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# A study of United States Ambassador George Crews McGhee and his mission to the Federal Republic of Germany

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**A Study of United States Ambassador George Crews McGhee  
and His Mission to the  
Federal Republic of Germany**

**Suzanne Brown  
M.A. History  
University of Richmond  
1993**

**Thesis Director  
Dr. Ernest Bolt**

George Crews McGhee was an American diplomat whose State Department career spanned the Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon administrations. Many valuable papers pertaining to McGhee's career are located at Georgetown University. The Lauinger Library holds both the George McGhee Papers and the Georgetown University Oral History Interview collection. Also, the McGhee files at the United States Department of State provide official documentation for McGhee's mission as ambassador to the Federal Republic of Germany between 1963 and 1968.

Though McGhee did not create new policy, he played a significant role in implementation of American policy in the Middle East and later in West Germany. While ambassador, McGhee consistently supported American policy despite his own lack of influence on its formation. A study of his twenty-three year career reveals the influence of George Kennan and Loy Henderson on the formation of McGhee's own ideas concerning containment. This study also examines the

major transition that affected American-West German relations during the 1960's, and provides insight into the dynamics of power operating in the State Department during this time.

Approval Page

I certify that I have read this thesis and find that, in scope and quality, it satisfies the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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A STUDY OF UNITED STATES AMBASSADOR GEORGE CREWS MCGHEE  
AND HIS MISSION TO THE  
FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY

By

SUZANNE BROWN

B.A., Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University,  
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## INTRODUCTION

George Crews McGhee was an American businessman and diplomat whose career in the State Department spanned three decades of crucial developments in the formation of American Cold War policy. McGhee entered the Department in 1946, at the onset of the Cold War between East and West. He retired in 1969 at the age of fifty-seven, having dedicated twenty-three years to what he and those of his generation termed the "struggle of the free world" against communism.

The Cold War was characterized by ideological differences between the democratic United States and the communist Soviet Union. Between 1945 and 1947, Soviet Premier Joseph Stalin established a communist bloc in Poland and its surrounding eastern European territories. In response, Truman announced the new policy of containment in 1947, cementing the rivalry that had dominated United States-Soviet relations since World War II.

As this rivalry between the two super-powers crystallized, a bright and energetic young man of thirty-four named George McGhee joined the State Department as special assistant to William Clayton, assistant secretary of state for Economic Affairs. Following the President's watershed announcement of the Truman Doctrine and containment policy in 1947, McGhee was promoted to

coordinator for Greek-Turkish Aid, and in 1949, to assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs. In 1951, McGhee received his first diplomatic post as United States ambassador to Turkey. During these assignments, McGhee came to believe firmly in the necessity of containment policy. Like his colleagues in the Truman administration, McGhee accepted America's responsibility as leader of the free world -- a responsibility demonstrated by the Marshall Plan and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

The election of Republican President Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1952 brought about numerous changes in the State Department staff. As a result, McGhee's career suffered a temporary setback that ended in 1958, when he again joined the Department as a member of Eisenhower's Draper Committee. The 1960 election victory of bright young Democrat John F. Kennedy over Richard Nixon provided new opportunities for McGhee. Viewed as an experienced and respected member of the old Truman core, McGhee was appointed chairman of the Policy Planning Council in 1961. A few months later, McGhee was promoted to the third-ranking spot in the State Department as under secretary for Political Affairs.

The year 1963 marked a turning point in McGhee's career. In April, Kennedy appointed McGhee to the

ambassadorship of the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG). He remained ambassador to the FRG until May of 1968. McGhee faced many road-blocks in his efforts to maintain smooth relations between the United States and the FRG. Four central issues affected American-West German relations during this period. These issues were: America's involvement in Vietnam, disagreements between American President Lyndon Johnson and German Chancellor Ludwig Erhard over German offset payments for American troops stationed in the FRG, West Germany's desire for control of NATO nuclear weaponry, and the implementation of Ostpolitik in 1966.

McGhee found his capacity to formulate United States policy from the embassy in Bonn had severe limitations. McGhee's policy advice to President Lyndon Johnson, and later to President Richard Nixon was largely ignored. Unable to influence policy in Washington, McGhee concentrated on the areas of Vietnam, offset payments, nuclear weapons, and East-West detente.

When McGhee's mission ended in 1968, he served as ambassador at large before retiring from government service in 1969. He participated in the administration of American Cold War policy for three decades. During the Truman years, he concentrated on the smaller Cold War theaters of the Middle Eastern and surrounding regions. He performed successfully as ambassador to the FRG, doing much to promote

American policy despite the fact that his own suggestions were ignored.

Like most of his contemporaries, McGhee believed strongly in America's role as a world leader. He provided reliable and dedicated service throughout his long career. Today, his story remains valuable because it demonstrates the motivations and methods that drove American Cold War policy between 1946 and 1968.

## CHAPTER ONE

### Coming of Age: McGhee's Foundations in Diplomacy, 1912 to 1953

As a young boy growing up in the suburbs of Dallas, Texas, George McGhee loved to collect unusual rock formations. He imagined that he might one day become a successful geologist.<sup>1</sup> Through hard work, a solid education that included instruction at Oxford University, and a dose of good fortune, McGhee became both a geologist and an oil millionaire before celebrating his thirtieth birthday. He assumed a career in the State Department in January of 1946, at the age of thirty-four.

At this time, a remarkable phenomenon in American foreign policy was taking place -- America had abandoned its pre-war isolationism and was instead assuming the responsibilities of global leadership. Between 1946 and 1954, McGhee witnessed the onset of the Cold War between East and West and the subsequent implementation of containment policy, enunciated in the Truman Doctrine. Containment was designed to stem the spread of communism in

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<sup>1</sup> George McGhee, "Oxford Letters: the Transformation of a Texan," unpublished manuscript, June 1991, p.260. The Ambassador George C. McGhee Library, Georgetown University School of Foreign Service, Washington, D.C.

"free" nations.

The front lines of the Cold War were located in Europe, justifying the creation of the Marshall Plan and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. As coordinator of Greek-Turkish Aid (1947-1949) and later as ambassador to Turkey (1951-53), McGhee participated in this vital Cold War theater. As assistant secretary for Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs (1949-1951), McGhee also participated in the lesser theater of the Middle East.

In his book Diplomacy for the Future, McGhee defined diplomacy as "the application of human reason to resolving conflicts between nations."<sup>2</sup> His own diverse background prepared him well for this task. George Crews McGhee was born "of old English stock" on March 10, 1912, in Waco, Texas.<sup>3</sup> His parents, George Summers McGhee and Magnolia Spruce McGhee, both enjoyed the benefit of education. George Summers McGhee was a banker who graduated from a "small east Texas college" and thereafter served on the board of Baylor University in Waco. Magnolia Spruce McGhee's education consisted of a degree in "preparation for

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<sup>2</sup> George McGhee, Diplomacy for the Future (New York: University Press of America, 1987), p.3.

<sup>3</sup> George McGhee, Envoy to the Middle World: Adventures In Diplomacy (New York: Harper & Row, 1983), p.xvi.

teaching."<sup>4</sup>

Even as a young boy, George McGhee displayed a curiosity and aptitude for learning. McGhee's parents had "traveled little outside the Southwest," and for McGhee, the world was "an unopened book."<sup>5</sup> After graduation from Bryan Street High School in Dallas, he enrolled at Southern Methodist University, also in Dallas, in 1928. After one year at the Southern Methodist University, McGhee transferred to the University of Oklahoma.<sup>6</sup>

Young McGhee enjoyed a successful college career. In 1933, he acquired a Bachelor of Science degree in physics and geology. His high grades led to his election to the Phi Beta Kappa and Sigma Xi honor societies. McGhee balanced his rigorous studies with an active social life. He was president of his social fraternity, Sigma Alpha Epsilon. He also won letters in cross-country track and in dramatics. To finance his expenses, he worked for one year (1930-31) as a subsurface geologist for the Atlantic Refining Company in Dallas.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> McGhee, "Oxford Letters," p.260.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> "George Crews McGhee," Current Biography: Who's News and Why, ed. Anna Rothe (New York: H.W. Wilson Company, 1950), p.367.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.



It was at the University of Oklahoma that George McGhee first became interested in continuing his studies of physics and geology abroad. He unsuccessfully applied for a Rhodes scholarship during his senior year at the University of Oklahoma, and instead obtained a job working with the seismograph team of the Continental Oil Company in Beeville, Texas.<sup>8</sup> However, McGhee did not let go of his ambition to become a Rhodes scholar. He inquired as to why his first application had been denied and was informed that his education displayed an overly narrow focus on the physical sciences. McGhee was further informed that a Rhodes scholarship candidate needed to possess a knowledge of history, literature, language, and art, in conjunction with knowledge of the physical sciences.<sup>9</sup> Upon receiving this reply, McGhee began reading works of art, literature, history, etc. while working for the Continental Oil Company. After several months of preparation, McGhee again applied for a Rhodes scholarship. On this second attempt, he was successful.<sup>10</sup>

In 1934, George McGhee left the United States to take up a three-year residence at Queen's College, Oxford. He

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<sup>8</sup> McGhee, "Oxford Letters," p.7.

<sup>9</sup> Interview of George McGhee (Washington: 3 December 1992) by Suzanne Brown.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

was twenty-two years of age. At this point, he had only limited experience in travel, as he himself noted:

I had been provided little insight into the more sophisticated culture of the northeast of my own country, Europe, or to other world culture centers. My education had been concentrated on the physical sciences, particularly geology and physics, and mathematics. I had met few foreigners.<sup>11</sup>

He imagined a "glamorous three years in England," where he could fully enjoy "the prestige of being a Rhodes scholar."<sup>12</sup> McGhee's lofty visions of life at Oxford proved to be quite accurate. He received a thorough and diverse education beyond his major fields of physics and geology that included studies in art, architecture, music, philosophy, politics, and government.<sup>13</sup>

McGhee obtained a Doctor of Philosophy degree in geology and physics from Oxford University in 1937, at the age of twenty-five. His doctoral thesis (published in 1938) was entitled: "The Mapping of the Subsurface Geological Formations of South-Eastern England with the Reflection Seismograph." In his last year in England, he also studied at the University of London.<sup>14</sup> Before instruction at

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<sup>11</sup> McGhee, "Oxford Letters," p.260.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p.8.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p.260.

<sup>14</sup> "McGhee," Current Biography, p.367.

Queen's College, McGhee had no inclination towards a political career. Now, in England, he experienced a sort of awakening:

The most important influence exerted on me in Oxford was the importance I sensed in public service, and in the humanities, which [years later] lead me away from geology and geophysics and a business career in oil finding, to diplomacy and the State Department. Politics [became] to me more intriguing than the laws of thermodynamics.<sup>15</sup>

McGhee's budding ambitions to pursue a political career were not realized for nearly a decade. Instead, he chose to begin a career in the oil business, "simply because that seemed to offer the best way to get rich in a hurry -- so he could afford to work for the government."<sup>16</sup> During his studies at Oxford, McGhee had obtained a United States patent (granted May 14, 1935) for a new method of making dip determination of geological formations. He had no trouble finding employment after his graduation from Oxford. In June of 1937, he was made vice-president of the National Geophysical Company in Dallas.<sup>17</sup>

McGhee recalled another significant event in his life upon his return from England:

I met my future wife, Cecilia De Golyer, the day

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<sup>15</sup> McGhee, "Oxford Letters," p.260.

<sup>16</sup> "McGhee," Current Biography, p.368.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

after I returned to Dallas after almost a three year absence, at a party in her parents' home. Since our meeting was close to being love at first sight, Cecilia and I were soon engaged, and, after an appropriate interval, married.<sup>18</sup>

Cecilia Jeanne De Golyer was the daughter of Everette Lee De Golyer of Dallas, a prominent oil producer and geological expert. She and George were married on November 24, 1938.<sup>19</sup>

While working for the National Geophysical Company, McGhee organized a small "prospecting group" to seek and buy up new oil fields. The resulting oil discoveries in the Lake Charles region of Louisiana made George Crews McGhee a millionaire before he had reached the tender age of thirty. Upon recalling this extraordinary turn of events, McGhee remembered feeling "embarrassed by the ease with which [he] was able to achieve financial independence by this young age."<sup>20</sup> In January of 1940, he left the National Geophysical Company to join his father-in-law as a partner in what became the Dallas firm of De Golyer, MacNaughton and McGhee, "consulting geologists."<sup>21</sup> McGhee started his own oil producing company, the McGhee Production Company, in

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<sup>18</sup> McGhee, "Oxford Letters," p.262.

<sup>19</sup> "McGhee," Current Biography, p.368.

<sup>20</sup> McGhee, "Oxford Letters," p.265.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

1940.<sup>22</sup>

Despite his success in the oil business, George McGhee did not forget his desire for a career in public life, awakened in him during his days at Oxford. The coming of World War II allowed him the opportunity to recognize this desire. McGhee joined the War Production Board in 1941. In June, he became the senior liaison officer to the Stockpile and Import Shipping Branch of the War Production Board. In January of 1942, he became deputy executive secretary to the United States-Great Britain Combined Raw Materials Branch (of the War Production Board).<sup>23</sup> Here, he aided in the allocation of scarce materials among the allies.<sup>24</sup>

In June of 1943, McGhee resigned to enlist in the United States Navy. He subsequently served three years as a naval lieutenant. In 1945, McGhee became the naval liaison officer for Major General Curtis E. LeMay, commander of the Air Force's Twenty-first Bomber Command, in the air war against Japan from the Marianas Islands.<sup>25</sup> For his service in the Navy, McGhee was awarded the Asiatic Ribbon with

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<sup>22</sup> "George McGhee," Dictionary of American Diplomatic History, ed. John E. Findling (New York: Greenwood Press, 1989), pp. 327-328.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> McGhee, Envoy to the Middle World, p.xvii.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

three battle stars, and the Legion of Merit for "developing and coordinating an air-sea operation which saved the lives of more than six hundred airmen."<sup>26</sup>

In January of 1946, McGhee applied for entry into the State Department as special assistant to "distinguished fellow Texan" William S. Clayton, assistant secretary of state for Economic Affairs. Clayton and McGhee were business acquaintances in Texas, where Clayton ran a "well known cotton firm" before becoming assistant secretary for Economic Affairs.<sup>27</sup> "As far as status in the Department was concerned," noted McGhee, "I started at the bottom, but I was very happy to begin a career in foreign affairs."<sup>28</sup>

As special assistant to Clayton, McGhee attended State Department meetings involving international business and finance, and outside of these meetings acted as a consultant to Clayton. Several examples demonstrate the nature of McGhee's role as special assistant to Clayton. McGhee sat in meetings concerning the financial agreements between the United States and the United Kingdom upon the fusion of

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<sup>26</sup> "McGhee," Current Biography, p.368.

<sup>27</sup> McGhee, Envoy to the Middle World, p.xvii.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

their respective German zones.<sup>29</sup> McGhee also participated in meetings pertaining to Export-Import Bank credits for the Polish coal industry.<sup>30</sup>

McGhee's expertise in the oil business also came into play during his tenure as special assistant to Clayton. McGhee appeared at meetings involving the re-negotiation of the "Red Line Agreement," an agreement between private American and European oil interests and the Iraq Petroleum Company.<sup>31</sup> He also attended meetings between the Standard Vacuum Oil Company and the State Department concerning the future of United States oil companies in China (as the result of the newly established China Petroleum Corporation).<sup>32</sup> Also while special assistant to Clayton, McGhee served as chairman of the interdepartmental committee

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<sup>29</sup> "Memorandum of Conversation, by the Chief of the Division of Central European Affairs (Riddleberger)," 29 November 1946, pp.344-346. FRUS, 1946, Vol.V: The British Commonwealth; Western and Central Europe (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1969).

<sup>30</sup> "Memorandum of Conversation, by the Assistant Chief of the Division of Eastern European Affairs (Hooker)," 13 December 1946, pp.529-534. FRUS, 1946, Vol.VII: The Near East and Africa.

<sup>31</sup> "Memorandum of Conversation, by Mr. George McGhee, Special Assistant to the Under Secretary of State for Economic Affairs (Clayton)," 27 August 1946, pp.31-34. FRUS, 1946, Vol.VII: The Near East and Africa.

<sup>32</sup> "Memorandum of Conversation, by the Assistant Secretary of State (Clayton)," 10 July 1946, pp.1374-1376. FRUS, 1946, Vol.X: The Far East: China.

for the establishment of a Greek-Turkish aid program. McGhee's experience as chairman of this committee led to his appointment by President Truman as coordinator for Aid to Greece and Turkey in June of 1947.<sup>33</sup>

Truman's decision to aid Greece and Turkey was motivated by Cold War concerns. During the summer of 1946, the powerful Greek Communist Party threatened to take over the Greek government. Truman, anxious about a Soviet breakthrough, agreed to shoulder formerly British responsibilities in Greece.<sup>34</sup> On March 12, 1947, Truman addressed a joint session of Congress and enunciated the renowned Truman Doctrine. In his speech, Truman divided the world into two spheres -- one standing for freedom and the other for totalitarianism. He then proposed a program of \$400 million in United States military and economic aid for Greece and Turkey.<sup>35</sup> On 22 May, the bill enacting aid to Greece and Turkey was signed. Also during these months, the American Mission for Aid to Greece (AMAG) was formed, and the new post entitled coordinator for Aid to Greece and Turkey was created.

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<sup>33</sup> McGhee, Envoy to the Middle World, p.xvii.

<sup>34</sup> Lawrence S. Wittner, "The Truman Doctrine and the Defense of Freedom," Diplomatic History 4:2 (Spring 1980), pp. 161-87.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p.162.



