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Interview with Edmund S. Muskie by Chris Beam

Summary Sheet and Transcript

Interviewee

Muskie, Edmund S., 1914-1996

Interviewer

Beam, Chris

Date

August 16, 1990

Place

Kennebunk, Maine

ID Number

MOH 025, 026

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Scope and Content Note

Interview includes discussions of: Muskie's first knowledge about his appointment to Secretary of State; the decision to take the Secretary of State position; protecting the senatorial staff when Muskie left the Senate; the embassy raid in Iran; not wanting to seek reelection in 1982; the financial burden of being in the Senate; the financial burden of being Secretary of State; people seeking Muskie's presidential nomination in 1980; the election of 1980; Muskie's enthusiasm as a legislator after his presidential races; success in budgeting through the seventies; the impact Reagan had on budgeting after his term; Muskie's preparedness for the Secretary of State position; State Department staff; daily briefings; the rarity of a legislator turned Secretary of State; comparisons between Muskie and other Secretaries; relationship between Muskie and Zbigniew Brzezinski; Iran hostage crisis during Muskie's tenure as SOS; the Carter administration and the Iran hostage crisis; the military option in Iran; the Algerian government's involvement in the Iranian crisis; the Shah and his impact on the hostage crisis; invasion of Cambodia and Southeast Asian issues; Soviet occupation of Afghanistan; concern over Soviet intervention in Poland; Central America issues in Nicaragua and El Salvador; the Middle East in 1979 and 1980; Camp David Accords; Reagan and the SALT II Treaty; issues Muskie may have tackled if Carter had been reelected; and views on the Middle East in 1990 (Pre Gulf War).

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Transcript

Chris Beam: ... meeting which takes place on August 16, 1990 at 9:00 AM. Senator Muskie, I wanted to, ah, Secretary of State Muskie, I wanted to ask you, get this discussion going, about the circumstances of your appointment as Secretary of State in the spring of 1980. When was the first inkling, what was the first inkling you had that President Carter was considering you as Secretary of State?

Edmund S. Muskie: Well, the first knowledge I had was when he asked me to become Secretary of State. I was not aware that there was a vacancy at the time, I'd been traveling across the country, campaigning in Arizona for Morris [K.] Udall, Colorado for Gary Hart, and I was on my way to Nashville, Tennessee to make a speech on water pollution. And on the way, when the plane stopped in St. Louis, there was a . . . I got notice that the White House was calling. I got off the plane and returned the call, but the White House switchboard did not know who it was who was trying to reach me. So I went on to Nashville and there was a call at the airport there, too, and the same thing. I called the White House switchboard and they didn't know who was trying to reach me. Incredibly. It wasn't until late that evening, about eleven o'clock, when I had completed my speech in Nashville that I returned to my hotel room and the President reached me there.¹

Even at that point I did not know there was a vacancy so I didn't know that he was considering me. I thought maybe he was calling me about a possible fishing trip in Maine. I knew he was, he was a rabid fisherman and we had talked about fishing, so I thought maybe that's why he was calling. It was spring after all. But then suddenly he asked me if I would be his Secretary of State. It came as a, like a bolt out of the blue. I was, as I say, I wasn't aware there was a vacancy, let alone that he was considering me. So I think there was a noticeable silence for a few seconds and he asked me what I thought of it and I said, well, it had some appeal but that I'd have to think about it, and so he asked me, "What," you know, "what, how much time I would have to have and I said, "Well, I've got to talk to my accountant, I've got to talk to my wife, I've got to talk to the governor of the state and make up my own mind." So we agreed that we would discuss it the next day, that I would return to Washington and then let him know. But he, he called me at six o'clock the next morning, when I was still in Nashville in my hotel room, said he was on his way to Texas and he could stop and pick me up so that we could talk on the way to Texas, and I told him really I didn't have to talk to him, I had to talk to my wife and my accountant and so on, and so on. So we agreed that after I'd done that the next day I would, I would get in touch with him.

But the only factor that was unfinished by the time I had talked to my accountant, I wanted to, because I understood my income would be sharply reduced. I'd have to cut off my lecture, lecture schedule, and that was an important source of income to me in those days, and also I would not get the full salary of a Cabinet member because I had voted for the most recent increase. So I had to go over my finances very carefully. And I had done that and we agreed

¹ A section called "Trips" in the miscellaneous index binder to the collection (SE 3117) is where to find a listing for the trip that included Arizona, Colorado and Nashville, Tennessee from April 25-28, 1980. The speech index lists the Nashville speech as April 28, 1980 on the subject of Earth Day and the Clean Water Act. This speech can be found at the following location in the collection: SE 3224 (last speech in last folder).

that I could probably manage for the rest of that year at least, through the election and until the end of Carter's term. And my wife was thoroughly in agreement with my taking the, taking the appointment. But then I had to get in touch with the governor, because I wanted to protect my staff and I wanted to ask the governor to. . . . Well, in the first place, I think as a courtesy to him, since he had to make the appointment to fill the vacancy, he ought to know anyway. But I wanted him to take up with my successor, whoever he might appoint, the matter of keeping my staff at least until the election. So I called the governor the next day, I didn't tell him what it was about because he was having a dinner at the governor's mansion with a number of newspaper reporters, and I didn't want him spreading the word, so I arranged to meet him at the Brunswick Naval Air Station the next day. . . . the President made a White House plane available to me. Came up to Brunswick, discussed the matter with him. He was thoroughly supportive. He went over his list of possible candidates with me to get my reaction. I told him that really it was his decision to make. I was sure he'd be interested in appointing someone whom he believed to be qualified, but that was his decision. I declined to give my reaction to any proposal he had. And he of course would be running for reelection himself, so he ought to be concerned about the pulling power of the senatorial candidate.

CB: Now, when you said that you were not aware that there was a vacancy, had the aborted military raid to rescue the hostages taken place?

EM: Oh, yes. That, as a matter of fact, [Cyrus] Vance had submitted his resignation to the president before the raid took place because he disagreed with that decision. But he agreed to withhold his resignation until the attempt had been made. But the raid had been made, and it had failed, well, the raid that had been attempted had failed. Uh, and the news of his resignation had been made public, because Jane had heard about it back home. The White House had been calling her to find out where I was, and they didn't tell her why, why the president was trying to get hold of me, but she guessed correctly what it was. So the raid, yeah, the raid was history and the resignation had been submitted and made public, but it simply had escaped my notice because I was busy traveling. So then I notified the, the governor had given me his assurance that he would try to protect my staff, and out of our discussion he ultimately offered the appointment to Senator Mitchell. And although Mitchell had been appointed District Judge and had been serving about six months, he was more than eager to take the appointment, so that it all worked out pretty well.

CB: Now, in 1980 you were a well-respected senior member of the United States Senate and it was clear in the spring of 1980 that the Carter administration was in deep trouble over the Iran hostage crisis.

EM: And inflation.

CB: And inflation. But, I mean, the administration was getting really a double whammy and clearly foreign policy was the major problem. Did you have any sense of trepidation about leaving the Senate to go to the State Department, to join an administration that was in deep political trouble over a major foreign policy crisis?

