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Interview #7
Nixon and Kissinger
(Wednesday, November 2, 1983)
Interviewed by Donald A. Ritchie

RITCHIE: Richard Nixon was around the Capitol for a large part of your time here, as senator first and then as vice president; did you ever have any dealings with him before he became president?

MARCY: No. My tracks did not cross with his at any point during that time. I observed him through the press by and large. So I can't give you an objective judgment based upon conversations that I may have had with him, or the environment in which I saw him operate.

RITCHIE: Well, what were your feelings at the time of his election? There was obviously going to be a sharp change in the way things were operating in Washington.

MARCY: I was quite disappointed, perhaps not as much as I should have been, but I felt strongly that Senator Humphrey, who was the Democratic candidate, had been taken in entirely too much by the Johnson administration. I felt rather badly that Gene McCarthy did not get the nomination because I thought he could have commanded the support of those people who did not know how to vote when it came to a choice between Nixon and Humphrey. As a matter of fact, Nixon's appeal to some people was the fact that he was able flatly to say

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that he would get us out of Vietnam. So on that particular issue, which to me at that time was very vital, he took a more forthright position that gave me more hope that he would get us out than did Humphrey. I'd always felt that if Humphrey had come out much earlier and stated flatly that he was going to get us out of Vietnam, he might have won--because I think that was the crucial issue during that campaign.

RITCHIE: Nixon, during that campaign, said that he had a "secret plan" to get the United States out of Vietnam, although he would never say exactly what it was. Do you think there was very much skepticism on the Committee about this, or did they make any attempts to figure out what he had in mind?

MARCY: I don't recall that there was any skepticism in the Committee. At that point the Committee felt so strongly that we ought to be getting out of Vietnam that anybody who made a promise that sounded like we might get out was not likely to be questioned. It's a bit like the Eisenhower campaign, when Eisenhower said "I will go to Korea." It was a depressing time for people who were concerned about our Vietnam involvement.

RITCHIE: With Nixon's election and the appointment of William Rogers as Secretary of State, and the other cabinet members, did relations between the Foreign Relations Committee and the administration change? Did they improve at all?

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MARCY: Yes, I think they did. Rogers was not a very strong secretary, but he was civilized. I think the Committee hoped he would be a strong secretary, which unfortunately he was not. I'm trying to remember, who was the Assistant Secretary for Congressional Relations? Was that

RITCHIE: Tolbert?

MARCY: Well, he was for a while.

RITCHIE: Eliot Richardson was undersecretary for a while.

MARCY: Yes, but not for very long, as I recall. But there was someone else. Let's see, Macomber was during the earlier period.

RITCHIE: Did you find that the administration was making any overtures to smooth things out, to try to win support in the Committee? Were they more likely to testify and more open about meeting with the Committee?

MARCY: My recollection is that they were. That was probably largely because conditions had so deteriorated between the Democratic administration and the Democratic Foreign Relations Committee that almost anything was better than what the situation had been prior thereto. To come back to the point which I made earlier in these discussions, there tends to be a greater effort to get along with Congress on the part of an administration of a different party than

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that of the Congress. They feel they must be sympathetic and understanding of the congressional point of view. Of course, the person who really had the biggest impact on the Foreign Relations Committee during that period of time was Henry Kissinger. While Kissinger never testified before the Committee in any formal sense, he was generally admired by Committee members. Senator Fulbright had great respect for Kissinger's ability. We tried several times to get Kissinger to

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come before the Committee. He never would. This was when he was National Security Advisor.

I got quite involved in negotiations to try to arrange it so the Committee members could meet with Kissinger. The assistant secretary at that time was David Abshire. David and I got along very well. Between the two of us we managed to get Kissinger to agree to meet privately with the Committee. We had three or four such sessions. I think the first one was at Senator Fulbright's home--Kissinger came. I remember at that point--this is perhaps illustrative of one of the problems that occasionally exists between a staff director and members of the Committee--the arrangement was that Kissinger was going to meet privately with the Committee members at Senator Fulbright's home. The senator told me, and I said, "Well, do you want me to be there?" Fulbright said, "Oh, no, I don't think that's necessary." I said, "Well, I thought we should have someone there from the staff to make a record of what goes on." He was rather reluctant, but finally he said, "Well, come along. I don't think

