The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training
Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

AMBASSADOR WILLIAM M. ROUNTREE

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INTERVIEW

Q: Ambassador Rountree it's a great privilege for me to have this opportunity to converse about your incredible Foreign Service career--one of the most distinguished of recent years. If we could begin at the beginning, we're interested in how you got interested in foreign affairs and how you entered the Foreign Service.

ROUNTREE: My first employment with the United States Government was with the Treasury. And in the course of my work in the Treasury, I was put on a task force to set up the system of accounting for lend/lease funds which were later appropriated by the Congress, and organizing methods for the procurement of supplies by the various departments of the Government. When we completed our task and the Lend/Lease Act was passed by Congress, I was asked to remain in the Office of Defense Aid Reports which was a forerunner of the Lend/Lease Administration. I did so and became involved in our program of giving aid to our friends engaged in World War II. At the time of Pearl Harbor, I decided to leave the Lend/Lease Administration and apply for a commission in

the Army. When I discussed this with Lend/Lease Administrator, Edward Stettinius, and his Deputy, Tom McCabe, they asked me to delay my application because they wanted me to undertake a mission to Cairo to join the British in the Middle East Supply Center. At that time the British organization was engaged in the provision of essential supplies to Middle Eastern countries and stimulating new production in the area to contribute to the war effort. Initially I was asked to go over for six months, after which Mr. Stettinius agreed to consider my application for the Army.

I went to Cairo in 1942 as the Assistant to Fred Winant, who was the principal American representative on the Middle East Supply Center, and became engaged in activities throughout the Middle East. Our area of responsibility was essentially that of the Office of Near Eastern Affairs in the Department of State, but included also the Sudan, Ethiopia and Iran. After six months I received telegraphic instructions to remain for another six months. And so it went for the duration of the war.

When I left Cairo after my work with the Middle East Supply Center, I met for the first time Loy Henderson, who at that time was the head of the Office of Near Eastern, South Asian and African Affairs and told him of my intention to leave the Foreign Service. Loy dissuaded me from this course and pointed out that the United States, by virtue of our leadership in the free world, had to assume far greater responsibilities in the Middle East than before. Before the war, United States interests in the Middle East had been limited, but with the reduced influence and capacity of the British and French, a vacuum would be created unless the United States engaged more actively in Middle Eastern Affairs. The Service urgently needed officers with area experience, and my war-time service had uniquely qualified me.

Q: Can I just ask here if before you went to Cairo, had you had any special interest in foreign affairs or the Middle East or were you planning to practice law or stay in the Treasury Department, have a Government career?

ROUNTREE: Before talking with Loy, I considered my options to be either to return to the Treasury and remain a Government official or accept an offer in private industry, which I was also seriously considering. My pre-war interest in foreign relations was that almost of the average informed citizen. I followed international matters closely, but I had never given thought to joining the Foreign Service. This all came about, in my case, because of my experience in the Middle East and my involvement in many matters of international importance during the war.

I think my decision to remain in the Foreign Service, while not taken until I met with Loy Henderson later, might have begun to germinate when, for example, I went with Alexander Kirk who was our Minister in Cairo and accredited also to Saudi Arabia, and lived in King Ibn Saud's tent camp for a period of five or six days during which I negotiated with the King's ministers the first lend/lease agreement with his country. This first agreement with the Saudi Arabs was for a limited amount of supplies, primarily trucks. The agreement was undertaken at a time when Saudi Arabian financial resources

were extremely limited. The budget was met primarily from revenues derived from pilgrims coming to Mecca, supplemented by a grant of about $10 million a year, as I recall, from the British. The negotiations took place while American oil facilities were being prepared in Dhahran and nearby areas, but before oil production was actually begun. And so the appreciation of the Saudi Arabs for our supplies was far greater than would have been the case when oil revenues began to flow in substantial volume.

In those days, Arabian costumes were worn when one entered the interior of the Saudi Kingdom. We did so, and lived in colorful tents near the King who in theory was there to hunt, but in fact was too weak to engage in this kind of sporting activity which he had enjoyed in his earlier life. Ibn Saud had never left the Arabian Peninsula and was quite uneducated, yet he was an extraordinarily intelligent man. To me, the most fascinating aspect of our visit was to sit in the King's tent and listen to conversations between the King, who often spoke in parables, and our Minister, Alexander Kirk, who was an eloquent speaker and one of the most interesting conversationalists I've ever known. It was extremely rewarding for me to witness at first hand the Saudi Arabian scene, the manner in which the King and his ministers operated, and to recognize the vast differences between the sophistication of United States governmental policies and procedures and those of Saudi Arabia. I became intrigued by these differences and considered how fascinating it would be to pursue a career in diplomacy.

One of the interesting aspects of the conversation between King Saud and Alexander Kirk was the King's description of his success in overthrowing his predecessor regime, the Hashemites. This was ultimately achieved by a night raid, scaling walls and destroying the enemy. The King told us, in some detail, of the battles to obtain power, and Kirk commented that he had understood that the King had always ridden a white camel. The King confirmed that was so, whereupon Kirk commented that white camels were magnificent beasts. The King said, "Oh you like white camels, Mr. Minister?" Kirk replied, "Oh yes, I think they are....". He then realized his comment might be interpreted by Saudi logic as suggesting that he would like to have a white camel. He went to great pains to dissuade the King from any such notion. Nevertheless, the following morning the King's aide, a gentlemen by the name of Rushty Bey, called on me in our tents to say that the King had ordered a camel parade after our breakfast. We would assemble at a certain spot when the camels could be driven by so that the Minister could make his selection. They had rounded up all the camels in the neighborhood. It was my assignment to persuade Rushty Bey that there was no way we could convey a camel back to Cairo on our return trip. Finally he understood this, but nevertheless in an exchange of gifts Kirk was given two gazelle, which we did, in fact, take back on the C-47 which had brought us to Bahrain.

During the course of my assignment to Cairo I visited all the countries of the area and learned a great deal about each. I also became aware of the problems which would confront them after the war. And so by the time I was prepared to make a decision at the conclusion of my service in the Middle East, I think I was strongly disposed to the

Foreign Service as a career and I accepted Loy Henderson's offer to become his Special Assistant and Advisor for Economic Affairs.

Q: That was certainly an incredible introduction to the Middle East, that tour in Cairo.

ROUNTREE: Yes.

Q: Now what year did you enter the Foreign Service?

ROUNTREE: I entered the Foreign Service in 1942. It was appropriate that I go to Cairo as a Foreign Service Auxiliary Officer since I would be doing more than Lend/Lease work. When I returned to Washington and undertook my first assignment in the Office of Near East/South Asian and African Affairs, I reverted to Civil Service status, which I retained for a relatively short time before becoming a career Foreign Service Officer.

Q: Okay, one of your first duties after entering the Department of State after Cairo, as I understand it, was to serve as the Executive Officer on the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry on Palestine which President Truman and the Prime Minister of England had appointed to recommend steps for what to do, not only in Palestine but about the Jews in Europe as well. Could you tell us a little about the work and the make-up of that committee and the forces driving it?

ROUNTREE: The committee consisted of six distinguished Americans and six distinguished British. They were supported by a staff of some twenty people, both British and American. The committee first held hearings in Washington, DC, in the old State Department building, now the Executive Offices of the President, over a period of about two weeks. We then went to London where hearings were held for about the same period, going from there to Europe where the committee as a whole or individual members visited many of the Jewish refugee camps in various countries. From Europe we went to Cairo where more hearings were held, and then by train to Palestine where we remained for a month. Through these hearings and visits the committee was able to obtain the diverse views of many organizations and individuals interested in the future of Palestine, and to study in-depth the background of this most complex problem. After Palestine we proceeded to Lausanne, Switzerland where the members spent a month reviewing the testimony and absorbing the information that had been collected from various sources. Slowly, recommendations to the British and United States governments evolved. The report, when completed, was delivered by the chairman of the British component to the Prime Minister, and by the chairman of the American delegation to President Truman.

Q: Who was the American chairman?

ROUNTREE: Joseph C. Hutchison, a distinguished Federal judge from Texas. The committee endeavored to draw up a balanced set of proposals. It was the committee's concept that the proposals arrived at should entail acceptance of all, since the balance involved give and take on both sides of the issue. Fairness and objectivity would be

destroyed if only selected recommendations were adopted. Unfortunately, the first proposal, that is that 100,000 additional Jewish immigrants be permitted to go into Palestine, was immediately accepted by President Truman and an announcement to that effect was promptly made. At no time did the balanced recommendations receive the kind of consideration, on either side, that could have rendered successful the mission of the Anglo-American Committee. And so, the practical results from the work of the committee was extremely limited.

Q: The British accounts of the committee and the aftermath--as you say the Zionists seizing what they liked, the Arabs taking what they liked and no one agreeing to everything--the net result it seems, from the British point of view, was that the United States because of the political pressures and all involved, really walked away from the Palestine problem and left it up to the British to do what they might. Do you think that's a fair account?

ROUNTREE: I think, in effect, that is what happened on the American side. I'm not sure that the opposite occurred on the British side. But in any event, the recommendations of the committee were not accepted when they were presented, and with the course of events in Palestine, probably could never have been accepted at a later date.

Q: So, even at that time, your opinion was pretty much that events had moved too far against partition against either a Jewish or Arab state in Palestine, that events had gone too far at this late date?

ROUNTREE: As a practical matter, they had.

Q: Do you feel that the committee had all the expertise on the Middle East, the members of the committee that would have been desirable?

ROUNTREE: I think, on balance, there was adequate expertise. In some cases there was not adequate objectivity among specialists, but I do not believe that was the reason for the failure of the committee.

Q: One related issue to this since the committee was to look at the fate of the displaced persons, the Jewish people in Europe in addition to Palestine, a charge that has frequently been made is that while the United States pressed very hard for the 100,000 and continued Jewish immigration, but in fact we did very little in the United States, in the Congress particularly, to open the immigration gates of the United States to bring as many of these displaced persons to the United States at the time--a kind of reverse pressure for Jewish immigration to Palestine. Do you think...?

ROUNTREE: I don't recall the statistics of the number of European Jews who came to the United States but an appreciable number did, and there is no question that the desire of most of the Jews in Europe was to go to Israel. The main objective of the Jewish immigrants was to find means of getting to Israel and, of course in addition to the

100,000 recommended by the Anglo-American Committee, there were many other thousands who by other means and other doors achieved that objective and were there at the time of the war and the establishment of the Jewish state.

Q: Alfred Lillienthal, in his book "What Price Israel", alleges that at this very time prior to the creation of Israel, the American Jewish organizations made no effort, no lobbying effort, no testimony before Congress on the immigration laws to open the door and I've never been able to substantiate that one way or the other. What about, at this same time, the other issue or allegation, report, that every United States Ambassador in the Middle East recommended against the American support for the creation of a state by Israel?

ROUNTREE: I think it's true that opinion in the Foreign Service favored extreme caution in decisions to be made with respect to Palestine, so the interests of the Arab Palestinians would be taken into account in the final decision. You recall at the time the independence of Israel was proclaimed, the new state was recognized almost immediately by the United States, the Soviet Union and many other countries. I think it would be fair to say that the overwhelming majority of Foreign Service personnel, both in Washington and in the field, felt that consideration should have been given to the future of Palestinian Arabs before the decision to recognize Israel was announced. Not that there was opposition to recognition itself, but there was concern that it be done in a manner that would have the least detrimental effect upon the United States influence in the Middle East and take into account the legitimate interests of the Arabs of Palestine. It is evident that our failure to do so has cost us dearly in the Middle East.

Q: Getting away from the Arab-Israel conflict for the moment, it seems from your biography that the period from 1947 through 1955, really a period of eight years, was pretty much devoted to Greece, Turkey and Iran in various capacities, including service in the field in all three of those countries. Could you say something about the main issues beginning with Greece and your participation in the economic delegation that led to the Truman Doctrine?