The Truman Doctrine and the subsequent creation of AMAG reflected critical developments in American Cold War policy taking place in the spring of 1947. A major concern to the Truman administration was the economic recovery of Europe. On June 5th, Secretary of State George Marshall outlined the famed Marshall Plan while speaking at Harvard's commencement exercises. The Marshall Plan, a comprehensive plan for the economic recovery of Europe in the aftermath of World War II, provided for 13 billions of American dollars to Europe over a four year period.<sup>36</sup> One month later, George Kennan, director of the newly-established State Department Policy Planning Staff, published his "Mr. X" article in the July issue of Foreign Affairs. Kennan, using the pen name "Mr. X," wrote that "a firm policy of containment [should be] designed to confront the Russians with unalterable counterforce at every point where they show signs of encroaching upon the interests of a stable and peaceful world."<sup>37</sup> Taken together with the Truman Doctrine, containment became the basis for the Truman administration's new Cold War policy. In acting as coordinator for Greek-Turkish Aid, McGhee became part of the State Department "team" involved in

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<sup>36</sup> Harry S. Truman, Memoirs: Years of Trial and Hope (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1956), Vol. II, p.114.

<sup>37</sup> Mr. X, "The Sources of Soviet Conduct," Foreign Affairs, 25 (July 1947), pp.565-77.

carrying out the Truman Doctrine.

As coordinator of the new program, McGhee was charged with taking "all necessary action relating to the administration (in Washington) of funds under the Act."<sup>38</sup> McGhee noted with some surprise that "after putting up a token resistance to appropriating the funds, Congress took little interest in how they would be spent."<sup>39</sup> According to McGhee, the congressional committees did not tend to interfere with the administration of the funds. McGhee recalled one particular instance in which he made the decision on how to appropriate a large portion of funds without any consultation outside of his department:

I well recall the day that I quietly (without getting anyone's approval outside the department) sent the Treasury department a check transferring \$50,000,000 from the Greek economic program to the Defense Department to apply against defeating the guerrillas. No one ever complained or questioned. I concluded that the best way to survive in the Washington bureaucracy was, when you had the authority, to 'lie low.'<sup>40</sup>

McGhee handled his largely unchaperoned responsibilities as coordinator of funds wisely, and used prudence in the allocation of these monies. In one

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<sup>38</sup> "McGhee," Current Biography, p.368.

<sup>39</sup> George McGhee, The US-Turkish-Middle East-NATO Connection: How the Truman Doctrine Contained the Soviets in the Middle East (New York: St. Martins Press, 1990), p.36.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p.37.

instance, he denied the request by the Foreign Minister of Greece, Constantine Tsaldaris, for an additional \$30 million U.S. dollars. Tsaldaris meant to use the additional funds to meet the needs of Greek refugees, who had been driven away from their local villages by warfare. Now these refugees resided in poverty-ridden cities. McGhee responded that "the problem of covering costs for housing, blankets, and the like were properly the responsibility of the Greek government."<sup>41</sup>

In another instance, Tsaldaris requested additional funds for the purpose of adding another battalion to the Greek National Guard. The battalion would serve as added protection for the local villages. Again, McGhee denied the request. He felt that "any greater expenditures in the field of the Greek National Guard could mean ruinous inflation -- a runaway inflation from which Greece might never recover."<sup>42</sup>

One reason for McGhee's conservative tendencies was his strong belief that Greece needed to learn autonomy. Furthermore, he did not think autonomy could be achieved if

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<sup>41</sup> "Memorandum of Conversation, By the Acting Chief of the Division of Greek, Turkish, and Iranian Affairs (Jernegan)," 28 October 1947, pp. 387-388. In FRUS, 1947, Vol.V: The Near East and Africa (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1977).

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

Greece relied too heavily on regular doses of American dollars. He placed distinct parameters on American aid to Greece. McGhee "wholeheartedly endorsed" the view that the "best assurance of the maintenance of international peace in this area [was] the prompt defeat of the Greek bandits, the re-establishment of international security, and the prevention of economic collapse," so that the rehabilitation of Greece could occur.<sup>43</sup> However, McGhee emphasized the Greek role in this process. In a meeting with Tsaldaris, he explained that Greece should augment American aid by "using all her resources to amplify the American program. Strong action by the Greek government was required, in addition to advice from American experts."<sup>44</sup>

In another example of McGhee's effort to teach self-empowerment to Greece, he told other members of AMAG that the Greek rebels should be assured of "faithful execution by Greeks of their own adequate amnesty law under their own direction," rather than bringing in American advisors to

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<sup>43</sup> "Governor Dwight P. Griswold to the Secretary of State (Acheson)," 9 October 1947, pp.361-363. In FRUS, 1947, Vol.V: The Near East and Africa.

<sup>44</sup> "Memorandum of Conversation, By the Assistant Chief of the Division of Near Eastern Affairs," pp.253-255. In FRUS, 1947, Vol.V: The Near East and Africa.

supervise the "actual execution of amnesty."<sup>45</sup> These actions displayed a firm manner and an ability to spot the long-term effects and consequences of financial aid to Greece. In deciding where American dollars would be useful (and where they would not), he showed conservative principles. McGhee's prior experience as a successful businessman most likely benefitted him in making these financial decisions. Moreover, even in this initial stage of his career in international relations, McGhee felt that American dollars should be used only to teach a struggling nation how to become self-empowered. McGhee already detected the fine line between constructive financial aid and dangerous dependency that could result if a nation such as Greece relied too heavily on United States funds. It was a lesson McGhee never forgot in his ensuing years as an American diplomat.

McGhee continued as coordinator of Greek-Turkish aid until March of 1949, when he was named special assistant to the secretary of state to the Near East on the Palestine Refugee Problem. Two months previously, in January 1949, a report from the United States embassy in Cairo estimated that a total of 844,000 refugees existed in the Middle East

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<sup>45</sup> "The Chargé in Greece (Keeley) to the Secretary of State (Acheson)," 17 September 1947, pp.342-344. In FRUS, 1947, Vol.V: The Near East and Africa.

after the Arab-Israeli war of 1947.<sup>46</sup> Hoping to promote lasting peace in the Middle East, Assistant Secretary of State for United Nations Affairs Dean Rusk wished to explore the possibilities of making new lands available for settlement.<sup>47</sup>

On March 3, Rusk directed a memorandum to Under Secretary of State James Webb suggesting that McGhee be named to the post of special assistant:

We should detail immediately an American of high rank, diplomatic ability and sound judgement, as special assistant to the secretary of state, to mobilize the public and private resources of the United States which might be brought to bear on this problem.

It is strongly recommended that Mr. George C. McGhee be named to this post. Mr. McGhee's experience and performance with regard to Greek Assistance, his knowledge of the Department and of the agencies concerned, and his broad political and business experience would make him admirably suited for this assignment. I hope that you will agree and will put this assignment to Mr. McGhee in the strongest terms.<sup>48</sup>

The events behind Rusk's request to Webb were quite interesting. McGhee vividly remembered being called into Rusk's office, so that Rusk could question him on his

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<sup>46</sup> McGhee, Envoy to the Middle World, p.28.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p.29.

<sup>48</sup> "Memorandum by the Assistant Secretary of State for United Nations Affairs (Rusk) to the Under Secretary of State (Webb)," 3 March 1949, p.788. FRUS, 1949, Vol.VI: The Near East, South Asia, and Africa (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1977).

knowledge of the Arab refugee problem. McGhee replied that he "had paid little attention to it," as he was absorbed in his project as Greek-Turkish aid coordinator. Rusk suggested that McGhee go to the Middle East "to see what could be done about the refugees under a long-term plan," and offered him the new title of special assistant to the secretary of state to the Near East on the Palestine Refugee Problem. McGhee responded that he "didn't wish to become involved in Arab-Israeli affairs." Rusk was plain in his answer. He informed McGhee that "the Marshall Plan eclipsed the need for the Greek-Turkish program, and if [McGhee] wanted to stay on" in the Department at his current level, he "ought to accept [Rusk's] offer."<sup>49</sup>

McGhee accepted the post, and after studying the problem, recommended that an Economic Survey Mission (headed by the United States, Great Britain, and Turkey) be set up under the authority of the Palestine Conciliation Commission (PCC) as soon as possible. The Economic Survey Mission was designed to direct programs of relief and public works for the refugees. The recommendations made by the Economic Survey Mission contributed to the passage of the June 1950 bill authorizing \$27.45 million United States dollars in aid

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<sup>49</sup> McGhee, Envoy to the Middle World, p.28.

to Palestine refugees.<sup>50</sup>

Three months later, in May of 1949, Special Assistant for the Palestine Refugee Problem McGhee received a new assignment. On May 26 of 1949, the passage of Public Law 73 authorized a re-organization of the State Department, in which Secretary of State Dean Acheson and Under Secretary of State James Webb named ten new Assistant Secretaries. One of these ten was McGhee, who was appointed assistant secretary for Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs (NEA).<sup>51</sup> In his memoirs, McGhee noted that his role in directing the program for Greek-Turkish aid, and his most recent role as special assistant to the secretary on the Palestine Refugee Problem, made him a "likely candidate for the new position of assistant secretary for the NEA."<sup>52</sup>

McGhee was the first assistant secretary of state to visit many of the Near Eastern-South Asian-African leaders he would encounter during his two year appointment.<sup>53</sup> This was not surprising, considering the Near East/South Asian/African territory did not receive high priority at the

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p.43. For a detailed account of McGhee's role in the establishment of the Economic Survey Mission, see Envoy to the Middle World, Chapter four, pp.27-45.

<sup>51</sup> Dean Acheson, Present at the Creation: My Years in the State Department (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1969), p.254.

<sup>52</sup> McGhee, Envoy to the Middle World, p.xvii.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p.7.



time of McGhee's appointment in 1949. During this period, the Truman administration was occupied with the establishment of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, an inclusive security pact for western European defense. The Truman administration was also concerned by the spread of communism in Korea by 1949.<sup>54</sup> Despite the Truman administration's focus on western Europe and Korea, McGhee's new post was of significant strategic importance in that it served as model territory for President Truman's Point Four Program, a program designed to provide technological aid to industrially undeveloped areas.<sup>55</sup>

As assistant secretary to the NEA bureau, McGhee felt that Truman's Point Four Program "was an important tool," and that the United States "must carry out the Point Four Program [in the NEA territories] in order to avert a future catastrophe in [this] area."<sup>56</sup> McGhee told Under Secretary Webb that "we [the United States] have the money to assume greater responsibility in the Middle East area, and we need to exercise this responsibility at once."<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Truman, Memoirs, p.260.

<sup>55</sup> "McGhee," Current Biography, p.367.

<sup>56</sup> "Record of the Under Secretary's (Webb's) Meeting," 29 October 1951, pp.1659-1663. FRUS, 1951, Vol.I: National Security Affairs; Foreign Economic Policy (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1979).

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

Though the initial effects of the Point Four Program were encouraging, McGhee "became increasingly concerned about the situation in the Middle East and South Asia."<sup>58</sup> In a memorandum addressed to President Truman dated 28 August 1950, McGhee voiced his concern. He wrote:

The viability of a non-Communist Asia hinges upon the chance of maintaining, in this area, free institutions, stable governments, and the right orientation of men's minds. [These territories] are unable to do so without external assistance.

I propose that the necessary first steps be taken immediately to develop an assistance program for South Asia, the Arab States, and Iran.<sup>59</sup>

Secretary of State Acheson "did not leave the memorandum with the President, because he had not had time to read it through," but Acheson did discuss the situation with President Truman.<sup>60</sup> Truman responded that he "saw no objection to beginning discussions with the appropriate people on the Hill."<sup>61</sup> Upon receiving this reply, McGhee began the process of sounding out key congressmen for their reaction to substantial economic aid to South Asia and the

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<sup>58</sup> McGhee, Envoy to the Middle World, p.213.

<sup>59</sup> "Memorandum by the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs (McGhee) to the President (Truman)," 28 August 1950, pp.178-80. FRUS, 1950, Vol.V: The Near East, South Asia, and Africa.

<sup>60</sup> "Memorandum of Conversation with the President (Truman) by the Secretary of State (Acheson)," 28 August 1950, pp.180-181. FRUS, 1950, Vol.V: The Near East, South Asia, and Africa.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

Middle East.<sup>62</sup>

These efforts to secure a significant economic aid program for the Middle East and South Asia were abandoned by President Truman in 1950. Though the State Department was no longer considering an aid package at this time, McGhee cooperated with the Bureau of Public Affairs in drafting information policy plans. McGhee's efforts did bear some fruit in the following year. In October of 1951, Congress approved the Mutual Security Act of 1951. This act involved the appropriation of \$396 million dollars in military aid, and \$160 million dollars in economic aid, for the Middle East and Africa.<sup>63</sup>

As an additional security measure beyond the Mutual Security Act of 1951, the Truman administration also entertained proposals for a Middle East defense organization similar to NATO in structure. During the summer of 1951, the United States and United Kingdom governments concluded that a Middle East Command (MEC) should be established in order to provide for continuation of key British military bases in the Middle East. McGhee actively participated in these proposals for a Middle East defense structure. In September 1951, McGhee organized a meeting at the Pentagon

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<sup>62</sup> McGhee, Envoy to the Middle World, p.216.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p.218.

between United States and British working groups for discussion of the MEC question.<sup>64</sup> By the end of the month, seven sponsoring powers (Great Britain, the United States, France, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and Turkey) agreed that a Middle East defense structure should be established.<sup>65</sup>

On December 1, 1951, McGhee relinquished his post as assistant secretary for Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs. His next assignment took him to Ankara, Turkey, where he officially became United States ambassador on December 8, 1951.<sup>66</sup> Alan Lukens, cultural affairs assistant in Ankara from 1951 to 1952, described McGhee as "a political appointee, but one with a great deal of clout and energy."<sup>67</sup> McGhee did bring a refreshing zeal to his post in Ankara. He arrived with "high visions for Turkey," and espoused the concept of Turkey as "the bulwark of

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<sup>64</sup> McGhee, The US-Turkish-NATO-Middle East Connection, p.115.

<sup>65</sup> "The Secretary of State (Acheson) to the Department of State," 27 June 1952, pp.251-254. In FRUS, 1952-54, Vol.IX: The Near and Middle East, Part I (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1986).

<sup>66</sup> "McGhee, George," The Biographic Register of 1963, United States Department of State Division of Publishing Services, June 30, 1962.

<sup>67</sup> Alan W. Lukens, Oral History Interview, Georgetown University Library, 17 November 1989, p.2.

defense" for the Middle East.<sup>68</sup>

McGhee's first challenge as ambassador to Turkey involved the smooth transition of Turkey into NATO. Turkey became a full member of NATO less than two months after McGhee arrived in Ankara. On February 15, 1952, the Grand National Assembly of Turkey voted 404 to 0 in favor of accepting NATO's invitation to membership. Turkey had now become an integral part of Europe and the West.<sup>69</sup> Deputy Chief of Mission William Roundtree remembered that both he and McGhee welcomed Turkey's initiation into NATO.<sup>70</sup> McGhee "wished to do everything possible to enhance United States assistance in building up Turkey's military contribution to NATO and Middle East defense."<sup>71</sup>

McGhee's second challenge as ambassador to Turkey involved the struggle for the establishment of the MEC defense structure. G. Lewis Jones, acting deputy assistant secretary for the NEA, remarked in February of 1952 that:

We [in the NEA office] are very fortunate in having Ambassador McGhee in Ankara. He is very

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<sup>68</sup> McGhee, The U.S.-Turkish-NATO-Middle East Connection, p.106.

<sup>69</sup> George McGhee, "Turkey Joins the West," Foreign Affairs 32 (July 1954), pp.617-630.

<sup>70</sup> William Roundtree, Oral History Interview, Georgetown University Library, 22 December 1989, p.14.

<sup>71</sup> McGhee, The US-Turkish-NATO-Middle East Connection, p.92.

familiar with the MEC question, having closely handled every aspect of this matter from its inception. Further, McGhee is deeply interested in getting the MEC underway at the earliest foreseeable time, and in obtaining fullest possible Turkish participation in the endeavor."<sup>72</sup>

However, several problems regarding the MEC had arisen by the time McGhee assumed his mission in Ankara. The MEC proposals were not appealing to the Arab nations (especially Egypt), who disliked the idea of a Western military command in the Middle East. Moreover, "the United States was simply not in a position to supply leadership or troops [for an MEC], since United States priorities [in 1951] were in Korea, Indochina, the United States itself and NATO, and only then the Middle East."<sup>73</sup>

Due to these problems, the MEC was changed to the Middle East Defense Organization (MEDO) in June of 1952. MEDO was a "planning group" (lacking any military structure) designed to supervise containment of communism in the Middle East.<sup>74</sup> On June 27th, Secretary of State Acheson suggested to the Department of State that "an approach should be made to the Arab states sounding out their willingness to join

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<sup>72</sup> "Memorandum of Conversation, by the Deputy Director of the Office of Greek, Turkish, and Iranian Affairs (Dorsz)," 7 February 1952, pp.188-89. In FRUS, 1952-54, Vol.IX: The Near and Middle East, Part I.

<sup>73</sup> McGhee, The US-Turkish-NATO-Middle East Connection, p.124.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., p.124.

the [MEDO] organization" as soon as the details had been worked out by the sponsoring powers.<sup>75</sup>

Six months later, the MEDO proposals had still not become policy. The onset of the Eisenhower administration in late January of 1953 ended the log-jam. Acheson was succeeded by John Foster Dulles. Dulles focused his primary attentions on the Cold War theater in Europe, and particularly on the rearming of Germany and its incorporation into the European defense community. Acknowledging that the Middle East "had previously been neglected by the United States," Dulles travelled to the Middle East in May, after visiting western Europe.<sup>76</sup>

Though Dulles did recognize the need for defense against communism in the Middle East, he was more concerned with United States relations with the Arab states. Despite the change from the MEC to MEDO (less offensive to the Arab nations because it was not a military structure), the Arab states still maintained their reservations about belonging to a Western defense group. Dulles was very sensitive to this fact. On 1 May, he cabled the American embassies in

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<sup>75</sup> "The Secretary of State (Acheson) to the Department of State," 27 June 1952, pp.251-254. In FRUS, 1952-54, Vol.IX: The Near and Middle East, Part I.