EM: No, not really. In the first place, in the first place, to be asked by a president, you know, to

assume this particular position in the circumstances, you know, a crisis, you know, I regard as a distinct honor and one that I couldn't lightly say no to. I mean, it was obviously a very serious matter from the country's point of view, as well as the president's political point of view, so I took that into account. But in addition, I had long believed that I would not want to run for reelection after I reached the age of seventy. Well, my next election I would have been, let's see, this would have been in '82, I would have been sixty-eight. So that, to run again wouldn't have violated my principle, if you can call it a principle. But in addition to that, the financial burden of being in the Senate was becoming very heavy, and I wasn't sure I wanted to run for another term. But I felt that if I stayed in the Senate that I would be pressured to run again, because people would probably conclude that if I didn't run, we might lose that seat as a party and that I might yield to the pressure to run again when I really thought the time had come when I probably should not.

So Carter's invitation really gave me a graceful way to avoid that decision, and to have the experience of serving as Secretary of State in these unusual circumstances, so it looked to me like an opportunity. I realized that he could lose the election and that my tenure would be eight short months, but that didn't really trouble me. I would have liked to have served for another Carter term as president, but that isn't the way the ball bounced. So I have no regrets today that I did it, and had no qualms about doing it then. There was something of an effort made, you know, to persuade me, to allow my name to be put in, nomination, at the convention for president as Carter's political problems deepened in the course of the next months. But I discouraged that, absolutely.

CB: Who made these efforts, these, put out these feelers?

EM: Well, it was a number of people. I don't really know who the ringleaders were, but there were a number of people. I know Edward Bennett Williams worked, did a lot of work trying to do that. I had discussions with him. Arnold Picker, who had been a strong supporter in '72, and who had contributed a great, a lot of money to that campaign. There were others. My memory is not as sharp as it ought to be on the names. They also tried, I think there was some effort made to try to persuade Senator [Henry M.] Jackson [D-WA] to lend his name to that effort. I think money was raised for such an effort.

CB: You mean before they contacted you about the possibility ...

EM: Well, this was sort of an ongoing effort for a few, I mean, they never got any encouragement from me at all, but that did not discourage them from pursuing it so that I was aware of it, the press was aware of it. I, over a period of a couple of months there, I couldn't avoid the question from time to time from the press as to whether or not I was interested or whether or not I would accept. And I'd made it clear from the beginning that when I said yes to the president's invitation to appoint me to the job, that implicitly I was renouncing it, although I had no idea when he offered me the appointment that there would be this little boomlet. But it occurred and if I had had any inclination to seek the presidency at that time, I certainly wouldn't have accepted the appointment.

CB: Now, this boomlet occurred when? Just before ...?

EM: Before the election, before the convention. When was the convention?

CB: Oh, I see, while you were Secretary of State.

EM: While I was secretary of state, oh yeah. I mean, I was appointed in May and the convention was, what, August? In August?

CB: I think so.

EM: So it was in that period. It wasn't a very long period. But I got off to a good start as Secretary of State. The reaction to my appointment was very positive everywhere that I could see, and so it was natural, I guess, the Kennedy candidacy hadn't really gotten off the ground. He'd run into trouble, particularly because of his unfortunate interview with Roger Mudd. You remember that interview that. . . .

CB: I remember it, but I don't remember all the details. . . .

EM: Mudd asked him why he was running for president, and Kennedy fumbled badly on his answer to that question. As I remember it, it was quite, a very visible political setback for Kennedy, the fact that he didn't really know why he was running. So his candidacy hadn't gotten off the ground. There was, I don't think there was any real doubt that Carter would get the nomination at the convention, but there were those who thought that another candidacy at that point, myself or Jackson, might succeed and put the party in a stronger position.

CB: Now, in the CBS documentary, CBS, WCSH documentary on you, your wife Jane also commented that in 1980 you had reached a kind of emotional dead end as far as the Senate was concerned. That you had, you felt that you were ready to move on in terms of what you could accomplish within the Senate, that you felt frustrated and that this offer of the Secretary of State position was really kind of a windfall. To what extent did you feel as though you had reached a kind of peak in the Senate?

EM: Well, I don't know that I felt that, although she may have read my mood better than I did. I mean, I found it a very welcome event for the reasons I've already given you, but in terms of losing enthusiasm for work in the Senate, I don't recall that I had reached that point. There really wasn't much in terms of advancement in a political sense that was left to me except, you know, continue to do a job as a senator.

The budget process was still very much under challenge. We'd done a good job, I think. At the time I left the Senate we had reduced the national, the deficit to something like twenty-billion dollars. Contrast that with the present two-hundred, two-hundred and fifty-billion dollars. So, we thought we had taken that process pretty well along the road to success but it was still under, it was still being tested. There was still a lot to be done to improve it and to solidify it and to really make it's impact. I think the Reagan administration in effect destroyed the potential effectiveness of that budget process. It's been substituted, in fact, by the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings law, which to me isn't a process at all. It's an artificial cap on the deficit that it is easy

for Congress to evade. And the trouble with it is that it didn't really, it doesn't really address the issue of what our priorities are to be in spending. I mean, you can't, if you just put an arbitrary top to your deficit, then there's the, you know, the priorities question which is the really tough budget problem, the priorities. You know, what interests do you serve with government resources? Education, health, environment, defense? As you know, the budget all too often develops as a contest between those who believe in social spending of one kind or another, and those who believe in defense. Well, that's an oversimplification, really, of what it is. But the first group is divided among a lot of sub groups: those interested in education, those interested in health, those interested in environment, those interested in jobs and so on. So there's a lot of work still to be done on the budget process, and I thought we had done very well on my side. Senator Henry Bellman of Oklahoma, who was in effect the Republican manager of the Senate Budget Committee, and I had worked well together and I think we'd achieved considerable success and I think we would have continued to if I had stayed on.

So I didn't feel really that we had exhausted the challenges to me personally of that process, and of course the environmental process hadn't come to a dead end. It was growing and, as you know, it is even a bigger issue today than it was when I left the Senate ten years ago. So my areas of interest were still very much alive, but in the sense, I was uneasy about, maybe that's what Jane interpreted to mean that I was tired of the Senate or its opportunities. I felt very much burdened by our financial condition and wondered how long we could sustain our family and educate our kids and all the rest of it. So in that sense perhaps I reflected a mood that persuaded her that I really wasn't getting much more satisfaction out of the job. That's a rambling answer.

CB: That's fine. One question that came to mind was, right after your swearing in as Secretary of State, I'm curious as to what particular steps you took to assimilate yourself into the job under very unusual circumstances. You were obviously faced with the Iran hostage crisis, not to mention the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, plus the usual, all the other issues that would face a Secretary of State. What particular steps, concrete steps, did you take or were taken for you to get you into the job in May of 1980?

EM: Well, of course I was a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee at the time and had been for a number of years so at least from a Senate point of view, I was involved in all of the visible issues, or the active issues, so I suppose I had that background which someone who hadn't been in the position wouldn't have had. And of course we had to plunge immediately into, you know, I had to plunge immediately into the management of foreign policy across the board. That's one of the advantages of the State Department, the Foreign Service people in the State Department of course ensure that there's continuity in the State Department and foreign policy on an ongoing basis. And I knew a lot of those people, and so I plunged in and I didn't have to, I didn't have the option of putting together a team in the State Department to, that reflected my priorities. That team was in place.

And the first important decision I made there that I think was a response to your question, was the deputy secretary of state. Warren Christopher had definitely been an approp-, been under consideration as, or on the list of those who were, deserved and got consideration for the appointment as secretary. And I knew Chris, admired him tremendously, and he, before I talked to him, had decided I think to leave the State Department and I persuaded him to stay. And that I

think was very important in terms, because Chris and I developed a very good personal relationship. And he was my immediate key to tying in to all of the ongoing issues and the management of the State Department. He was an invaluable assistant.

