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## Hebrew University Question and Answer Session

Edmund S. Muskie

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HEBREW UNIVERSITY: Question and Answer Session

I'd like to add just a personal note, if I may, since the Vice-President has done so with reference to me. I can remember almost as a personal experience the reasons and the circumstances which motivated my father at the age of 17 to leave eastern-occupied Poland for the United States. He was unusually articulate about them as I suppose are all those who move under similar circumstances, because inevitably it must be a traumatic experience. However hard the circumstances of life, such a movement means leaving the warmth of home and loved ones behind.....

(tape ends)

Q: ...you are talking to a group that is composed mostly of Americans (laughter) and I think you'd want to consider us, as many of us as have left the United States - some of us permanently - some of us for a period of only several years, ...I think that raises a very serious question as to why we're here as well as to why we, as originally American citizens, are not back in the States. My question is this: I would like to know, when you speak of the notion of strength, and you talk of supporting Israel, and maintaining Israel's strength, why, I don't hear and no-one else hears, any talk of disarmament, or curtailing the arms supply on both sides in the Middle East. We're involved right not in the

SALT talks, which is supposedly disarmament. Yet I have not heard any talk of trying to control the situation, to calm it, to smooth it over by at least not supplying any more arms.

(Applause)

A: May I suggest that (inaudible...) to try to answer, or fail to...you speak of the importance of disarmament in the Middle East. This, of course, has been an objective of American policy in the Middle East...the United States has undertaken to set an example by restraining itself. We've been subjected to some criticism, because of the fear that unilateral action in this respect might create unacceptable risks for Israel. So it is a difficult dilemma which is involved...I think both President Johnson and President Nixon have been sensitive to the importance of trying to de-escalate the arms race in the Middle East. We are faced with the problem that up to this point any inclination to do so has been unilateral, and not bilateral or multilateral. And unless both sides pursue that objective, that (inaudible)... with the one side to do so, in terms of the values, the interests the (inaudible - people?) ...support. There's great interest in the United States in the SALT talks, in the Congress and outside. I talked to the Russian Ambassador on this subject, and hope to talk further about it when I go to Moscow near the end of this

journey. The Russians also express an interest in these talks. Both sides interested in them now express optimism about the possibility of an agreement, yet progress toward such an agreement (remains?) discouragingly slow. And I personally feel that neither side has taken initiatives that it might well have taken without taking unacceptable risks with its own security. The accumulation of nuclear arms on both sides is such, I think, as to serve as an adequate deterrent against the (inaudible)...without further accumulation. And initiatives should be possible and I think they have been, and I have suggested some, (in the base?) ...of my own country, which might have been taken, to get these talks moving, and get some achievement, in terms of containing the arms race. It must be, eventually we must find a way to do it, and if we must always, of course, be skeptical about those countries whose national objectives run counter to ours so often, whose (governments?)...come in confrontation with ours so often, which involve us in military risks so often, yet at the same time I think there is visible a clear understanding on the part of the Soviet Union that, if only in the interests of its people, it ought to seek a stabilization of the arms race. Now if I'm right,



in that reasoning, then perhaps both sides have a right to be somewhat optimistic. At least...(inaudible)...its own first step making achievable within the not too distant future. It's easy to be skeptical about such things and even cynical, but I think we must continue to pursue that (inaudible)...That is, as you suggest by your concern, at the heart of whatever prospect humanity has for achieving peace...(tape stops...applause)

Q: Repeat the question?

A: The question is, what steps...do you think the United States might take to help to end the persecution of Jews in the Soviet Union. I think we must of course, continue the dialogue which started as a result of the Leningrad trials...(inaudible)...is stimulated by further activity of that kind. I - we must express our concern through official channels in all contacts and communications with the Soviet Union. I've done so, and hope to continue to do so. I think the recent world reaction to the Leningrad trials has (inaudible)...and the quick Soviet response indicates that the Soviet Union is somewhat sensitive to world opinion in this area...having discovered it, we ought to pursue it...there's nothing...it's an intangible sort of thing that we can get at in (inaudible) kinds of ways, except...keeping the dialogue open, maintaining the present bilateral world concern on the subject

(tape ends).....(applause)

Q: (not on tape, from memory: SH) What will you say when you go to Egypt from here?