<sup>76</sup> "Memorandum of Conversation, by the Ambassador in Turkey (McGhee)," 26 May 1953, pp.148-54. In FRUS, 1952-54, Vol.IX: The Near and Middle East, Part I.

the Middle East, announcing that "Arab resistance to MEDO should be considered urgently. [Perhaps the United States could] develop an alternative approach to the establishment of inclusive defense arrangements in the Middle East."<sup>77</sup>

Dulles's May visit to the Middle East exacerbated his reservations regarding the MEDO concept. Upon his return, he made his feelings known during a 1 June National Security Meeting. He commented that:

The old MEDO concept was certainly finished. For one thing, Turkey was still greatly feared by the Arab countries which she had once controlled. A fresh start was needed on the problem of defense arrangements, and the only concept which would work was one which was based on the contribution of the indigenous peoples.<sup>78</sup>

These developments frustrated McGhee, who had been working first toward the MEC and then toward MEDO since 1951. Furthermore, Turkish Prime Minister Koprulu pressured Ambassador McGhee to convince Dulles that "the United States, the United Kingdom, France, and Turkey should proceed immediately toward setting up a formal MEDO" in the hope that after it was going, the Arab states would also

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<sup>77</sup> "The Secretary of State (Dulles) to Certain Diplomatic Missions," 1 May 1953, pp.365-66. In FRUS, 1952-54, Vol.IX: The Near and Middle East, Part I.

<sup>78</sup> "Memorandum of Discussion at the 147th Meeting of the National Security Council," 1 June 1953, p. 278. In FRUS, 1952-54, Vol.IX: The Near and Middle East, Part I.



join.<sup>79</sup>

McGhee felt Koprulu's suggestion of an overt establishment of MEDO by the four mentioned powers would be unwise, due to the negative reaction of the Arabs. However, he disagreed with Dulles's contention that a defense organization must come solely from the Middle Eastern states themselves. On the day before he left his post in Ankara, on 18 June of 1953, he relayed his final thoughts as Turkish ambassador to the Department of State:

It would seem that we could find a middle course between immediate overt action by the four powers as proposed by the Turks (and presumably the British) and no action at all. Desirable course of action might be to leave MEDO project in abeyance for the time being while intensifying unpublished planning for the defense of the Middle East by United States, British, and Turkish military representatives.<sup>80</sup>

McGhee's "interim approach," as he called it, would both ease Turkish anxiety and avoid dangerous negative Arab reaction "during the present very fluid period."<sup>81</sup>

McGhee's suggestions concerning the MEDO organization were not adopted. McGhee was disappointed, noting that "all

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<sup>79</sup> "The Ambassador in Turkey (McGhee) to the Department of State," 10 June 1953, pp.387. In FRUS, 1952-54, Vol.IX: The Near and Middle East, Part I.

<sup>80</sup> "The Ambassador in Turkey (McGhee) to the Department of State," 18 June 1953, pp.390-92. In FRUS, 1952-54, Vol.IX: The Near and Middle East, Part I.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

our efforts to organize a defense for the Middle East, in which I had on behalf of my country been involved since 1947, still remained in such an unsatisfactory state [in June of 1953]."<sup>82</sup> Instead, the Baghdad Pact between Turkey, Iraq, Pakistan, Iran, and Great Britain was signed on February 24, 1955."<sup>83</sup>

McGhee resigned his post on June 19, 1953. In his memoirs, he attributed his resignation to the "general reshuffle of ambassadors [in 1953], reflecting sharp differences between the foreign policy of the new Eisenhower administration and that of the Truman administration."<sup>84</sup> McGhee returned to private life and resumed his career as an oil magnate.

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<sup>82</sup> McGhee, The US-Turkish-NATO-Middle East Connection, p.160.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., p.157.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., p.159. No other reasons for McGhee's resignation are given. McGhee's mention of "sharp differences" might be based on Dulles's rejection of MEDO in favor of the Baghdad Pact. Acheson had supported a United States role in a Middle East defense structure, and McGhee had worked diligently toward this end since the summer of 1951. Dulles had effectively ended these efforts by June of 1953, opting instead for a defense structure based on the "indigenous populations" of the Middle East.

## CHAPTER TWO

### The Decade of Realization: McGhee's Diplomatic Career, 1958 to 1968

After retiring from his ambassadorship to Turkey in June of 1953, McGhee returned to Dallas and to the forgotten pleasures of private life. Upon coming back to the United States, McGhee chose to remain involved in Middle Eastern affairs. To that end, he served as a board member to the Middle East Institute from 1953 to 1957, and became director of the Institute in 1957.

McGhee's involvement with the Middle East Institute inadvertently brought about his return to the State Department in 1958. On November 24, 1958, President Dwight D. Eisenhower appointed a special committee to analyze United States military assistance to foreign nations under the Mutual Security Program, designed to provide economic and military aid to struggling nations.<sup>1</sup> This committee was chaired by William H. Draper, former under secretary of the Army. Because of McGhee's experience as director of the

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<sup>1</sup> "Memorandum From the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs (Roundtree) to the Under Secretary of State for Economic Affairs (Dillon)," 7 January 1959, pp.688-691. In FRUS, 1958-1960, Vol.XV: South and Southeast Asia (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1992).

Middle East Institute, he was selected to chair a subcommittee (of the Draper Committee) in charge of Middle Eastern territories.<sup>2</sup>

Membership to the Draper Committee invited other appointments for McGhee during the late Eisenhower years. Between 1958 and 1959, he served as a consultant to the National Security Council, and also as a consultant to the Committee of International Economic Growth.<sup>3</sup> The 1960 election of young and energetic Democrat John F. Kennedy to the presidency provided stimulating opportunities for many old guard "Truman Democrats," and McGhee was no exception. On February 13, 1961, Kennedy appointed McGhee counselor to the Department of State and chairman of the Policy Planning Council.<sup>4</sup>

By many accounts, the State Department of 1961 was riddled with problems. At the outset, Secretary of State

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> "McGhee," Biographic Register of 1961, United States Department of State Division of Publishing Services, 15 March 1961.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. The Policy Planning Council was established in February, 1961. Its predecessor, the Secretary of State's Staff Committee, was created in December, 1944. This Staff Committee was superseded by the Policy Planning Staff under Secretary of State George Marshall. Finally, in February, 1961, the Policy Planning Staff was converted into the Policy Planning Council (PPC). For a detailed account of the PPC's responsibilities, see Elmer Plischke's Conduct of American Diplomacy (London: D. Van Nostrand Company, 1967), pp.198-200.

Dean Rusk and members of the Policy Planning Council disagreed on the Policy Planning Council's desire to publish a comprehensive (and voluminous) statement of United States foreign policy. McGhee and his staff felt that such a document could provide a useful guide for fledgling Foreign Service officers.<sup>5</sup> The document was initiated during the Eisenhower administration in the form of a thick volume entitled "United States National Security Policy." During the early months of the Kennedy administration, McGhee and his staff labored on the ill-fated document. Both President Kennedy and Rusk nixed the document in its final stages, due to its "lack of practicality." Rusk recalled that "both Kennedy's reaction and mine disappointed George McGhee and others with Policy Planning."<sup>6</sup>

By September of 1961, Under Secretary of State Chester Bowles recalled that "the [State] Department was almost without direction, and inevitably the White House staff under McGeorge Bundy assumed more and more responsibilities for questions which should have been handled by the State Department."<sup>7</sup> Bowles thought Kennedy's confidence in the

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<sup>5</sup> Dean Rusk, As I Saw It, As Told By Dean Rusk to Richard Rusk (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1990), p.532.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Chester Bowles, Promises to Keep: My Years in Public Life, 1941-1969 (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), pp.360-361.

State Department was rapidly declining. It was time, asserted Bowles, for re-organization in the administrative set-up of the beleaguered State Department.

On November 27, 1961, Bowles met with Rusk to discuss suggestions for re-organization. One suggestion made by Bowles involved transferring McGhee from Policy Planning to the European Bureau. However, noted Bowles, McGhee was reluctant to give up his position as chair of Policy Planning to become assistant secretary of the European Bureau, though Bowles felt it would be a positive administrative change.<sup>8</sup>

Two days later, it was Bowles who found himself forced into a new (and lowered) position. For months, Bowles -- and most of Washington -- had speculated as to how President Kennedy would mesh all the disparate personalities in the State Department together, and how he would sooth the disarray infecting his administration. Then, on November 29th, Kennedy acted.<sup>9</sup> Bowles was to leave his post as under secretary to replace Averill Harriman as "roving ambassador." George Ball would become the new under secretary of state. George McGhee would move into Ball's

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p.362.

<sup>9</sup> Roger Hilsman, To Move A Nation: The Politics of Foreign Policy in the Administration of John F. Kennedy (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1967), p.50.

old position as junior under secretary, with the title under secretary of state for Political Affairs.<sup>10</sup> The town of Washington and the press, caught by surprise, coined Kennedy's bold re-organization the "Thanksgiving Day Massacre" at the State Department.<sup>11</sup>

McGhee came through the dramatic Thanksgiving Day Massacre ranking third in the State Department hierarchy. As under secretary of state for Political Affairs, he was responsible for administration of policies designed by Rusk and Ball. The so-called "Congo Crisis" presented a challenge almost immediately. The African Congo became independent from Belgium in 1960. The crisis element centered around the copper-rich province of Katanga and around its leader, Moise Tshombe. Less than one month after independence, Tshombe announced that Katanga had seceded from the Congo and would henceforth function as a separate government with close ties to Belgium. Joseph Kasavubu, the new Congolese President, requested the assistance of the United Nations to help end the Katanga secession and to restore national unity.<sup>12</sup>

In October of 1962, McGhee visited Katanga in order to

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<sup>10</sup> Bowles, Promises to Keep, p.363.

<sup>11</sup> Hilsman, To Move a Nation, p.50.

<sup>12</sup> Bowles, Promises to Keep, p.421.

speak with Tshombe. Under Secretary of State Ball felt McGhee's negotiating skills could be useful because McGhee was "highly personable, and well-liked by the Southern Democrats in Congress. Therefore, he could not be dismissed as an anti-Tshombe fanatic."<sup>13</sup> State Department colleague Roger Hilsman recalled that "McGhee was known to be close to the Belgians, and if anyone could talk Tshombe into co-operating, surely McGhee had the best chance."<sup>14</sup>

Ball awaited the results of McGhee's visit anxiously. In his mind, "the mission by McGhee strengthened hope that conciliatory measures could succeed. We [at the State Department] were increasingly anxious that such measures succeed soon, for the Congolese government seemed to be falling apart." This would create new openings for Soviet infiltration.<sup>15</sup> For his part, McGhee believed that there was value in a United States connection with Tshombe because the copper mine interests of the State Department's European Bureau could be best protected by a separate state dominated by Tshombe.<sup>16</sup>

After meeting with Tshombe, McGhee concluded that

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<sup>13</sup> George Ball, The Past Has Another Pattern: Memoirs (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1982), p.256.

<sup>14</sup> Hilsman, To Move a Nation, p.260.

<sup>15</sup> Ball, The Past Has Another Pattern, p.258.

<sup>16</sup> Bowles, Promises to Keep, p.424.



United States support of a United Nations crackdown on Katanga would make "a difficult situation even worse."<sup>17</sup> Ball agreed that sanctions against Katanga "were a sticky problem." Upon his return to the United States in November, 1962, McGhee urged the imposition of sanctions on Tshombe be delayed. Meanwhile, he drafted a plan proposing a milder formula of economic pressure, while convincing Belgian Foreign Minister Paul-Henri Spaak of the necessity for this plan.<sup>18</sup>

During the first days of December, after heated discussions with top-level State Department officials including Rusk, Ball, McGhee, and Bowles, President Kennedy made the decision to continue full support for the United Nations sanctions against Tshombe. On December 11, Foreign Minister Spaak announced that despite Belgium's self-interest in the Congo, Belgium would also support the United Nations. Bowles recorded in his memoirs that Spaak's statement "may be credited in large part to the efforts of McGhee, who now also supported President Kennedy's decision even though it was contrary to his earlier recommendation."<sup>19</sup> The reasons for McGhee's change of

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ball, The Past Has Another Pattern, p.258.

<sup>19</sup> Bowles, Promises to Keep, p.428.

attitude are unavailable.

McGhee remained under secretary for Political Affairs until March 28, 1963. He was appointed ambassador to the Federal Republic of Germany nearly one month later on the 25th of April.<sup>20</sup> The circumstances surrounding McGhee's transfer to the Bonn embassy remain mysterious. Secretary of State Rusk recollected that "Kennedy and Johnson let me [Rusk] name the people I wanted in regard to appointing key positions in the State Department," and Rusk had wanted McGhee for the position of under secretary of Political Affairs in November of 1961.<sup>21</sup>

Attorney General Robert Kennedy posed a problem for Rusk in terms of Rusk's choices for these key positions. Rusk admitted that he had problems with Bobby Kennedy on personnel because Bobby wanted devoted "Kennedy people" in those jobs. For example, George Ball, George McGhee, and Harlan Cleveland were "longtime Democrats and loyal to the President, but not Kennedy people to suit Bobby's tastes. Fortunately, John Kennedy took a broader view. On key appointments, [Rusk] managed to prevail."<sup>22</sup>

What began as a small conflict became increasingly

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<sup>20</sup> "McGhee," Biographic Register of 1964, United States Department of State, 30 September 1963.

<sup>21</sup> Rusk, As I Saw It, p.524.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p.525.

dramatic. Robert Kennedy took an intense disliking to McGhee. "In every conversation you had with McGhee," fumed Bobby Kennedy, "you couldn't possibly understand what he was saying. I was involved with him a good deal in 1962, and it was just impossible."<sup>23</sup> Finally, the Attorney General became so frustrated that he approached his brother, President John Kennedy. The President told Bobby to "go see Dean Rusk and ask him to get rid of McGhee if he felt so strongly."<sup>24</sup>

The Attorney General did just that. Bobby Kennedy remembered "calling on Rusk one Saturday morning to say that I thought [McGhee's performance] was discouraging, and to give Rusk some examples of the fact that George McGhee didn't know what he was doing."<sup>25</sup> Kennedy's memoirs did not elaborate on examples of McGhee's alleged "poor performance." Similarly, neither the memoirs of Rusk nor those of McGhee shed any additional light on these events. According to Bobby Kennedy's memoirs, Rusk responded by asking "whether this [disparaging of McGhee] was anything personal, and by wearily agreeing to take Kennedy's words

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<sup>23</sup> Arthur Schlesinger, Robert Kennedy and His Times (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1978), p.438.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

under consideration."<sup>26</sup>

The exact chain of events that followed Kennedy's direct request for McGhee's removal is difficult to ascertain. Only Bobby Kennedy's memoirs make any sort of elaboration in describing the process by which McGhee retired from his position as under secretary for Political Affairs and assumed the ambassadorship of the FRG. Kennedy asserted that "finally, in a very badly handled way, they [presumably meaning President Kennedy and Secretary of State Rusk] got rid of George McGhee by firing a rather good ambassador, Walter Dowling, over in Germany. Dowling was so upset at the way it had been handled that he quit the Foreign Service."<sup>27</sup>

In his own memoirs, McGhee notes only that he "grew restless in the vast Washington bureaucracy by early 1963, and hoped that he would soon have his own mission again." His hopes "became a reality when Walter Dowling retired, and he [McGhee] was named as his replacement on April 25th." Less than three weeks later, on May 15th, McGhee caught the

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<sup>26</sup> Robert Kennedy, In His Own Words: The Unpublished Recollections of the Kennedy Years, ed. Edwin Guthman and Jeffrey Shulman (New York: Bantam Books, 1988), p.279.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

evening plane to Frankfurt.<sup>28</sup>

### **Impressions of Ambassador McGhee**

When the new Ambassador to the FRG arrived at the American embassy in Bonn, he made a vivid impression on his staff. By many accounts, George McGhee was a most unusual ambassador. Firstly, he was quite different from his predecessor, Walter Dowling. American Economic Officer Emerson Brown remembered Dowling as being "very low profile, vis-a-vis the Germans." George McGhee, however, was "very high profile, vis-a-vis everybody."<sup>29</sup> United States Information Services (USIS) officer Maurice Lee recalled that McGhee "was a personal friend of President Kennedy's and worked through the night with me upon receiving the news of Kennedy's assassination."<sup>30</sup>

Lee's recollection of McGhee's diligence on that night represented nothing unusual in terms of McGhee's devotion to his duty. Former High Commissioner to West Germany John J. McCloy observed that McGhee managed to "maintain American

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<sup>28</sup> George McGhee, At the Creation of a New Germany, From Adenauer to Brandt: An Ambassador's Account (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), p.xix.

<sup>29</sup> Emerson M. Brown, Oral History Interview, Georgetown University Library, 2 February 1990, p.15.