And Vance had assembled a very good team of people in the top spots, the top leadership spots in the State Department, and we established a working relationship immediately. And I think it was helpful that I was prepared to accept the personnel structure as it was. I just accepted them and I told them so. I said, look, you've got to take me in this crisis, in these circumstances, this emergency, as I am, and I'm prepared to take you, too, so let's work together. There was never any, I left no doubt whatsoever that I wasn't looking, you know, for patronage positions to put people into, that I was willing to take the State Department as it was. And I think that worked very well. Now, to this day I get the impression that my willingness to do so really created a positive environment in the State Department that served me, it served the State Department, served the president and served the country. So they were all there.

They didn't, they all knew me or of me, and they all respected me for what I had been up to that point. And the fact that I was willing, you know, to just step right into harness with them to work eliminated any uncertainty as to their own status or what the impact might be on them personally, or their position. So we jumped right into harness together and that was, you know I met, there was a group of eight that I met with every morning at eight o'clock and then once a week I would meet with people at the assistant secretary or ambassadorial level who were out of town, and I converted that into a different kind of arrangement. Up to that time, those meetings were held for the purpose of giving them an opportunity to report to the secretary as to what was happening in their areas. I converted it into another kind of forum. I used them to test all the questions that I had to consider at the secretarial level. In other words, I asked for their judgment on the decisions that I had under consideration and had to deal with. And it was interesting to watch them react to that. They were not there just to give their own view of their particular little piece of the pie, but they were there to, you know, I was, I clearly had an interest in what they thought about the big picture, and it was very helpful.

CB: Now, when you came in, were you given briefing books, piles of documents to sort of update you on which departments. . . . ?

EM: Oh, this was a daily business, not necessarily related to fact that I had come in and needed to get caught up. You had to start reading immediately. I mean, the daily input of, because all these issues are pending on a day-to-day basis and it did involve a lot of reading. The Secretary of State can't possibly personally deal with all the cable traffic that moves into the State Department. So I had good people who screened that to make sure that I got the important things, the things that I had to absolutely be in touch with, but there were massive amounts of detail on issues that probably did not come to my attention. And that's why Christopher's position as deputy was important and the seven or eight other positions at that level.

I mean, they all had their share of the cable traffic to deal with and my name went, you ought to read, the best answer to your question I think is found in Dean Rusk's new book. He discusses in great detail the kind of problems a secretary has in dealing with just the total mass of information that passes through the State Department. The State Department is really a

communications center, you know, this information flowing from around the world twenty four hours a day and there have to be people who intercept it here, there and elsewhere, make sure that it all, the key questions get to the secretary's attention. It's quite an operation. And of course, the hostage crises had complicated that. We had a special section dealing with just the hostage crisis involving some of the spouses of the people who were hostages in Iran. I forget what that was called. But it worked well.

And of course, so far as my, you know, I had to begin traveling almost immediately. I mean, the Secretary of State today does even more than we did in those days. But almost immediately there was, there were meetings in Brussels, NATO ministerial meetings, the Austrian State Treaty, a celebration in May, there was a Venice economic summit that was approaching in June, an (*unintelligible word*) conference in Southeast Asia in late June, and so on. So there wasn't much time to sit at my desk in Washington and read reports or cable traffic and whatnot.

CB: One thing, I was looking back over some of the backgrounds of former secretaries of state, and in a way your background is unusual because you had a career as an elected official, as a politician, throughout most of your adult life. And that was not the case with Secretary Vance, Secretary Rusk, Secretary Kissinger, Rogers, the only others that I can think of would be Christian Herter under Eisenhower, or [Sic] [Charles] Evans Hughs in the 1920s.

EM: Don't overlook Roosevelt's secretary of state, Cordell Hull.

CB: Cordell Hull, okay. Do you think this gave you a different perspective than most of your predecessors in terms of your approach, your relations with Congress, the press, with your understanding of the dynamics of international relations?

EM: Well, undoubtedly it did. Of course in the early days, you know, at the beginnings of the Republic, the Secretary of State was a political figure. He was, usually the president, vice president and secretary of state were perhaps the three most important political figures of their time, beginning with Washington, Washington, Adams, Jefferson as secretary of state. If you go through the first fifty or more years of the country's history, secretary of state was usually chosen from the ranks of political leaders. And as a matter of fact, by law he was the third in, or the second in line of succession to the presidency, and I think that was true until after I reached the Senate. I forget when it was precisely that the line of succession was changed to substitute the speaker of the house, the President Pro Temp [of the senate] for the Secretary of State on down. But yes, I think it did in terms of the most recent incumbents of the state department, I was an exception.

Well, there was Cordell Hull, there was former Senator [James] Byrnes who was secretary after the war, I guess the three of us. Hull, I guess, came from the House, Byrnes came from the Senate and I was from the Senate. It did, it, and I think it made a difference in some important ways. I know [Zbigniew] Brzezinski, you know, who created many problems for [Cyrus] Vance, had a different view of me, because he understood that one of the reasons that Carter appointed me was because I had a political base. And in a way that, I don't want to use the word intimidated him, but he took it into account in his own assertions of turf, for example. Although he was never a comfortable person to work with in that respect. We got along personally all

right, although we haven't had a personal relationship of any kind since I left, since I left public life.

And of course with respect to the Congress, you know, the Congress respected me, respected me totally. I never had any troubles with the Congress. I found it easy to communicate with them, I knew them. And . . . in my appearances before committees and so on, I felt completely at home and they responded in kind. And I think even in the State Department and also in my relations with, you know, my counterparts in other countries, the fact that I came from the Senate I think added a dimension to my position that was a plus. They regarded me as a political leader of the country, not just simply as secretary of state, so it was important in very many ways.

No, I felt that my eight months plus as secretary was regarded as a plus and a positive period by everybody concerned so far as I can see. I never felt that people were disappointed in my handling of the job. They seemed to be, have a feeling of assurance because I was there, and that was true wherever I went or whatever group I was with.

CB: Now, you mentioned that you had some problems with national security advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski. What were some of those problems? Were they turf questions, were there differences in pers-, philosophical differences, approaches to foreign policy?

EM: Well, there was a, no, the questions of, the questions such as holding press conferences on foreign policy. There's nothing that Brzezinski liked more than that limelight and the trouble with it was that, you know, his articulation of a policy at any point would always be compared with the secretary's articulation. And to the extent that people perceived a difference, it creates confusion. He also met with representatives of other countries. Well, he always felt there was a temptation for people, representatives from other countries, to shop for the best point of view they could get. I mean, not that every time he had a press conference and every time he met with a foreign leader that that necessarily led to a sharp breach between the national security advisor and the secretary of state, but the potential was there. Of course, reporters who specialized in foreign policy, who dealt with both, you know, would like to play games with that kind of a relationship. Now, I don't think he, I don't think he did it as much with me as he did with Vance because he understood this was an election year for the president and the president couldn't afford to lose another secretary of state. And besides, this secretary of state had a political following of his own, so I think that his inclinations along that line cooled somewhat, or he held them in restraint, for whatever reason. But he still was an abrasive kind of a guy to deal with. He was very sure of his own opinions. We used to have some, in . . . we took turns chairing foreign policy meetings and we used to have some pretty sharp exchanges.