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Henry will like it." I arrived at the Fulbright home, and when Kissinger came in I recall Kissinger looking past Senator Fulbright and at me, and saying: "Vell, Carl, vat are *you* doing here?" Whereupon Senator Fulbright nobly looked right past Mr. Kissinger and looked at David Abshire, the Assistant Secretary for Congressional Relations, and said: "Well, Mr. Abshire, what are *you* doing here?" So that problem of Kissinger having a back-up person, and the Committee having a back-up person was resolved. From then on, when we did hold other sessions between Kissinger and the Committee, both Abshire and I were present.

RITCHIE: How many sessions did the Committee hold with Kissinger?

MARCY: I would say there were three or four. We met several times at the Court of Claims Building, which at that time was just off Lafayette Square.

RITCHIE: Would one of these meetings resemble an executive hearing, in a sense? Would Kissinger give a little speech and then be questioned by the members, or how did it work?

MARCY: Yes, that's the way it usually went. Kissinger would explain some particular facet of our activities and the members would question him quite vigorously. I recall that Senator Javits was very

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effective during those sessions, making more impact perhaps than other members at the time. I wish we had a transcript. Do you know, did I make memos of those conversations?

RITCHIE: I haven't seen any.

MARCY: I must have. But maybe not.

RITCHIE: What was it about Kissinger that so impressed the members of the Committee?

MARCY: Well, he had a deep voice, and he spoke with authority. He was known to be close to Mr. Nixon. He was--I hate to use the word--but I think he was viewed as an "intellectual," which Mr. Rogers had never quite managed to convey to the Committee. He was a scholar. He certainly seemed candid with the Committee. All of those factors. I think that later on there was some feeling that Kissinger dissembled a little bit, but the members were slow to catch on, if they caught on at all. If they read Sy Hersh's book before they had met with Mr. Kissinger they might have had more doubts. But the general feeling at that time among the Committee members was: "For Heaven's sakes, make Kissinger Secretary of State. He's making all the policy." Rogers didn't seem to be in the chain of command.

RITCHIE: Interestingly, I did come across a letter that you wrote in 1958 to Kissinger. You had just finished reading his book

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on nuclear power and you commended it as one of the most stimulating books that you had ever read. That was ten years before you had to deal with him in the administration.

MARCY: Actually, I think I met Kissinger even before that. There was a Professor Bill Elliot who was on the Harvard faculty. He used to run seminars and would invite people from Washington to come to Harvard and meet with his students. I think Henry was in one of those classes at that time. That must have been in the mid-'50s or earlier--but I wouldn't want to take any credit for having educated Henry Kissinger! I think he did it himself.

RITCHIE: What about the whole problem of the division between the State Department and the National Security Advisor? It seems to me this was creating a new set of problems for the legislation branch in dealing with foreign policy, because it's really shifted so much authority in foreign policy away from the agency that the Foreign Relations Committee follows and supervises, and can call to testify. How do you account for this shift in power from the State Department to the White House and National Security Advisor on foreign policy?

MARCY: In the first place, it was clear that the shift had taken place downtown, and that the only place the Committee could get any authoritative answers was

from the White House, and the only person in the White House we could get answers from was Kissinger.

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Kissinger met a number of times privately with Senator Fulbright, meetings to which I was not privy. Senator Fulbright would mention casually that Henry called him last night or had stopped by the office--that sort of thing. During that period it seemed to me that the Committee pretty well gave up on the Department of State as an effective spokesman for the administration. The Committee was uncomfortable with this situation in the sense that they felt that since Kissinger was running the foreign policy of the Nixon administration he ought to be at the place where foreign policy was supposed to be managed--in the Department of State. I think Committee members were much more comfortable after Kissinger became Secretary of State. That pretty much resolved the problem.

There was nobody left in the National Security Council, after Kissinger left, who was worth talking to. Brent Scowcroft was a nice person, but Kissinger took the foreign policy of the United States from the White House back to the Department of State, which was where the Committee thought it belonged. But when the foreign policy power was not in the Department of State, the Committee, following its instincts, went where the policy was being made, and that was Kissinger. So practically during all of that period, the key to the conduct of United States foreign policy was in Mr. Kissinger. The Committee recognized that.

