rapidly.

RITCHIE: It was sort of a breach of faith.

VALEO: Yes, and it smacked too much of Johnson back in the Senate, and the recollection of how he handled the Senate, which had by that time changed considerably under Mansfield. This led us to the '64-'65 trip. Again, I drafted the letter for Johnson's

signature asking Mansfield to go to Vietnam and go to other places for an independent congressional view. I'm sure this was the farthest thing from Johnson's desires, but Mansfield asked him about it and he couldn't say no to him. He was still trying to win and keep his support for what he was doing, not only in Vietnam but elsewhere. So he signed the letter requesting Mansfield to make the trip to Vietnam.

RITCHIE: Why was it necessary to do that? You did that with Kennedy and you did it with Johnson. Why couldn't Mansfield just have gone as a member of the Senate?

VALEO: He could have, but it gave it greater stature if he was asked to do it by the president. It gave him a reason for reporting back to the president on the return. He could have gone on his own, sure.

RITCHIE: Was it a way of avoiding the appearance of junketing?

VALEO: Well, it may have started with that. But by that point I don't think Mansfield would have been accused of junketing, no matter what he'd done in the way of travel. I think there was another consideration in it as well, it gave him an in to report to the president when he came back, and that gave it a status that it might not otherwise have had. It meant more in terms of what kind of cooperation you got abroad, as well, from

our own embassies. If it had a presidential stamp on it, why they were very careful on how they handled the mission.

RITCHIE: Can you tell me about that trip?

VALEO: Yes, that was when my own health broke down. I'm trying to remember now who was on that '64 trip. Inouye was on that, Aiken was on it, I have a feeling there was another member.

RITCHIE: I can look that up.

VALEO: It was a long, very grueling trip. It started in Paris, from Andrews to Paris, and then went to Poland and to Moscow and then down into Saudi Arabia, across to Ceylon. And then on into Burma, Thailand, Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. It was a ceremonial trip in great part, and a very effective one. There was one very amusing incident: in Saudi Arabia living conditions were then quite primitive. They hadn't gotten all that oil money yet. We went to see Ibn Saud. It was just a three or four hour stop en route to somewhere else. We sat and we chatted and we had some tea with him and talked for a while. It was not too long before his assassination. We left to go to the airport, and got on the plane, and all of a sudden the sky opened up and the rain fell and fell and fell so heavily that we couldn't take off for about two or three hours. I understand they got about 70 percent of the annual rainfall in that one Mansfield visit. It got to be a big joke. The king sent for him and told him to come

back to the palace, because we couldn't take off. We always assumed that he wanted to keep him there because he had brought the rain, because it's terribly, terribly dry! We did meet the so-called oil prince in this period too, Shek Yamani, the one who runs the oil cartel. He impressed all of us with his charm and his skill and his Harvard Business School training. For the most part the trip was uneventful until we got to Asia.

RITCHIE: You said you went to Moscow; that was right after Khrushchev had been turned out.

VALEO: Yes. We didn't meet Brezhnev. We met Kosygin, and Gromyko was there. We had a long conversation. This was part of the reason for going to Moscow. He wanted to get a line on the new leaders. I don't remember anything particularly from the conversation. It was pretty ritualized when you talked with the Soviet Union people.

I guess the first really significant Asian stop was in Cambodia. Sihanouk welcomed Mansfield this time with open arms, I mean literally with open arms. He was on the verge of breaking relationships with the United States and sending home the mission. It had all to do with the same kinds of pressure, trying to force him to take more than he wanted, trying to force him out of neutralism and trying to force him to do it our way. There was an ambassador there whom he liked a great deal, Sihanouk did, Philip

Sprouse. He was a careerist and far better than anyone who had ever been before him. He had gotten a positive response from Sihanouk. But Sihanouk was in the middle of playing his own neutralist game and he was very astute, very sharp. He was juggling the forces around him. One of his objectives was of course to keep some contact with the United States. Without that he lost a lot of his bargaining power. He was having trouble with South Vietnam. He was having trouble with the North Vietnamese. He was having trouble with the Thais on the question of sovereignty over a temple on the western border. He was surrounded, literally surrounded, by countries, any one of which could have easily invaded in a matter of days.