CB: Were these differences over the ...?

EM: The differences over the management of the Middle East, crises, the Afghanistan situation, the Polish situation. I mean, all of those came up during that eight month period. Never resulted in any break, it was just, it was just not a very comfortable arrangement. And apparently in Vance's case, after three years, he had a belly full, especially on that Afghanistan, on that rescue mission.

End of Side A
Side B

CB: Okay, concerning the Iran hostage crisis, how did you feel about the military raid when it occurred? Did you, had you thought it was advisable to even try it? I realize in retrospect it might because it was aborted, that it might seem a bad idea, but what was your opinion, both as a senator and once you were in the State Department, about the advisability of this raid?

EM: Well, I felt that, I felt that the president would have been remiss in his response, in the discharge of his responsibilities if he hadn't, if he hadn't planned for a military option. And that planning did begin, I gather, as soon as the, early on in the hostage crisis. Now, I had not been briefed on the fact that such planning was going on, or its nature, its components, and I really had not focused on whether, I hadn't focused on whether it was under way, or whether there should be an effort of this kind. But, again, I began by saying that I would have thought it would have been a mistake not to have planned.

Now, whether or not the plan that was finally developed was the best plan that could have been put together, I have no military judgment on that. And I was not a part of that planning, I was not a part of a consideration of options of one kind or another. So the shaping of the plan, I wasn't involved in any way whatsoever, and in no position to make a judgment on it. And I gather it was in the course of that, the development of the plan and the consideration of the options and the final decisions as to its make up, that Vance's negative attitude developed. And I gather that Brzezinski had a great deal of influence on the plan and its components. But, looking at it from another point of view, at the time that the decision was made to go forward with the military option, all other options for dealing with the crisis had come to a dead end. The very last of it involved the United Nations effort through Kurt Waldheim and, you remember, that was tried and produced no results. Diplomacy had come up against a dead end all across the board and there were the constant threats, or possibility of threats, from the Iranians about what might be done with the hostages. Talk of trials, talk of possible death penalty and so on. All of this was very disturbing for the president.

So, and then, with respect to the military option, this was May, the nights were getting shorter and night time was obviously an important part of whatever plan you launched. The nights were getting shorter and with respect to the helicopters and the aircraft, the air was getting warmer and thinner and less supportive, so that as time went on, the potential viability of the plan that had been put together was diminishing. So with diplomatic initiative at a dead end and possibilities of using this option under pressure, the decision was made to launch it. So we lost I think six or eight men in the process, in Desert One. So my reaction to it publicly at that point, and this was before I knew that Vance had resigned, the president called us down to the White House to brief us on it and to tell us what had happened, and of course he was very deeply concerned that it had failed, I felt that he had no choice but to undertake it. But this is after the fact and without having been exposed to it in the way that Vance had been.

Now, after the fact, after this thing was all over, I came to believe that the fact that the effort had been made was one of the factors that may have contributed to the Iranian's decision to negotiate. They couldn't be sure we wouldn't try again, and they couldn't be sure that another

effort might be more successful. I don't know to what extent that may have had an influence on them, but I, I mean, it was too bad to lose the lives of those six or eight soldiers, but other than that, the failure of the mission was not that profound. The one negative impact its failure might have had, or the fact that it was undertaken, might have resulted in the dispersal of the hostages so that it would have been more difficult to find them in the event of another effort.

CB: Was the military option ever considered again?

EM: No, not to my knowledge. Not to my knowledge. But we certainly didn't announce to the world that we weren't considering it. So they couldn't be sure that we were not. No, we absolutely did not consider a repetition of the military option. What we did decide was to wait for the political developments in Iran to finally produce a government with which we could deal. And it was in, I think in August of that year that the *Madulis*, or Parliament, was elected and a speaker of the *Madulis*, speaker of the hou-, *Madulis* was appointed, and it was at that point that I wrote him a letter indicating that we had mutual problems.

You know, they had been asking us for an apology for all the, for the Shah's regime, our contribution to it and all of that, and I simply referred to mutual grievances that we ought to be discussing. And it wasn't long after that, I think late August, early September, the dates ought to be confirmed, I am not sure about this, that we got word through the German foreign minister, Gentscher, who is still foreign minister, that he'd gotten word from the Iranians that they were interested in a meeting. And we pursued that and were able to confirm the fact that they were indeed interested in some kind of talks. And those talks began under the auspices of the West Germans, in Germany, before the election, and continued through the election and beyond so that, and those talks are what finally produced the release of the hostages. After the election, the Algerians saw, the Iranians asked to substitute the Algerians for the West Germans, they felt more comfortable I guess with the Algerians. So although it wasn't direct face to face negotiations, it was negotiation through the Algerian intermediaries.

And of course politically, you know, the Republicans at that time were, you know, trying to make an issue of two things: one, that you never talk with hostage takers. I don't know how you ever resolve those issues unless you talk to hostage takers, but anyway that was the line, the Republican line at the time. And secondly, the Shah of course had bought and paid for a lot of military equipment and the Republicans were sure, you know, that we would give that up to get the hostages, that was another issue, supposed issue. Interesting thing is that we, there was no discussion between us and the Iranians on the question of those arms. So far as I know, they never requested them, probably because they didn't want to be beholden to the great Satan, but in any case that never arose, and we settled it, settled the matter without dealing with that issue and I don't really know what the present condition of those specific arms might be. I would think there would be a lot of obsolescence.

CB: These are what, planes that we had deliv-, that the United States had delivered to the Shah?

EM: I don't really know the details, I don't really know the details of what it consisted of. No, the, when we got to the question of, you know, on what basis do we resolve our differences, the principle we advanced was that if they would restore the hostages to us, we would try to restore

their frozen assets to them. The trouble was that a lot of those assets were in the form of bank accounts that had been attached by creditors of one kind or another, asserting claims of one kind or another, so it wasn't as easy to restore the assets as it was to ask them to restore the hostages. But that was a basic principle upon which the discussions were based, and to deal with the claims we agreed to set up a claims tribunal in The Hague to sort through those, I guess literally thousands of claims, a process that is still ongoing, unless it's been finally concluded. I don't think it has been finally concluded these ten years later.

Anyway, it worked. We were able to return to Iran, I think something like, oh, I forget how many billion dollars, but that would put some in escrow against these claims, and that was an agreement I think, or a provision in the agreement that if the amount of escrow money was exhausted that the Iranians would replenish it. I'd have to go back and look at that agreement. That's, it was a pretty technical thing. And Warren Christopher presided over that whole negotiation at the time. Had to deal with the bankers, had to deal with creditors, had to deal with the Iranians. Fortunately, you know, the emergence of the electronic transfer of funds made it possible to implement the agreement in a very short time frame, once the agreement was reached, because we didn't have a hell of a lot of time toward the end.

So it was a rather steady progression, you know, from the failed hostage, failed hostage attempt, decision in order to await political developments in Iran, finally, once there was somebody to deal with, to communicate with, to make that contact, and then a response, not too late, a month or so, subsequently that resulted in these indirect negotiations. And I don't, I can't remember how many, how many trips the Algerian emissaries had to take, you know, moving between Washington and Tehran before the agreement was finally buttoned down. And they were excellent. They had been involved, the three Algerian emissaries, had been involved in the negotiations between Algeria and DeGaulle's government which led to the independence of Algeria, so they were seasoned diplomats. It was really a pleasure to do business with them. They sort of filtered, you know, filtered the messages back and forth. They didn't act as, try to act as arbitrators, but they simply undertook to filter, where, you know, by eliminating, you know, the hostile fringes of these exchanges. I thought they did a terrific job.