ROUNTREE: During the course of my assignment in the Office of Near East/South Asian and African Affairs, I was appointed a member of the special mission sent by President Truman to survey Greek requirements in connection with the Truman Doctrine. The British informed us that, because of their own financial problems, they would have to withdraw support from Greece. At that time Greece was engaged in a bloody civil war. Their economy was a disaster. It appeared quite possible, if not probable, that in the absence of American aid Greece would fall victim to the tremendous efforts of international communism to take over the country. When the British informed us of their decision to withdraw, there was very limited time, we calculated, to organize alternatives to save Greece.

The President appointed Paul A. Porter, a distinguished lawyer in Washington, to head a delegation to make a survey, to talk with the Greeks, and see in the first place whether Greece could be saved and, if so, how. We spent some weeks in Greece studying the

situation and formulating our conclusions and recommendations. Meanwhile, Washington had proceeded with legislation providing a new departure in American policy. The Truman Doctrine, as you know, was essentially a decision that it would be the policy of the United States to extend aid to countries needing and requesting such aid that were being threatened by international communism. The reaction in Congress to this was overwhelmingly favorable, and initially a sum of $400 million was appropriated for aid to Greece and Turkey. Turkey was included since it also was being subjected to heavy communist pressures, in this case, pressures in the form of Soviet demands with respect to the Kars-Ardahan province of Turkey and control of the Turkish Straits. $300 million was earmarked for Greece, for both military and economic aid, and $100 million for Turkey.

Following the appropriation of the money, the President appointed former Nebraska governor Dwight Griswold to head the Mission to administer the program in Greece. A staff of highly competent people was organized to assist him in this work. A small American military advisory group was organized under the direction of General Van Fleet to handle, under Governor Griswold's direction, the military aspects of the program. At that juncture the military aspects were extremely important because the Greeks needed aid and advice to coping with a very difficult guerrilla war, which at times it appeared they were losing. After Governor Griswold and his mission had been in operation in Greece for a few months, it became evident that having two Ambassadors in Greece was leading to some confusion. There was doubt as to who articulated American policy and who had responsibility for various facets of our operations there. Ideally, the same man should have occupied both positions or clearly have authority and responsibility for all aspects of American operations in the country. To resolve the problem, the President appointed Henry Grady, both as Ambassador to Greece and as Chief of the American Mission for Aid to Greece. When Ambassador Grady went to Greece, because of my deep involvement in the Greek aid program from Washington, I was asked to go as his Special Assistant for Politico-Economic Matters. A Senior Foreign Service Officer by the name of Burton Y. Berry was appointed in a similar capacity as Special Assistant for Politico-Military Matters. We were the two officials assisting Ambassador Grady in his overall capacity, neither in the Mission nor in the Embassy.

After the program had been in operation for a year, many of the obstacles first encountered were either resolved or on the way to resolution. A particularly favorable development occurred when Tito decided to defect from the Soviet Bloc. An immediate effect was that the border between Yugoslavia and Greece was closed to the Greek guerrillas and thus their maneuverability was greatly restricted. They theretofore had been free to strike, retreat across the border, regroup and come again at some unpredictable place. So militarily the situation came under control and economically Greece was at least held together.

Q: Is there any author or authors of the Truman Doctrine or was it pretty much a bureaucratic consensus thing?

ROUNTREE: Of course, full credit must be given to President Truman, whose foresight and courage made this one of his most important decision. I think if there were another author of the Truman Doctrine, it might perhaps be Loy W. Henderson who headed the staff work leading to the proclamation. However, I think that that would not be correct because of the deep involvement of many key people in the State Department, including Secretary Marshall, Under Secretary Acheson, Chip Bohlen and others.

Q: Did Francis Russell, did he play any role in that?

ROUNTREE: I don't recall specifically, but many fine officers participated in this establishment of a new departure in US foreign policy. After the legislation passed, the most active officer in the Department in its implementation was George C. McGhee, who was designated Coordinator of Aid to Greece and Turkey.

Q: Was it recognized at the time that the far reaching interpretation of the Truman Doctrine that it later took on that it really kind of applied across the world, rather than just to Greece and Turkey?

ROUNTREE: The real significance of the Truman Doctrine was exactly that. We embarked on an entirely new policy. The decision here was the forerunner of the Marshall Plan in Europe. The success of the Greek-Turkish Aid Program, I think, stimulated many other efforts in the Truman Administration, such as Point Four Program and the expansion of bilateral and multilateral treaty arrangements with many countries in various areas. All of these things taken together were the most significant aspect of our ability to cope with Soviet expansionism.

During the course of my assignment to Greece, I was asked to return to Washington to become Deputy Director of the Office of Greek, Turkish and Iranian Affairs. The first director of that newly-created office under a reorganization plan was Jack Jernegan. The newly-designated Bureau of Near Eastern/South Asian and African Affairs under George C. McGhee, included, for the first time, an office to deal with Greece, Turkey and Iran, all peripheral to the Soviet Union. The reason for that is obvious. Those were the countries directly confronting the Soviet Union which had been subjected to the greatest pressures. They had a number of points in common as far as the execution of US policy was concerned. Jack remained as Director of the Office of Greek, Turkish and Iranian Affairs a few months after I returned, and in May 1950 I took over as director.

Q: Were Greek-Turkish relations a big problem in those days?

ROUNTREE: In those days relations between Greece and Turkey did not constitute a major problem but, of course, historically relations between the two countries have never been close. During my period as director, I took on a special project to bring about the entry of Greece and Turkey into NATO, an objective which had the full support and participation of my boss, George McGhee. It seemed to me that the strength in NATO was diminished by the absence of those two countries, and that logic required their

inclusion. This view was very strongly held by George McGhee as Assistant Secretary and was strongly supported by the Turkish and Greek Ambassadors in Washington. After considerable effort on our collective parts, Greece and Turkey were admitted and, for some time after their inclusion in NATO, relations between the two countries were quite good. It was only later when events in Cyprus created concern on the part of the Turks that Enosis--or union of Greece and Cyprus-- might take place that severe strains again appeared.

Q: Well, you had the opportunity of seeing both sides of that since, after serving back in Washington and having served in Greece, your next post was as DCM in Ankara for a little over a year anyway. Were there any big issues by that time during your assignment?

ROUNTREE: In Turkey my superior officer was again George McGhee, who left the position of Assistant Secretary of State in 1952 to accept an appointment as Ambassador to Turkey. I joined him as the Deputy Chief of Mission soon after his arrival at the post. I think the most significant aspect of his term of office there, and mine, was facilitating the effective entry of Turkey into NATO, and the negotiation of new agreements dealing with military facilities. The importance of our aid to Turkey, and our continued support for the Turks in building up their defense capabilities and improving their economy as a member of NATO and as an ally became increasingly important.

Q: In those early years of the Cold War and given the importance of those countries, what were the relations like within the Mission, say with the military, between the Embassy and the military aspect with the Pentagon, with the Economic Cooperation Administration? In other words, the interagency working. Were the State Department and the Ambassador pretty dominant at that period, or more like it is today with some of the other agencies, particularly the military, being dominant?

ROUNTREE: I mentioned the problem in Greece before the decision was made to put all of our operations in Greece under the direction of a single man, the Ambassador. Once that was done in Greece, interagency relationships were better than good, they were excellent. And although there were inevitably differences of opinion among Washington agencies as to priorities and so forth, I would say in retrospect that difficulties were within very manageable proportions and relationships did not impair the effectiveness of our overall effort. In Turkey, during my tour of duty there, I think we had an almost ideal relationship among the country team, and there were relatively few differences among the Washington agencies. We had a strong and influential Ambassador, as well as able representatives of the military and other government departments. So I'd say that unlike the situation which no doubt has existed in some countries, our interagency problems in Greece and Turkey during this critical period were minimal.

Q: Do you think it's because there was a strong consensus about what our policy was or did it also have to do with a predominant role that the State Department had under General Marshall, under Acheson, under Dulles, or a combination?

ROUNTREE: I think it's all those things. There were very few differences among agencies with respect to the main thrust of American policies and certainly we were all operating under the direction of the President who was, as indicated by the Truman Doctrine, deeply interested in and instrumental in the execution of policies to achieve the objectives which he had set.

Q: You also had rather prestigious, strong ambassadors in those countries at that time.

ROUNTREE: That was no small factor.

Q: Next you move on to Iran to serve in all three of these countries in the field as Deputy Chief of Mission at an extremely interesting time in Iran. And, of course, I refer to the Mossadegh Revolution and the aftermath of that. Can you tell us something about the revolution, the US role and the oil companies?

ROUNTREE: During my earlier period as Director of the Office of Greek, Turkish and Iranian Affairs, Mossadegh rose to power. The political situation in Iran had been very shaky for several years. You might recall the unsuccessful negotiations between Prime Minister Razmara and the British, with the Iranians endeavoring to amend the terms of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Agreement. Finally, the assassination of Razmara added to the turmoil within Iran. A series of Prime Ministers were appointed by the Shah, including his closest confidant, Hussein Ala, but none succeeded in establishing stability and an atmosphere conductive to successful negotiations with the British. During this tumultuous period Mossadegh, who had always been in opposition and never in power, attracted an increasingly wide audience and supporters. The Shah finally felt compelled to turn the government over to Mossadegh, and I think it was the Shah's general expectation that Mossadegh's inability to come to an agreement with the British or to organize the economy would bring about his early departure. This was not to be the case. Mossadegh's hostile attitude toward the British was manifested in many ways. His unwillingness to meet the British half way became evident. We became increasingly concerned over events in Iran and endeavored in every possible way to be instrumental in bringing about a resolution. President Truman asked Averell Harriman to go to Iran and try to serve as a catalyst to bring about a resumption of negotiations between the British and the Iranians. I went with him and we spent several weeks in Iran, during which he held many talks with Mossadegh. He finally persuaded Mossadegh to receive a British delegation, which was promptly dispatched to Tehran. Various proposals were discussed but all were unacceptable to Mossadegh, who seemed quite adamant in his position that the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company would not return. So the Harriman mission left without any substantial progress. The Iranian economy continued to deteriorate. Continued sporadic efforts to find some means of resolving the problem were unsuccessful and it was in this atmosphere that Mossadegh came to Washington for a series of discussions with the President and other officials in Washington, but they also were without concrete results.

Shortly after Mossadegh's visit to Washington, both George McGhee and I left for Turkey. While I was in Turkey various interesting events occurred in Iran, one of which

was an effort to unseat Mossadegh, in which CIA was involved. This failed and the position of the Shah became untenable. He was forced to leave Iran for Italy. After his departure, however, an almost spontaneous revolution occurred on the streets of Tehran. It began with a public demonstration by a health club--or exercise club--lifting barbells and chains and that sort of thing. These clubs often demonstrated on the streets. But on this occasion they began shouting anti-Mossadegh, pro-Shah slogans and proceeded to march through the streets. Many others joined them, and soon there was a substantial demonstration in favor of the Shah and against Mossadegh. Shouts of "Long live the Shah" spread throughout the city and the crowd went in the direction of the building housing the Mossadegh cabinet. Meanwhile General Zahedi, who had been one of the principal figures in the earlier attempt to overthrow Mossadegh, came out of hiding and he and other military officers gave leadership and direction to the mobs on the street, and they succeeded. I might say, parenthetically, that one of the reasons for the relatively easy success was that Loy Henderson, who was our Ambassador in Tehran, had complained bitterly to Mossadegh about harassment of Americans on the street by communists and other of his followers. He said that if this continued he'd have no alternative but to order the evacuation of Americans from Iran. This Mossadegh did not want and he instructed his people, including the communists, to stay off the streets. After this tremendous demonstration had gained momentum it was too late for the communists and other Mossadegh followers to offer any effective opposition. The result was the success of the pro-Shah, anti-Mossadegh demonstration, or revolution, and the members of the Mossadegh cabinet were seized. Mossadegh himself, after initially escaping the crowds, was seized but treated far more gently than his associates.

At this point a situation was created in which the Shah could return. He did so, and appointed General Zahedi as Prime Minister. This created an entirely new situation in Iran. I was asked to transfer directly from Ankara to Tehran and become Deputy Chief of Mission under Ambassador Henderson. I think this was because of my previous experience as Director of the Office of Greek, Turkish and Iranian Affairs in which position I handled various matters relating to the problems of Iran. Ambassador Henderson's former Deputy had recently left, and I was delighted again to be working with Loy, who had become my close friend as well as mentor.