He was trying so hard to keep them out and he had had great success. He had done this with some foreign aid—the French were still very active, the Chinese were active. Sihanouk had done a marvelous job of building Phenom Phen from a backwater town into a really elegant, charming capital. It had a lot of French quality to it. Good living was an important part of it, and one had the impression of great popular contentment. In the midst of all of this trouble in Southeast Asia, it seemed to be the one garden spot. One hoped that it would stay that way, but of course it wasn't destined to be. I remember the dinner Sihanouk gave for Senator Mansfield. My God, he composed the dinner music, he devised the menu, supervised the preparation of the food; there were

gold plates on the tables. It was an extraordinary performance, as I recall. Then he personally accompanied the group to Ankor Wat, and he had a picnic for us amid the ruins. He really went all out to express his desire for U.S. understanding. And Mansfield responded very well to it.

Interestingly enough, there were several efforts, I think it was on this trip, several efforts to break up the visit before we got there. Periodically we would get reports or press clippings at U.S. embassies en route to the effect that Sihanouk had made some disparaging statements about Mansfield. I never knew what to make of them, whether these were plants or what. They usually came through State Department channels. They would go to Meloy, he'd show them to me, and I'd show them to Mansfield. Mansfield would say, "Well, what do you think?" And I'd say, "Well, I wouldn't believe anything I hear in this part of the world except from Sihanouk himself. If he tells you that when we get there, then you can believe it. But I would be very reluctant to accept anything as a newsflash or a report or whatever, until we're actually there. " I said, "Just keep on going, that would be my judgment, and don't let any of this discourage you." So we did, and it was certainly worthwhile to have done that. I may have two or three trips mixed up here. We went to Cambodia so often. But I know this was an element that came into one of the trips, this obvious attempt to discourage the visit. Whether it came from our

own people or not, I just don't know. I learned to grow very wary of anything that came out of Bangkok or Taibei, particularly where Mansfield's attitude went against what was the prevailing wisdom in the executive branch of the government and in that period Mansfield was about the only friend Sihanouk had in Washington.

So we went from Cambodia to Vietnam. I guess Nguyen Cao Ky was in charge at that point. The last president had not yet taken over. We met with Westmoreland in Saigon. The military build-up had already begun. It was going very heavily at this time. We had over a hundred thousand troops, and we were moving up towards a hundred and fifty thousand already. Westmoreland gave the usual briefings. Somebody in our party—I guess it was [Edmund] Muskie—asked whether he wanted more troops, could he use more people, more support. "Yeah," he said, "but not right now. I've got seven ships waiting out there in the harbor. I can't unload them." That's how fast the involvement was deepening.

Saigon had become a total military city already. In the French days, it was colonial, but it had a certain charm of its own. The military weight was not that heavy. It looked like a little Paris in the tropics. But now all of a sudden it was loaded with soldiers and what usually goes with that had already entered it. Every storefront was a bar, practically. There were the aimless soldiers walking around, not knowing what else to do. And the bar girls were flying all over the place. The situation

had really seriously deteriorated. It had become a war center. I remember walking through the town with Frank Meloy and noticing this. My own reaction was: "I really don't want to be here. It's too late. We're really not going to do anything with this now. There's no way you can turn this around. It's already here."

I'd been through this whole experience myself as a soldier and I knew that there's a certain inevitability in a military enterprise that is, in a sense, almost irreversible by any action. At some point, it develops its own logic. This was brought home very forcibly to me during the Eisenhower administration, when we landed troops in Lebanon. I was following the situation in the *New York Times*, mostly from little boxes in the *New York Times*. There was a minor item about a departure of a number of Marines from a base somewhere in Asia, I believe in the Philippines. They had got on board the ship; they were going to Lebanon. The next box was when they had reached Colombo, Ceylon, or some such place. By that time the situation had clarified in Lebanon and we were beginning to withdraw the forces that had originally gone into Lebanon. Somebody inquired of the commander of this Marine regiment still en route, whether or not they would now turn around and go back to the Philippines. "Oh, no," he said. "We can't do that. We have got to go on to Lebanon first and then we'll turn around and go back to the Philippines."