Muskie: Well, as Adlai Stevenson once said, I can hardly wait to hear myself. (Laughter) There are at least two things, I expect. First, the United States is committed to the survival of Israel, secondly, that our objective is peace in the Middle East for all the peoples of the Middle East. (Applause) ✓

Q: Would you please tell us, Senator, very candidly, who, in your opinion, is saving whom? Is America, in your opinion, saving Israel, or is Israel saving America? (Laughter)

A: I hope it's a two-way street. I hope that we contribute with our strength in ways that can be useful and helpful to Israel. And I take it you don't find that repugnant. Secondly, I'm sure that the example of Israel, in the sense that I discussed it in my prepared remarks, helps us keep our own values alive. And to that extent, I'm sure they help us save America.

Q: Do you think that the only way to achieve peace is for Israel to withdraw to its pre-1967 borders? (Applause)

A: I don't think it's been helpful for Americans to circulate publicly about what your secure and recognized borders ought to be. We've (begun?) with more pessimism than I like to see for

the negotiations that are aimed at settling that question, and I think a settlement ought not to be prejudiced by any personal opinions I might have. And I'll say this in addition, obviously, negotiations involving parties so far apart in so many areas, if they're to achieve progress, are going to require movement on the part of both. Now what that movement will be, what the trade-offs can be in the light of the security interests of the two sides as each side sees those interests is the unanswered question. And unfortunately neither side, probably, will look at these questions with the objectivity or dispassion that might be ideal in such a situation. The curtain of suspicion and even hatred that separates you from your Arab neighbors is a very serious obstacle to resolving the question. But nevertheless, the fact that the negotiations have begun after great difficulty is at least some hope that we might take the next step. The question of the borders, of course, is a fundamental...incidentally, the young man who asked the first question about the...reminding me that a lot in this room were American students, I hope that not all of them are American students (laughter), otherwise I might have stayed home (laughter) (tape stops)

Q: What is the difference, if any, between support for the freedom and self-determination of the State of Israel and the freedom



and self-determination of the State of South Vietnam? (Applause)

A: Well, obviously someone's freedom is involved in both places.

(Laughter) The question is, our own interests involved...to the point where we should become involved in a material way. In my judgment, there is simply no comparison between the impact of instability in the Middle East on peace in the world and the impact of the struggle in South Vietnam on the peace of the world ...and that judgment, I suppose...the struggle between various forces that tear mankind apart...religious, national...but also (inaudible)...because of the resources that are located in this part of the world. When we contemplate an area which produces 80% of Japanese oil, and almost as much, a high percentage, of European oil, which is tangled up in struggles of two national movements, yours and the Arab...the impact on the fabric of peace or the potential for peace in the world is evident...of a much higher magnitude in terms of its dangers for man, than Southeast Asia. This is not to minimize the importance of freedom for Vietnamese as compared to the importance of freedom for Israeli...in each case, freedom is a desirable objective they're entitled to pursue. But the resources of the United States and its capacity for exercising meaningful influence over the course of events are limited. We cannot do everything, everywhere, to



advance freedom for everyone. So we must do so in those places where our national interests most clearly lie, and our capacity to do so is within our limitations.

A: According to that logic, then America, or you, as President ...be willing to promise, as in South Vietnam, the liberation or the self-determination of the South Vietnamese in the same manner of speaking. That is to say, would you be willing to commit perhaps 500,000 American soldiers to the Middle East?

Comment from audience: Nobody wants them (laughter).

A. The first question ought to come from (inaudible)...oh, I think so. Secondly, I don't think it is helpful to speculate on this kind of a sensitive security area, about hypothetical situations that have not arisen. The real situation is difficult enough. We must not strain the credibility of our policy in this area by indulging in hypothetical questions or situations. What Israel has requested is the economic and military (support?) which she requires to maintain economic and military viability. We responded to that request. We responded out of the strength that is America. In addition to that, of course, you have, I think, the heartfelt moral support of the American people. I don't think it's necessary to speculate beyond that point at a

time when we've begun negotiations which hopefully and prayerfully can result in a settlement.

Q: There were two platforms on Vietnam (inaudible)...which endorsed the policy...the bankrupt policy of the President. And the minority one was supporting the policy of Mr. McCarthy and the late Mr. Kennedy. You made a speech in which you endorsed the authority of the President...(tape ends).....

A: I have to hope that (inaudible) (the alternative?)...first of all, I did not describe myself as (inaudible)...I tried to (inaudible) the interests of my country as I see them at any given time. And I've done that all my life. I've been a believer in peace since my father first told me the reasons why he came to...(inaudible)...so I do not accept...(inaudible)... I might suggest that your description of it...you show as little understanding of my position as you accuse me of giving to the Vietnam war. The Vietnam war arose out of complex forces and circumstances, many of which were not understood by most Americans, and many others in the early period, and even in the late fifties and early sixties. I think it's something of a tragedy that the American educational system has not, up to this point, educated our children...(tape ends).