The main objectives when the Shah returned were to reestablish order, get the economy going again and, very importantly, effect the return of the British Diplomatic Mission, which had been expelled by Mossadegh, and the beginning negotiations which would permit the resumption of Iranian oil production.

Q: Before we get on to that, if I'm understanding you correctly, what you're saying is that the CIA has gotten a lot of undeserved credit for bringing back the Shah and that they really didn't play a significant role.

ROUNTREE: Oh, I don't think it was undeserved. The CIA did remarkably well in creating a situation in which, in the proper circumstances and atmosphere, a change could be effected. Mind you, they had been working with General Zahedi and his people. Quite

clearly the matter did not work out as they had anticipated, or at least hoped, but it did work out in the end, and I wouldn't deprive them of credit for playing a major role if indeed they sought credit. However, it is clear that the responsibility for and the success of the revolution are due to Iranians. Our people could only supplement the efforts of others with the approval of the Shah, and could not replace such efforts.

Q: What about Turkish attitude toward Mossadegh at the time?

ROUNTREE: I don't recall any notable aspect of Turkish attitudes toward Iran during this period. Relations between Turkey and Iran during the period were acceptable and the Turks continued to work with the Shah in the context of the Baghdad Pact, but I don't recall any particular demonstration of favorable or unfavorable attitudes at the time of the counter-revolution which effected the Shah's return.

Q: What about our American thinking at the time? Was the Mossadegh nationalization and his alliance or use of the Tudeh party, was this Iranian revolution seen primarily in the context of the Cold War and a possible Soviet encroachment into Iran or was the Iranian nationalist movement seen as the primary force? How were we looking at the Iranian revolution at that time?

ROUNTREE: From the outset there was no hostility by the United States toward Mossadegh. We were not fundamentally opposed to Mossadegh. We were, however, deeply concerned by his inability to work out an agreement with the British, and get the oil revenues again flowing. We were concerned about the state of the Iranian economy, the extent to which Mossadegh had resorted to the printing press to meet all financial needs. There had been predictions early in his administration that the Iranian economy would collapse within six months. Well, it didn't collapse, and it probably would not have collapsed in a considerable period of time because of the unique character of the Iranian economy and the ability to survive in circumstances which would have been catastrophic for many other countries. There was a reversion to a primitive type of economy. We actually undertook various types of programs to help the Iranian government under Mossadegh. This included a Point Four Program and a willingness to provide Export/Import Bank loans. We were anxious to avoid an economic catastrophe in the Mossadegh regime.

I think most people recognized that the situation in Iran would be highly precarious until Mossadegh or someone could find a means of resuming oil production in conditions acceptable to the international oil market. Even if they could produce the oil, companies and not countries are for the greatest part the customers, and so long as Iranian oil was produced under the onus of expropriation, big companies which would normally provide the markets for the product were unwilling to take it; thus the economy suffered. We made every effort through the Harriman mission, through discussions with Mossadegh when he came to Washington, through continuous efforts of our Embassy under Henry Grady and, more recently under Loy Henderson, to find the means of rendering the sale of Iranian oil acceptable to the international community. But all of these efforts failed, and it

seemed to us that stability in Iran would require a change in government; that Mossadegh simply should not continue indefinitely.

Q: What about the role of the American oil companies? Surely they were very upset by the precedent that Mossadegh's nationalization set in Iran and what it would mean for their concession throughout the Middle East.

ROUNTREE: They were indeed upset. American oil companies were initially unwilling to even consider replacing the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company. This was a matter of principle. It was a matter that concerned them as businessmen. They were also aware of the likely effects which the successful expropriation of oil facilities would have on their own interests elsewhere. After the Shah returned it was clear that there was no possibility of a return to the status quo ante, that is the return of Anglo-Iranian. It became increasingly clear that the best alternative would be an international approach to the operation of the Iranian oil industry under arrangements acceptable to the British. American firms were not waiting to jump in. The first step in the world's most complicated business negotiations was to achieve the agreement of the American firms among themselves to become a part of an international consortium. You can imagine the difficult negotiations involved in even this one of many steps.

Q: Were the British quite willing to accept them?

ROUNTREE: The second aspect was discussions and agreement between the Americans and the British with respect to the circumstances under which Anglo-Iranian Oil Company would relinquish its claims in Iran. Negotiations between the five American oil companies and the British, Dutch and French companies were held to complete the international consortium. In order to preclude the appearance of unfair practices, a percentage of the consortium was made available to smaller American oil companies. My recollection is that this amounted to five percent.

After completing their negotiations, the consortium then sat down to negotiate with the government of Iran. We were very fortunate in many respects, one of which was that Loy Henderson was an excellent negotiator in setting up the arrangements for the consortium meetings with the Iranian negotiators. Secondly, the Administration obtained the services of Herbert Hoover Jr. to help facilitate the negotiations. He came to Iran and remained throughout the negotiations. He was invaluable. Thirdly, the negotiating team designated from the consortium members, was excellent, and was headed by an official of the Standard Oil Co. of New Jersey, Howard Page. Page represented the consortium as a whole--at least he was the principal consortium representative and was surrounded by many officials from other companies. He proved himself to be extraordinarily able. Finally, the Shah and his government desired to find a reasonable and politically acceptable solution which would permit the early resumption of oil revenues. After a period of a good many months this rather incredible agreement was reached, thanks to the outstanding qualities of the negotiators.

Q: Was the US Government role in all of this a promotion, I mean a normal kind of promotion, protection of American interests, in the interest of American oil companies? Or were there serious differences of opinion between the US Government and how it saw its larger interests and the American oil companies, or were they basically together in negotiating with the British and with the Iranians?

ROUNTREE: The US Government role in this matter could best be described as one of facilitating agreement among the various parties concerned. Naturally, our interest in the protection of American firms is always there. Once the momentum was created and the basic decisions made, once it became clear that the US companies were comfortable with their prospective roles in the consortium, among themselves and with the British, Dutch and French firms, then special interests were substantially lessened. To a much greater extent the negotiations were between the consortium and the government of Iran, and whatever arrangements they were able to make would likely be agreeable to the United States Government. Throughout this whole process we had the advantage of having Herb Hoover there to help, to advise, to assist. He was very helpful.

Q: Was there, as in the early days of dealing with OPEC, the early 1970s, was there at this time a waiver of the Sherman Anti-Trust Act for the oil companies to work, collude together?

ROUNTREE: I don't remember the exact legal framework in which this was done, but, yes, this was always borne in mind. I don't remember what instrument was issued or what policy statement was made, but at no time were the oil companies operating contrary to US law or contrary to any established policies in the US Government.

Q: During the remaining period of your tour in Iran through October 1955, what kind of relationship, if any, did the Embassy have with the religious establishment in Iran--relations with the Ulema, if any?

ROUNTREE: Our relations were limited, although we did make an effort to keep in touch with all elements in Iran, particularly the leaders of various groups. I met on several occasions with religious leaders. Separately and always quite privately, other members of the Embassy staff did so on a more regular basis. At that time, the importance of religious leaders in Iran was extremely limited. The Shah was at times rather undiplomatic in his relations with the religious leaders opposing his regime. Iranian authorities left no doubt in the minds of the diplomatic corps that they felt the religious leaders presented no present or potential problems in Iran. In retrospect, the Shah clearly underestimated this aspect and did far too little to understand the hopes and aspirations of religious elements.

Q: Is there anything else about your service in Iran I haven't asked about that would be of interest?

ROUNTREE: It was one of the most interesting assignments that I had in my Foreign Service career. Most of the efforts of the embassy during my period there, either as

Deputy to Ambassador Henderson or, following his departure, as Chargé d'affaires were concentrated on economic matters, the resumption of oil revenues, the implementation of development programs, including our extensive Point Four Program, and, generally, efforts to undo the vast damage that had been done to Iran and the Iranian economy under the Mossadegh regime.

Q: What was your impression of the Shah at that time?

ROUNTREE: The Shah was, during that period, filled with renewed confidence. He felt that he had the backing of his people. He displayed a new determination to carry out his development programs formulated over a period of years with the help of a group of American specialists. The Shah was a courageous man, and his intentions were superb. But as one of our previous Ambassadors to Iran commented: "In Iran good intentions sometimes pave the road to hell". His capacity to organize the government to carry out programs, and to choose the right people for the right jobs, was obviously limited. As a result, much of the progress that could have been made faltered. Later, the Shah concentrated heavily upon military matters and, in the opinion of most, expended far too much of Iran's resources on the military. Apart from that, on the whole, Iran had a leader that in the right circumstances could have brought the country forward from their economic depression. He made a lot of progress, but obviously not enough.
Q: What about corruption? Was corruption a problem? This was before the big oil money had started to pour in.

ROUNTREE: I think there is no doubt that corruption in Iran was one of the major problems that the Shah should have coped with but did not.

Q: Now you returned to Washington for a period of almost four years, serving as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Near East and Africa, then Assistant Secretary and then Africa gets carved away in August 1958, but those were a period of years full of very significant events. Let's start with the 1956 Suez War and the US role, what it knew, when it knew it.

ROUNTREE: As you indicated, I returned to Washington toward the end of 1955 as Deputy to George Allen, who at that time was Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern/South Asian and African Affairs. Later, when I succeeded George Allen in 1956, we were engaged in an assortment of crises throughout the region. One of these, of course, was the Suez War and its aftermath. We had, during my term of office, some 28 crises of various sorts--difficulties between Greece and Turkey over Cyprus; the Iraqi revolution; the landing of American Marines in Lebanon to prevent an overthrow of the government by outside elements; disputes among the Arabian Peninsula sheikhdoms; quarrels between Pakistan and India over Kashmir; territorial differences between Pakistan and Afghanistan; difficulties between Iran and Afghanistan over the Helmand River; and the crisis in Iran itself, a continuing crisis over a period of years. All of this in addition to the longstanding Arab-Israel conflict.

During this period there were virtually no crises in Africa except for the war in Algeria, but there was continuing concern with respect to the emerging states on that continent and how the United States could most effectively use its influence to achieve peaceful transactions from colonial status to independence. When I took over there were a hand-full of independent countries in Africa, but there were literally dozens of territories and colonial areas on the road to independence. This deserved more personal attention and thought to the continent of Africa than anyone engaged in the crises of the Near East and South Asia might provide. Part of the problem was met when I appointed a special Deputy for African Affairs. But I felt the continent deserved and should have the undivided attention of an Assistant Secretary dealing with the problems of Africa at the Bureau level. Therefore I proposed, and Secretary Dulles readily agreed, that we should ask Congress to approve the creation of a separate bureau and the appointment of an additional Assistant Secretary. There was no opposition to this, but both houses of Congress did not complete necessary action for some time. We nevertheless proceeded with the creation of a separate African bureau and until an Assistant Secretary was finally appointed, I continued both as Assistant Secretary for the Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, and Assistant Secretary for African Affairs.

Q: Weren't the African affairs handled, some of them in that period, by the European Bureau?

ROUNTREE: No, African affairs always were handled primarily by the Bureau of Near Eastern and South Asian and African Affairs. My Deputy for African Affairs devoted full time to that Bureau, until the official appointment of an Assistant Secretary. That appointment was delayed, unfortunately, for a period of time because of the difficulty in obtaining confirmation for the first nominee. Time was required for the selection and installation of a successor. Now, turning to the Bureau of Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs...

Q: Before we do that, could you just say something about the relationship then between your Bureau and the European Bureau over the African questions? Was that a problem? It must have been, I'm sure it was with Algeria, for example, but in some of the other African countries was there a bureaucratic conflict of interest between the European Bureau and the African Bureau?

ROUNTREE: Naturally, there were some problems of coordination between various bureaus sharing an interest or responsibility, but there were no unusual or unique problems between my Bureau and other officials of the Department dealing with Europe. I emphasize, however, that in many matters close coordination was necessary and I think with few exceptions this presented no unusual problems.