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RITCHIE: The National Security Council has become something of a bureaucracy in itself. It has quite a few specialists in different fields. Were there any contacts between staff members and their counterparts in the NSC? Were there any overtures made on say the lower staff level under the National Security Advisor?

MARCY: I don't recall any regular communications back and forth, although I think that Dick Moose, Richard Moose, had been on the National Security Council for a time with Kissinger. When Moose came to the Committee he may have kept some contacts with people who were still on the National Security Council, but I can't speak to that of my own knowledge.

RITCHIE: I did see one controversy with John Lehman, who I think is the current Navy Secretary, who at that time was an NSC member. He made a charge in what he thought was an off-the-record session, but it got printed in the newspapers, that the Foreign Relations Committee was a leaky sieve, and that was the reason why the administration wouldn't tell it anything. Senator

Fulbright tried to get Lehman to come to testify to explain what he had meant, but he used executive privilege and pulled the covers back over him.

MARCY: I don't recall that incident specifically. I knew Mr. Lehman in another capacity later on. But at that time--well, I

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guess it's still true, is it not--that National Security Council people do not testify before congressional committees. The White House is the ultimate bastion of foreign policy.

RITCHIE: I was just wondering if there were any informal ways of getting around the whole question of executive privilege, if anyone else was trying to smooth things out the way Kissinger obviously was on an ad hoc basis, rather than on a formal basis.

MARCY: I don't recall any. There was some talk within the Committee of trying to use its authority to approve authorizations. There were several times when there was an issue of executive privilege and the Committee talked about how you managed to get around it, but I don't recall any successful use of that authority. I do recall one spectacularly unsuccessful effort to get around executive privilege. In connection with one of the USIA programs we asked for country planning papers which each mission would send in. Those papers became the basis of the budget of the Information Agency. USIA refused to give the Committee those planning papers, and Senator Fulbright proposed to penalize the Agency by reducing the authorization for USIA by some rather spectacular amount. Somehow the figure \$40 million sticks in my mind. He managed to get that \$40 million reduction in USIA authorization through the Committee, but lost that fight on the floor.

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I mentioned in one of my earlier interviews when we were talking about Senator Church, that Senator Church was one of those that Senator Fulbright was counting on in this instance, but Church took the position on that issue that to use the authorization process to acquire country planning papers was not sufficiently important to gut the United States Information Agency program. So the administration won that particular effort to break down executive privilege.

RITCHIE: Before we go into some of the specifics of foreign policy in the Nixon years, I was wondering if you could give a general overview, your impression of the foreign policy issues and the Nixon administration's handling of foreign policy, from a Capitol Hill perspective?

MARCY: My impression is that the Foreign Relations Committee was rather surprised that Mr. Nixon was turning out to be a statesman. They did not expect

it. I think they found his opening to China and his willingness to talk with the Russians refreshing and unexpected in view of their earlier recollections of Mr. Nixon when he had been one of the biggest anti-Communists in the United States Senate.

RITCHIE: The overture to China was probably the single most noteworthy achievement of the Nixon administration, yet in some respects it seems a cynical action, in the sense that up until the day before we were basically fighting in Vietnam to keep the

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Communist Chinese from overrunning all of Asia, and suddenly we were making overtures to China as a new ally. How do you explain such a sharp change in foreign policy, and how does public opinion get altered so quickly?

MARCY: Well, I think in that case public opinion was waiting to be altered. What most people knew about China at that time was that it was a place where we had sent missionaries long ago and we had set up medical schools and done that kind of thing and the Chinese were a very interesting people. I don't believe that the public ever felt strongly that China was an aggressive Communist nation. I'm talking about my perception of the general public attitude at that time. I think there was also some cynicism, in the sense that Nixon might have been opening to China with the idea that China would be a counterweight to the Soviet Union. It seemed to me that Nixon was far more open than Johnson had been toward both the Chinese and the Soviet Union. I don't have an explanation. I probably should read Mr. Nixon's books!