CB: What was the motive of the Algerian government to get involved in this?

EM: Their motive? Well, I think they were interested in being involved in such a, I mean, it gave their government visibility. Certainly the Iranians had confidence in them, in selecting them, so it was a way of maintaining good relationships and maybe improving their relationships with Iran, and with us. I mean, I think almost any government would have accepted that role if they felt in a position to do it to lighten the burden for them, and they gained a lot of respect in this country, from people who counted. I think, I know that Warren Christopher enjoyed the relationship he established with the Algerians, and I certainly did. And the West Germans were willing to play the same role. You know, this is not unusual, when you think of some of the conferences dealing with Southeast Asian issues. Poland has been involved in that sort of thing, France, Canada. Canada quite often is asked to serve in similar roles. They do so without reluctance. And you know these countries that send, that send troops in peace keeping situations, you know, their soldiers are under pressure, in dan-, in risk of their lives. You think of the United Nations forces that have been in Lebanon, that also served in. . . . *(telephone*

interruption).

CB: Concerning the Iran hostage crisis, did you, did you or Warren Christopher have any direct dealings with Iranian emissaries?

EM: No.

CB: You just worked through the Germans, or the Algerians?

EM: Through the Algerians.

CB: When did you sense that there was some kind of breakthrough in the impasse between Iran and the United States over the hostages?

EM: Well, I think I've already indicated that the possibility, I mean, until I had written to the speaker of the *Madulis*, there had been nothing to indicate there was a possibility of a break. And of course when I wrote, I think he disclosed publicly in a press conference the fact that I had written and, I don't know, I can't remember to what extent he revealed the contents of that letter. But in any case, he was not abusive in his reaction to the letter.

CB: Had you expected him to be abusive?

EM: Well, I mean, you know, the Iranian reaction to anything that the American government said or did on these subjects took the form of a tirade. They never lost an opportunity to castigate the great Satan. This was a typical stock in trade. But we didn't get any of that in response to my letter. That didn't generate any false hopes on our part, but it was a matter of interest. So I guess I would say that the first indication we had that there might be a possibility down the road of a break was the West German foreign minister's call to me to tell me about the signal he had had from the Iranians. And so we responded, we agreed on an exchange of public statements that were ambiguous but which would indicate that there was indeed genuine contact between the Iranian government, and Khomeini, and us.

We did that, and from then on, the one setback in that whole process was the weekend before our election when, when the Iranian *Madulis* convened and there was a lot of public debate about the hostages. And we had to go through a weekend of television review of, you know, the burning of the United States flag and, you know, all the footage that had been generated at the time of the hostage taking. And that didn't help Carter's election chances very much. If they'd kept it quiet, we might have done better, but, in other words, that was their way, I guess, of indicating publicly that they were seriously considering the possibility of a resolution. But the language in that debate didn't always encourage us to believe that. We couldn't be sure whether or not their going through this public demonstration of involvement was for the purpose of helping or hurting Carter's chances for reelection.

The Republicans, I guess, like to say, well, I won't say that because I'm not sure about that. In any case, whatever their motive was, the effect on the election here in this country was dramatic as revealed by the polls. I think on the Friday or Saturday before elections, the, it seemed to be

about even, according to the polls, but the election was a walk away. The polls, just before election day, just showed a dramatic drop in Carter's prospects. He knew the day, the day before, the day before election that he had lost, which is a dispiriting thing.

But in any case, after election, we, we made the change in intermediaries and the talks continued on a continuing basis. At least one exchange a week, I think, as I recall it, one exchange every two weeks, trying to hammer out the principles and the elements of a resolution. And all this happened, the messages from Iran always seemed to arrive on a Saturday before the Sunday of all the talk shows, you know, and I'd usually be scheduled on Meet the Press or Face the Nation, Issues and Answers, only to have to publicly react to some development, alleged development or supposed development. The most dramatic was when the Iranians delivered a message which sounded like a request for a twenty four billion dollar ransom payment. That's how the press tended to describe it, and I had to cool that one off. And obviously we did, we never did pay them anything like twenty-four billion dollars.

CB: Now, did the issue of the return of the Shah himself, or his wealth, come up in negotiations when you were secretary of state?

EM: I don't think so. I think the Shah died, let's see, what is this, I think the date of his death is in here. Marshall Tito died according, on May 4th. But it didn't, in any case. I was just trying to place it and I thought I saw something in here. Ah, July 27th, the Shah dies in Egypt.

CB: So that was, the return of the Shah was a moot issue. What about his assets? Did the Iranians demand the return of his, because they had alleged that he had salted away quite a bit of money.

EM: I think they did. Incidentally, on those details, under the auspices of the New York Bar, Warren Christopher and others who were involved in, the team that we created to deal with all those issues, resulted in a book, I don't know if you've run into that or not, on the hostage crisis. Ought to try to get a copy of it for the, because those answers will be found there, and I don't want to rely on my memory, but yes, constantly I think the question of the Shah's assets were, they cer-, part of the discussion as I recall it.

CB: I have one more question on the Iranian hostage crisis. I was always curious in following this why the Iranians didn't release the hostages before the November elections on the grounds that Ronald Reagan might be more difficult to deal with than Jimmy Carter. Do you have any sense of why the Iranians kept the hostages until after the election? Indeed, didn't release them until the day of the inauguration.

EM: Well, must be that they weren't impressed by that argument. After all, in that weekend's demonstration before election they, although it's, I've said a moment ago that we can't be sure whether they were doing that to help or hurt Carter, they couldn't have done anything more likely to encourage the election of Reagan than that demonstration. So if it was his election that, that they were worried about, it certainly didn't affect their behavior that weekend, as far as I can see. No, the Republicans liked, liked to, some Republicans, I don't want to blanket them all with that kind of a statement, but a lot of people were saying at that time that, that Reagan would be

tougher on them than we were, etc. That kind of argument was made but I can't, I really have no reason to believe that it affected their attitude in the negotiations. After all, no, I just don't see that, Chris.

CB: Okay, turning to another part of the world where you've had a recent interest, Southeast Asia, the, in 1979 Vietnam invaded Cambodia and overthrew the Khmer Rouge regime, which was supported by the Chinese. The Chinese launched a border, an incursion on Vietnam's border, and the position of the Carter administration was in opposition to the Vietnamese intervention, or the invasion of Cambodia. What were your thoughts at the time, in 1980 when you entered the State Department, on the Carter administration's policies towards Southeast Asia, specifically towards Vietnam?

EM: Well, when I came in as secretary I don't think the Carter administration had made a decision. Well, the Carter, the Carter administration's reaction to the invasion was that it was a demonstration of the expansionist tendencies of the Vietnamese government. I think that's a matter of fact, pure and simple. And I guess that was my reaction as well. The provocation for the invasion, as I've learned since, is that the Khmer Rouge had been launching incursions, military incursions, bloody incursions into Vietnam across their common border. Now, at the time, I'm not sure that we gave Vietnam the credit for whatever credit there might be involved in reaction to those incursions as the motive for their invasion. We tended to believe that it was simply Vietnam's historical tendency and, hostility to Cambodia and historical tendency to try to expand its reach. And that's what we were against. The fact that in the process the Vietnamese deposed the Khmer Rouge was not really focused on particularly. I don't know to what extent we were aware at that time of the genocide that had taken place. I don't recall being aware of it and I don't think the Western world was aware of it at that time.