<sup>30</sup> Maurice E. Lee, Oral History Interview, Georgetown University Library, 9 February 1989, p.17.

prestige in Germany during a time of great change and turmoil by exerting patient and experienced leadership."<sup>31</sup> USIS officer Albert E. Hemsing elaborated on McCloy's assessment. Hemsing remembered McGhee as "an activist ambassador who looked to the USIS to help him on every bilateral or United States-European issue, from the annual offset agreement with the Germans, to trade issues, to promoting the Multilateral Force idea."<sup>32</sup>

In fact, Hemsing received his promotion to USIS director for Germany by way of McGhee. Hemsing first came to know McGhee while working for the USIS in Berlin. He recalled that he "had always gotten on well with the Ambassador on his frequent trips to Berlin."<sup>33</sup> McGhee often visited Berlin in order to meet with the press and to participate in as many USIS functions as Hemsing could schedule. However, Hemsing was "hardly prepared for the phone call he received from McGhee requesting him to come down to Bonn as counselor for Public Affairs and run the USIS." Hemsing initially protested on the grounds that two other officers had seniority over himself. McGhee's reply

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<sup>31</sup> McGhee, At the Creation of a New Germany, p.xiii. McCloy wrote the foreword for McGhee's book.

<sup>32</sup> Albert E. Hemsing, Oral History Interview, Georgetown University Library, 18 April 1989, p.45.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p.42.

was, "Well, I want you, and I told Washington so." Washington complied with McGhee's request, and Hemsing became USIS director for Germany in 1964.<sup>34</sup>

Hemsing was but one member of McGhee's staff with fond memories of McGhee during the Bonn years. Colleague Thomas J. Dunnigan had vivid recollections of McGhee:

McGhee was boisterous, almost rambunctious at times, brilliant at others. Hard-working, dedicated. A man of a thousand ideas. Loyal to his staff. Quite effective, I think, with the Germans. A man who spoke all over Germany all the time, touched every issue, dodged none. Put forth the American view quite, quite well. He couldn't stand a situation of quiet when nothing was going on. Something had to be going on. I don't know if I could explain that very well, but that was the feeling: "What's the old man up to now? What's he doing now? Well, he's cooking up something."<sup>35</sup>

McGhee's "boisterousness and rambunctiousness" manifested itself in intriguing ways. One had only to observe McGhee during his daily routine in order to appreciate Dunnigan's description. For example, McGhee recalled his own "peculiar" note-taking fashion. "In my early years at the State Department," recalled McGhee, "I developed the technique of taking notes surreptitiously on a small piece of paper concealed in my left hand, so as not to inhibit the frankness of my interlocutor. After the meeting, while the

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Thomas J. Dunnigan, Oral History Interview, Georgetown University Library, 7 September and December, 1990, p.36.

information was still fresh in my mind, I dictated an expansion of my notes into a full minute of the conversation."<sup>36</sup>

Dunnigan remembered another unusual habit of the Ambassador:

For a long time, he [McGhee] had behind him in his office a speaker going all the time, reciting German grammar. He [McGhee] thought, you know, subliminally he could pick it up even though he was talking to you. He'd say, "Now, what are we going to do about this? Hadn't we better go see so and so? Maybe I ought to write a letter to the President about this." Meanwhile, the German... but that eventually stopped.<sup>37</sup>

McGhee's abundance of unflagging energy proved to be quite necessary. In 1963, American-West German relations resembled a bedrock of tranquility -- on the surface. By the time of McGhee's retirement in 1968, the relationship between the two nations had been turned upside-down. Only an ambassador with a wealth of endurance and patience could successfully guide the American embassy in Bonn during these unpredictable years.

#### **An Introduction to the FRG, May 1963 to May 1968**

When McGhee arrived at his new post in mid-May of 1963, he had every reason to feel an unbridled sense of optimism.

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<sup>36</sup> McGhee, At the Creation of a New Germany, p.xi.

<sup>37</sup> Dunnigan, Oral History Interview, p.37.



The FRG seemed to be entering into a new stage of maturity and strength. By 1963, all traces of the devastation wrought by World War II had vanished. Emerson Brown, an American economic officer stationed in Bonn at this time, observed that "the Germans were going great guns economically, and had also achieved political stability."<sup>38</sup> Moreover, according to USIS Officer Maurice Lee, relations between the United States and West Germany were characterized by an overall sense of "maturity" and "healthy respect."<sup>39</sup>

In reality, the FRG was a nation in transition during the period of the sixties. Edwin Cronk, economic consular in Bonn from 1961 to 1965, observed that the FRG was like a well-bred stallion that "had the bit in its teeth and was going crazy."<sup>40</sup> Cronk's observation was not far off the mark. Almost all facets of life in West Germany would face upheaval by the end of the decade. Historian Mary Fulbrook provides a wonderful description of the Germany that McGhee encountered upon his appointment to the Bonn embassy:

West Germany became, very visibly, a different place in the course of the 1960's. Old, ruined town centers were rebuilt, with modern buildings

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<sup>38</sup> Brown, Oral History Interview, p.14.

<sup>39</sup> Lee, Oral History Interview, p.17.

<sup>40</sup> Edwin Cronk, Oral History Interview, Georgetown University Library, 7 November 1988, p.14.

and pedestrian shopping precincts. Transport was improved, with rapidly expanding networks of autobahns bringing formerly isolated communities into a more modern, fast-moving society. Fewer people were working on the land, and in the old heavy industries: more were beginning to work in the service sector and in new electronics and other high-tech industries. The image of affluence was spreading: the typical West German was no longer the emaciated ex-POW, a person lacking an arm or a leg, a prematurely aged widow in black, but rather a bloated, cigar-smoking businessman, an efficient banker or industrialist, or a fashion-conscious, smartly dressed woman. The charge that Germany was an economic giant, but a political dwarf might have been partially justified; but new generations were growing up who would radically change the face of German politics. The passage was to be a stormy one.<sup>41</sup>

According to McGhee, these changes in West Germany were symptomatic of the "state of flux" characterizing United States-European relations in 1963.<sup>42</sup> On the day McGhee arrived in West Germany to take up his duties (May 16, 1963), West German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer formalized his long-time collaboration with French Premier Charles de Gaulle by way of the controversial Franco-German Treaty of Cooperation.

Adenauer's friendship with de Gaulle was a sore point between the West German government and the Kennedy administration. In a speech given in Philadelphia on July

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<sup>41</sup> Mary Fulbrook, The Divided Nation: A History of Germany, 1918-1990 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), p.201.

<sup>42</sup> McGhee, At the Creation of a New Germany, p.10.

4, 1962, President Kennedy described the "Grand Design" that he envisioned for the future of the Atlantic alliance. According to Kennedy and his fellow "Atlanticists," the Grand Design was to be comprised of an "Atlantic Community" consisting of an "American pillar" and a "European pillar." The European pillar would be strengthened economically and politically by British entry into the European Economic Community (EEC), or Common Market. Also, the European pillar would preferably depend on the United States for defense and nuclear power.<sup>43</sup>

De Gaulle and his fellow "Europeanists" had their own version of the Grand Design. In de Gaulle's plan, the security and prosperity of Western Europe depended on cooperation between the existing members of the EEC (which did not include Great Britain). Furthermore, special ties between France and West Germany would eliminate the current dependence on the United States for stability and defense.<sup>44</sup>

De Gaulle's Grand Design, an idea that centered around a Franco-German alliance, was frowned upon by the Kennedy Administration. McGhee was also troubled by de Gaulle's plan. He noted that "we had to be constantly on the alert

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<sup>43</sup> Roger Morgan, The United States and West Germany, 1945- 1973: A Study in Alliance Politics (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), p.127.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

for any re-structuring of the inter-Western European alliances advocated by de Gaulle, for the purpose of eliminating the United States as a European power."<sup>45</sup> However, McGhee did see value in a close relationship between France and the FRG. He believed that the United States had a fundamental interest in good Franco-German relations, because the rivalry between these two key European nations had been a primary cause of two world wars.<sup>46</sup> Therefore, it made sense to encourage friendship between the traditional rivals.

McGhee did not have to convince Chancellor Adenauer of the value in a Franco-German friendship. During his later years, Adenauer was proud to call himself a Europeanist. His political stance was important -- Adenauer was an indomitable force in West German politics, though his power had declined since 1959.<sup>47</sup> He had occupied the post of chancellor since its inception in 1949, thus earning his nickname, "the Giant."<sup>48</sup> The "Adenauer era" was to end six months later, when Ludwig Erhard was elected chancellor of

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<sup>45</sup> McGhee, At the Creation of a New Germany, p.9.

<sup>46</sup> Interview of McGhee (Washington: 3 December 1992) by Suzanne Brown.

<sup>47</sup> Manfred Jonas, The United States and Germany: A Diplomatic History (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), p.301.

<sup>48</sup> E. Brown, Oral History Interview, p.14.

the FRG in October, 1963.

Erhard was a very different type of leader than Adenauer had been. Economic officer Brown made the comment that "when Erhard took over, you couldn't say it was a disaster, but it was clear that Erhard was an economist and that he just didn't have the required guile." However, added Brown, "nobody had Adenauer's guile, though Erhard didn't even come close."<sup>49</sup>

Erhard was a much more pleasing choice in the eyes of the Kennedy and Johnson administrations. Erhard turned away from France and instead concentrated on strengthening West German ties with the United States. One example was his cooperation with the United States in focusing on the so-called Kennedy Round of European-American tariff negotiations. McGhee noted that Erhard welcomed Kennedy's efforts to reduce trade barriers, and ceaselessly advocated the free enterprise market system during his years in the Bonn government.<sup>50</sup>

Erhard had also established good relations with President Johnson, and tried to fulfill German offset obligations in order to compensate for the foreign exchange

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., p.15.

<sup>50</sup> McGhee, At the Creation of a New Germany, p.1.

costs of United States troops in Germany.<sup>51</sup> Also, he promoted German participation in the Multilateral Force (MLF), an idea involving a nuclear force in Western Europe controlled by a panel of Western Alliance leaders (though the power to make final decisions would lie with the United States).<sup>52</sup> Finally, Erhard made successful peace overtures to the East, paving the way for future successes in East-West relations.<sup>53</sup>

In retrospect, the years between 1963 and 1965 resembled a sort of honeymoon period in comparison to the rocky roads ahead. The year 1966 marked a shift in the tide of West German-American relations. According to McGhee, "the developing mood of détente (in which the United States took the lead) and increasing American entanglement in Vietnam, caused Germans to become restive under the restrictions of American tutelage."<sup>54</sup>

Other factors also marked this disconcerting shift in attitude. Without any warning, President Johnson abandoned the idea of the MLF in late 1964, causing confusion and

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p.xv.

<sup>52</sup> Arthur M. Schlesinger, A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1965), p.853.

<sup>53</sup> McGhee, At the Creation of a New Germany, p.2.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p.xv.

resentment amongst Germans who had ardently wished for admission to the "nuclear club."<sup>55</sup> Difficulties over German payments under the offset agreement with the United States reached a climax in September of 1966. The struggle between Erhard and the Atlanticists against Adenauer and the "Gaullists" (supporters of de Gaulle and his version of the Grand Design) added to these tensions. The struggle between the two factions seriously eroded Erhard's authority within his cabinet, in his political party (the Christian Democratic Union), and also in the public mind.<sup>56</sup>

These pressures, in combination with a mild recession in the FRG during 1966, resulted in Erhard's defeat in the 1966 elections. The new "Grand Coalition" government, led by Chancellor Kurt-Georg Kiesinger, had special political significance. The Grand Coalition combined the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) party (which had been the majority party since 1949) and the Social Democratic (SPD) party, which prior to 1966 had always been in opposition. The SPD was finally granted social acceptability, and the combined strength of the CDU and the SPD would guarantee the later passage of financial reform, state of emergency legislation,

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<sup>55</sup> Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p.851.

<sup>56</sup> Arthur B. Gunlicks, "Opposition in the Federal Republic of Germany," Political Opposition and Dissent (New York: Dunellen Publishing Company Inc., 1973), pp. 185-227.

and a new electoral law.<sup>57</sup>

The 1966 accession of the Grand Coalition government also marked a watershed turn of events in American-West German relations. Kiesinger again favored France over the United States, as Adenauer had in the early part of the decade. In 1967, controversy also erupted over the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty between the United States and the Soviet Union. According to the foreign minister of the Grand Coalition, Willy Brandt, European security and nuclear non-proliferation were inherently related. Brandt noted that the Grand Coalition's attitude toward the treaty was based on four considerations:

First, our own security must be safeguarded; secondly, there must be a guaranteed transition to further progress in arms control; thirdly, the treaty must have no adverse effects on European unification; and, fourthly, we wanted assurance of non-discrimination in regard to the peaceful use of nuclear energy.<sup>58</sup>

The basic conflict lay in the fact that the Western European "nuclear have-nots" (like the FRG) did not wish to be defenseless in the face of the continuing threat presented by the Soviet Union.

Further problems arose between the United States and

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p.204.

<sup>58</sup> Willy Brandt, People and Politics: The Years 1960 to 1975 (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1976), pp. 188-189.



West Germany during the period of the Grand Coalition (1966-1969). Perhaps most damaging to American-West German relations was the implementation of "Ostpolitik", a new "eastern-oriented" foreign policy supported by Willy Brandt. McGhee and his officers at the embassy in Bonn felt favorably toward Brandt's Ostpolitik. He recalled that he "consistently supported German initiatives in improving relations with the East, both with the Soviets and with other Warsaw Pact countries."<sup>59</sup> McGhee understood that in the eyes of the Bonn government, these initiatives represented a way to increase already substantial trade with the East, and also to further the cause of German reunification. The Nixon administration did not share McGhee's opinion, fearing that closer association between the FRG and Eastern Europe might mean "losing" the FRG to the Soviets.<sup>60</sup>

According to McGhee, the events between May 1963 and May 1968 resulted in the complete transformation of the FRG to a "new Germany."<sup>61</sup> The transition had not been smooth. The Grand Coalition government steered the Federal Republic toward a new course, featuring increased economic and

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<sup>59</sup> McGhee, At the Creation of A New Germany, p.2.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p.242.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., p.xvi.

political relations with the Eastern bloc nations. The election of Brandt to the chancellorship in 1969 was especially significant because he was the first member of the Social Democrat party to hold the office of chancellor. West Germany had matured politically and in the process had become more independent of the United States.

A detailed examination of American-West German relations as affected by the Vietnam War, Brandt's Ostpolitik, and the matter of nuclear weapons control in the FRG thus becomes valuable in two ways. Firstly, the dynamics operating to bring about monumental change during McGhee's mission to the FRG become evident. Secondly, McGhee's only partially successful attempt at bold leadership from the embassy in Bonn demonstrates his minimal power to affect major policy decisions during the Johnson and (early) Nixon administrations. Indeed, at several crucial points, McGhee's advice was ignored by Johnson and early Nixon policy-makers. Ambassador McGhee found himself facing the repercussions of these same (and sometimes ill-founded) policies, and he supported them with dignity and grace.

## CHAPTER THREE

### The United States, the Federal Republic of Germany, and South Vietnam

When the Kennedy administration appointed George McGhee ambassador to the Federal Republic of Germany in May, 1963, American relations with West Germany "were marked by a substantial measure of agreement."<sup>1</sup> West Germany enjoyed a reputation for economic muscle and political equanimity, and there existed no particularly divisive issues between the two governments. West Germany stood in stark contrast to another United States ally, troubled South Vietnam, which remained embroiled in a civil war with communist North Vietnam. Kennedy administration policy regarding South Vietnam was one of continually-increased support in the form of finances, material, and personnel.

Against this background, Ambassador McGhee took his post in Bonn. He did not expect America's involvement in South Vietnam to affect the relationship between the United States and West Germany. Before his arrival in Germany, the war in South Vietnam "seemed quite innocuous" and "had not

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<sup>1</sup> Morgan, The United States and West Germany, p.125.

become a very sensitive problem."<sup>2</sup> This did not remain the case. America's involvement in South Vietnam adversely affected relations between the United States and West Germany on several fronts.

### **Vietnam: The Ambassador's Perspective**

Before his appointment to the ambassadorship of the Federal Republic of Germany, George McGhee was well aware of America's increased involvement in South Vietnam. In fact, in a paper dated November 3, 1961, United States Ambassador to India, John Kenneth Galbraith, suggested that McGhee might possibly replace Frederick Nolting as ambassador to South Vietnam.<sup>3</sup> Galbraith believed McGhee capable of "holding his own with both Diem and the United States military," and further credited McGhee as someone who "would insist once and for all on government reform, and who would understand the United States political implications of developments there."<sup>4</sup> Galbraith did not stand alone in this opinion. On November 15 of 1961, President Kennedy's Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, McGeorge

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<sup>2</sup> Interview of McGhee (Washington: 3 December 1992) by Suzanne Brown.

<sup>3</sup> "Paper Prepared by the Ambassador to India (Galbraith)," 3 November 1961, pp.474-476. FRUS, 1961, Vol.I: Vietnam (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1988).

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

Bundy, wrote a memo to the President also suggesting McGhee replace Ambassador Nolting. "I would still consider McGhee," wrote Bundy. "For one thing, if he thinks it won't work after a good look, he'll tell you, and he has the authority of the victor of Greece."<sup>5</sup> Kennedy seemed receptive to these suggestions. He expressed the view that if a general military command should be set up in South Vietnam, he "wanted to make sure that someone like George McGhee headed it; in fact, it might be well to send McGhee."<sup>6</sup> At the least, President Kennedy thought highly enough of McGhee to appoint him under secretary of state for Political Affairs on November 26 of 1961.

On the day after his appointment was announced, Under Secretary-Designate McGhee voiced his opinion on Vietnam to the Secretary of State:

I have read Mr. Chayes's memorandum to you of November 16 on the subject of Vietnam. There is one consideration bearing on the introduction of substantial US combat forces into Vietnam which is not mentioned in that memorandum and which seems to me worth noting.