RITCHIE: On the larger issues of foreign policy, it seems that the Committee was in accord with the administration, on relation with the Soviet Union and relations with China. On the other hand, the differences come more on the sidelines, as William Shawcross indicates, not the big, global issues, but on specific nations, backdoor activities in Chile, and Cambodia, and Laos. There seemed to have

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been a dichotomy in which the administration had a master plan on the larger scale, but seemed still to have been conducting back door skullduggery in other places.

MARCY: I suppose that reflects what the Committee felt was an overall Kissinger strategic point of view, although during those years I think the Committee had rather expected much more headway to be made in negotiations to bring the Vietnam war to an end. It was in that framework that worry about the increased bombing of the North and the invasion into Cambodia, bothered them. Chile tended to be a side issue during that period of time. We didn't really

get worried about what was going on in Chile until '73 or '74, when it was looked into after the event. I don't recall much excitement about Chile at the time.

RITCHIE: Vietnam was the one issue that continued to fester. The negotiations dragged on, and there was an escalation in the bombing, although there was also "Vietnamization." A lot of the opposition within the Congress began to coalesce around the Cooper-Church amendment. The thing that strikes me about that was that it wasn't the Fulbright amendment. Why was it that Cooper and Church were at that stage taking the initiative and not the chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee?

MARCY: Well, I would make the point that they were the products of Fulbright's educational process over a period of time. I

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never detected any rancor on the part of Senator Fulbright. He was delighted to have Cooper and Church take on this issue. The more the merrier, I guess. I think Fulbright realized that there would be a greater political impact if the lead were taken by members of the Committee other than himself. I don't think he put Cooper and Church up to it. Senators do their own thing. I think they came to it on their own. Fulbright was delighted to go along. This idea I mentioned earlier that Fulbright was a tyrant chairman, that he controlled everything in the Committee, just was not true. He was a very, very broad-minded person. He had his enemies, of course, but I never saw any feeling of jealousy, for example, of some other member assuming some role that he thought was his own. He was jealous in protecting the prerogatives of the Foreign Relations Committee as an institution, but not of his own prerogatives.

RITCHIE: Did you work at all with Cooper and Church and Hatfield on that?

MARCY: Very, very little. I worked with Peter Lakeland, who was at that time with Senator Javits. But most of the work was done by Pete Lakeland, and Senator Cooper's aide, who was Bill Miller. The work was done very largely at the staff level. I was kept informed by Lakeland and Miller, and it was fine to have that kind of communication.

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RITCHIE: I always thought that the senator who had the best proposal of all was George Aiken, who said we should just declare that we had won the war and then leave.

MARCY: You must remember that at that time many senators were looking for some way to end the Vietnam war. Mansfield had--I probably am using the phraseology of the present time--but Mansfield had a "build-down" theory, stop

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where we are. I can only think in the terms of the contemporary. He wanted to freeze our forces where they were. Other senators were coming up with all kinds of ideas. These were the "dove" senators. These were the ones who did not see any likelihood that we could continue to escalate, and help one side or the other win what they felt was a civil war which had to be handled within the confines of Vietnam.

RITCHIE: Did you find that the Committee was becoming more divided between doves and hawks? Was it creating any tensions within the Committee?

MARCY: No, most of the hawks were on the Armed Services Committee, and most of the doves were with the Foreign Relations Committee.

RITCHIE: You had Griffin and Scott coming on, and you indicated that they were more hard-liners.

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MARCY: They were, and Senator Dodd had taken a harder-line position. I don't recall any particularly rancorous confrontations in the Committee between hawks and doves at the time we're talking about. We're talking about what the late '60s, '68 to '70 at that time.

RITCHIE: Did it increase in '71 and '72?

MARCY: I don't think so.

RITCHIE: Did you have any dealings with Daniel Ellsberg during this period? I know he was moving around Washington trying to get people to listen to him.

MARCY: No. Ellsberg saw Senator Fulbright several times, but I don't recall ever having met Ellsberg. There was a historian in the Pentagon who knew about what later on became the Pentagon Papers. I talked with him several times, and made arrangements for him to see Senator Fulbright. But he was not leaking anything. He was trying to persuade the Committee, or Fulbright in particular, to ask for the historical compilation which was being put together.