CB: Well, there had been reports ...

EM: There had been reports, no question about that, but I don't, here I'm talking about something that happened twelve years ago, eleven, twelve years ago, but I don't think that our policy was, appropriately took into account that fact. In other words, we didn't credit Vietnam with the motive of invading in order to liberate the Cambodian people from the Khmer Rouge. I don't think we believed that that was Vietnam's motive. So it was sort of an incidental result, whatever awareness we had at the time, that genocide had taken place. Not that we had a very high opinion of Pol Pot, I don't think we did, but the fact that in effect the Khmer Rouge and their murderous regime were deposed was an incidental result of the invasion and not the motive of the invasion.

And so the result, you know, then the ASEAN countries of course, which have always been fearful of Vietnam, also saw it as evidence of Vietnamese expansion and these countries, you know who they are, they are Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, the Philippines, Brunei, Thailand, six of them, they were anxious to get U.S. support for their view of this situation and China was with them at that time. And so the result was that there was a common agreement on the part of the ASEAN countries, you know, to recognize the coalition which, I don't know whether the coalition was in place in 1980. But the result of it all was that they all supported the idea of giving the United Nations seat of Cambodia to the Khmer Rouge and the non-communist

coalition. That was their idea of a way to restrain, or to make Vietnam pay a price for its invasion. And we concurred in that, I think, and I think that decision on our part took place while I was secretary.

CB: Now the Chinese argued, at least publicly, that the invasion of Cambodia by the Vietnamese was an extension of Soviet power. Was that a consideration in the formulation of the U.S. response to the Vietnamese invasion?

EM: Oh, well, I think we still retained the conviction we had throughout the Vietnam War. The Soviet Union was the principal, although we regarded China as a supporter of the Vietnam-, of the North Vietnamese, too. We didn't see it as just a Soviet, I mean, China's position in this whole situation has been a shifting one over the centuries. Until about 1000 B.C. I think China controlled Vietnam, or Indo China as it was then called. I think that's what it was then called. And the Vietnamese shook loose from that control for most of the next millennium. It's rather strange that during the Vietnam War we regarded China as a supporter of North Vietnam and since then, of course, China has been a supporter of the Khmer Rouge. It's both, you know, both relationships have a deep history that is not fully explainable.

CB: Mentioning the Soviet Union, at this, during the period you were Secretary of State, the Soviets had, well, before you became, just before you became Secretary of State, the Soviets had occupied Afghanistan, which had been, of course became a major issue in U.S. - Soviet relations. And the United States imposed certain sanctions on the Soviet Union and at least enunciated support for the Afghan, the growing rebellion in Afghanistan. In your opinion, do you, what do you think was behind the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan? Now, again, there's a division of opinion in, one group would argue that the Soviets were simply trying to shore up a tottering Communist regime that had no basis of support, others argued that this was one step in a long historic drive by the Soviet Union, the Russians, to gain a foothold in the Middle East, and particularly foreign water ports. What was your view or response at the time, in 1980, to the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan?

EM: Well, I thought, I think we saw it then as the latter, you know, the latter rationale that you just stated. And it was that point of view that I presented to Gromyko when we had our first talk about the whole situation. He was curious as to why we were concerned about it and my answer to him was that it was the geography of the situation that concerned us. What their actual motive was, I think you've still got to see it in that way.

The Soviets, you know, following WWII, you know, had designs on Iran at that time. As a matter of fact, we formed the Alliance with Greece and Turkey at the time, our Greece and Turkey policy under Truman for the purpose of creating a deterrent to Soviet expansion in that area. So the Soviets historically for a long time had been reaching out toward Iran and we were concerned about that all through my term as secretary, the possibility that the Soviets might move into Iran. They were, there were troop movements, troop buildups along that border while we were, during that period, at the same time that there were buildups along the Polish border. I mean, we were concerned about both and not entirely sure as to which of those perceived options the Soviets were playing games with. But we certainly felt that they were, and the Afghanistan invasion could well have been part of a broader objective which included Iran ultimately, and a

warm water port, as you put it. I think that's about it.

Incidentally, I had an Afghanistan taxi driver in New York yesterday. He promised to turn on the air conditioning, and appeared to, and then nothing happened and I finally said, your air condition doesn't seem to work. He said, my air condition's working very well. So, where is it?

But in any case, when he dropped me off, I told him who I was and he said, oh, I know, he said, I'm from Afghanistan. So there you are. Taxi drivers in Washington and New York come from all over that area, Iranians, Afghanistans, Pakistanis, and they all recognize me.

CB: Were you afraid that the Soviets would intervene in Poland?

EM: Yes, we were. Definitely we were concerned about that. That was a very, very, an area of very great concern on the part of all of our NATO allies as well as ourselves. They were all concerned about it. I remember we, the last meeting we had of NATO foreign ministers in December of 1980 ...

End of Tape One

Tape Two MOH# 26

CB: There, you were mentioning at the last meeting of NATO foreign ministers, you were concerned about possible Soviet intervention in Poland. What were, what did the United States propose to do about it, if that eventuality happened? I mean, what could the United States do about that?

EM: You mean, what would we ultimately do about that? You know, what you might ultimately do about such situations is a question that you don't necessarily decide early on. Just as at present time in the Persian Gulf. What will we ultimately do? Will we blockade, for example? Well, the suggestion that we may is certainly raised and left to rest there as a deterrent. Whether we actually will, you know, you won't know until you get to that point. Whether we would have gone into WWII if they had invaded Poland is a question we never decided as such, of course. And so what you try to do is to find ways to express the seriousness of our concern that they appeared to be preparing for that kind of a development, or that kind of intervention, and their mobilization of forces along the Polish border of course gave grounds for that concern. And I forget exactly what communique or what position we announced publicly at that time, as an Alliance, to deter the Russians, but whatever it was it seemed to be sufficient at the time.

CB: Now, turning to a, closer to home, in 1979 and 1980 the issue of the turmoil in Central America began to come to the fore. There'd been a revolution in Nicaragua and an incipient civil war in El Salvador. In December of 1980 four American church women were murdered and the best evidence suggests that they were murdered by members of the Salvadoran military. What do you recall about that incident and also, nine days after the murder of the church women, the opposition Marti front, guerilla front in El Salvador, launched an offensive and the Carter administration released emergency funds to help the Salvadoran government withstand that offensive. What do you recall in terms of the formulation of U.S. policy towards Central America, and specifically El Salvador at this time?

EM: Well, we were concerned, as everybody else was then and as people still are concerned in El Salvador as to whether or not, and to what extent if at all, the military, the right wing military had been involved in those incidents.

Duarte, Antonio Duarte was a part of the government at that time. I think there was a group, a *junta*, and he was a member. But there was always a question as to how much influence he had or to what extent he was able to deter, you know, the use of these death squads in El Salvador. I know we undertook to limit the amount and kind of military aid we would give. We tried to avoid lethal aid at the time, as I remember. Helicopters were I think a special item that we were concerned about. It's a fact, of course, that this guerilla war was under way and the question as to who was supporting the guerillas. I think we were reasonably sure the Nicaraguans were to some extent, and the Cubans to some extent, and it was our policy to provide the government of El Salvador with the resources to enable them to resist those incursions. And yet at the same time there was this concern that the, you know, the right wing, the radical group, were also involved in that internal struggle for power and then that, it was always difficult to pinpoint the perpetrators of those crimes. And so we tended to be very cautious about the amount and kind of military aid we would give.