One of the first Middle Eastern crises with which I was confronted, first as Deputy Assistant Secretary then an Assistant Secretary, was the Suez War. As you know, relations between Nasser's Egypt and the United States had deteriorated. There were sharp differences between us. At one point it appeared that matters might improve as a

result of our willingness to assist in financing construction of the Aswan Dam. Agreement between the United States, the World Bank, the British and Egypt on the Aswan Dam appeared likely. Then a number of events occurred, including Nasser's changed attitude toward the Soviet Union, and his acquisition of vast quantities of Soviet military goods. This entailed the commitment of Egyptian resources for years to come for payment of the military equipment. This not only changed attitudes, it changed the evaluation of the ability of Egypt to meet the cost of the Aswan Dam and at the same time service its debts otherwise acquired.

Attitudes were changed also as a result of various unconstructive statements and threats emanating from Egypt. Members of Congress had serious doubts about the wisdom of the United States engaging in this in the then existing circumstances. Secretary of State Dulles was warned by particular Senators and Congressmen that they would oppose the US proceeding. In any event, the collective judgment in the United States government was that we should not proceed, and information to that effect was communicated to the Egyptian Ambassador in Washington by Secretary Dulles.

Q: You say it was a collective decision? I can recall hearing at the time that the people on the Egyptian desk, for example, heard about it in The New York Times. In other words, the impression was that it was a unilateral sort of decision by Dulles.

ROUNTREE: No, I don't think that is correct. I was present with Dulles when the decision was made. I was also present at meetings with the British and officials of the World Bank, as well as at the meeting at which the decision was communicated to the Egyptians. All of this information was conveyed by me to my staff as it occurred. So no official of the Bureau should have had to rely on The New York Times or any other outside source for knowledge that this had indeed been the decision.

There were people both within the United States Government and outside, including the World Bank, who would have preferred to proceed with the loan, and disagreed with the decision.

Q: In this reevaluation of Nasser that took place within the US Government at your level, at that time did the Lavon Affair play any role or was it taken into account?

ROUNTREE: The reaction in Egypt was sharp, and the subsequent decision by Nasser to seize the Suez Canal created a sharp counter-reaction in the United States, Britain and various other countries using the Suez Canal. All of our economies, and particularly the economies of our NATO allies, relied upon oil coming through the Canal. We consulted with the British and French and others as to what should be done in the circumstances following the seizure of the canal. There were some who felt that no option should be eliminated and, if necessary, the military option should be exercised. We were deeply concerned over the premature reliance on force, and gave most urgent thought to more practical and workable alternatives. Secretary Dulles personally conceived of the idea of a Suez Canal Users Association which would provide a mechanism for countries to whom

the free passage through the Suez Canal was important, getting together and applying pressure for arrangements under which free and safe passage through the Canal could be assured. The Secretary telephoned me from his Push Island retreat to tell me of his idea and ask that we urgently consider the possibilities. This seemed one of the relatively few peaceful recourses available at the time. Mr. Dulles no doubt felt that, in the absence of some peaceful approach, military action on the part of some friends and allies would be inevitable.

And so various conferences with the British, French and other users of the Canal were arranged. Great efforts were made over a period of months to put this mechanism into place. Perhaps it was doomed from the beginning as a result of Nasser and Egypt's refusal to go along. In any event, it didn't work, but it did succeed in at least postponing the day of military action.

The Suez War was the direct result of the closure of the Suez Canal and the failure of what was perceived to be the best non-military alternative. We had not given up hope, and were working very hard on peaceful alternatives to resolve the problem. At one point communications between the British and ourselves, the French and ourselves and the Israelis and ourselves were reduced to a level which caused questions as to what was going on. I received intelligence reports indicating an enormous increase in communications among the British, the French and the Israelis. At the same time there were reports of a substantial buildup in Israeli forces. We came to the conclusion that the three countries were preparing for a military option. I recall my first conversation with Secretary Dulles on this possibility. After listening to my recitation of the evidence, he talked with the President and urgent messages were sent to the Prime Ministers of Great Britain, France and Israel, strongly cautioning against military action. The Israeli military buildup continued throughout the next day, and a second letter was sent to Prime Minister Ben Gurion, as well as to the British and French. Following this second message to Ben Gurion, I received an urgent visit by the Israeli Ambassador Abba Eban, one of the most able and eloquent diplomatic representatives I have known. Ambassador Eban was obviously upset. He said that if we had only called him in to discuss our concern he could have reassured us that there was no significant military buildup in Israel.
There had been a localized buildup to meet a particular situation, but Israel had no intention whatsoever of invading Egypt. During the course of our talk, one of my associates in NEA, Fraser Wilkins, handed me a UP ticker. The ticker read, "FLASH-FLASH-FLASH, MAJOR ISRAELI FORCES HAVE INVADED EGYPT AND HEAVY FIGHTING IS UNDERWAY." I handed this to Ambassador Eban and commented that he no doubt would like to return to his Embassy and find out what was going on in his country. It was perfectly obvious that Eban had no indication of a military buildup or planned invasion; he was flabbergasted.

As you know, the initial invasion was by Israel. According to the plan, the British and French were to enter as the second phase, ostensibly to separate the combatants and secure the Canal. All of this presented the United States with a difficult and, in many respects, heartbreaking situation. I accompanied Secretary Dulles to his meeting with the

President to determine what our reaction to this unhappy event would be. I was very impressed with the attitudes of both of these gentlemen. Their decisions were based entirely on principle. It was later in that day that Dulles made a statement in which he set forth our reaction. He described this with what he said was a "heavy heart", because we would be opposing in the Security Council our closest allies and good friends. Nevertheless, we would have to insist that the military be withdrawn.

In the final analysis, the British, French and Israelis felt compelled to act in accordance with the resolution, and the forces eventually were withdrawn.

One of the incidental effects of these events was to convince Nasser that the United States was not the devil that it had been thought to be. He recognized that we did, in fact, act according to principle. The affair, as sad as it was, served to mellow his attitude toward the United States and create something of a new situation in which more reasonable and realistic negotiations with him and his government could take place. And I would say that in the ensuing period...

Q: In addition to the point you made about improving relations with Nasser, letting him know we acted on principle, what were some of our other rationale that we used with the British and the French and the Israelis against the use of force in the situation?

ROUNTREE: There were many considerations, one of which was we did not think that force would achieve the long-term objectives which we sought. We felt that force would present complications, not only in Egypt but throughout the area, that would render our collective positions far more difficult. We had not exhausted the opportunities or the possibilities of a peaceful solution. Although people were not elated with the results of the Suez Canal Users Association approach, there were still other peaceful approaches that could and should have been pursued.

Q: Do you think Mr. Dulles saw this crisis primarily in US-Soviet terms or did he very much see it in terms of Egyptian nationalism and the Middle East?

ROUNTREE: Mr. Dulles was a very wise man, one of the finest Secretaries of State in this century. Certainly, he and Dean Acheson would qualify for that distinction. I don't believe any single element, such as the effect on US-Soviet relations, was responsible for his decision and his attitude. There were various facets, including the effect on any possible solution to the Arab-Israeli problems, as well as our relations with Egypt itself, that were weighed in this decision.
Q: Another major event that took place during your period as Assistant Secretary was the demise of the Baghdad Pact as a result of the revolution in Iraq in 1958, but could you say something about the Baghdad Pact, the origins of the Baghdad Pact, the rationale for it, why the United States didn't join?

ROUNTREE: The United States was not a party to the creation of the Baghdad Pact, although from the outset the members had hoped that we would join. It was a concept of

other countries, Pakistan, Iran, Iraq and Britain. Many of us were not convinced that the Baghdad Pact could be an effective counter to the UAR and other collective approaches to political objectives in the Middle East. Nevertheless, the members felt that it could be, and placed a lot of credence in the concept. Certainly, we shared the objectives of the Baghdad Pact and made clear our support, but in the final analysis at every meeting of the organization we declined to become a member. Among other things, US membership in the Baghdad Pact would have rendered our effectiveness in dealing with certain other countries in the area, more limited.

Q: Wasn't the Baghdad Pact more directed at containment of the Soviet Union than the other direction--I mean its concept?

ROUNTREE: The concept included both and that was one of the problems of US membership. It was not purely and simply, a collective effort to defend the members against international communism, that is the Soviet Union. This was one of the fuzzy aspects.

Q: What role did you play in the decision in 1958 after the demise, after the coup in Iraq, in the decision to land the Marines in Lebanon?

ROUNTREE: The revolution in Iraq was an extremely bloody affair in which the royal family and all members of the government not only were killed but were mutilated. It occurred, of course, at a time when Jordan and Iraq were actually negotiating some sort of amalgamation of their military force under a union countering the UAR between Egypt and Syria. It seemed clear that Jordan and Lebanon were placed in grave danger, and there was a genuine concern on the part of the government of Lebanon that the blood spilled in Iraq would flow into Lebanon. There was similar concern in Jordan.

Before the Baghdad coup there had been a period of relative quiet in the Middle East, that had encouraged me to take the first vacation that I'd had since I had returned to Washington in 1955. My wife, daughter and I had driven down to Atlanta. We actually drove into the city about 8:00 in the morning. I turned on the car radio and heard about the Baghdad revolution, and when I arrived at my relatives' residence I was told that Washington was trying to get in touch with me. I called Secretary Dulles and he said that a plane was standing by at a naval station in Atlanta to bring me back. And so, having arrived at 8:00 in the morning, I left at 8:30 to return and joined the top level of the State Department and other agencies in considering the implications, not only of the Iraqi revolution but elsewhere.

The decision to move military forces into Lebanon came at the most urgent request of the President and Government of Lebanon. They felt that in the absence of such an action on our part Lebanon would be confronted with major crisis and possible disaster. Again, all aspects of this were considered and it was decided to respond. The details were worked out with very great care and in consultation with other countries. The British, having close treaty relationships with Jordan, decided to respond to the King of Jordan's request

for assistance. The decision having been made, the operation was carried out, I believe, in an almost flawless manner.

Q: How was that decision made? The President made it in a meeting, or over the phone, or with Secretary Dulles?

ROUNTREE: Of course, the President made the decision. Although I don't recall the details, and even whether I was present when he did so, it would have been after seeing Secretary Dulles and other appropriate Cabinet officials. In any event, it was a personal decision on the part of the President based on the recommendations of Secretary Dulles with the concurrence of the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and others. I don't recall any opposition to the decision. At discussions related to the implementation of the decision in the most effective possible way, there were, of course, inputs from many sources.

As we moved the Marines into Lebanon, the Administration went to great pains to make clear that they were there for a very limited purpose and when that purpose had been served they would be withdrawn. There were a lot of skeptics in the Middle East. Many Arabs felt that this was a mere ploy--that US forces would stay as long as it served US interests--but we were meticulous in making the statement and then acting upon the assurance as soon as the mission was completed. It's certainly my evaluation that the decision was an excellent one. It probably saved a disaster in Lebanon, and perhaps also in Jordan. Our withdrawal as promised was a source of surprise and reassurance to skeptics, not only in the Middle East but elsewhere, who felt that we had motives other than those which we had stated. On the whole, it was a very successful operation.

Q: What's your opinion of the role Ambassador McClintock played in that crisis?

ROUNTREE: Ambassador McClintock did an outstanding job in keeping Washington informed on all aspects of developments in Lebanon. He was very effective in his meetings with the Lebanese officials, before, during and after the decision was made. He was particularly helpful to the military forces when they arrived and, indeed, accompanied the commander in the lead car as the Marines moved into their positions in Beirut. So his performance was, in my judgment, extraordinarily good.

Q: Ambassador Rountree, during your period as Assistant Secretary, what kind of relationships or contacts did you have with the so-called lobby that is the Zionists or the Zionists lobby in Washington? How did they affect our Middle East policy, if at all?

ROUNTREE: I think that individual Jews and most Jewish organizations go to great lengths to express their views, both to officials in the Administration and to members of Congress. As the years have passed, the extent of lobbying organizations has grown and become more scientific. At no time since the establishment of the State of Israel has any issue affecting to any important degree the interests of Israel been considered in Washington without an input of the Jewish lobby. For example, before any appropriation

for aid was considered by the Administration and Congress during my term of office, there would be a slate of Jewish leaders visiting the Secretary of State, the Under Secretary of State, the Assistant Secretary of State and other offices concerned with such matters to urge the position of the government of Israel. The effectiveness of this lobby has certainly increased since my years in the State Department, and probably is the most extensive lobby existing in Washington today.