My first contact with the Pentagon Papers--which I didn't know what they were at the time--was when Senator [Charles] Mathias brought to me one day what turned out to be the Pentagon Papers. He said, "This is very hot stuff." He had asked Senator Fulbright what to do with them, and Senator Fulbright said bring it to me for safe-

keeping. That's just what I did. I gave the papers safekeeping. I did not read them. Now that I look back I should have had one of our staff members look them over, but we did not.

RITCHIE: You recognized that it was classified?

MARCY: Yes. That must have been one of Ellsberg's copies that he was passing around.

RITCHIE: I think it was Pat Holt who said that after the Pentagon Papers were published, Norvill Jones said, "Oh, I've had that in the safe for two years."

MARCY: Well, that's it. If you were to have asked me where I put the papers for safekeeping I would have to say, I don't remember, but it's logical that I would have given them to Norvill Jones.

RITCHIE: What was the impact of the Pentagon Papers on the Committee? Did it change any minds, or intensify feelings?

MARCY: Oh, I think it did. I think the papers provided documentary proof of what most of the members had been feeling all along. I doubt that anyone read them fully, but there was the press summary of what was in the papers. I did have at that time some advance notice that something was brewing because a *New York Times* reporter, Ned Kenworthy, told me that the *Times* had a hot story

coming out and he was not going to be around for a week because he was working night and day. But what they were, at that time I didn't know until the story broke.

RITCHIE: I thought the most telling comment on the Pentagon Papers was Senator Fulbright's observation that the only time Congress was mentioned in them was how the administration was going to manipulate it.

MARCY: That's not the first time the Congress has been manipulated, and probably not the last. I think there ought to be a general rule, however, that would be applicable to the Congress generally, and that is: don't take any action until you've counted to ten. As I've mentioned, I was with Senator Fulbright last night and he said to me what he had said many times: "I cannot understand why I so quickly accepted the administration's word on the Gulf of Tonkin incident and helped pass that resolution on such short notice. It was a stupid thing to do." Most people don't understand sometimes why they do- things in the heat of passion, but I think it's a good rule, there ought to be a waiting period of some

kind. I think probably the Grenada case is one where it would be wise to wait for a while before any judgment is passed. The same with the KAL airliner tragedy. There is no reason in most cases why something needs to be

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done within twenty-four hours. As a matter of fact, you can show more outrage probably after you wait for a week than if you do it the very next day.

RITCHIE: Is it possible to make people wait for long?

MARCY: No, unfortunately--and that's dangerous.

RITCHIE: The first think is that the press will be outside of every senator's door asking for their reactions.

MARCY: That's right, and senators and congressmen survive by being well-known figures. The first person out with the most quotable line is going to be in the press or on the tube. It's a tremendous temptation. One can't get headlines by saying "I have nothing to say." I guess that's the way it is, and probably will continue to be.

RITCHIE: In viewing the foreign policy and other issues, the Nixon administration seemed to be obsessed with secrecy. Did you find it more so under Nixon, or the same as it had been under Johnson, or was it a culmination of movement in that direction?

MARCY: That is hard to say. I find it difficult to distinguish between the attitudes that I had towards a Republican administration or a Democratic administration. My instincts were to be suspicious of the executive branch, that they did keep secrets, that

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the usual attitude of anyone from the executive branch was: if you knew what we know, you would make the decision the way we have made it, but we can't tell you what we know. That was a characteristic of the Johnson administration as it was of the Nixon administration. I think that it's almost a characteristic of the executive bureaucracy in dealing with the Congress, and the smaller bureaucracy which exists on the Hill.

Coming back to my earlier attitudes, when I left the Department of State, it was the feeling that people who worked on the Hill were not specialists in any substantive area. They were politicians at heart and to be a politician one didn't have to read a book, and one didn't have to go into any subject in depth. I think over a period of time that's been disproven, but the instinct within the executive

branch is still that "those fellows on the Hill are a bunch of politicians and to keep them happy you don't have to tell them everything. We make the better judgments in the executive branch."

RITCHIE: Given the extreme polarization that was developing over Vietnam, do you think there was any way the Nixon administration could have been more open about some of its policies, or were they being excessively secretive?