In a way the situation in Vietnam had taken on some of the same characteristics. Once the military steamroller had begun to move, it would have to go through its own agonizing logic until you could turn it around and pull it out. To me that had become at that point almost a certainty. I don't think Mansfield felt it quite the same way. He still felt you could do something with it, and that, of course, gave us the report that we brought back. There were two reports, there was a public report and there was a report to the president. They had similarities, but the one to the president was much more blunt. It was again in the same tone as I recall, to try to keep the involvement limited, that if we didn't, three hundred thousand or even five hundred thousand troops wouldn't be enough to alter the situation.

It was a very discouraging report and went in the face of what was actually happening. Mansfield gave it to the president. The president gave it to Rusk and McNamara. I understand that both of them poo-pooed it, and said, "It's just Mansfield, and that's the way he thinks and that's the way it's going to be all the time with him. He could almost write his report before he comes back." So I know it didn't sit very well downtown, and I don't think it had any influence to speak of on Johnson. That was to come later, when true to form, Westmoreland emptied his six or seven ships in Saigon harbor and began to ask for more. Then the numbers got up to three hundred thousand, and of course, while all

of this was being done, the relationship between Mansfield and Johnson was steadily deteriorating. Mansfield was becoming increasingly concerned about what was happening in our country as a result of the war.

We were now getting up in the neighborhood of three or four hundred thousand men in Vietnam. We tried the B-54 bombers and that didn't work. We had done everything except bomb them back into the Stone Age, which was Hap Arnold's idea of how to win the war. A few other theories on how you'd win were these: you'd hit Hanoi with a few bombs. Johnson didn't go that far. Cut the Ho Chi Minh trail in Cambodia. But Johnson didn't go to Cambodia. I remember being in Puerto Rico at one point on a vacation for a few days, it was I think around Christmas time. Mansfield called me in Puerto Rico and said the president had talked to him about the possibility of hitting the Ho Chi Minh trail in Cambodia. And he said, "I told him no, I said 'stay away from it, don't go any further. You can't get out by going in deeper.'" So Mansfield was doing everything he could to keep it limited. It was certainly suggested to Johnson, but I don't think he ever really wanted to do that bombing of Hanoi and the Red River dikes. I think he recognized the danger of getting involved with China at that point.

Of course, the problem was that: there was no certainty that you could end this war in a victory in South Vietnam alone, which

was at that time the strategy. There was no certainty that you could end it, even if you went into the North to Hanoi. Then you might have to go on to Beijing, because that would be the next stop. I remember writing memoranda to this effect, and maybe not even in Beijing, maybe from there you'd have to go on to Moscow, and that might be the only way. By that time, where would you be? But there was absolutely no way in which you could isolate and win this war in South Vietnam. That was the basic thrust of our arguments for not going in any deeper anywhere. You'd be chasing victory all over Asia before you were done, and maybe in Europe in the end. Johnson must have begun to see this at some point.

I think Mansfield related this to me at a later date, I should mention, it must have been around this time when things began to go wrong, Westmoreland came to see Mansfield in Manila. We were in Manila for some reason I can't remember now. He asked to see him in Manila and Mansfield said, "I don't want to see him, you talk to him." I talked with him, and again it was an argument for how the war was really going well. I guess this must have been after the big Tet blow-up in Saigon, and how that really was a victory, and he was trying at that time to persuade people to believe that the Tet attack was not decisive. I had a certain sympathy for Westmoreland. I think he was in far over his depth. He didn't understand the situation in Asia at all. He was very

much an orthodox military man. You gave him a job to do and he was trying to do it in a standard military pattern. Of course, he was trying to put the best light on whatever happened. I remember the talk with him at that time, and then relaying the substance of the conversation to Mansfield.

By that time Johnson had on his desk the request from Westmoreland to raise the troop commitment to over five hundred thousand, or something like that. Johnson showed it to Mansfield, and he asked Mansfield what he should do. Mansfield said, "Don't do it." Apparently they had a kind of straight, honest talk at that point. Mansfield said that there was no way that the thing could be brought to a satisfactory conclusion. I don't know what brought this on, but Johnson said to Mansfield as he was leaving, "I'd like some support from my majority leader on this." He replied, "Mr. President, I'm not your majority leader. I'm the Senate's majority leader." And he said that he walked out of Johnson's office at that point. I guess after that, the hostility was very clear, but Johnson did not go in deeper after that point. He didn't go along with the Westmoreland request.