Q: What about the American oil companies? Were they active in direct relation with you or what kind of impact did they have on Middle Eastern policy during those years?

ROUNTREE: American oil companies have had, particularly since World War II, considerable investment in the Middle East and, therefore, a great interest in US policies and operations in the region. They maintain an appropriate level of contact with the State Department, and exchange information of mutual interest. In the case of oil companies, it has never been a one-way street. We are able to benefit from their experiences and their knowledge of particular problems. It has been a useful type of relationship which should exist between any business firm with an interest abroad and diplomatic representatives.

Q: Would it be fair to say that during that period, anyway, that the American Government didn't see any contradiction in the interest of the oil companies and the interest of the United States in the region--that they were very parallel?

ROUNTREE: I can't say positively that there has never been a contradiction or a conflict of interest, but offhand I can't remember any. Nor do I recall during my term of office that either I or others in the State Department were pressed to take action or assume positions that would be inappropriate.

Q: Another question, this relates to one of my few sort of scoops in the Foreign Service. I went to call on the head of the G2 in Aleppo, Syria, the United Arab Republic at the time, on January 1, 1959, Marwan Thebbi, and he told me that as part of a UAR-wide operation the night before throughout Aleppo, Damascus, Cairo that the G2s government of the UAR had arrested all the leading communists. And Aleppo, as fast as we could work the "one-time pad" anyway, was one of the first to report this, which of course the Egyptians wanted it out anyway. But I wonder what kind of impact the crackdown, not just on this night but other times as well, the crackdown on domestic communist parties in the UAR and Egypt particularly, had in Washington, had on the thinking in Washington? And, of course, it's something that happened not just in Egypt but in other countries where the government seemed close to moving toward the Soviets but was very tough on domestic communists.

ROUNTREE: Rarely were we concerned that any of the Arab countries, with one exception, was moving dangerously close to accepting anything like a communist ideology. Obviously, many of the Arab countries dealt with the Soviet Union, traded with them, bought military goods from them, got political support from them, but whenever such a relationship began to raise questions as to the ideology of the Arab country,

something always happened to demonstrate that they were far from communist. Several incidents in which local communists were slapped down tended to reassure us as to the basic commitment of the governments.

The one exception in which we were deeply concerned was following the revolution in Iraq. As you recall, the military leader of the Iraqi revolution became its president. Qasim headed a government that was operating in rather difficult and highly confused circumstances in which there were, as I recall, three elements: One, a pro-UAR element which urged union of Egypt and Syria and a much closer relationship with Nasser. A second element urged a closer relationship with communists and with the Soviet Union. The third was that element of Iraqi nationalists who felt they shouldn't be unduly tied to relations with the Soviet Union, the communists or with the UAR. After this government had been in operation for a while, a lot of people in Washington felt that the communists were getting the upper hand and that our policies toward Iraq should be based on the assumption that we either were then or would soon be dealing with a highly unfriendly communist government. Some of us felt that this was not the case, that the balance which I mentioned did, in fact, exist. And in order to test this, I decided, with the Secretary's approval, to go to Iraq. My mission was announced--I think it was December 1958--and I prepared to go first to Lebanon and have talks with the President and Lebanese officials, then to Jordan for talks with King Hussein, then to Egypt for talks with Qasim. This trip was announced by the State Department and immediately thereafter the communists in Iraq, as well as the Soviet Union and China, began a campaign obviously designed to discourage the trip. The campaign became very heated during the time that I was in Egypt talking with Nasser. There were signs across all the streets "ROUNTREE GO HOME". Every newspaper had the upper part of the front page devoted to some slogan such as "ROUNTREE, DON'T DIRTY OUR SOIL" and so forth. Crowds had already begun to appear on the streets and it was clear that this was going to be a hostile reception, and clear also from the character of the buildup that it would be a communist-led demonstration. I recall that when I talked with King Hussein, he brought in his Chief of Staff who had gone through the Baghdad revolution, had been seized himself and put aboard a truck to be hauled across the town with other foreigners of various nationalities. People on the trucks were grabbed one-by-one, dragged off the truck and cut into pieces. Greeks, Britons and several other European nationalities were included. Finally they hauled the Jordanian General off and started cutting him, but he fell to the ground, crawled under the truck, through the legs of people on the other side before they discovered his escape. He hid behind a wall where he became unconscious until the crowds left. He survived and the following morning was taken by a stranger to a hospital. These were the recollections of someone who had gone through a horrible ordeal. His descriptions of the attitude of the mob, of the hatred on the faces of children and so forth as they hacked away on these bodies, were incredible.

By the time I arrived in Egypt for talks with Nasser, the newspapers, including Egyptian newspapers, had pictures of these mobs and signs. Nasser advised me that it would be unwise to go. I sent a message to Washington reporting my conversation with him. Washington consulted with our ambassador in Iraq who talked with Qasim upon whom

he placed the responsibility for my safety unless Qasim asked me not to come. Qasim did not ask that the visit be canceled, and so I went.

When I arrived at the airport my plane was met by two truckloads of Iraqi soldiers. One truck preceded the car in which I rode with the American Chargé d'affaires and my Special Assistant who accompanied me on the journey, and the other truck followed closely. Without any previous announcement, instead of going out the front entrance where thousands of people has assembled, the convoy went through a hole that had been cut in the fence. Nevertheless, enough of the crowd got over to pelt us pretty thoroughly with rocks, tomatoes and any other objects they might pick up. In driving to the city, we paused on the way for me to sign the book at the Regency Council. This, unfortunately, gave the people at the airport an opportunity to get downtown, and so the crowds to be passed in the city grew to massive proportion. Thousands of people had us circled before reaching the embassy. They had assembled a small herd of cows and as the lead truck passed at a traffic circle, they forced the cows in front of my car. Fortunately, my driver just shot right through them and knocked them out of the way, otherwise my car would have been isolated there; the crowd had cut off the follow truck. We were not stopped, and in passing the crowds I could see the expressions on the faces of these people, including children, which bore out the accuracy of the descriptions which the Jordanian General had given me. I'd never seen human faces bearing such hatred. Now what they hated I'm not quite sure, but having been there I know there are few things as unpleasant as a hostile Baghdad mob. Actually note of that fact has been taken in Arab literature for centuries.

We reached the Embassy safely, and my evening was spent at dinner arranged by my able host, Chargé David Fretzlar, and attended by most of the Iraqi cabinet. I had the opportunity of having brief but informative talks with each of them. Throughout the dinner, and for the remainder of the night, truckloads of demonstrators passed the Embassy shouting their slogans. A small Iraqi army unit stationed in the Embassy garden prevented them from stopping.

The next morning I had to be transported by armored vehicle to the Ministry of Defense for my meeting with Qasim. We got out of the vehicle in the courtyard, where dozens of soldiers were stationed at random positions, assuring that all visitors were not more than ten feet from the muzzle of a machine gun. Proceeding up the staircase and through halls, we were never without this coverage. Qasim was obviously a man of questionable mental competence. He had the appearance of a highly unstable person. I was amused that he sat in a very high chair and, like Hitler and Mussolini, had provided his guest with a chair with sawn-off legs. I sat in this and was considerably below his level. But at least we had a conversation, even though a soldier with a machine gun stood in the middle of the floor between the four conferees.

The main purpose of my mission was to persuade Qasim that contrary to communist propaganda, the United States and Iran or Pakistan were not plotting a counter-revolution. I don't know the extent to which this could be demonstrated but it was my feeling that as

a result of our concerted efforts, including this mission and other means, he became reassured that we were not planning a counter-revolution as the communists had charged. He felt comfortable in turning away from support of the communist elements, and in favor of the nationalists and the pro-UAR elements. That is one case where I felt that communists might be on the verge of taking over in one of the Arab countries. My visit reassured me that this would not be the case.

Q: Did you make any visits to Saudi Arabia as Assistant Secretary?

ROUNTREE: Not as Assistant Secretary.

Q: In North Africa we had in February 1958 the French bombing of Sakiet Sidi Youssef in Tunisia because the French accused the Tunisians of allowing the Algerians to use it as a refuge in the Algerian war. Could you say something about our relations with France and the Algerian revolution, or NEA's relations, I guess, or approach towards the Algerian revolution and one of our main European allies?

ROUNTREE: Most matters affecting the Algerian revolution were dealt with to a greater extent by EUR than by NEA for the reason that Algeria, theoretically, was a part of France. This is one of those cases I mentioned earlier where very close coordination between the European Bureau and the African Bureau was essential.

Q: I would assume that EUR and the French Desk was toeing fairly close to the French position, no? After all, the Algerian revolution was one of the great events going on throughout the Arab world and support for it was enormous.

ROUNTREE: Yes, there was an enormous interest in the Middle East in other Arab and Moslem countries. The ultimate victory of the Algerians was a source of great elation on the part of the Arab world.

Q: I gather, too, from many of the things you did, like attending the United Nations General Assembly debate on the Middle East, that President Eisenhower took a pretty strong interest in the Middle East. Did you have much dealings with President Eisenhower?

ROUNTREE: In times of crisis, and when important decisions relating particularly to my area were to be made, I would often accompany the Secretary to meet with the President. I had developed a very great respect for Eisenhower and for his fundamental attitude in setting American policies in the Middle East. Later, when I was Ambassador in Pakistan, he came out for a visit and it was one of the high points of my term as Ambassador in Pakistan, and also one of the truly high points in US-Pakistani relations. It was an enormously successful and useful visit.

Q: Do you feel he had a good understanding of the Middle East?

ROUNTREE: Yes, I think he did. Of course, he relied heavily on Secretary Dulles. President Eisenhower was an organization man and to me that was one of his strengths, not weaknesses. He didn't have people around him outside the organizational structure whispering in his ear, telling him to do this, that, or the other thing. He had confidence in Dulles, and rightly so. He could rely on the organization of the Foreign Service and feel confident that he didn't have to know every detail about every problem.

Q: What about Secretary Dulles, did he have a good understanding, in your opinion, of the Middle East?

ROUNTREE: I think a remarkably good understanding.

Q: You know he was accused sometimes of seeing the world only in US-Soviet bipolar terms.

ROUNTREE: I don't think that was a weakness of Dulles. It's one of the aspects that was taken into account in most decisions that he made, but certainly not to the exclusion of other considerations. Dulles was criticized a great deal during his term of office and much of the criticism was, in my judgment, unjustified. You recall that he was criticized for all of his travels. In comparison with all Secretaries who preceded him, he was a traveling Secretary of State. He traveled no more than was essential in the circumstances existing at the time, circumstances quite different from those which existed from all his predecessors. The world had changed, communications had changed, diplomacy had changed. It was no longer possible effectively to exercise the responsibilities of Secretary of State while sitting in Washington. Many international conferences were required, personal contact with heads of states, and so forth. That was one area of criticism. Another one was he was a one-man Secretary of State, that everything came out of his hat and he seldom consulted others. I doubt that there is a Secretary of State in history who was more meticulous in consulting his subordinates than Dulles. I know of no decision that he ever made with respect to my area of responsibility in which I was not informed and invited to participate. This went far beyond just the big questions. It included, for example, advance consultation on the appointment of ambassadors. Though this was obviously a courtesy, and he had no obligation whatsoever to do so, he would never make a speech dealing with the part of the world for which I had responsibility without our input and comment.

Q: Another area in which I think he was criticized for was his role, or his lack of a role, in the McCarthy period.

ROUNTREE: Yes, and in that I cannot provide an adequate defense. Not only Dulles, but I think the President and the Administration generally, initially and for a good many months were very weak in resisting that kind of totally inappropriate activity on the part of Senator McCarthy or any senator. I think that if I were to evaluate the performance of Dulles as Secretary of State that is perhaps the only significant area in which I would be less than complimentary. It's my guess that if Dulles were to evaluate his own

performance as Secretary of State, that would be the area in which he would be self-critical.

Dulles was criticized for being a hard man, an unfeeling man. He had the appearance of a dour person, but I have never worked with anyone who was more thoughtful and considerate. I used to work very hard in pressing situations, sometimes for days without adequate rest. On several occasions, Secretary Dulles called Suzanne at home and said, "Suzanne this is Foster Dulles speaking. I just want to tell you that Bill has been working too hard and I want you to keep him home this weekend", or whatever.