MARCY: Oh, I think they were probably being excessively secretive, but that's speculation. I'd like to say yes, the Nixon administration was more secretive, but that's not my feeling. They

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were no more secretive than the Johnson administration had been. What it comes down to in most cases is that by and large basic information is acquired through the press. At least the basic information required to make judgments tends to be available by careful reading of the press. So I've become very skeptical that many secrets are kept that involve the national security--maybe for an invasion and that kind of thing in wartime. I'm sure that within the next few days when we hear more about Grenada we are going to hear again about secret papers which have been uncovered, and we're going to hear about information which we have acquired. But the administration will not tell us where the information came from because it would compromise some system of collection. There may be something that is so exotic that it's not published in *Aviation* magazine, or *Science* but I rather doubt it. And whatever that information maybe it is so infinitesimal compared to what is generally available through public communications or through the press, that I doubt if it makes very much difference. I don't think we give any very great secrets away. I think the secret device is used more to keep the Congress from second-guessing something that the executive branch has already made a decision on.

RITCHIE: Okay, going back to specifics, one area that we haven't talked about and I was hoping you'd make some comments on was the Middle East. During the same period that we were focusing on Vietnam, in the late 1960s, there were wars between the Israelis and

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the Egyptians and increasing American involvement in the Middle East. Do you have any sense of the Committee's concerns over what was happening in the Middle East?

MARCY: I didn't follow that area very closely. The general reaction of the Committee was that Israel was our friend, and what the Israelis wanted or needed they got. There were constant quotations about only three million citizens in

Israel and fifty million Arabs, so there was a feeling that over the long range it was more important to keep on a reasonably friendly basis with fifty million people than with three million, but Israel being an essentially Western-oriented state, its problems were more understandable to the American public. Israel was a democracy. I think there was a feeling that there wasn't much understanding of the problems of the Arab states. About the only concern was that it was a source of fuel, energy.

RITCHIE: I know that Senator Fulbright was one of the first to indicate that the problems could have been as much Israeli-created as Arab-created, which generated some criticism in the United States. Did you find that there was a lot of pressure from the Israeli lobby on the Committee, or any sense of that in public opinion?

MARCY: Pressure was very subtle. The Israeli lobby did not operate, at that time at least, in a very open sense. It was

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generally believed that Israel's security was in the American interest. We'd helped set up the state; we had to help the state survive.

I don't remember whether I told you earlier that I did travel with Senator Fulbright to the Middle East at the invitation of Colonel Nasser. Senator Fulbright had a Jewish merchant friend from New Orleans whom I had never met, but apparently he had provided some intellectual and financial support for Fulbright over a number of years. He insisted that if Fulbright was going to Cairo he absolutely had to go to Israel. He made arrangements so that Senator Fulbright would go to Israel also. We flew to Tel Aviv and then drove up to Jerusalem. As I recall, we had to fly through Cyprus because there were no direct flights between Egypt and Israel at that point. When we got to the King David Hotel and Fulbright was on his way to make a speech at the University, he asked if I wanted to come along, and I said, "No, never mind, I know about what you're going to say." Fulbright and Betty, who were along with us, went to make the speech. I remember when they came back to the hotel, Fulbright said to his wife, "Betty, what were all those students doing walking around with umbrellas? It wasn't raining." Betty said something like, "Bill, they were making out that you were just like Chamberlain--an appeaser." Fulbright was completely innocent of the implication.

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RITCHIE: Well, it's an area that we've gotten increasingly drawn into.

MARCY: Most people have forgotten this, but this was in the era when we were talking about mutual security agreements. Fulbright said on several occasions that it's obvious that if anybody's going to try to overrun Israel, the United States

is going to come to their defense. He thought we might as well recognize that fact and make a treaty of mutual assistance, or mutual security with Israel. I don't know why that never caught on. At that time the Israelis were saying "Give us the weapons, we can take care of ourselves." But Fulbright was willing to make a flat-out commitment to the state of Israel. I'm going to have to leave rather soon.

RITCHIE: Rather than start another line of questioning, about Watergate and the War Powers Act, if you're under time pressures it would be better to wait.

MARCY: Yes, I have an appointment, so maybe it would be better if we put that off.

[End of Interview #7]