Domestic US dissatisfaction with what would surely be the prolonged involvement of American soldiers in these indecisive anti-guerrilla

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<sup>5</sup> "Memorandum From the President's Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Bundy) to the President (Kennedy)," 15 November 1961, pp.612-614. FRUS, 1961, Vol.I: Vietnam.

<sup>6</sup> "Memorandum From the President (Kennedy) to the Secretary of State (Rusk) and the Secretary of Defense (McNamara)," 14 November 1961, pp.603-604. FRUS, 1961, Vol.I: Vietnam.

operations would mount and give rise to growing demands that we attack the source of the aggression in North Vietnam....

If we gave in to these pressures and attacked North Vietnam, we would be propelled into a widening conflict which might be hard to terminate....

In short, once we committed combat troops to Vietnam we would tend to lose control of subsequent events - either in that theater or more generally - by reason of the popular reactions that our continued involvement would likely trigger.<sup>7</sup>

A decade later, Under Secretary McGhee's predictions would be proven correct. As ambassador to West Germany between 1963 and 1968, McGhee did not participate in policy planning for South Vietnam. Privately, however, he became concerned by August of 1964, when he learned that American personnel in Vietnam participated in combat operations.<sup>8</sup> "The big change came," observed McGhee thirty years later, "when we sent the first combat people [during the Johnson administration]. The government concealed this from the American public; they said they were experts on irrigation but they were actually authorized to shoot. Once we started shooting it was our war."<sup>9</sup>

Nevertheless, Ambassador McGhee did not allow his

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<sup>7</sup> "Memorandum From the Under Secretary-Designate for Political Affairs (McGhee) to the Secretary of State (Rusk)," 27 November 1961, p.672. FRUS, 1961, Vol.I: Vietnam.

<sup>8</sup> McGhee, At the Creation of a New Germany, p.156.

<sup>9</sup> Interview of McGhee (Washington: 3 December 1992) by Suzanne Brown.

personal feelings to affect his requirements to both explain and support United States policy. He actively spoke about the American stance on the hotly-debated topic of Vietnam at clubs, universities, and amongst political circles. In a speech to the Evangelische Akademie in July of 1964, the Ambassador reminded the Germans of their own responsibility "as the second strongest nation in the free world" toward stemming the tide of Communist aggression in faraway South Vietnam.<sup>10</sup> Even today, Ambassador McGhee clearly recalls the basis for his public defense of American policy. "The point I made in my speeches was an important one," insists McGhee. "We had undertaken to defend people under the Truman doctrine, which could be construed as a universal doctrine. Having done this in countries such as Greece and Turkey, how could we ignore other countries that were subject to the same pressures?"<sup>11</sup>

If America's responsibilities in Vietnam were questionable, Ambassador McGhee's responsibilities as an official United States representative to West Germany were not. His task embodied upholding American policy,

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<sup>10</sup> McGhee, "Speech to the Evangelische Akademie," 16 July 1964, In George Crews McGhee Papers (Series XV: Germany-Miscellaneous Files, Box 2), Lauinger Library, Georgetown University.

<sup>11</sup> Interview of McGhee (Washington: 3 December 1992) by Suzanne Brown.

especially in the face of assault. One must wonder how difficult this task was made by McGhee's private misgivings concerning Vietnam. At the very least, he must have experienced an intermittent -- and dreadful -- discomfort.

### **Vietnam and the "Anti-authoritarian"<sup>12</sup> Student Movement**

Beginning in 1964, Vietnam became the focal point of protest in a seemingly endless wave of student unrest breaking over the Federal Republic of Germany during Ambassador McGhee's appointment. Indeed, nowhere did the "system" put itself more terribly in the wrong, in the eyes of young people, than Vietnam.<sup>13</sup> Dissatisfied German students rejected most forms of traditional authority. They protested against elder generations in schools, in universities, in their government, and even in their own families on the basis of what, to this younger generation, seemed to be a "tarnished Nazi past."<sup>14</sup> Now, students eagerly sought new and "unblemished" voices of authority.

Student opposition in Germany was led by Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), an offshoot of the Social

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<sup>12</sup> Richard Lowenthal, "Cultural Change and Generation Change in Postwar Western Germany," The Federal Republic of Germany and the United States: Changing Political, Social, and Economic Relations (London: Westview Press, 1984), p.41.

<sup>13</sup> Brandt, People and Politics, p.200.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.



Democratic Party (SPD). The SDS had broken away from the SPD when the SPD abandoned its Marxist affiliations in 1959.<sup>15</sup> The German student opposition sought to obliterate "social injustices" that included apartheid in South Africa, the Vietnam War, and political repression in Iran.<sup>16</sup>

Anti-authoritarian German student leaders could be characterized as neo-Marxists who referred to American policy as "the necessary product of a declining capitalism turning into fascism."<sup>17</sup> The deeply-felt fervor over United States policy in Vietnam stemmed from both American military presence in West Germany and from the "Americanization" of the FRG since World War II. This "Americanization forbade the misfortunes of Germany's most powerful partner to be greeted with indifference." Idols to the neo-Marxist youth included Ho Chi Minh, Che Guevara, and Herbert Marcuse.<sup>18</sup>

Anti-authoritarian student agitation focused most centrally around the German universities. Sources of acute dissatisfaction included the "ossified, hierarchical, and authoritarian structure" of the universities, the "absolute

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<sup>15</sup> McGhee, At the Creation of a New Germany, p.167.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Lowenthal, "Cultural Change and Generation Change in Postwar Western Germany," The Federal Republic and the United States, p.41.

<sup>18</sup> Brandt, People and Politics, p.200.

power" wielded by the full professor "in all matters of curriculum, examinations, appointments, and promotions," and the rapid growth of the student body from 244,000 in 1961 to 316,000 in 1968.<sup>19</sup> Ambassador McGhee observed further causes for the explosion of student agitation, including exaggeration of the "student threat" in the press and the aloof reaction to student demands on the part of the University professors.<sup>20</sup>

Student "reformers" actually sought to move beyond the universities and to become a recognized force in West German national politics. In 1966, the Federal Republic of Germany suffered an economic downturn, giving rise to significant membership growth in the National Democratic Party, a small political party residing on the extreme right of the spectrum. The National Democrats created a fairly significant "extra parliamentary opposition" against the currently ruling "Grand Coalition" government (a combination of the Christian Democratic Union and the Social Democrat Party). Radical students hoped to play a role similar to that of the National Democratic Party by creating an identical opposition on the extreme left of the political

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<sup>19</sup> Hans W. Gatzke, Germany and the United States: A "Special Relationship?" (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980), p. 214.

<sup>20</sup> McGhee, At the Creation of a New Germany, p.167.

spectrum.<sup>21</sup> Their efforts did not meet with any real or lasting success in the realm of national politics. In fact, the most recognizable mark of the radical student opposition was its violent nature - SDS demonstrations resulted in several student deaths.

Life at the American embassy in Bonn remained uninterrupted by these widespread student demonstrations. However, demonstrations against American involvement in Vietnam presented an intriguing challenge for Ambassador McGhee and for his staff. United States Information Service (USIS) Officer Albert Hemsing recalled Ambassador McGhee's "idea that the USIS must do something to support [American] policy in Vietnam every day, 365 days a year."<sup>22</sup> This idea seemed problematic to Hemsing. Hemsing found that supplying Embassy or USIS officers for discussion of American policy, per the ever-growing requests of German organizations, "became counter-productive." Often, students would "run an open-to-all meeting to have an American to throw bricks at."<sup>23</sup> Instead, Hemsing preferred the idea of allowing American officers to speak only in controlled situations,

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<sup>21</sup> Lowenthal, "Cultural Change and Generation Change in Postwar Western Germany," The Federal Republic and the United States, p.42.

<sup>22</sup> Hemsing, Oral History Interview, p.45.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

such as in small, closed seminars.

After he himself experienced numerous difficulties, Ambassador McGhee concurred with Hemsing's advice. During an incident on February 7, 1966, at Cologne University, "the Rector had to sneak Ambassador McGhee out the back door when a well-organized band of students used the occasion to stage a riot about United States involvement in Vietnam."<sup>24</sup> This incident was by no means isolated. Ambassador McGhee had previously confronted vicious hecklers while giving lectures at German universities. One of several noteworthy occasions occurred at Munich University on May 15, 1965. The Ambassador delivered a speech entitled "The Atlantic Partnership and European Unity" to a group of political science students and found himself interrupted by "a weird moaning sound."<sup>25</sup> The disconcerting sound originated from a member of the audience seated in the balcony, and as McGhee recalled the situation:

The student had a gas mask over his face and was dropping leaflets on the audience below, while moaning "Vietnam, Vietnam." I appealed to the gentleman to quit so as to allow me to speak, and offered the gentleman the opportunity to ask the first question. The chairman made an appeal to him, and when he didn't respond, a group of normal German students kicked him out. I don't know what they did to him, but we didn't hear from him

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p.46.

<sup>25</sup> McGhee, At the Creation of a New Germany, p.170.

again. I just stood back and didn't sit down.<sup>26</sup>

Ambassador McGhee handled insincere or hostile questioning by "coming back hard" until the questions became more reasonable. He responded to student charges of American imperialism in South Vietnam by insisting that the United States "owed it to" the Vietnamese people to help save them from communist subjugation.<sup>27</sup> Some German students with whom he spoke would come to appreciate his position. On other occasions, no such change of heart occurred. Generally speaking, the venom of student demonstrations against American policy in Vietnam increased steadily between the Ambassador's arrival in 1963 and his departure in 1968.

One example of the increasing seriousness of student attacks against American policy took place in April of 1967, during United States Vice President Hubert Humphrey's visit to Berlin. According to reports, a bomb attack against Humphrey had been planned by students. The police did discover "explosives" - consisting of bags of custard and cottage cheese, dyes, flowers, and smoke sticks!<sup>28</sup> Neither

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<sup>26</sup> Interview of McGhee (Washington: 3 December 1992) by Suzanne Brown.

<sup>27</sup> McGhee, At the Creation of a New Germany, p.171.

<sup>28</sup> Rob Burns, Protest and Democracy in West Germany: Extraparliamentary Opposition and the Democratic Agenda (New York: St. Martins Press, 1988), p.108.

the press nor the police found the students' joke overly amusing. Older German politicians also condemned the student movement for its irresponsible and dangerous tendencies. Kurt-Georg Kiesinger, chancellor of West Germany between 1966 and 1969, labeled the increasingly violent tendencies of the student movement as "an expression of the forces of anarchy."<sup>29</sup>

In conclusion, results of the student revolt against Vietnam and, speaking more generally, against the institutions of traditional authority, could be noted on several fronts. For instance, a series of university reforms was enacted. These reforms included increased student influence on curriculum, examination standards, and professional appointments. Unfortunately, these changes actually lowered the level of many German universities for several years.<sup>30</sup>

Perhaps more disturbing was the heightened criticism of most things American. Ambassador McGhee must be admired for remaining steadfast against the storm of disapproval spreading across West Germany's younger generations like a

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<sup>29</sup> Terence Prittie, The Velvet Chancellors: A History of Postwar Germany (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, Inc., 1979), p.150.

<sup>30</sup> Lowenthal, "Cultural Change and Generation Change in Postwar Western Germany," The Federal Republic and the United States, p.42.

tempest. He displayed an unflagging forbearance in the face of direct hostility on the part of many students he encountered. Furthermore, he attempted to expose the students with whom he spoke to a fresh perspective. His justification for American policy remained steadfast: an American commitment to Vietnam could not be denied under the universal Truman doctrine.<sup>31</sup> In this sense, Berlin and Saigon shared the same birthright.

#### The Berlin-Saigon Analogy

In his "perilous" visit to Berlin in April of 1967, Vice-President Humphrey defended the integrity of the United States position on Vietnam in a speech to the Berlin House of Representatives. In a specific reference to the relationship between aid to Berlin and aid to Saigon, he reminded his audience that "American commitment to freedom in one place is no less than American commitment to freedom in another."<sup>32</sup> Or, in the words of Dean Rusk, "one could not expect the United States to be a virgin in the Atlantic

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<sup>31</sup> Interview of McGhee (Washington: 3 December 1992) by Suzanne Brown.

<sup>32</sup> Hubert Humphrey, "Remarks to the Berlin House of Representatives," 6 April 1967, In George Crews McGhee Papers (Series XV: Germany- Miscellaneous Files, Box 1), Lauinger Library, Georgetown University.

and a whore in the Pacific."<sup>33</sup>

The Berlin-Saigon analogy cited by Vice-President Humphrey during his speech to the Berlin House of Representatives already existed as early as 1965. In June of that year, President Johnson discussed the parallels between West Germany and Vietnam with German Chancellor Ludwig Erhard during a one-on-one meeting held in the President's office in Washington. Johnson questioned Erhard about the general attitude of Germans regarding American commitment to South Vietnam. Erhard replied that "Vietnam was important to most Germans, because they regarded it as a kind of testing ground as to how firmly the United States honors its commitments. In that respect, there existed a parallel between Saigon and Berlin."<sup>34</sup>

However, two months before the Johnson-Erhard meeting, the German Minister for Special Tasks, Heinrich Krone, told an American audience at Notre Dame University that "analogies apply only to a very limited extent; in Vietnam, other laws apply than [those that do] in Germany. Nevertheless, things [happening in Vietnam] do not fail to

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<sup>33</sup> Dean Rusk, As I Saw It, by Dean Rusk as Told to Richard Rusk (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1990), p.455.

<sup>34</sup> "Memorandum to McGhee Regarding Meeting Between Erhard and Johnson," 4 June 1965. Fiche 4: George McGhee Files (unpublished), United States Department of State.



leave their mark upon us."<sup>35</sup> Other noteworthy German politicians only partially accepted the idea of a parallel between Germany and Vietnam. For example, Willy Brandt, foreign minister of West Germany at that time, sharply attacked the "oversimplified and unfounded" nature of the comparison between Vietnam and Berlin.<sup>36</sup>

Skepticism concerning an analogous relationship between Germany and Vietnam did not translate itself into anti-Americanism. The student movement aside, most German politicians and adult generations generally avoided making moral judgements on United States policy. Brandt himself was "irritated by anti-American prejudice where the Vietnam campaigns were concerned."<sup>37</sup> Elder Germans preferred to avoid conflict with "the American Protecting Power"; it seemed irresponsible to "develop an overly critical attitude towards [the German's] most important guarantor."<sup>38</sup> Therefore, as a rule, German political leaders did not participate in the open condemnation of American policy in Vietnam.

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<sup>35</sup> "Memorandum to McGhee Regarding Krone's Speech at Notre Dame University," 26 April 1965. Fiche 8: George McGhee Files (unpublished), United States Department of State.

<sup>36</sup> Brandt, People and Politics, p.321.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p.320.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p.318.

One outstanding exception to this rule occurred in August of 1966, when former chancellor Adenauer (now famous for his pro-French leanings) publicly announced his opinion that the United States should withdraw troops from South Vietnam. Ambassador McGhee performed the delicate task of relaying Johnson's response to Adenauer. McGhee reminded Adenauer that in the future, Johnson would appreciate learning of such views through Ambassador McGhee instead of through the New York Times or the Washington Post.<sup>39</sup> Adenauer "reacted rather sheepishly, like a schoolboy caught with his hand in the cookie jar," and admitted to deliberately provoking President Johnson.<sup>40</sup> He succeeded.

Adenauer's imprudent comments created only a minor stir in comparison to the havoc wreaked in 1966 by the discord concerning German offset payments (to America) for the cost of stationing United States troops in the Federal Republic.

**The Vicious Triangle: Vietnam, the Balance of Payments Crisis, and United States Troops in West Germany**

Both President Johnson and Chancellor Ludwig Erhard entered office with the glow of optimism left behind by their larger-than-life predecessors, John Fitzgerald Kennedy

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<sup>39</sup> "Memorandum From McGhee to the Special Assistant of the President (Walt Rostow)," 1 September 1966. Fiche 4: George McGhee Files (unpublished), United States Department of State.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

and Konrad "the Giant" Adenauer. Shadows closed in quickly for both Johnson and Erhard in the form of economic distress. Had only one of these two nations experienced a recession during the years of 1965 and 1966, perhaps the end result might have been a happier one.

As it were, however, both nations suffered from a similar malaise. In the United States, the increasing burden of the Vietnam War caused the balance of payments deficit to grow from \$1.3 billion in 1965 to \$2.3 billion in 1966. As the deficit ballooned, so did the reluctance of congress to maintain large numbers of forces in Germany.<sup>41</sup> During the Kennedy administration, American military costs in Germany had been offset by the sale of American military equipment to the West German Bundeswehr (weapon arsenal). By 1966, these sales had ceased to be mutually profitable. The Bundeswehr was fully equipped, and in light of the 1965 trade deficit in the FRG, further purchase of American military equipment became highly controversial.<sup>42</sup> Johnson insisted that Erhard's government pay an increased percentage of American troop-stationing costs and further stipulated that the German government purchase the amount of

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<sup>41</sup> Morgan, The United States and West Germany, p.144.

<sup>42</sup> Frank Ninkovich, Germany and the United States: The Transformation of the German Question Since 1945 (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1988), p.146.

American military equipment agreed upon in 1964 negotiations. Otherwise, warned Defense Secretary Robert McNamara, the number of American troops stationed in West Germany would be reduced.<sup>43</sup>

Alfred Puhan, director of the Office of German Affairs, wrote to Ambassador McGhee in order to convey the urgency of the situation. "The offset is indeed a sacred cow in certain Washington circles," noted Puhan. "We should not allow our worship of it, however, to blind us to the really important issues in our relations with the Federal Republic of Germany. I hope you share these sentiments," added Puhan.<sup>44</sup> McGhee did share a similar attitude. In a memorandum to John J. McCloy, member of Johnson's Senior Advisory Group and consultant on the offset payments crisis, McGhee pleaded the case of the Erhard government:

The German defense effort has for years been smaller -- as measured in percentages of gross national product and numbers of men under arms -- than the United States, British, and French efforts. A really massive increase in the German effort is out of the question, both for economic and political reasons, and on political grounds

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<sup>43</sup> Jonas, The United States and Germany, p.303.