Q: That is amazing.

ROUNTREE: If I did something that particularly pleased Dulles, he wouldn't get on the telephone and call me and say "good job". He'd get up out of his desk, get on the elevator, come down to my office, walk in and thank me. He really was a great man.

Q: On the McCarthy, Senator McCarran all that business, did you have any personal, I don't mean you personally but you know close friends, did you have any.....

ROUNTREE: No one close to me professionally. I never met the man. I was never involved in any of the nefarious activities going on in his bailiwick. I happen to know such people as John Service and John Carter Vincent and Ambassador Grady's son-in-law.

Q: Do you think it had a real lasting impact on the Foreign Service?

ROUNTREE: Yes, I do. It had a lasting impact on the individual concerned, obviously, and I think for a period of time it discouraged the kind of frank reporting that is essential if a Foreign Service post is to live up to its responsibilities.

Q: What about your relationship with other agencies in Washington now that they are all getting more and more, of course you still had Foster Dulles as Secretary of State who was an extremely strong Secretary and you had Christian Herter, too, after he died. Were the other agencies becoming more influential in policy matters yet?

ROUNTREE: During the Dulles Administration, Dulles was clearly the dominant personality in foreign affairs, and he seemed to work with relative ease with all other agencies of the Government. One factor, of course, in the Dulles Administration was that his brother was Director of CIA, therefore coordination with CIA presented no problem. Relations among agencies in Washington during that period were extremely good. The effectiveness of this relationship very often depends on the strength and influence of the Secretary of State. It's no coincidence that coordination among agencies was better in the Dulles Administration and in the Dean Acheson Administration than in most others.

Some Secretaries of State since Dulles have been among the finest people I've known, awfully good people, but not necessarily strong people. The result has often been that the kind of leadership in foreign affairs which ideally should be exercised by the State Department was diminished. Presidents have different methods of operating. President Eisenhower, as I indicated, was an organization man. He depended upon his organization. If things went wrong he wanted to change his organization or elements of the organization--not devise new organizations to take their place. Other Presidents, beginning with Kennedy, felt that important decisions could not be made down the line in the traditional organizational structure, but had to be made in his office. Many were made in his office with relatively little influence by professionals. Other Presidents also had their own methods. A number operated foreign affairs from the White House or the National Security Council. To the extent that this takes place, coordination among the agencies is rendered more difficult and the influence of any single agency, necessarily is limited.

Q: It seems that Eisenhower and Dulles were almost the last of the institutional type Presidents, Secretary of State. They weren't termed personal.

March 10, 1990

Q: Thank you Ambassador Rountree for seeing me again to continue your interview. First, I have two questions about the period we covered earlier. One relates to a new book "The U.S.-Turkish-NATO Middle East Connection" by George McGhee published just this year, in which he provides evidently an account of how he led the campaign to get Turkey into NATO with a lot of bureaucratic things, such as holdings a Chiefs of Mission meeting in Istanbul. A reviewer, Dan Newbury, suggests that in his view the main thing that got Turkey into NATO was the performance of the Turkish Brigade in the Korean War which Ambassador McGhee does not dispute but he does not highlight it either. If you could say something about your own views on the importance of Turkey in the Korea War and the battle to get Turkey into NATO in spite of the great cultural gap and all between Western Europe and Turkey.

ROUNTREE: I have no doubt that the outstanding performance of the Turkish Brigade was a favorable factor in considering the entry of Turkey, as well as Greece, into NATO. But I believe that their admission to NATO would have been achieved in any event in order to complete the membership of countries most logically to be included. Certainly the performance of the Turkish Brigade was a favorable factor and made George McGhee's work, as well as mine under his direction, much easier.

Q: How did you deal with the cultural differences, the religious differences with the West European states? Wasn't that a big issue at the time, because it still is today as Turkey tries to get into the European Community?

ROUNTREE: It might have been a factor in the minds of some of the members of NATO, but I don't think such differences were of real importance. The overriding importance of military and security aspects carried the day in the final determination.

Q: Another additional question about the 1956 Suez War. The Soviet Union was engaged in that period in a lot of "missile rattling", as it was called, and tried to take a lot of credit for the withdrawal and got a lot of credit in the Arab countries. How important was the Soviet Union in getting the forces to withdraw, and did we have any contact with the Soviet Union during that period?

ROUNTREE: Of course, we had contact and followed with great interest the various statements and actions of the Soviet Union. I do not believe that the credit which you mentioned in the Arab states was all that extensive. Some Arabs gave the Soviets credit for making a substantial contribution. I never thought that Nasser, for example, shared that belief. Nasser had a rather realistic appraisal of the extent to which the Soviet Union might influence events in the Middle East. The Soviets sought and, from some quarters, received credit for making a substantial contribution, but it was in fact a very limited contribution.

Q: In our communications with the Soviets, did we coordinate or was there any real honest exchange of views with the Soviets about the aggression?

ROUNTREE: I don't recall the details of communication, but there was, of course, contact with them.

Q: Well in June 1959, you end your major service in Washington and begin your Ambassadorial career which was a very long and distinguished one. Just for the record, how did you first get appointed an ambassador? What was the process? You were already an Assistant Secretary.

ROUNTREE: After I had been in the Office of Assistant Secretary for several years, I discussed with Secretary Dulles my desire, at his convenience, to go on to other things. He very kindly said that he had hoped I would remain with him for the remainder of his term in office; but he understood my desire to move to the field. He discussed the possibility of an ambassadorial appointment, mentioning specifically Pakistan. Later he said that he discussed the matter with the President and they would be pleased if I would accept that appointment. I was delighted, and accepted.

Q: You went to Pakistan during a relatively stable period. What were the main objectives of your mission to Pakistan?

ROUNTREE: You're quite right. My service in Pakistan happened to be during what many people would consider to be the best period in Pakistani history. Ayub, who had been Commander-in-Chief of the Army, had taken over in a bloodless coup and had organized his government not long before I arrived. He brought to Pakistan a period of

stability and a sense of national direction which had been largely lacking before he took over. Our relations with Pakistan during that period were very good. We had one of our largest economic/military assistance programs in operation in Pakistan. They were listening carefully to the advice of our economic advisors and were making good progress in a number of fields. Generally things were moving in a favorable direction. There was, of course, criticism in the United States and elsewhere of the revolution which had brought into power a military regime in Pakistan, but at that time no other form of government could have provided the stability and progress which were evident under Ayub. I had tremendous regard for his ability as a leader.

Q: Did we influence him in his early pledge to return to democracy, or was all that from his own initiative?

ROUNTREE: We had some influence in that direction. It was our hope that Pakistan would, as soon as possible, return to democratic processes. Ayub no doubt felt pressures from his own people to do that. He instituted what he called basic democracies which, step-by-step, brought Pakistan more into democratic processes, but far short of real democratic choices which were the ultimate goal.

Q: The US was playing an influential role in Pakistan at that time, how was that done primarily? Was it through you in Karachi, or was it done primarily in Washington, or were there other channels that worked to exert US influence?

ROUNTREE: There were multiple channels. Our general policies in Pakistan were articulated locally by myself as ambassador. During the period of my assignment to Pakistan, several important events occurred. One was the visit of President Eisenhower, which was enormously successful. It brought about a closer understanding between Pakistani and American leadership than had ever existed before. Eisenhower and Ayub got along extremely well. They talked with great frankness and candor and established a new relationship which was much to our advantage. Later, during the early days of the Kennedy Administration, Lyndon Johnson, who was then Vice President, came out on a visit. Again, relations between President Ayub and Vice President Johnson were excellent from the outset. The two got along extremely well, with the result that it was easier for Washington and Karachi to communicate. Pakistan felt for the first time that the Kennedy Administration was not unduly prejudicial toward India in matters affecting the interests of the two neighboring countries. President Ayub, at the invitation of President Kennedy, visited Washington for very frank and helpful talks.

Q: What was your impression of Vice President Johnson on this? I'm sure you also had reason to see him on other occasions?

ROUNTREE: My impression was very good. I thought he was extraordinarily able in foreign affairs. I was delighted with his visit with Ayub Khan and the contributions he made as Vice President to a better understanding between the United States and Pakistan. You may recall that during the Vice President's visit to Pakistan in greeting people on the

street, he met a camel driver, a fellow by the name of Bashir. And as he shook hands with Bashir he said, in effect, "If you're ever in Texas, look me up". Reporters picked this up and suggested that the Vice President might want to invite Bashir to come to the United States, which he did. I communicated that invitation to Bashir who, as you might imagine, accepted with great pleasure. He came to the United States and was in the company of the Vice President for a number of days in New York, Texas, Washington and elsewhere. It turned out to be a very successful visit, partly because Bashir, although totally uneducated, made some rather remarkable statements which proved to be invaluable from a public relations standpoint. For example, when I extended the invitation to him in Karachi in the presence of members of the press and made comments to the effect that I was happy to make the presentation, I expected no profound response from Bashir. He surprised me and his audience by saying that he accepted with great appreciation the tickets which I had presented to him and he hoped that I would express his appreciation to his friend Johnson Sahib. He looked forward to going to the United States to visit his friend Johnson Sahib. Perhaps he would be introduced to Kennedy Sahib and that would give him great pleasure, as well. But most of all he looked forward to meeting the American people because he regarded the American people as being leaders of the free world. I was ready to commend my Public Affairs Officer for eliciting such a statement, but he assured me that these were Bashir's own words and that he had nothing to do with the comment. This proved to be true over and over again during Bashir's visit to the United States. Wherever he went with the Vice President, he made extraordinary comments and served as an excellent representative of Pakistan. His quotes were reported all over the world.

Q: I remember that. Did the Embassy have any trouble tracking him down after this thing snowballed into a state visit?

ROUNTREE: No, no trouble at all. Ayub Khan was a little concerned about Bashir's coming when I talked with him about it before extending the invitation. He expressed his preference that the invitation not be extended because he planned himself to come to the United States soon at the invitation of President Kennedy. He thought Bashir's visit might be treated something like a circus. However, Lyndon Johnson had authorized me to assure Ayub that the visit would be treated in a very dignified fashion. On the basis of this assurance, Ayub agreed that Bashir might come. As it turned out, it was very good in terms of public relations, particularly from the point of view of Pakistan, and it contributed to a nice background for Ayub's own visit: From the camel driver to the President; from the common man to the leader.

Q: How about the U2 incident in May 1960 and the impact that it had in Pakistan, wrecking the Paris summit? I think it had been secret up until then that these U2 aircraft had been even flying out of Pakistan.

ROUNTREE: These flights had taken place for some time under extremely special and secret arrangements with Ayub Khan. In each case before such a flight took place, I had to get his specific approval. And the Gary Powers flight did, in fact, take place from

Pakistan. I was asked in mid-April to get permission for this flight and I flew from Karachi to Rawalpindi to talk with the President about it. I communicated his concurrence to Washington. The flight was delayed for several days because of weather and other problems, and actually took place toward the end of April.

Q: I remember Khrushchev kept it quiet for some time that the Soviets had captured Powers.

ROUNTREE: Before the flight actually took place, Ayub was slated to go for a Commonwealth meeting in London. At the same time, I returned to Washington on consultation. I left Washington, I believe it was the last day of April. When I arrived at the airport in London, I was told that the CIA Station Chief wanted urgently to see me. It was early in the morning, as I recall about 7 o'clock, and I went straight to the Embassy to see him. He told me that the U2 plane was down, there had been nothing said about it by the Russians, and they had no word of the fate of the pilot, Gary Powers. I was fully briefed on the situation as it was known, and then went to Ayub's hotel where I filled him in over breakfast. He took the news very calmly, but expressed the strong hope that we would adhere to the cover story that had been agreed in advance. He asked me to inform President Eisenhower of that, which I did by an immediate telegram to Washington. Both Ayub and I returned to Pakistan, and a good many days went by before there was any announcement by the Soviets. Of course, when it did come it came in a spectacular fashion. Ayub did not seem unduly concerned about this, but Pakistan was subjected to a tremendous amount of Soviet propaganda and threats. You might recall, in particular, the threat of bombing Peshawar, from where the U2 took off. I would say that the decision on the part of President Eisenhower eventually to admit exactly what had happened and to make it a matter of public record, however necessary this might have been, surprised Ayub and rendered it difficult for him to deal with the Soviets.