Now that changed, of course, after the Reagan administration came in. I think they were less reluctant to provide military assistance. Ultimately Duarte did get elected in his own right as president. That produced a kind of improved situation thereafter, but that was long after we had left office. At the time we left office we were, we really hadn't been able to satisfy ourselves that the way we were handling the situation was producing anything very constructive. At that time also, I think, we were supporting an aid program for Nicaragua. I think seventy five million dollars, something of that kind. The program didn't look too good, subsequently.

CB: It didn't look too good in what sense? That it didn't have an impact on the Sandanista government, or that it had caused political problems at home?

EM: Well, both.

CB: Now, the purpose of the aid prog-, aid to Nicaragua, was that to exercise some leverage over the political development of the new regime?

EM: That's right. It was. I don't know, I can't remember whether at that time we had, my memory really isn't very good, they had finally prevailed over the Somoza forces, I think they had, am I correct in that?

CB: Well, the Sandanistas came to power in July of 1979. So they were in there, I mean, they were in there when you came in to the state department. But I think the government was, the formal government was in flux. It had been a kind of unstable coalition of Sandanistas and non-Sandanista opposition, opponents of Samosa.

EM: But the aid program had been created before I became secretary and ...

CB: How much attention were you able to pay, I mean, this, all this seems to be taking place in the context of the Iran hostage crisis and negotiations. How much time and attention were you as secretary able to give to the issues like Central America or Afghanistan or Southeast Asia?

EM: Well, you had to deal with them. Ah, and I'm not sure that we're able to do so thoroughly, you know, you haven't even gotten to the instability, instability in South Korea which also plagued us in that period. So we had, you had South Korea, you had all these others that we've touched upon.

No, really, what I think to make these sessions more productive, I think what I need to do is do some focussed reading to refresh my recollection on the period. I just, I find myself, you know, too foggy in my recollection about the specifics. I don't know what the reading sources will be, or could be, that was somewhat helpful but not fully. I'm not sure that that's accurate, for example, and I'm wandering through your last question, but, (*reads*) "in his first significant speech the secretary must control the Foreign Policy Association; on July 7th the State Department placed less stress on human rights issues and provided for essential economic, social, and military aid to non-Communist nations regardless of its civil rights agenda." I don't remember that speech. I'm going to dig it out when I get back to Washington and see if in effect that, that's an accurate one-sentence summary. I find that ...

CB: That does seem like a major change in the Carter adminis-, the thrust of the Carter administration policy ...

EM: Yeah, I don't re...

CB: ... because when Carter came into power, I mean came into office, human rights was to be the keystone of his foreign policy.

EM: Yeah, and I think it was. I don't remember that. I really need to do some digging, Chris.

CB: Yeah. Okay. I just want to touch on one other area and then get some general reflections from you concerning the Middle East, other than Iran. The, a couple of issues came, well, one, obviously one ongoing issue or circumstance or condition was U.S. relations with Israel. The, before you came into office, President Carter had managed to establish a relationship between Sadat of Egypt and Begin of Israel. At the time, what are your reflections on U.S. relations with Israel at the time? Israel, particularly with regard to Israel's occupation of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, it's relations with the Arab countries, its security needs and so forth?

EM: Well, what we were basically involved in at that time was a continuation of the peace process which had started with the Camp David Accords. I think we had carried those Accords to the point where a peace treaty had been entered into between Egypt and Israel. Am I correct in that recollection?

CB: I believe so, yes.

EM: And the next phase of the Accords were designed to begin a dialogue which would expand

beyond Egypt and Israel and get other Arab states involved in a discussion of issues that hopefully could be resolved and achieve a resolution of issues involving Israel's other neighbors, other than Egypt. So to continue the peace process, which at that point really still involved only Egypt and Israel. How to lay the foundation, you know, for a broader dialogue including a broader range of issues that impacted upon other countries. Sol Linowitz, of course, was in charge of that process, and the American ambassadors to Israel and Egypt. In the case of Egypt that was, that was Ambassador Atherton and in the case of Israel, Ambassador Lewis, and they're both very good. But Israel would do provocative things that would have the effect of interrupting the talks between Egypt and Israel.

CB: Such as?

EM: Oh, such as, I forget the member of the Knesset, a woman, that introduced a resolution naming Jerusalem as the capitol of Israel. Now that's just calculated to inflame Arabian opinion at any point. Well that wasn't a government initiative, an Israeli government initiative but neither did they denounce it. I think they were able to sidetrack it at the time and we were told, as I recall, that they'd, they would somehow manage to keep it sidetracked. But there was always the threat, and you know, ultimately after we left office, the government of Israel did itself name Jerusalem the capitol of Israel. I mean, that was, the status of Jerusalem was an issue that was, under Camp David Accords, was to be separately discussed and decided after the deliberation and the involvement of other states, other Arab states. But that dialogue had never begun and there's Jewish opinion that wanted to precipitate the decision and. . . . So that had the effect of repeatedly interrupting the continuity of the peace process and the discussions between Israel and Egypt. And it led to votes in the Security Council. There's some reference to some of those votes in here, I think, that we abstained, we were able to abstain in many of them, but I think ultimately we actually voted. . . . I don't know if that vote is in here. And I forget the resolution. This is where I get lost in these discussions. I don't remember the, but in any case, I think ultimately on one resolution we did not abstain, but voted for the resolution, if my memory is correct, and Begin was very unhappy with me about that.

But those were never any personal decisions that I made, I mean, they were the result of discussions that involved the president, the vice president, Mondale, and our ambassador to the United Nations. But our interest was in keeping the dialogue going, the peace process dialogue going, and it was damn frustrating, you know, to get these domestic political developments in Israel that had the effect of interrupting those. Because Linowitz was making some progress we thought, at the time, on the broader agenda, and was constantly frustrated by the inability to continue to establish some continuity. I didn't, it's not, those are not all covered adequately in that summary, but that's an interesting review in its own right. And there was a lot of that that took place at that time. And we managed to keep it afloat, but, you know, I mean Sadat obviously was put in a box every time they did this sort of thing, Begin had his own internal problems with his of-, I mean, it's a mess.

CB: Now, what was to be the, or what were your thoughts at the time on the status of Palestinians, both those in the occupied territories and those living as refugees in places abroad because that, their ultimate status, whether they're to have a homeland or a state or whatever, always seemed to be the major issue, at least it was for. . . .

EM: An ever present issue that nobody has ever satisfactorily resolved, nor has any formula ever been, and I don't recall that American policy ever adopted any ultimate position as to what the Palestinian status ought to be. And it was just hoped, I think, that, well, not hoped. I think part of the purpose of the Camp David Accords was to bring the issues that would bear upon that ultimate resolution, the ultimate resolution of that question, and to focus in the context of related issues such as, I mean, the Camp David Accords were perceived I think as the beginning of an evolutionary process. A process of evolution that would finally bring the parties into a healthier relationship and one that would suggest the final answer to the status of the Palestinians.