<sup>44</sup> "Memorandum from the Director of the Office of German Affairs (Puhan) to the Ambassador (McGhee)," 6 May 1965. Fiche 8: George McGhee Files (unpublished), United States Department of State.

would not even be desirable.<sup>45</sup>

Chancellor Erhard desperately needed the supportive efforts of Ambassador McGhee. As West Germany's own economy struggled in 1965, Erhard could not easily comply with Johnson's request. Paradoxically, Erhard considered American troop commitment in Germany to be "a most vital common interest" shared by the two nations.<sup>46</sup> Erhard visited Washington in the late summer of 1966 seeking relief from the controversial payments for United States military supplies and for the stationing of United States troops according to the agreement made in 1964.<sup>47</sup> Before his departure to Washington, Erhard had pledged in the German Bundestag to reduce the current ceiling on offset payments. Johnson "knew that Erhard was facing serious political problems within his own party [the Christian Democratic Union]," but nevertheless refused to lower the ceiling of the payments.<sup>48</sup>

Johnson did not arrive at his decision arbitrarily.

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<sup>45</sup> "Memorandum from the Ambassador (McGhee) to John J. McCloy," 3 November 1966. Fiche 7: George McGhee Files (unpublished), United States Department of State.

<sup>46</sup> McGhee, At the Creation of a New Germany, p.156.

<sup>47</sup> Dennis Bark and David Gress, Democracy and its Discontents, 1963-1988 (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), p. 56.

<sup>48</sup> Lyndon Baines Johnson, The Vantage Point: Perspectives of the Presidency, 1963-1969 (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971), p.306.

Despite West Germany's 1966 trade deficit, the German mark enjoyed greater vitality than both the American dollar and the British pound. Moreover, the British government insisted that "a prompt and satisfactory offset arrangement be made with the Germans [in which the Germans kept their commitment of 1964], or British troops would be brought home [from Germany]." Thus, to President Johnson, the reduction of British or American troops in West Germany meant the demise of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).<sup>49</sup> In summary, President Johnson had no intentions of risking the NATO alliance, and frankly, the Germans stood in the best position to "pay up." Therefore, against the advice of McGhee, Johnson refused to relent to Erhard's pleas.

Unfortunately, the German Bundestag disliked Johnson's decision, and Chancellor Erhard would be the one to pay up. When Erhard returned from Washington unable to deliver on his pledge, he fell from grace in the Bundestag and faced defeat in the fall elections. McGhee personally felt that the inflexibility of the United States position contributed greatly to the political demise of Ludwig Erhard.<sup>50</sup> Erhard also bore blame. In his efforts to cement a solid relationship with the American president, he lost touch with

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> McGhee, At the Creation of a New Germany, p.182.

the more significant demand of his own people -- the reversal of Germany's budget deficit.

The issues of offset payments and troop commitments moved beyond the halls of the Bundestag; indeed, West Germans at large concerned themselves greatly with the possible implications of American commitment to Germany as affected by American commitment to Vietnam. Ambassador McGhee made a concerted effort to dispel false rumors on the subject and to quell unfounded German fears of abandonment by America. At a press conference in Bremen on October 11, 1965, the Ambassador assured reporters that "the United States had at its disposal satisfactory military potential, to have sufficient troops stationed in both Europe and Vietnam." Furthermore, no American troops stationed in Europe would be transferred to Vietnam.<sup>51</sup>

By the end of the decade, the divisive issues surrounding offset payments and American troop levels had been expedited with only a minor reduction of United States forces. Major solutions involved German purchases of U.S. treasury bonds, to be redeemed after America's balance of payments crisis had been solved, a promise by the Bundesbank to halt dollar conversions into gold, and German financial assistance for renovation of American military bases in

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<sup>51</sup> Nordwest Zeitung (October 11, 1965).

Germany.<sup>52</sup> This strong medicine was further boosted by several upward revaluations of the Deutschemark.

The Germans did not find these solutions altogether welcome. Helmut Schmidt, Brandt's successor to the chancellorship in the mid-1970's, recalled that "none of these maneuvers led to any lasting resolution."<sup>53</sup> In fact, noted Schmidt, these "constant interventions" in the German mark led to unwelcome high money supplies in Germany. The interventions further contributed to the beginnings of an inflationary cycle.

The offset payments crisis involved more than a tug-of-war over monetary issues. Western Europeans at large, and especially West German, felt cheated of the attentions they had enjoyed for decades -- attentions that were now lavished upon South Vietnam.

#### American "Neglect" of Europe?

The underlying concern on the part of the Germans rested on the fear that "America was becoming so obsessed with South-east Asia that it was neglecting the security of Europe."<sup>54</sup> Ambassador McGhee described the relationship

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<sup>52</sup> Ninkovich, Germany and the United States, p.147.

<sup>53</sup> Helmut Schmidt, Men and Powers: A Political Retrospective (New York: Random House, 1989), p.154.

<sup>54</sup> Bark and Gress, Democracy and its Discontents, p.53.



between the United States and West Germany as one "down in the doldrums" by late February of 1967 -- a condition owing itself to perceived American neglect of Europe.<sup>55</sup>

Ambassador McGhee refuted charges of American negligence. America's changed relationship with Europe, stated McGhee, "need not represent the subordination of Europe to [American] interests elsewhere or [American] preoccupation with the war in South Vietnam."<sup>56</sup>

He acceded that relations between the United States and the Federal Republic of Germany had been transformed by 1967, but he credited the change to "a clearer separation, but not necessarily a divergence, of German policy from our own."<sup>57</sup> The Germans still remained dependent on the United States for defense. However, in economic and political matters, the Germans now "looked out for themselves."<sup>58</sup> West Germany's reliance on the United States for economic and political stability during the Adenauer era was now neither desirable nor necessary. Chancellor Kiesinger

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<sup>55</sup> McGhee, At the Creation of a New Germany, p. 215.

<sup>56</sup> McGhee, "The Changing Relations Between the United States and Europe," 17 October 1966. *George McGhee Speeches, Articles, and Essays* (27 January 1965 - 16 December 1968, Volume VIII), Ambassador George C. McGhee Library, Georgetown University School of Foreign Service.

<sup>57</sup> McGhee, At the Creation of a New Germany, p.229.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

confirmed McGhee's assessment of the changed relationship between the United States and West Germany. In August of 1966, Kiesinger remarked to the Washington National Press Club that "Germany would not come running to the United States to solve all of its problems."<sup>59</sup>

Ambassador McGhee could not convince the majority of West Germany's government and populace that America could uphold its commitments to Europe while simultaneously carrying the ungiving weight of the Vietnam albatross. However, in light of West Germany's own newly discovered self-sufficiency, America's former level of commitment to the Federal Republic of Germany ceased to be appropriate. By 1968, an increasingly egalitarian relationship existed between the two nations. As ambassador, McGhee was attuned to these changes, and he guided the efforts of the American embassy in Bonn accordingly.

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<sup>59</sup> McGhee, "The Changing Relations Between the United States and Europe," McGhee Speeches, Articles, and Essays, Georgetown University.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### **The Storm Over Nuclear Control and Ostpolitik: Severing the Old Steel Ties**

When Ambassador McGhee arrived at the Bonn embassy in May of 1963, the Kennedy administration's foreign policy had shifted to a new strategy coined "flexible response." The administration aimed for a more flexible American strategic doctrine that would multiply Washington's strategic and tactical options, and that would also require a buildup in conventional forces on the part of the European NATO allies.<sup>1</sup> "Flexible response" was a measure toward a lessening of hostilities, or "détente," with the Soviet Union after the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis.<sup>2</sup>

Officially adopted by NATO in 1967, "flexible response" not only required higher German defense expenditures, but also seemed to undermine the credibility of America's willingness to extend its nuclear umbrella over Western Europe.<sup>3</sup> During the 1960's, as American nuclear superiority began to diminish with the development of Soviet nuclear

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<sup>1</sup> Wolfram F. Hanrieder, Germany, America, and Europe: Forty Years of German Foreign Policy (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), p.13.

<sup>2</sup> Jonas, The United States and Germany, p.293.

<sup>3</sup> Hanrieder, Germany, America, and Europe, p.13.

strategic capabilities, an intense doctrinal debate took place within NATO around the question of how the credibility of the American nuclear commitment to Western Europe could be sustained, now that the United States was gradually becoming vulnerable itself.<sup>4</sup>

### **The FRG and the Control of Nuclear Weapons**

By 1960, the world had become divided into two rather uneven groups: the "nuclear haves" and the "nuclear have-nots." Moreover, nations without nuclear power were forced to depend on nuclear giants such as the United States and Russia for their own basic security. For the fast-maturing Federal Republic of Germany, playing the role of the "nuclear have-not" seemed both difficult and unnatural. Respected German politician Willy Brandt noted that "those who possessed power, especially nuclear power, did not necessarily have morality or wisdom on their side -- the greatest dangers to mankind stemmed from great powers, not small."<sup>5</sup> Therefore, how could a "nuclear have-not" like the FRG, so inexorably dependent on the United States for defense, insure greater security for itself?

The search for devices to give West Germany and her

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Willy Brandt, People and Politics, p.189.

other North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) allies a greater sense of participating in nuclear decisions began in 1957, when Britain, Turkey, and Italy accepted nuclear missiles under an agreement by which the United States retained custody of the warheads. Both the United States and the recipient could veto the use of these warheads. This action was the catalyst by which the sharing of nuclear control with the FRG and her European neighbors became a live issue.<sup>6</sup>

In 1957, General Lauris Norstad, supreme commander of NATO, announced the idea that NATO itself should become a nuclear power with its own force. By 1960, Norstad's idea had gathered force, and "a feeling arose in Washington that the United States should devise a solution of its own before the demand got out of control."<sup>7</sup> The State Department then began the search for a NATO nuclear formula which would give West Germany and the other allies a sense of participation without encouraging national proliferation. The result was the proposal for a Multilateral Force (MLF), defined as:

a naval fleet of approximately twenty-five merchant-type ships armed with some two hundred Polaris A-3 missiles, which would be owned, controlled, and manned multilaterally by a group of as many NATO nations as may wish to participate. The Force would be under the

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<sup>6</sup> Arthur Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p.850.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p.851.

direction of a Council or Commission composed of representatives of the participating nations. The United States would retain a final veto on any decision involving the use of these missiles.<sup>8</sup>

The concept of a Multilateral Force was first suggested by then-Secretary of State Christian A. Herter, with the approval of President Eisenhower, at the NATO council meeting in December of 1960. Its purpose was to satisfy "to a major degree" the legitimate desires of the members of the Alliance (and especially West Germany) to participate more meaningfully in the nuclear affairs of NATO while inhibiting the proliferation of "purely national nuclear weapons programs."<sup>9</sup> McGhee saw this prejudice against national nuclear weapons programs as "another way of saying that the [United States] wanted to remain in charge."<sup>10</sup> The fact that the United States would retain the power to veto decisions concerning use of MLF weapons would seem to support McGhee's observation.

Ambassador McGhee was already familiar with MLF when he took his post in May of 1963. He had participated "in many discussions" on it as chairman of the Policy Planning

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<sup>8</sup> "Memorandum to All NATO Capitals from Secretary of State Rusk," Fiche 8: George McGhee Files (unpublished), United States Department of State, Washington, 15 February 1964.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> McGhee, At the Creation of a New Germany, p.87.

Council and later as under secretary for Political Affairs. He claimed to have no direct connection with MLF planning before the beginning of his mission in Bonn, and had formed no "firm convictions" about it.<sup>11</sup> Before long, McGhee grew skeptical of the MLF, deciding that it was somewhat of a "gimmick." As early as May of 1963, he sensed that "support was cooling in both Washington and Bonn, where the main support presumably lay, and that the Germans mainly supported the MLF because they thought Americans wanted them to."<sup>12</sup>

President Kennedy also had his doubts. Though he understood the symbolic importance of "giving West Germany an indissoluble nuclear association with the United States," he still retained "a certain skepticism" about the MLF. After all, "Europe as a whole was well-protected" and did not need its own nuclear force. Nevertheless, the enthusiastic response on the part of Bonn incited him to continue examination of the idea.<sup>13</sup>

In February, 1963, President Kennedy established a three-man Multilateral Force Negotiating Team under Secretary of State Dean Rusk to work out the concept in

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p.86.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p.87.

<sup>13</sup> Schlesinger, A Thousand Days, p.872.

further detail. By October, seven interested allies (the United States, West Germany, Italy, Greece, Turkey, Belgium, and Great Britain) began meeting in Paris.<sup>14</sup> At this time, two alternative schools of thought contended inside Bonn government circles for control of nuclear policy. The Europeanists, represented by former chancellor Konrad Adenauer and former defense minister Franz Joseph Strauss, supported a French-organized Europe instead of dependence on the United States.<sup>15</sup>

McGhee noted that Adenauer supported the MLF during his chancellorship in that it enhanced Germany's position in NATO and gave the FRG a role in nuclear decision-making.<sup>16</sup> However, by November of 1964, Adenauer had taken a position against the MLF and against the new chancellor, Ludwig Erhard. On the 17th of November, at a meeting with Harvard Professor Henry Kissinger, Adenauer stated that although he had agreed to have the question of the MLF studied during his chancellorship, he now sided with de Gaulle in his

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<sup>14</sup> "Memorandum to All NATO Capitals from Secretary of State Rusk," Fiche 8: George McGhee Files (unpublished), 15 February 1964.

<sup>15</sup> Michael Balfour, West Germany: A Contemporary History (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982), p.208.

<sup>16</sup> McGhee, At the Creation of a New Germany, p.86.



reservations about the MLF proposals.<sup>17</sup>

The opposing Atlanticist school, of which Chancellor Erhard and Foreign Affairs Minister Gerhard Schroeder were the leaders, argued that for the foreseeable future, "Germany must continue to depend for her defence on American nuclear might."<sup>18</sup> The Atlanticists hoped that the MLF proposal would forestall pressures for German participation in de Gaulle's force de frappe, or French-sponsored nuclear force. Erhard and Schroeder felt that the MLF would "get the United States inextricably involved in the defense of Europe" instead of France.<sup>19</sup>

In February of 1964, Secretary of State Rusk released a lengthy preliminary report which outlined the objectives and structural specifics of the proposed MLF. The report specifically targeted the FRG as one of two major European non-nuclear countries (the other being Italy) likely to benefit from nuclear defense not involving national nuclear

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p.158. Dr. Kissinger visited Bonn as a private citizen to attend the biannual German American Conference scheduled for November 13-15th in Berlin. He did release the notes of his conversation with Adenauer to the American embassy in Bonn.

<sup>18</sup> Balfour, West Germany: A Contemporary History, p.208.

<sup>19</sup> McGhee, At the Creation of a New Germany, p.88.

weapons proliferation.<sup>20</sup> After a thorough review of the report, McGhee admitted that the arguments in favor of the MLF were indeed "formidable," but that its chances of success still depended on the Europeans. McGhee noted:

France was out. If Britain opted out, too, taking Belgium and Holland along, the remaining countries -- Italy, Greece, and Turkey, seemed meager. I [McGhee] was concerned for the future of the MLF and what would happen if it failed.<sup>21</sup>

In August of 1964, Schroeder made a direct request to McGhee for an analysis of the advantages of the MLF over the force de frappe. Nearly one month later, McGhee still had not received the requested analysis. McGhee cabled Secretary of State Rusk and minced few words in expressing his dissatisfaction over the matter:

We are already in default in responding to Foreign Minister Schroeder's request -- a request made on the basis of urgent need. Given the fact that the FRG is our number one partner in the MLF, and that without German participation the MLF would not come into being, our response can be of considerable importance.<sup>22</sup>

In this same cable, McGhee also wrote to Rusk that it was "difficult for [McGhee] to understand, why such a low

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<sup>20</sup> "Memorandum to All NATO Capitals from Secretary of State Rusk," Fiche 8: George McGhee Files (unpublished), 15 February 1964.

<sup>21</sup> McGhee, At the Creation of a New Germany, p.137.

<sup>22</sup> "Memorandum to Secretary of State Rusk from Ambassador McGhee," Fiche 9: George McGhee Files (unpublished), United States Department of State, 15 September 1964.

priority had been assigned" to his August 10th request. Therefore, it was his "prerogative to write directly to higher officials in the Department, and in theory even to the President, on matters that concerned him in Bonn."<sup>23</sup>

McGhee insisted on a quick response because he grasped the importance of the MLF issue in the eyes of the Erhard/Schroeder government. Unfortunately, the United States sent increasingly mixed signals to Bonn concerning the MLF. Both Rusk and United States President Lyndon B. Johnson had the same misgivings that McGhee had voiced in response to Rusk's February 1964 report. De Gaulle was committed to French nuclear forces and would never accept the idea of a NATO sponsored MLF. The British were also cool toward the concept. Rusk noted that the United Kingdom "was not excited by the prospects of a German finger on the nuclear trigger, nor did they want to dilute their own status as a nuclear power."<sup>24</sup> Johnson and Rusk were prepared to go ahead without France, but they feared that the hesitancy of Britain and Italy might mean that the United States and the FRG would have to "go it alone."