Q: Eisenhower didn't do that until they produced Gary Powers did he? First we denied it, which was the cover story.

ROUNTREE: That's right, and then he felt compelled to make it all public. This made Ayub's problem with the Soviets rather difficult. A number of things happened after that which tended to soften Pakistan's relations with the Soviet Union. Ayub acceded to a suggestion by one of his young cabinet officers, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Minister of Fuel and Power, that he accept a Soviet request to send an oil mission to Pakistan. This had been offered by the Soviets some time before. And so they permitted the Soviet mission to come as one means of relieving pressures between Pakistan and the Soviets. Not long after that, the same minister was instrumental in bringing about a change in Pakistan's China policy. Ayub recognized Red China and expelled the Nationalist Chinese Ambassador and Embassy. So there began at the time of the U2 incident a gradual change in Pakistani policies, which altered the nature of Pakistan's relations with the United States, although the basic friendship and cooperation with the United States remained.

I left Pakistan in 1962 and went as Ambassador to the Sudan. After I departed, Ayub's position became less firm. He made more and more concessions toward democratic processes under a system which he called "basic democracy". When he eventually lost power, the young minister I mentioned, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, had a meteoric rise in influence and became a candidate for election to President, and eventually won that post.

Q: Had you gotten to know Bhutto when you were there?

ROUNTREE: I knew Bhutto quite well. When I was in Pakistan Bhutto was a very suave, sophisticated man with a beautiful wife, a very wealthy man of considerable property--many hundreds of thousands of acres of land. He enjoyed western-type entertainment, parties and so forth. Shortly after we arrived, he invited my wife and me to his estate up near Moenjodaro, a place called Larkana. We spent a weekend there with a number of Pakistani leaders and I came to know him quite well, even at the outset of our tour. We continued to see a lot of him socially, as well as officially. When he decided to enter politics he gave up his western dress and lifestyle and became a more traditional Pakistani leader. When we were in Pakistan his daughter was a young child, perhaps eight or nine years old. As you know, now she is the head of state in Pakistan.

Q: Did the move of the capital to Rawalpindi and Islamabad take place during your tenure?

ROUNTREE: It did indeed. That's an interesting story in itself. Shortly after we arrived in Karachi, the new, beautiful chancery building was completed, and my wife and I gave a party to celebrate its opening. We had, perhaps, 2,000 guests, with bands and other entertainment. I made a speech and described the new chancery as indicative of the close relations which existed between the United States and Pakistan, as symbolic of this special association. I then introduced President Ayub who, during the course of his remarks, announced that the capital was being moved from Karachi to Rawalpindi, pending the construction of a new capital city at Islamabad. All this to take effect immediately. This came as a great surprise to Pakistanis and Americans alike. We thus learned that one of the most beautiful embassy chanceries would soon become a consulate general. From that time, Ayub spent most of his time in Rawalpindi. When I had consultations or discussions with him, I would ordinarily have to fly to Rawalpindi. He did from time-to-time come to Karachi where we would always meet, but that was the exception, not the rule.

Q: Why did he do that? After all, Karachi was by far the largest city and Rawalpindi way up in the boondocks?

ROUNTREE: He wanted to move away from the sea, and wanted, in particular, to get it into an area which was more home to him. He never liked Karachi, and few Pathans did. His great ambition was to build a new capital city as a monument to himself. So he decided to take the bull by the horns and announce the move, and chose the occasion of our Embassy dedication to do so. We had the good fortune of having one house in

Rawalpindi which had been used by our AID personnel as a guest quarters for their rather frequent visits to that part of the country. This was an advantage not shared by any other diplomatic mission. There were inadequate facilities in Rawalpindi for diplomatic missions to rent or otherwise acquire new residences. The President did make it possible for diplomats to rent facilities at a town called Murree, 39 miles from Rawalpindi in the foothills of the Himalayas, up winding mountain roads from Rawalpindi. We rented one building for a Political Officer who I assigned there full-time to be in close proximity to Rawalpindi, and rented a house for myself to be used during the period in which Ayub Khan was in residence in Murree, which generally was in June and July. I saw Ayub frequently during this period, but otherwise my meetings with him would normally require flights from Karachi to Rawalpindi.

Q: During this period too, the Pakistan-Afghan differences became quite serious. There was a severance of diplomatic relations in September 1961, a cessation of transit of goods to Afghanistan through Pakistan, which was their main route and, for some reason I can't figure out, our Ambassador to Canada, Livingston Merchant, came out on a "good offices" mission to try to help resolve the Afghan-Pakistan differences. How did that come about, and how did he do?

ROUNTREE: This was a very difficult period and one that caused us a great deal of concern. There was, in fact, open warfare at times between Pakistan and Afghanistan. The implications of this, in terms of stability in the entire region, were disturbing. We made an all out effort to assist in resolving the problem, and urged both sides to settle this matter peacefully. We were finally instrumental in bringing an end to hostilities and in reopening the border. Livingston Merchant, who had been our Ambassador in Canada, and at one time was Under Secretary of State, was asked to come out to visit both sides and extend good offices in providing suggestions which might facilitate a settlement. Livy was a good friend of mine whose diplomatic talents I highly respected, and we welcomed his visit. Although he was not immediately successful, he certainly contributed to the final good result.

Q: Then in November 1962 Averell Harriman comes out, shows up again in your presence with Duncan Sandys. That was on the Pakistani-Indian differences, I guess, particularly over Kashmir wasn't it?

ROUNTREE: I had left by then. Averell Harriman came out while I was there, shortly after the Kennedy Administration came into office. His concern at that time was primarily Indochina, not matters related directly to Kashmir or other Pakistan matters. His being in the area did give the new Administration an additional opportunity to have talks with Nehru in India, and with Ayub Khan in Pakistan.

Q: Let's move on to the Sudan in about July 1962. The United States was, at that time and had been for a number of years, putting a lot of money into the aid program there, pro-western, largest country in Africa and all, what was the strategy behind the aid program? The overall strategy for developing a backward country like the Sudan? Was there one?

ROUNTREE: The main strategy was simply to build upon those aspects of the economy giving the best prospects of success, which meant really concentrating largely on agriculture and agricultural industries, and things that support them.

Q: And infrastructure, dams, roads.

ROUNTREE: Exactly. Sudan was a country with virtually no roads. Vehicular transport was across the desert. The vast majority of all goods movement was by water. We did endeavor to begin some kind of road system, and in fact built a road from Wad Medani to Khartoum, though not without extraordinary difficulty. It was built, and it established a pattern. Since then there has been some additional roads, but it remains largely a country with a grossly inadequate infrastructure in transport, except river transport. This has always been a factor in the isolation of the southern regions of the country, populated mainly by blacks.

Q: During this period too, in the Sudan, the North-South conflict heated up again in a major way. Did the United States play a role in trying to bring a solution to this conflict and, if not, why not?

ROUNTREE: The United States endeavored to play a role, with limited success, nor has it been very successful even today. There has always been very deep-rooted hatred and fear between the blacks of the southern part of the Sudan and the Arabs of the north. The Arabs have always dominated. And following the independence of the Sudan from the British and the Egyptians, the country was ruled by the Arab, Moslem portion of the population.

Q: What form did the US efforts to resolve this conflict take? Given our great interest in building up the economy, it would be very difficult in an area of civil war.

ROUNTREE: There were limited means by which we could exercise influence. In the first place, there was no official representation whatsoever in the southern part of the country. The only Americans in the south were a few missionaries, and shortly after I arrived in the country the Sudanese government expelled all missionaries. This meant the closure of all schools, churches, hospitals, clinics, medical facilities, etc., because only foreign missionaries provided those facilities for the people of the south.

Q: Were there any differences of opinion between you and Washington over what the United States should do, or could do in the Sudan?

ROUNTREE: I don't recall any substantial differences of opinion, although we did have a continuous, active exchange of views. We both felt that apart from talking with representatives of the government, urging them along specific lines, there was very little that we could do in the circumstances, which at that time were extraordinary. You may recall that this problem was enormously complicated while I was there, and incidentally

while you were there, by the fact that the initial government of the Sudan had been replaced in a military coup. From the outset of my assignment, Sudan was run by the army, under the leadership of General Abboud. It was a relatively benign military dictatorship but, nevertheless, one that was resented by people who had been engaged in political activity, and particularly by students. The government mishandled several student protests in the course of which students were injured and a few killed. Demonstrations began, first strictly among the students, later with professors, and members of the court, clergy, and leaders from various political elements. Severe measures were taken by the army against these peaceful demonstrations, resulting in a number of people being killed. Incidentally, these events took place in front of the American Embassy which is in the middle of Khartoum, across the street from the Presidency and next to the Central Square. The demonstrations and the measures taken by the government could be seen from the Embassy premises. So we witnessed a revolution, from beginning to end, over a period of several days. We saw student demonstrations met by very strong use of force. We saw the students being joined by faculty and by members of the judiciary, the clergy, businessmen, and then witnesses additional military action by the government. Finally we saw an all-out assault against the demonstrators in which dozens of young people were killed or injured. All of this we saw from the windows of the American Embassy. The government was unable to continue this kind of repression for the simple reason that soldiers and police refused to fire. The position of the government collapsed and the students and other demonstrators won. Initially, a National Front was organized to assume power. This national front was dominated by communists, however, and eventually the traditional political parties in the Sudan forced the communists out and established a new government based more on the traditional political structure. This was a fascinating process for me, as I was in contact with the political leadership throughout and was able to provide continuing input into these delicate relations. The transition was very difficult, but in the process of reorganizing the government, efforts were made to bring southerners into positions of responsibility and into the cabinet. This was a highly commendable step. It could have made a substantial contribution to the settlement of one of the biggest problems in Africa, that of relations between the blacks of southern Sudan and the Moslems of the north. Unfortunately, it did not succeed. There were race riots in Khartoum, resulting from baseless rumors that a leading black Sudanese had been killed by the government. Excited blacks in Khartoum created physical disturbances with a very bloody aftermath in which hundreds of blacks were killed. The basic problems have continued, and still present one of the most formidable dilemmas in Africa.

Q: During your tour in the Sudan, too, President Kennedy was assassinated. And in the Sudan, as well as in many other Third World countries, there was a tremendous outpouring of grief and sympathy over that assassination. How do you explain that?

ROUNTREE: It came as a surprise to me that so many Sudanese all over the country felt a sense of personal loss in the death of President Kennedy. It became evident, not only in the Sudan but throughout the world, that the impact of John Kennedy had been much greater than Americans had imagined. In the Sudan I was attending a basketball game, an

American team playing a Sudanese team, sitting next to President Abboud. One of my embassy officers leaned over my shoulder and told me that my secretary was on the phone saying that the President had been assassinated. I said that couldn't be true, the President was there. He said, "No, she means the President of the United States". I left immediately for the Embassy and turned on the radio to find that the Voice of American already had taken over facilities of BBC, and was broadcasting from the hospital in Dallas. Even as I listened to those early reports before President Kennedy's death was actually confirmed, Sudanese--this was late at night--came to the Chancery door to express condolences. Many of them were weeping. Within hours, every taxi in Khartoum had a black banner on its radio aerial. It was evident that people were not merely giving lip service, but felt his death very deeply and emotionally.

Later, members of the Economic Mission and others Americans who were in remote parts of Sudan told me that wherever they were, they were visited by Sudanese from all walks of life, many of them literally weeping when expressing their admiration of President Kennedy. We had generally known that Kennedy and his philosophies were appreciated worldwide, but I had no idea that the admiration was so extensive.

Q: What were your own personal impressions of President Kennedy?