From then on, or perhaps even before then, my recollection of the chronological sequence is a little hazy, but we had begun then to try to do something in the Senate about bringing the war to a close. The mail was coming in heavier and heavier. It was getting more difficult, more angry, more agonized. I remember a

conversation with Mansfield in which he said—and I didn't fully understand the implications of it at that time—but he said, "Do you see the consequences of this? If it goes on much longer, Frank, we're going to have riots in the streets." He said, "We're going to have race problems. We're going to have all kinds of things." At that point I still couldn't see how the one would follow from the other, but as time went on I recognized that obviously that that's what was happening. Mansfield had a great deal of farsighted understanding of American reactions. Interesting, since he came from Montana, which is not necessarily typical, but his view was in many ways very, very accurate of what was going to happen in the country. It did happen. It began to get heavier and heavier as time went on.

Because of the view he was taking, which would be reflected from time to time in the press, we got a lot of hostile mail from those who felt he was welching on an American commitment, or was a coward who tucked-tail and ran—all these crazy Johnson clichés. On the other hand, we got this enormous outpouring of mail that said "keep it up," "try to end the war," and that sort of thing. He got so much that he didn't even look at the mail anymore unless it came from Montana; he just put it aside there was so much of it. Then when the demonstrators started to come down to Washington they would try to see him. Sometimes he would and sometimes he wouldn't.

What was interesting was some of the turnarounds of what you would regard as Kennedy people, who now suddenly discovered that the Senate had a different role than they expected it would have. These were obviously people who looked on the American system as essentially president-oriented, who now began to see some hope for ending the war, perhaps in the Senate. I must say, the House was doing absolutely nothing on the war. [Speaker John] McCormack wouldn't budge one inch from full support of the president, again following the old concept from the Roosevelt period that the president did everything in foreign policy. I think that was the main reason for it. There wasn't any great love of Johnson or anything like that on McCormack's part. But the Senate was the only place where the legislative independence that Mansfield had developed through this whole period of his leadership began to pay off.

Mansfield started to use the Majority Policy Committee as a sounding board, and the Democratic caucus as a sounding board. Generally speaking, Russell went with Mansfield on the issues. Russell was the key person in this in terms of how far you could go in the Senate in establishing a kind of independent approach. It was interesting, Mansfield would always remind Russell that when Russell was in the hospital, he, Mansfield, had gone to see him, and Russell had said, "Well, what are we doing in Vietnam?" or something to that effect. Russell always took the view that you either have to go in with everything, nuclear weapons, the

whole works, or nothing. He was an all or nothing person when it came to military action. What bothered him in the Vietnamese thing was that it was only half of involvement. And he thought that it was the wrong place to be involved, and he didn't believe that we should be involved in it. He understood probably that we should not be involved in the Asian mainland in a military sense, anywhere.

Generally speaking, we'd get Russell's independent, but nevertheless genuine, concurrence. He had his own reason for concurring but it helped, nevertheless. And Symington began to take a very active role in this because of the war's impact on the country's financial stability. Dan Inouye also took an active role in trying to bring this thing to an end. Phil Hart was on the policy committee at the time—Hart was beginning to feel, I think, discouraged with life. I don't know if he was sick already at this point or not, but I think he felt his whole experience in the Senate had been a kind of futile endeavor and that he would probably have been better off if he had never done it. At least that's the impression that came across from him. We had very few hawks left on the policy committee. I'm trying to think if anybody really took a strong position. Bob Byrd was only interested in what legislation he could get passed. Ted Moss was on the committee. If you will, remind me and I'll go back and explain the changing nature of the policy committee in a subsequent interview.

It did begin to change about this time, because of other things Mansfield had done earlier in connection with it. But anyhow, Hollings was on it and Warren Magnuson and Ed Muskie. I guess that was the main group.