Therefore, even in 1964, President Johnson already ran

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Rusk, As I Saw It, p.264. Rusk also noted that British status as a nuclear power would have been diminished in that the MLF would have incorporated the basic structure of the British nuclear force into a NATO force.

hot and cold on the matter of the MLF proposal. In December of 1964, in a memorandum to the Bonn embassy, President Johnson noted that:

This is my clear and present position, and I wish all actions by American officials to be in conformity with it. If other governments for their own reason find it important to reach an early agreement [in regard to the MLF], they will make their own efforts to this end. In that case, I do not desire that we on our side should drag our feet. But I do not wish anyone at any level to give the impression that we are eager to act on a short timetable, or are attempting in any way to force our views on Europe.<sup>25</sup>

In January of 1965, several weeks after Johnson sent his message to McGhee at the Bonn embassy, Secretary of State Rusk cabled a message to Foreign Minister Schroeder. Rusk indicated that at this point, Johnson felt that "the United States should conduct itself so that what emerges will truly represent the views of the major potential European participants," instead of resulting from "United States pressure upon unwilling European allies."<sup>26</sup> Rusk indicated his awareness of France's refusal to participate, and of the hesitancy of Britain and Italy. Though the Johnson administration was "prepared to move ahead without

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<sup>25</sup> "Memorandum to the Bonn Embassy from President Johnson," Fiche 9: George McGhee Files (unpublished), United States Department of State, 23 December 1964.

<sup>26</sup> "Memorandum from Secretary of State Rusk to Gerhard Schroeder, Federal Minister of Foreign Affairs," Fiche 7: George McGhee Files (unpublished), United States Department of State, 14 January 1965.

France," it refused to pursue the MLF on a "bilateral basis" with only the support of the FRG.<sup>27</sup>

In the meantime, McGhee kept the German press abreast of the Johnson administration's concerns. On February 10, 1965, in an interview with Marion Donhoff, the influential editor of the German newspaper Die Zeit, McGhee referred to the hesitancy of key European powers (meaning France, Britain, and Italy) as the reason for United States inaction concerning the MLF proposals. "We are not pushing," noted McGhee, "but waiting for European opinion on the issue to crystallize."<sup>28</sup>

The MLF issue had reached a deadlock by July of 1965. In that month, McGhee received word from Secretary of State Rusk that the United States "was only marking time on the MLF discussions. Only the United States could take the lead on these issues, and at this point no decision had been made."<sup>29</sup> Rusk told McGhee to wait until the German elections [of 1965] were over. "Afterwards, the [Johnson administration] would see if the others [meaning Britain and

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> McGhee, At the Creation of a New Germany, p.160.

<sup>29</sup> "Report to the Ambassador on Europe and United States Policy from the Secretary of State (Rusk)," Fiche 13: George McGhee Files (unpublished), United States Department of State, 20 July 1965.

Italy] were ready to go forward."<sup>30</sup>

By December of 1965, Britain and Italy still had not made a commitment. Thus, no move toward the establishment of the MLF had yet been made. Furthermore, Chancellor Erhard, who had been left "on hold" concerning the MLF since the beginning of his chancellorship in 1963, was due to visit the United States at the end of the month. One purpose of his visit was to re-emphasize the desire of the FRG to "have a say" in the use of nuclear weapons.<sup>31</sup>

The German-American Committee to Promote Common Interests wired McGhee as to exactly what the hold-up in Washington was all about. Apparently, there was more to the deadlock than the hesitancy of Britain and Italy. On December 12th (of 1965), the Committee wrote to McGhee:

In the last few months, various influential liberal United States politicians, among others, Robert Kennedy, have expressed their serious doubts about the expediency and usefulness of an MLF. The mistrust of the communist states concerning the political and military strength of the FRG is extremely great, so that any German control of atomic weapons would make any East-West détente almost impossible.<sup>32</sup>

Johnson himself was firmly committed to East-West

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> "Memorandum from the German-American Committee to Promote Common Interests to Ambassador McGhee," Fiche 17: George McGhee Files (unpublished), United States Department of State, 12 December 1965.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

det ente. After his inauguration in January of 1964, he proclaimed "the American people and their Government have set the strengthening of peace [with the Soviet Union] as their highest purpose in the new year."<sup>33</sup> Both he and Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev made modest reductions in their military budgets as proof of their good intentions. When Johnson was re-elected in 1966, he "pressed on with his det ente campaign."<sup>34</sup>

In October of 1966, Johnson held a Camp David discussion with several senior advisors including Rusk, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, Attorney General Nicholas Katzenbach, and Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Eugene Rostow. Johnson said that the conversation "reinforced several things he had believed" about det ente as it related to West German possession of nuclear power through the MLF:

Although the Soviet Union was seriously interested -- as we were -- in preventing the spread of nuclear weapons, Moscow would nonetheless try to use negotiations to create trouble among our closest allies. The West Germans were a particular target. Moscow was deeply suspicious of the Germans and wanted to make certain that they had no chance of gaining control of nuclear

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<sup>33</sup> Richard W. Stevenson, The Rise and Fall of D etente: Relaxations of Tension in United States-Soviet Relations, 1953-1984 (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1985), p.122.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p.128.

explosives.<sup>35</sup>

Johnson concluded that détente with Moscow took precedence over establishment of the MLF. John J. McCloy, a member of Johnson's Senior Advisory Group, disagreed with the President. McCloy's foreign service career dated back to 1949, when he served as high commissioner to the FRG (until 1952). He told close friend Averell Harriman (serving in 1966 as United States ambassador at large) that "the Germans were indeed asking for some control over NATO nuclear weaponry, and he thought they should get it."<sup>36</sup> Unfortunately for the Erhard government, even the powerful McCloy could not change the Johnson administration's mind-set.<sup>37</sup>

In 1966, Johnson finally dismissed the idea of the MLF.<sup>38</sup> Ambassador McGhee was left "holding the bag," since

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<sup>35</sup> Johnson, The Vantage Point, p.478.

<sup>36</sup> Kai Bird, The Chairman: John J. McCloy and the Making of the American Establishment (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992), p.585.

<sup>37</sup> Walter Isaacson and Evan Thomas, The Wise Men: Six Friends and the World They Made; Acheson, Bohlen, Harriman, Kennan, Lovett, McCloy (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1986), p.645. McCloy valued the NATO alliance above all other foreign policy concerns. He retired from the Senior Advisory Group in 1967, due to his disagreement with the Johnson Administration's Vietnam policy.

<sup>38</sup> McGhee, At the Creation of a New Germany, p.187. There exists some debate on the exact date of Johnson's dismissal of the MLF. Future chancellor Helmut Schmidt (Men and Powers, p. 142) argued that Johnson dropped the project in December of



he was in charge of maintaining a smooth relationship between the Johnson and Erhard governments. Erhard desperately wanted the MLF so that he could establish German participation in nuclear control without losing to the Europeanists, whose criticism seriously threatened his cabinet by the late summer of 1966.

By September, Erhard still remained under the impression that establishment of the MLF was possible -- an impression long unshared in Washington. On the 22nd of September, McGhee cabled President Johnson in order to remind him of Erhard's precarious political position, due in part to criticism from the Europeanists. McGhee told Johnson that "it would be wise to inform Erhard confidentially that we regard the MLF as unlikely of achievement."<sup>39</sup>

Unfortunately, Johnson used poor timing when canceling the MLF that September. He had been warned by McGhee about

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1964. Johnson's memorandum to the Bonn embassy dated 23 December 1964 indicated an unwillingness to move ahead with the MLF until the positions of Britain and Italy became clear, but it did not dismiss the proposal altogether. Johnson's memoirs (The Vantage Point, p.477) imply that he made a final decision to reject the MLF in September of 1966, when Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko told Rusk that the Soviet Union would never accept West German control of nuclear weapons.

<sup>39</sup> "Memorandum from Ambassador McGhee to President Johnson," Fiche 14: George McGhee Files (unpublished), United States Department of State, 22 September 1966.

Erhard's political problems. Surely enough, Erhard was forced to resign in October of 1966. Johnson's dismissal of the MLF at this crucial juncture only served to reinforce Bonn's feeling that "its central security interests were no longer effectively represented in Washington."<sup>40</sup> Future German chancellor (from 1974 to 1982) Helmut Schmidt recalled his own reaction upon hearing about the dismissal of the MLF:

Those of us who had put our prestige on the line to back a plan of strategic importance to the United States felt we had been duped and lost respect at home. That was when I understood for the first time that it is domestically risky to commit oneself to a policy advocated by the ruling power if that power cannot be relied on to stick to its guns.<sup>41</sup>

With the MLF now officially dead, the question of European participation in nuclear decision-making remained unresolved. According to McGhee, only the United States and West Germany were really interested. At least temporarily, it was settled by the creation of the NATO Nuclear Planning Group by Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara.<sup>42</sup> Members of Johnson's administration felt little regret when the MLF passed on to the land of abandoned projects. After all, noted McGhee, "grave objections to the proposals had been

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<sup>40</sup> Hanrieder, Germany, America, and Europe, p.13.

<sup>41</sup> Schmidt, Men and Powers, p.142.

<sup>42</sup> McGhee, At the Creation of a New Germany, p.187.

voiced from the beginning" -- objections based on the impracticality of a "mixed-manned" personnel, on the hesitation displayed by France, Britain, and Italy, and finally on Soviet resistance to the idea of an "atomic empowered" Germany.<sup>43</sup>

Even the possibility of a Multilateral Force was ruled out by the final draft of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.<sup>44</sup> The first draft Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) had been initialed by the United States, the Soviet Union, and Great Britain on July 25th, 1963. The treaty became a reality on July 1, 1968. On this day, representatives of the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, the United States, and more than fifty other nations signed the treaty ensuring that nations without nuclear weapons would neither construct nor purchase nuclear weapons.<sup>45</sup> The NPT also provided that participating nations would have access to peaceful uses of nuclear power. Under Article Six of the treaty, those nations possessing nuclear weapons pledged to work toward effective arms control and disarmament.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p.86.

<sup>44</sup> Ball, The Past Has Another Pattern, p.274.

<sup>45</sup> Johnson, The Vantage Point, p.462. Schmidt (Men and Powers, p.112) observes that neither the United States nor the Soviet Union lived up to the treaty's obligations to reduce their military potential.

<sup>46</sup> Rusk, As I Saw It, p.343.

The FRG was not amongst the fifty nations that signed the NPT in July of 1968, though it did finally sign in November of 1969.<sup>47</sup> When the Grand Coalition government replaced the Erhard cabinet in December of 1966, Ambassador McGhee delivered a "complete draft of the text" to Chancellor Kurt-Georg Kiesinger and Foreign Minister Willy Brandt. He recognized "this was only the beginning" and "there were many road-blocks ahead."<sup>48</sup>

The government in Bonn had serious problems with several sections of the NPT draft. First, the Kiesinger cabinet feared that the United States was participating in secret agreements with the Soviets. When dealing with Kiesinger and Brandt, McGhee emphatically denied these charges. Nevertheless, the German press continued to propagate rumors of secret negotiations.<sup>49</sup>

Kiesinger and Brandt also objected to the absence of a provision limiting the treaty's duration. On the 25th of

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<sup>47</sup> McGhee, At the Creation of A New Germany, p.207. McGhee also notes that France and China, both of which had conducted nuclear tests and developed nuclear weapons, did not sign the NPT. Rusk (As I Saw It, p.344) admits that many "prime targets refused to climb aboard," including Brazil, Argentina, Israel, Egypt, India, Pakistan, and South Africa.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p.208.

<sup>49</sup> "Memorandum from Ambassador McGhee to President Johnson," Fiche 18: George McGhee Files (unpublished), United States Department of State, 25 April 1967.

April, 1967, a concerned McGhee cabled President Johnson in order to report Bonn's arguments:

This contention [concerning the duration of the treaty] stems directly from Chancellor Kiesinger. It reflects his deep-seated misgivings about the possible effects of an indefinite [versus limited duration] treaty on Germany's long-range security interests. He points out that NATO could be dissolved at some future date. Our draft treaty, on the other hand, would deprive Germany forever of the ultimate means of self-defense. Therefore Germany -- so his thinking runs -- should avoid locking itself into a position of permanent inferiority -- particularly vis-a-vis its traditional enemy, the Soviet Union -- through an unlimited non-proliferation treaty.<sup>50</sup>

The Johnson administration refused to compromise. It did not insert a limitations statute in the NPT draft.

Objections also existed concerning nuclear power used for peaceful purposes. Kiesinger and Brandt feared restrictions on German activities in peaceful uses of nuclear energy. In this case, NPT draft was revised to make provisions for "the uninhibited further development of peaceful programs which shall satisfy both the United States and their European allies."<sup>51</sup>

A fourth concern, voiced by the German scientific community, involved the "Safeguards" section of the NPT draft. "Indeed, we had quite a fight over NPT safeguards,"

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

recalled Secretary of State Rusk.<sup>52</sup> This section outlined inspection procedures discouraging the shipment of fissionable material and critical technology to other countries. Scientists feared this might lead to industrial espionage. Ambassador McGhee did not hesitate to extinguish this fire as quickly as possible. In March of 1967, McGhee wrote to Dr. Gerhard Stoltenberg, Federal Minister of Scientific Research: "the Safeguard system will not give rise to industrial espionage. The technical nature of inspection activities is such that inspectors do not gain access to detailed information of potential commercial value."<sup>53</sup>

With the exception of the "limited treaty duration" issue, the Johnson government made sincere efforts to compromise with the Kiesinger cabinet on points of contention between them. Johnson wrote to Kiesinger, "you may be certain that we are examining your comments on the draft text of the treaty with utmost care. You can rest assured that we will make every effort to work out formulas

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<sup>52</sup> Rusk, As I Saw It, p.343.

<sup>53</sup> "Memorandum to Dr. Gerhard Stoltenberg, Federal Minister of Scientific Research, from Ambassador McGhee," Fiche 20: George McGhee Files (unpublished), United States Department of State, 6 March 1967.

which the FRG and our other allies will find acceptable."<sup>54</sup> Meanwhile, McGhee "fought on the front lines" to iron out points of disagreement.

Despite these efforts, neither McGhee nor the Johnson administration could fix the permanent damage to American-West German relations inflicted during the MLF ordeal and solidified by the NPT. The treaty's ratification in 1968 confirmed Bonn's suspicion that the NPT was "directed mainly against the Federal Republic" and that the United States had not done enough to support German opposition to the treaty.<sup>55</sup> To the Germans, it had clearly been demonstrated that Soviet-American interests took precedence over the German-American partnership. For the FRG, the realization of second class status was very unpleasant indeed.

Thus, by 1968, the American-West German relationship had suffered several deafening blows. Controversy over American involvement in Vietnam, disagreement concerning

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<sup>54</sup> "Memorandum from President Johnson to Chancellor Kiesinger," Fiche 20: George McGhee Files (unpublished), United States Department of State, 11 March 1967. For a detailed description of the process by which compromises between the Bonn and the Johnson administrations were made, see McGhee's chapter on the NPT in At the Creation, pp.207-219. See also Roger Morgan's The United States and West Germany, pp. 139-59 and pp.180-187.

<sup>55</sup> Hanrieder, Germany, America, and Europe, p.91. For a detailed account of the psychological ramifications of the treaty in regard to the German attitude toward the United States, see pp.90-91.

offset payments, and strife regarding the MLF proposals and the NPT treaty had taken a toll on the formerly solid partnership between the United States and the FRG. One final issue that severely strained German-American relations was the landmark foreign policy of the Grand Coalition under Foreign Minister Willy Brandt. "Ostpolitik" would crystallize the sentiments already evident during other confrontations -- the United States and the FRG no longer shared the same agenda.

#### **A Tempest Called Ostpolitik**

When McGhee joined the embassy in Bonn in 1963, the issue of West Germany's ties to the Western alliance already rested foremost in the mind of the Kennedy administration. Two days before Kennedy's visit to Berlin from June 22nd to 26th (1963), Under Secretary of State George Ball wrote a note to the President containing what he called a "hard-boiled appraisal" of what "was going on" in the Federal Republic:

Germany not tied closely and institutionally with the West can be a source of great hazard. Embittered by a deepening sense of discrimination and bedeviled by irredentism, a Germany at large can be like a cannon on a shipboard in a high sea. Therefore, you must offer the Germans an equal partnership with America. Partnership and an organized Europe are not only compatible with, but essential to, one another, since neither Germany nor America wants to see a closed,



autocratic, incestuous, "continental" system.<sup>56</sup>

McGhee refuted Ball's statements. "I agree that Germany, if not anchored to the West, could over a period of time revert to an unpredictable force like a "gun loose on a ship," granted McGhee, "but I do not believe that Germany is near breaking loose from her moorings at this juncture."<sup>57</sup>

McGhee went on to indicate that in June of 1963, the FRG had no plans for defense aside from that provided by the United States. "Her tendency was still to lie low, and continue seeking acceptance into the family of nations."<sup>58</sup>

The truth of the matter concerning the FRG's associations with the East actually lay somewhere in the middle of these two interpretations. The origins of Brandt's policy towards the East dated back to 1958, during his first year as governing mayor of Berlin. In an address that year to the Royal Institute of International Affairs in London, Brandt declared Berlin should promote an "open door policy" in terms of contact with both the West and the East. During the 1961 local elections, Brandt campaigned on

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<sup>56</sup> "Memorandum from Under Secretary of State George Ball to President Kennedy," Fiche 3: George McGhee Files (unpublished), United States Department of State, 20 June 1963.

<sup>57</sup> "Memorandum from Ambassador McGhee to Under Secretary Ball," Fiche 3: George McGhee Files (unpublished), United States Department of State, 21 June 1963.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

pledges to build relations with the Soviet Union and its satellites, "insofar as the situation justified, while also keeping counter-pressure against Soviet moves."<sup>59</sup> In December of 1966, upon becoming the new Foreign Minister, Brandt had the chance to transform his ideas into Germany's foreign policy.