I don't think we ever tried to impose our own, you know, a formula of our own on anybody. I don't think we were ever sure of what that ought to be, and I don't think we, to this day, that our government has any established position on what the status of the Palestinians ought to be. With the Intefada and this violence that has sprung up over the last few years, it's pretty difficult to find, come up with an answer to it. I don't have an answer. A separate state? A confederation of some kind involving Jordan and the West Bank? I mean, there have been so many attempts to come up with a formula that just don't generate universal approval or support. The situation over there now seems worse than it was when we left office.

CB: Was there any consideration of bringing the Palestine Liberation Organization into any negotiations?

EM: Oh, no, I mean, that policy was, so long as the Palestinians did not recognize the right of the State of Israel to exist, we didn't do business with them. That policy did not change until very recently. When was it, last year? Yes? Last year that we began talking with them. And now I think those talks are in suspension. And now, given. . . . given Arafat's support of Iraq, you know, in this present crisis in the Middle East, I don't think there'll be a resumption of those talks for awhile.

CB: I'd like to wrap this up with something that historians I think like to do more for, to get a handle on things, is kind of ask you a 'what if' question. That is to say, if Jimmy Carter had been reelected in November 1980 and, I'm assuming you would have stayed on as Secretary of State for a good while, what areas, or what, let's put it this way: what do you see the major areas for taking initiatives, or major areas of concern once, particularly once the Iran hostage crisis had been resolved, and how would you have conducted the foreign policy of the United States different from the policy of the Reagan administration in its first term?

EM: Oh, God.

CB: That's a big question.

EM: How do you answer a question like that? I mean, I don't even have at the top of my mind, you know, the, the, the developing status of foreign policy problems and issues beginning back then. I mean, there's certainly points of differences that I can recall. You know, the attitude about arms control, the attitude about the SALT II Treaty, for example. Reagan never at any point, at any point, officially denounced the SALT II Treaty. I think its status was, as best I can

recall, was the decision to observe the treaty without ratifying it, and ultimately four or five years down the road he rejected it. Then roughly the same time, no, earlier than that, he announced the strategic defense initiative designed to build this outer space shield against nuclear weapons.

So there are plenty of points of difference that I took with him, publicly and otherwise. And at one point I worked with Nixon and Howard Baker and Jim Baker to try to launch a visit to the Soviet Union. A Muskie-Nixon, or Nixon-Muskie visit to try to, you know, probe the possibilities of a resumption of strategic talks. It was about that time that Reagan himself changed his own view about the importance of arms control talks and he initiated his own at that time.

Well, what the hell good is it going to do me to try to reconstruct in my mind how that period would have changed, been different if I'd been there. I mean, I was for the SALT II Treaty, I was for arms control, I was chairman of the Arms Control Sub-Committee of the Foreign Relations Committee when I was in the Senate, and so I was interested in the arms control process. And I was opposed to the strategic defense initiative because I, number one, I didn't think it could work, I didn't think there was any way to make it work, and I never heard a scientist argue that it was possible. But that's all history now. Now we're in a different ball game and I assume that finally the strategic defense initiative is, I guess we're still providing some money to continue, continue the research. I suspect that won't last very long. I can't believe that with all the budgetary constraints that we have to meet today that that program will last very long in the present context of east - west relations. So I don't know how you deal with that question.

In Nicaragua I took issue with the administration handling of that situation. You know, things like the mining of Nicaraguan harbors, the renunciation of the, of the ah, of the ah, compulsory jurisdiction of the World Court, and other issues that flowed out of that situation, I disagreed with the administration. But it's very hard to say where we would be now if a different road than that the Reagan administration chose to travel had been traveled. It's very difficult to do.

So I would say we would have differed on arms control, we would have differed on the handling of the Central American situation. Once the administration embraced the arms control thing, then I'd have to give the administration credit for its shift in policy and the results that followed, although Reagan never did concede that SDI should be terminated. And you think back now, you know, on what, at what the defense spending of that decade did to our budgetary problems, the national deficit, and our ability today to, you know, to play a more effective, productive role in Eastern Europe, for example, and in Cambodia. We don't have the resources to do the things that we've been, we've said we've been wanting to do all this time, in large part because I think of excessive spending for defense. And yet there will always be a historical argument as to whether or not the change in the Russian perception of the east - west relationship was effected by that defense buildup on our part. My own view is that, that the So-, the problems with the Soviet economy were a greater factor than, maybe exacerbated by the amount of their defense spending. But nevertheless, I think that motivated Gorbachev in a way that might have motivated him even if our level of defense spending had been less.

And then there's a whole question of whether or not, you know, the money we spent on defense,

on the defense posture, on the defense structure, that we've bought with all that money is relevant to problems like that in the Persian Gulf at the present time. I doubt very much, you know, that the stealth bomber has much to do with the power that we project in the Middle East now, or the Trident submarine. In other words, the defense buildup, the emphasis of the defense buildup doesn't seem very relevant to the needs of today. Problems of Eastern Europe, the threat, the dangers of the Persian Gulf, so there you are. You can second guess until the cows come home and you can't be sure that you would have been right.

CB: One last question, this sort of gets beyond the Secretary of State period. What's your, what is your view on the recent events in the Middle East, particularly President Bush's response in sending large numbers of U.S. forces over there?

EM: Well, I, my view is that he's on target. I think he's done what he had to do. I don't, whether some lesser level of deterrents would deter Saddam, we're not sure that what Bush has done will deter him. No, I take no exception to what he's done. Now, that doesn't mean that I have any certainty that the ultimate result will be a resolution of the, of the confrontation. My own feeling is that Saddam has, you know, Saddam's objectives haven't changed one iota at all, you know. His timing may; he may decide that he can't do what he might otherwise had planned to do. If he had planned to invade Saudi Arabia, he may be deterred from that. Whether or not he can be persuaded to pull back out of Kuwait, he's already plundered Kuwait, I think, pretty decisively with, you know, with electronic transfer of wealth. I suspect he has really stolen Kuwait blind in the weeks that he's been there. I think he must have been concentrating on transferring that Kuwaiti wealth in any way that he can to his own bank account, figuratively speaking. No, I think he has long wanted to be the dominant Arab figure, the dominant Arab leader in the Gulf. Number one because he's hungry for power, number two, that would give him control of the oil resources of the Gulf area which would give, make him a, you know, a very disturbing force in the world economy. I think all of that's what he's been wanting to do.

I think he has long coveted, not just the oil well, the oil resources that he shared with Kuwait, but Kuwait itself. I think he has always argued that Kuwait was once a part of Iraq and should be a part of Iraq again. I don't think he's given up that objective simply because we've moved these forces in. He may be deterred from staying there for the time being, but if he moved out, you know, he would simply be awaiting another day. And of course he has indicated his determination to become a nuclear power. That makes him an even more frightful risk down the road. Chemical weapons and all of that. I think he's just one of those figures that history produces from time to time whose hunger for power, all that can bring, as he perceives it, you know, makes him virtually immune to any change. No, I think we're in a very bad pickle. And what will we do, I mean, you will begin to get disagreements now as various options for avoiding war, or the possibility of war, are presented to Bush by King Hussein, by Saddam, and now this initiative toward Iran, what will that do? Well, Iran, what will Iran's attitude be? And these economic sanctions? All very interesting.

CB: Okay, well, thank you very much, Secretary Muskie, I really appreciate this. I think that has been, this has been very informative in filling out a ...

EM: I think we've got to make them more productive, I don't know.

End of Interview

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