We began then to put out resolutions on the war. They were very innocuous at first. You know, the president should exert every effort to end the war in Vietnam as soon as possible, or something to that effect. Magnuson usually went along with it. He didn't have any strong feelings, but he went along with it. We decided when it was really getting bad, and the public pressure was growing, to take it to the caucus. We drew up a resolution to present to the caucus on the basis of discussions in the policy committee. It was quite a fascinating battle. I heard two of the greatest extemporaneous speeches I've ever heard made, one by Dan Inouye and the other one by Stuart Symington, in one of those caucus meetings, when both began to express—well, each one took a different theme, but they were expressing their awareness of what was happening to us as a people as a result of the war.

Symington of course, had up until that time been essentially—if you want to use these loose terms like "hawk"—he was never a militant person on this, but he believed in strong shows of force. After all, he'd been air force secretary. He made this speech in the caucus, almost in tears. Apparently he'd had a talk with some of the younger people in his family over the weekend, and he came

in and he really spoke in the most moving fashion about how we had to end this thing before it would ruin the country. I don't know what year that was, or what prompted the speech, but he made it. He spoke from the heart. Basically, the tone of it was: we'd better do everything we can to get out of this thing before it ruins us. It moved me very deeply.

Then Inouye got up, and he talked about his war experiences and the loss of his arm. He talked about "the Jap," and the treatment of minorities in this country, and how this had relevance to what was happening in Vietnam. He made a passionate speech, with a depth of an understanding that came out of his Asian background, of what was actually happening among the people in Vietnam. It was a beautiful, beautiful speech. Both of them were. And there was absolute silence in the caucus. It was after that that we got to the point where we were ready to try a resolution in the caucus to express the feelings of at least the Democrats in the Senate on the war in Vietnam. I'm going now from Johnson into Nixon, I don't remember exactly the timing of these things, but they were the highlights of what happened in that period. It may be that the Johnson period was already over when these events took place.

I guess I should wind up on Johnson's role in this thing. I think the decision not to go any deeper was a critical one, and it came after that meeting with Mansfield. I don't know that

Mansfield's attitude was decisive. I think Johnson may have already made up his own mind that he was pursuing a will-o'-the-wisp. Up until that point he would pull out of his pocket these statistics on how much damage the B-54s had done by hitting this city or that, and public opinion polls which would show a rising curve in support of his leadership every time he tried something new. His leadership role would go sky-high in rating at first, and then it would taper off as the war went on. Each new gimmick was of course assumed at that point to be the decisive factor that was going to end the war. What happened on those public opinion curves was that at first the response to any new initiative would show his popularity curve going way up quickly and then gradually tapering off again, until the next one, and then it would go up again. But the pattern changed. After a while it would go less and less high after each new action, and the drop that followed would come much more abruptly. That exactly was what was happening to Johnson politically in the country as a result of the war. I think without the war he would have gone down as one of the really great presidents in our historical experience. But with the war he was doomed.

I remember I was in Japan when word came through that he decided not to run. I was talking with the then ambassador to Japan, one of the people who advised him precisely to take the course that he had taken.

RITCHIE: Was that Reischauer?

VALEO: No, it was after Reischauer. It was a careerist, U. Alexis Johnson, who had been one of the advisors in the other direction. I was talking with Johnson with two or three other people from the embassy when the word came in. They gave him the wire, and he said, "Well, what do you know, Johnson quit." He asked me what my reaction was. I said I was really surprised, although I could see why he would not run again. We got talking about the financial problems which were being produced by the war, along with others. U. Alexis Johnson said, "Well, why can't we have both guns and butter?" The unawareness of what was happening in the country on the part of people who should have known, or should have been advised in some way, was pretty bad.

When I came back, I guess the Senate leadership gave Johnson a farewell party after the announcement. Then the heat went off after that. Sometime prior, Russell Long had come into my office one day and said, "Why is the president so disturbed with you?" I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "I was just down there talking to him. He raised it, I didn't raise it, but he said, 'You know that fellow Valeo, he's the most dangerous man in the American government.'" I kind of half-laughed, knowing Johnson and his tendencies to exaggerate. Long said, "I don't know why. I don't think you're so dangerous." I said, "The only reason I can think

of is he probably thinks I'm influencing the Senate to oppose his Vietnamese policy. I can't think of anything else. He ought to talk to Senator Mansfield."