The program to pursue better relations with the East existed prior to the official implementation of Ostpolitik at the end of 1966. As early as October, 1963, Chancellor Erhard proposed increased trade with the Eastern states. An official Federal Republic trade mission was established in Warsaw in 1963, and similar missions were opened in Budapest, Bucharest, and Sofia in 1964.<sup>60</sup> On November 9, 1963, the West German-Hungarian trade agreement was concluded. Little more than one month later, on December 17, the first treaty allowing visitation by West Berliners into East Berlin was signed. By March 16 of 1964, a German-Bulgarian trade agreement had been concluded.<sup>61</sup> In April 1964, Foreign Minister Schroeder announced that increased trade was a step in re-establishing political contacts between the FRG and the Eastern states.

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<sup>59</sup> McGhee, At the Creation of a New Germany, p.175.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p.125.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., p.13, p.113.

In September of that year, the FRG announced Khrushchev's visit to Bonn. Erhard did consult with the Johnson administration before finalizing this decision. He asked McGhee to gage the Johnson administration's reaction to such a meeting. In response, McGhee consulted with Rusk. When Rusk expressed some misgivings, McGhee tried to assuage his doubts in a memorandum dated the 16th of April:

I do not believe that such a meeting would be contrary to United States interests. There is, in my estimate, no danger of the FRG seeking to go it alone with Moscow.

To take a negative attitude toward a meeting would imply a lack of confidence in Erhard personally and in the maturity of the West German political parties, which would be extremely, and I think, needlessly, harmful to our relations. We should state that we see no objections to Erhard's meeting with Khrushchev.<sup>62</sup>

The FRG's economic ties with the Eastern bloc nations, combined with Erhard's open pursuit of improved communication between the FRG and the Soviet Union, foreshadowed the more drastic policy adopted by Brandt in December of 1966.

Ostpolitik was an effort to create a "lasting spirit of reconciliation" which could lead to normal diplomatic and political relations between West Germany and her Eastern neighbors. In contrast to previous economically-oriented

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<sup>62</sup> "Memorandum from Ambassador McGhee to Secretary of State Rusk," George McGhee Files (unpublished), United States Department of State, 16 April 1964.

policies, it included a number of political and diplomatic concessions in addition to the continued strengthening of economic ties.<sup>63</sup> Bonn estimated that economic and political inroads into Eastern Europe would induce a "more pliable" Soviet position concerning détente and the reunification of Germany.<sup>64</sup> Ostpolitik distressed many members of the Nixon government in Washington, who feared losing West Germany to Eastern influence in the ongoing battles of the Cold War. McGhee noted that both President Richard Nixon and National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger looked unfavorably upon Ostpolitik because they thought "it was leading the Germans to believe that the Cold War was over."<sup>65</sup> Furthermore,

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<sup>63</sup> Laszlo Gorgey, Bonn's Eastern Policy, 1964-1971: Evolution and Limitations (University of South Carolina International Relations Series: Archon Books, 1972), p.9. Gorgey provides a full discussion of the political, diplomatic, and economic trends behind the Ostpolitik movement. For a detailed background on the specific proposals made by the Grand Coalition to the Eastern bloc nations, see the Keesing's Research Report entitled Germany and Eastern Europe Since 1945 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973), Chapter Four.

<sup>64</sup> Lawrence L. Whetten, Germany's Ostpolitik: Relations Between the Federal Republic and the Warsaw Pact Countries (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), p.6. Dr. Whetten's book provides a full discussion of the various interests of all the Eastern European states involved in these issues, in addition to an analysis of the interests at stake for the FRG and the Soviet Union.

<sup>65</sup> McGhee, At the Creation of a New Germany, p.242. The degree of skepticism on the parts of the Nixon administration are difficult to ascertain. Brandt (People and Politics, p.288) notes that he never encountered what he would call "doubts" about Ostpolitik in conversation with Nixon and

Nixon suspected that Ostpolitik was galloping toward a returned emphasis (in Germany) of traditional ties to the East. After Brandt's visit with Kissinger in Washington in April of 1970, Brandt recalled getting the impression that "Kissinger would have rather taken personal charge of the delicate complex of East-West problems in its entirety."<sup>66</sup>

McGhee did not share this skepticism. He insisted that Ostpolitik actually represented "a more realistic and workable relationship between East and West in Central Europe."<sup>67</sup> In October of 1967, during a wave of anxiety over Ostpolitik in Washington, McGhee told John M. Leddy, assistant secretary of state for European Affairs, that West German effort toward a better relationship with the Soviet Union was "fully consonant with Western interests and, furthermore, should serve to support American interests."<sup>68</sup>

USIS Officer Albert Hemsing recalled the "sad note" in

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Kissinger. However, it was clear to Brandt that men like Clay, McCloy, Acheson, and veteran trade union leader George Meany, were "filled with concern" and transmitted their objections to the President. Brandt also heard that "Henry Kissinger voiced different shades of meaning in his absence than in his presence."

<sup>66</sup> Brandt, People and Politics, p.284.

<sup>67</sup> McGhee, At the Creation of a New Germany, p.243.

<sup>68</sup> "Memorandum from Ambassador McGhee to the Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs (Leddy)," Fiche 7: George McGhee Files (unpublished), United States Department of State, 12 October 1967.

his Bonn tour in 1966 and 1967, due to the Johnson administration's (and the embassy's) "inability to cope with the changing climate in Bonn."<sup>69</sup> To Hemsing, Erhard's term of 1963 to 1966 had really been "an extension of the Adenauer era of warm United States-German relations." Brandt's Ostpolitik hit the embassy like a bucket of cold water. According to Hemsing:

Ambassador McGhee could not understand what was happening. Rumors floated that it might be time for a new United States Ambassador to come. He sought to knock these down. I advised that this could only be done by the German principals -- the Chancellor or Foreign Minister. That never happened. Their behavior was foolish, but so was ours. America is slow in adjusting its foreign policy posture to changing climates. We pay too much mind to the comfort of dealing with "old friends." That hurts us time and again in a rapidly changing world.

Unfortunately, it was in this climate that I left Bonn in August 1967, to accept nomination to the Department's senior seminar in Foreign Policy. I got the impression that the Ambassador thought I was deserting a sinking ship. I hoped he understood.... I had certainly been more loyal to him, and dealt with him more honestly, than some of the State Department colleagues I was leaving behind.<sup>70</sup>

In the final analysis, the Eastern policy pursued by the Grand Coalition would not rely on the opinions of officials in Washington. Ostpolitik was Bonn's own invention and its own responsibility. The Kiesinger cabinet

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<sup>69</sup> Hemsing, Oral History Interview, p.49.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., p.50.

still regarded the United States as a valuable ally, but would no longer fashion Bonn's foreign policy to match that of the United States. Such efforts had been Erhard's nemesis. In his memoirs, McGhee recalled welcoming these changes, for the reason that the FRG's new political independence was refreshing and healthy.<sup>71</sup> Unfortunately for both McGhee and for the Kiesinger coalition, the Nixon administration was not so open-minded, and Ostpolitik became a symbol for the divergence that had taken place in the once-congruent paths of American and West German foreign policy.

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<sup>71</sup> Interview of George McGhee (Washington: 3 December 1992), conducted by Suzanne Brown.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Assessing an Old Guard Truman Democrat: Conclusions

McGhee's mission to the FRG ended in May of 1968, five years after the date of his arrival.<sup>1</sup> He returned to Washington and served as ambassador-at-large for one year before retiring from diplomatic service in 1969. He then assumed an active life in Washington, where he became involved in civic projects and local government affairs.<sup>2</sup>

McGhee also returned to the business sector, serving on the boards of several major American corporations. Between 1969 and 1982, the retired ambassador sat on the executive boards of Mobil Oil Company, Procter & Gamble Incorporated, and the American Security & Trust Company. In addition, McGhee was a member to the executive board of Trans World Airlines between 1976 and 1982.<sup>3</sup>

In the past decade, McGhee has devoted his time to

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<sup>1</sup> "McGhee," Biographic Register of 1968, United States Department of State Division of Publishing Services, 30 June 1968.

<sup>2</sup> "McGhee," Dictionary of American Diplomatic History, p.328.

<sup>3</sup> "McGhee, George," The International Who's Who For 1992 (New York: Europa Publications, 1992), Fifty-sixth edition, p.1026.



publishing his memoirs and also to editing several books concerning the future of diplomacy in America. His publications include: Envoy to the Middle World (1983), At the Creation of a New Germany (1989), and The United States-Turkish-NATO-Middle East Connection (1990). He is the editor of Diplomacy for the Future (1987) and National Interest and Global Goals (1989).

Currently, McGhee resides in Middleburg, Virginia with his wife Cecilia. The retired ambassador owns a second home in Georgetown, which today serves as both an office and a "writing headquarters." The McGhees travel to Washington on a weekly basis to attend civic and social functions. On an annual basis, the McGhees visit England and the south coast of Turkey, where they reside for several months in their restored ancient villa. Recently, McGhee donated this villa to the Georgetown University Center for Eastern Mediterranean Studies.<sup>4</sup>

In assessing McGhee's long diplomatic career, it becomes important to examine its beginnings. McGhee entered the State Department in 1946 at the onset of the Cold War. One year later, the President announced the Truman Doctrine as justification for American involvement in Greece. The Truman Doctrine was just one part of a postwar containment

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<sup>4</sup> Interview of George McGhee (Washington: 3 December 1992) by Suzanne Brown.

policy which included the Marshall Plan and the establishment of NATO.

Of the several men who influenced containment policy, two in particular played a role in the development of McGhee's own ideas concerning containment. Director of the NEA Loy Henderson supported the Truman Doctrine on the grounds that the United States had to meet Soviet aggression in the Near East with a decisive policy of economic and military aid.<sup>5</sup> McGhee was also influenced by Policy Planning Chair George Kennan, who firmly believed in the Soviet threat but felt a "great militarization" of the Cold War was a mistake. Kennan observed that overemphasis on military strategy resulted in neglect of political and economic strategy, and that military force should be employed only in carefully analyzed situations.<sup>6</sup>

The philosophy of containment espoused by Henderson and Kennan wove its way into McGhee's own career. McGhee, a willing soldier of the Cold War, carried out containment policy in Greece, Turkey, and the Middle Eastern-African-Far Asian regions. While serving as coordinator for Greek-Turkish Aid and under secretary for Near Eastern-South

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<sup>5</sup> Anne Witt Perkins, "Loy Wesley Henderson: A Cold Warrior in Near Eastern Affairs, 1945-1948" (M.A. thesis, University of Richmond, 1987), p.126.

<sup>6</sup> George F. Kennan, American Diplomacy (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1951), p.173.

Asian-African Affairs, McGhee came to believe in the value of American economic and military aid to underdeveloped nations as an effective instrument for containment of communism. He supported the Point Four program and worked diligently toward the establishment of a Middle East defense organization. McGhee also took a firm stand against the use of American combat troops in Greece and in South Vietnam.

During the Truman years, McGhee's attempts to create new policy for the Middle Eastern regions ended in failure. The collapse of the Middle East Defense Organization in the spring of 1953 exemplified this failure. However, his efforts did influence the passage of the Baghdad Pact in 1955. McGhee's strongest contribution lay in the implementation of policy dictated by Truman and Acheson. For example, he successfully managed the funds allocated for containment in Greece and Turkey. He also carried out the Point Four program in the underdeveloped NEA territories. Finally, McGhee supervised the smooth transition of Turkey into NATO during his mission in Ankara.

As chair to the Policy Planning Council in 1961, McGhee again did not create new policy. His efforts toward the publication of a comprehensive guide to American foreign policy did not see fruition. As under secretary for Political Affairs, McGhee's suggestions were not heeded. Against the advice of McGhee, President John Kennedy

supported United Nations sanctions against Katanga during the Congo Crisis. McGhee's memorandum expressing disapproval of American combat troops in South Vietnam did not change President Lyndon Johnson's decision to send combat troops in 1964.

Though McGhee had limited influence on the policies created by President Kennedy and Secretary of State Dean Rusk, he remained a trusted and loyal member of the State Department staff. The high faith placed in McGhee was demonstrated by his appointment to the Bonn embassy. The mission to the Federal Republic of Germany was a distinguished and sought-after one.

As was the case throughout his long career, Ambassador McGhee's strength did not lie in the formation of American policy, but rested instead in its successful implementation. His suggestions made from the embassy in Bonn went unheeded by President Lyndon Johnson. A heightened example of this occurred in 1966, at the peak of the balance of payments crisis. McGhee repeatedly warned Johnson about Chancellor Ludwig Erhard's precarious political position, made more dangerous by Johnson's demands for full payment. Prior to Johnson's critical September meeting with Erhard in Washington, McGhee wrote to Johnson:

We must take into account [with regards to the offset payments issue] Erhard's weakened internal political position. This restricts his freedom in

making concessions to us. Also, an obvious failure for Erhard in the [September] talks could bring down his government. Rightly or wrongly the Germans -- including the Chancellor -- believe that he [Erhard] has a special relationship with you [Johnson]. If we let him down now, he -- or his successor -- could draw the conclusion that too intimate a relationship with us is not a political asset -- perhaps even a liability.<sup>7</sup>

When Johnson did not take McGhee's advice on this crucial issue, several of McGhee's predictions came true. The Erhard cabinet did collapse by October. New Chancellor Kurt-Georg Kiesinger was quick to announce that "Germany would no longer come running to the United States to solve all of its problems."<sup>8</sup> Close association with Johnson was viewed as Erhard's "mistake" by the new Kiesinger cabinet. Finally, West Germany's desire for stronger independence from the United States manifested itself in new Foreign Minister Willy Brandt's announcement of Ostpolitik.

McGhee's minimal influence with Washington policy-makers was evidenced in another way. Often, McGhee was not kept abreast of crucial day-to-day developments in American policy towards the FRG. In regards to the Vietnam crisis, McGhee felt he was not given proper guidance by the State

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<sup>7</sup> "Memorandum from the Ambassador (McGhee) to President Johnson," 22 September 1966. Fiche 14: George McGhee Files (unpublished), United States Department of State.

<sup>8</sup> McGhee, "The Changing Relations Between the United States and Europe," McGhee Speeches, Articles, and Essays, p.235.

Department as to the potential number of FRG-stationed American troops up for transfer to South Vietnam. Insistent on obtaining reliable information, McGhee wrote to John M. Leddy, assistant secretary of state for European Affairs. He told Leddy:

I feel strongly that when something occurs which could seriously affect German-American relations, we need prompt and adequate guidance on the event. I know that getting something like this done expeditiously in Washington is not always easy, but in a matter of such importance as American troop levels in the Federal Republic, we all stand to gain if we are in a position to deal immediately with local reaction.<sup>9</sup>

McGhee was frustrated, and rightfully so. Rumors of decreased American troops in the FRG caused serious problems. West Germans faced the Soviet threat every day -- the danger felt as close as the other side of the Berlin Wall. The majority of West German citizens desired that the current level of troops be maintained. Thus, as ambassador, McGhee was responsible for keeping the West German government and local population at ease and reliably informed -- an almost impossible task.

Undaunted, McGhee continued to voice his assessments of current policy. Furthermore, he defended American policy unflinching in the face of criticism over South Vietnam,

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<sup>9</sup> "Memorandum to the Assistant Secretary for European Affairs (Leddy) From Ambassador McGhee," 5 March 1966. Fiche 16: George McGhee Files (unpublished), United States Department of State.

the offset payments issue, the failed MLF and the frowned-upon NPT, and finally the much-debated Ostpolitik. An activist ambassador, he conducted press conferences, lectures, and public appearances on a frequent basis. McGhee fought to maintain a positive American image in West Germany during the incendiary controversies over Vietnam, the balance of payments crisis, nuclear power in the FRG, and Ostpolitik. McGhee's strength lay in his commitment to his mission and in his steady defense of American policies he had not created. He is admirable for the character and grace he exuded during his mission.

Though McGhee did not create the policy he so faithfully implemented, a study of his career remains valuable. His story reveals the influence of men like Kennan and Henderson on "cold war soldiers" like McGhee. A careful examination of McGhee's later career provides insight into the dynamics of power in the State Department during the Kennedy/Johnson/Nixon years. Finally, this study is a tribute to McGhee's loyalty during a time of transition in American-West German relations.

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George McGhee, "Oxford Letters: the Transformation of a Texan," unpublished manuscript, June 1991. George C. McGhee Library, Georgetown University School of Foreign Service, Washington, D.C.

Provides a detailed account of McGhee's early years in Texas and at Queen's College, Oxford.

George McGhee Files. Historical Office, United States Department of State. Washington, D.C.

In 1980, McGhee requested that these files be declassified so that he might use them as a reference tool for his memoirs. They consist of approximately 500 documents, divided into 22 microfiches. Each microfiche contains 87 pages. These files are not indexed. They are entitled "McGhee Files, Mission to the Federal Republic of Germany, 1963-1968," and the option to purchase is available. These documents provide detailed accounts by McGhee, President Lyndon Johnson, and Secretary of State Dean Rusk regarding Vietnam, the offset payments crisis, nuclear power in the FRG, and Ostpolitik.



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## Vita

Suzanne Brown was born in April 1969 in Durham, North Carolina. She was raised in McLean, Virginia and attended Bishop Dennis J. O'Connell High School in Arlington, Virginia. She received a B.A. in English and History from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in 1991. Miss Brown entered the Master of Arts in history program at the University of Richmond in the fall of 1991. During the summer of 1992, she attended St. John's College at Oxford University. She shall receive her Masters degree in history from the University of Richmond in August of 1993. She will be pursuing her doctorate in history at the University of Maryland beginning in the fall of 1993.