But afterwards, at the party, Johnson sought me out. He came over and he grabbed me by the lapels, as usual, and said, "When are we going to make another trip together?" And I thought that was the way it finally ended. He realized himself that Vietnam had been his own disaster and that he would have been well advised to take more advice from the Hill.

RITCHIE: There are two questions I wanted to ask you about that '64 trip. You had mentioned at one point about the ambassador you thought was afraid of Westmoreland.

VALEO: Oh, yes. Something came up with Lodge. Lodge was the ambassador at the time. It was a trivial incident. I'm trying to remember now what happened. I think I was trying to get the answer to some question that Mansfield had asked me to get. I just don't remember the exact circumstances. But I saw Lodge, and asked him about the matter. He said, "Well, I don't know about that, you'd better speak to Westmoreland." And I said, "Well aren't you the ambassador?" And he looked at me with a kind of look as though to say: I don't dare touch anything like that; that's a military matter and I can't go anywhere near that. Well, that contrasted very sharply with what later happened when Graham

Martin took over. He really ran the show. Or Ambassador Godley up in Laos who also ran the show the way he thought it should be run.

RITCHIE: Was there something about Westmoreland, that he was a take-over type of person?

VALEO: No. I didn't spent a lot of time with him, but he was always pleasant. He was very much an orthodox soldier, that was my impression of him. He wasn't a martinet or anything of the sort. I wouldn't go so far as to call him "Westy," as Johnson called him, but he was a decent enough man. If I were going to pick a soldier to run a campaign somewhere, I think I would have picked him, too. I would give him a doable job though, because I don't think he would recognize a non-doable job in a political sense.

RITCHIE: The other thing I wanted to ask you was: you alluded to the fact that you had health problems on that trip.

VALEO: Oh, yes. What happened was I had begun to develop a circulatory problem in one of my legs. I guess it was the tension of working so much, and I smoked a great deal and I drank immense amounts of coffee. I began to have difficulty walking. One of my legs would give me trouble all the time. When we got to the Kremlin, some of the old parts of the Kremlin have very steep steps and I couldn't get up the steps; I'd have to sort of pull

myself up on the banister. So I began to get worried about it. We had a doctor with us, he checked it. I said, "I think there's something wrong with my feet, I've always had trouble with my feet." He said, "Well, it might be something more serious." And of course it was. It was a circulatory problem in my right leg. He said, "You'd better get it checked carefully when we get back," which of course I did, and found out what the problem was. Then everything else began to give way at the same time. So I had to change my whole style of living at this point and stop eating at the desk and take long walks and do a lot of other things. I finally got back in shape, but it took me, oh, two or three years actually.

RITCHIE: So the pressures of the legislative process . . .

VALEO: Finally caught up with me. I stopped smoking.

RITCHIE: It did it to Lyndon Johnson certainly, and to a lot of others. But Mike Mansfield always seemed unbothered by it.

VALEO: He knew how to take it. And that pipe seemed to help him. He's the only one that smoking helped, I think! He still smokes it.

But I want to tell you one more story about Frank Meloy, which came during the Nixon administration. We'll wind up the Vietnamese War because then it began to get to be essentially a

legislative effort to end the war against the resistance of the executive branch. It just got worse and worse until it just gave out. The irony of this was that it was Nixon who probably had provoked Johnson into being macho on Vietnam and I think Johnson's reactions were at least in some ways a reaction to a fear of Nixon's criticism. But in the end, ironically, Nixon took over from him. So Johnson fell into the trap. And then Nixon came out, or at least posed as the peacemaker during that campaign. That should have been Johnson's second campaign, and would have been certainly without the war.

RITCHIE: There was a special program on television recently on the last forty years, an overview ("45/85"), and they asked Nixon what was his "secret plan" to end the war that he campaigned on in 1968. "Oh," he said, "there was no secret plan."

VALEO: Yes, exactly. The irony. Well, he saw how the Korean War had helped to beat Truman out of one more term in the earlier period with Eisenhower. I think Eisenhower would have won anyhow, but the public's attitude on the war made it clear that Truman couldn't run and Eisenhower put his campaign in terms of ending the Korean War. The slowness with which politicians learn sometimes is appalling.

End of Interview #9