ROUNTREE: I admired him. I saw very little of him personally. I was in Pakistan when he took office. Happily, from my point of view, I was among the first of Ambassadors appointed by the Eisenhower Administration to be asked to remain in office. I returned to Washington on consultation and had the opportunity of talking with him at length about Pakistan and my mission. Later, when Ayub Khan made a state visit to the United States as a guest of President Kennedy, I was present to brief Kennedy and to attend various sessions between the two leaders. Incidentally, it was on this occasion that the highly publicized and enormously successful state dinner given at Mount Vernon took place. This was the first and only time that Mount Vernon was used for such a purpose. Of course I met with President Kennedy before I left for Khartoum after my appointment to the Sudan, but I never saw him again. This was unlike my relations with the other Presidents under whom I served as Ambassador. I had more frequent opportunities to see them and to know them. Though from what I saw and heard, I was very favorably impressed with President Kennedy.

Q: What was your view about not so much the missionaries in the Sudan who were expelled, but generally your personal and the Foreign Service view of missionaries generally in Africa and Third World countries?

ROUNTREE: My admiration of missionaries serving in remote and dangerous parts of the world has always been very great. When the government of Sudan decided to expel all foreign missionaries, including a good number of Americans, my wife and I made a great point of receiving these people in Khartoum and entertaining them and assisting them in any way that we could. I learned more about the real sacrifices of missionaries in Africa than I had ever known before. There was one woman, for example, who had gone to a

remote part of Sudan as a young woman and had stayed there for 50 years. Her nearest non-Sudanese neighbor was 50 miles away and her function for all those years had been to run a leper camp. She was the only missionary there. When she was picked up and put on a truck and brought to Khartoum for expulsion, the several hundred lepers were totally without care. I've often wondered what happened to them. Then there was a couple. The wife was a surgeon, the husband assisted her and performed various other functions. The day they were picked up and put on a truck and brought into Khartoum, they had three recently operated on patients, with no one to care for them. The children of these people were truly impressive young human beings. The sacrifices that their parents had made and the extremely limited contacts which they had had with the outside world had given them an aspect of life, of humanity, that I found extraordinarily touching. From the point of view of the contributions that these people made and their personal sacrifices, I simply can't say enough. On the other hand, I believe that very often missionaries operating in such circumstances have been able to achieve so little that their service might be questionable.

Q: Before moving to South Africa and how that came about, I want to ask, too, how the appointment to the Sudan came about from Pakistan? After all, Sudan was an important African country, but after having been Assistant Secretary and then Ambassador to an important country like Pakistan, it was not exactly a promotion.

ROUNTREE: Not a promotion. I didn't look upon it at the time as a promotion. When I was completing my tour in Pakistan I had, in fact, expected to go to Australia. I was told by officials in Washington that it was the intention of the President to send me to Australia. That was changed and how the Sudan came to be substituted, I've never really known. In any event, it was a challenge and I was happy to accept the appointment. I found it one of my more interesting experiences.

Q: Did a political appointee go to Australia?

ROUNTREE: Yes.

Q: That was under the Kennedy Administration. Now the appointment to South Africa is under Lyndon Johnson. How did that one come about?

ROUNTREE: I don't exactly know how the decision was made, but I did know President Johnson had in mind appointing me to some suitable post. I welcomed the opportunity of going to South Africa.

Q: What was your main mission, objective and US goals in South Africa at that time, in 1965?

ROUNTREE: The situation in South Africa and US relations with that country at that time were wholly different than at present. South Africa was one of the few independent countries in Africa. We had had a long history of close relations. They were with us in

both World Wars and Korea. It was country with which we had done business on highly favorable terms. For example, at that time our favorable balance of trade with South Africa was in the neighborhood of $700-$800 million a year--that is, in our favor. It was a country upon which we relied for many, not only important but absolutely vital, minerals, things which we could not do without in our defense industry and our business.

Q: What was our policy on apartheid?

ROUNTREE: Apartheid had always been repugnant to the United States and our policies were to work toward its end. We expressed our objection in many forms. However, it did not have the enormous opposition of the American public that it later received. I wouldn't say that it was not a factor in domestic attitudes and politics, but the public attention it received was small compared with that which attached to apartheid in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Nevertheless, it has always been our policy to oppose apartheid and to use whatever influence we could to bring about a change in South Africa's race relations. After the 1960s, the willingness of the United States to take progressively stronger measures grew. We joined, for example, with other countries in imposing restrictions against the provision of police equipment, arms, ammunition, anything of that sort, and took initiatives at the United Nations and the International Court.

Q: During your period there, did you have contact with prominent black leaders? Mandela was already in jail wasn't he?

ROUNTREE: Mandela was already in jail.

Q: You knew about Mandela and he was famous?

ROUNTREE: Oh yes, he was famous. Our attitude toward apartheid was manifested in many ways, including deliberate efforts on the part of my embassy to meet and exchange views with blacks and members of other racial groups.

Q: Would you have mixed racial parties?

ROUNTREE: Yes, of course. This was a real bone of contention in our relations with the South African government. The Fourth of July party, for example, would include a large number of blacks, coloreds, Indians, as well as white South Africans.

Q: And Afrikaner officials came?

ROUNTREE: Some Afrikaner officials came, some did not. As time went on, more and more attended, and eventually there was no problem in inviting them and having them attend. Incidentally, particularly at smaller parties where you got various races together, they seemed to enjoy exchanging views and discussing matters among themselves. It has been perfectly evident to me since I've had anything to do with South Africa, that the most constructive influence against apartheid, against repressive race relations, has been

exercised by American firms doing business in South Africa. I regret that so many people in the United States, including members of Congress, have insisted that Americans disinvest in South Africa and that American firms operating in South Africa leave. Until recently, most of the really constructive things that were done, such as doing away with job reservations and achieving equal pay for equal work, were brought about more because of the influence of American businesses than any other factor.

Q: The argument was that it was too gradual, too slow.

ROUNTREE: That was the argument and perhaps there is some merit in that, but during the period in which I was serving in South Africa and had responsibility for relations between South Africa and the United States, I felt that this was one of the constructive things that was going on. This was one of the few means by which we were making any impact, and I regret that this was dropped, rather than being supplemented by other measures.

Q: Did you have contact, I assume you did, with Robert Kennedy during his visit to South Africa in June 1966, and I suppose he took the other side, things had to change quicker?

ROUNTREE: Yes, he and his wife came out while I was there. They stayed with us in Pretoria, and we entertained them not only in that city but elsewhere. We arranged meetings for the Senator with white South Africans, as well as blacks and others, but the South African government refused to meet with him.

Q: Why?

ROUNTREE: Because they objected to the purposes of his visit.

Q: He was invited by a students' organization, a liberal one, and black.

ROUNTREE: Black and white. He made a series of speeches, and met with people across the political spectrum, including some Afrikaners, but not members of the government. He said from the outset that he was not coming to provide solutions to the problem, he was coming to learn. He made clear his abhorrence of apartheid, of this kind of repressive race relations, and gained a lot of friends and admirers.

Q: He's quoted as saying during his visit he met Chief Luthuli. Robert Kennedy, I believe, called him "one of the most impressive men I've met anywhere in the world". Did you know Luthuli?

ROUNTREE: Yes. A very impressive man indeed. Another impressive man is Chief Buthelezi, who succeeded Luthuli as head of the Zulu tribe.

Q: Did you know Prime Minister Verwoerd before he was assassinated?

ROUNTREE: Yes. Verwoerd was the Prime Minister when I arrived and I saw quite a bit of him in my early days in South Africa. South Africa has several capitals. The administrative capital is Pretoria, the legislative capital is Cape Town, and the judicial capital in Bloemfontein. We had recently moved from Pretoria to Cape Town for the parliamentary session. I attended parliamentary sessions as a visitor only infrequently but an Embassy Officer was often assigned to sit in the gallery to observe the proceedings. On this particular occasion a young Political Officer was there. Before the session began--Verwoerd was on the floor, with other ministers and members still coming in. The American Officer noticed a uniformed messenger walk in the door to the assembly room. For some reason the messenger attracted the officer's attention. He was then recognized as a man of Greek origin who had been in the embassy several times to find out how to sue the United States Government. The officer's eyes followed the messenger as he walked across the floor, drew a knife and stabbed Verwoerd. The officer rushed back to the embassy and reported this to me, and we sent a flash message to Washington, reporting the name of the man and the fact that he had been expelled by the United States on at least one and, perhaps two occasions. We knew that while he was in the United States he had been in mental institutions. We asked urgently for background data.

Q: He had been in the United States?

ROUNTREE: Yes, illegally. We had expelled him. And he wanted to sue the United States because we had deported him to South Africa instead of to Greece.

Q: I know he was a schizophrenic.

ROUNTREE: As so, within minutes intelligence, background from Washington started pouring in, giving full details. I don't know how they had such immediate access to all this information. This, of course, I took immediately to the Foreign Minister. It's an interesting little sidelight to the fact that, yes, I did know Verwoerd who was in office during my early days in South Africa but died soon after.

Q: Who was that embassy officer, just out of curiosity? Do you remember?

ROUNTREE: He was a young lawyer who had passed the bar exams and then had applied for the Foreign Service. This was his first assignment, and he was detailed to the Political Section. He was awfully good in ferreting out information and making contacts across the political spectrum. This was the only assignment he had, as he resigned soon thereafter. Verwoerd was replaced as Prime Minister by John Vorster, who remained in that office for the remainder of my stay in South Africa.

Q: Vorster had a reputation, I believe, as a ruthless Minister of Justice before he became Prime Minister.

ROUNTREE: He had the reputation of being a very strict man and disciplinarian. He was an extremely strong proponent of apartheid.

Q: He was also a golfer. Did you play golf with him?

ROUNTREE: Yes, he was a golfer. No I didn't. I played very little golf in South Africa.

Q: I understand they have some beautiful courses.

ROUNTREE: Yes, they do. Suzanne played regularly. I played twice, I think, the whole time I was there. Incidentally, we never even met Gary Player until our retirement in Florida.

Q: In February 1967, the US aircraft carrier FDR was visiting Cape Town. The US Government refused shore leave because of segregated hospitality and apparently the South African government reacted very angrily. Could you say something about your role in all that, the implications of that ship visit?

ROUNTREE: Yes, it was an interesting event and in most respects a very sad event for me. I was back in Washington on consultation and I was asked to meet with the Joint Chiefs of Staff, which I did. The purpose of the meeting was for them to impress on me the importance of ship visits to South Africa. At that particular stage in history, it would have been enormously beneficial to have access to South African ports.

The Secretary of the Navy at that time was Paul Nitze. While I was in Washington we worked out an arrangement which seemed satisfactory to all concerned, including to officials of Defense, Navy and State. Even before I returned to South Africa I was in communication by telegram with my staff setting forth the circumstances in which the visit could take place. I put in motion conversations with South African officials to work out the details. I returned to South Africa and all aspects of this proposed visit were completed in close telegraphic consultation with Washington, which knew exactly what we were going to do, when, where, and for what reason. This was all approved. The FDR was to arrive on a certain day. Twenty four hours before arrival time a large group of congressmen visited the Secretary of the Navy and, as I recall, other officials to protest the visit of the FDR. They exacted from the Administration, despite the fact that all the details had been worked out and previously agreed, conditions that rendered it impossible to go forward with the visit. I asked for and received a visit by helicopter from the Executive Officer of the FDR. We spent the night going over various alternatives and exchanging telegrams with Washington. But finally the word was, indeed, that there would be no leave except for organized, integrated activities. Now the arrangements included many organized, integrated activities which went far beyond the strict apartheid laws of South Africa, but there was such a tremendous variety of activities to render it impossible to say that each and every one was organized and integrated. For example, several hundred volunteers with automobiles were to pick up members of the crew to take them on visits, excursions, home dinners and so forth. Several hotels had canceled their business in order to give dinners and luncheons for members of the crew. There were all

kinds of activities, but there was no way that the leave could be granted under the conditions imposed by Washington. Therefore, the result was that all leave was canceled.

Q: They insisted that everything be integrated?

ROUNTREE: Everything be integrated. Nothing except organized, integrated activities. And there was no way in a matter of a few hours of changing all the tremendous plans that had been made and previously agreed by Washington. Every aspect of it had been agreed. So the next morning the ship came in and the Minister of Defense and the Minister of the Navy, according to the program, called on the Captain. It was then we announced that there would be no leave. The next three days the ship sat at the dock, the crew had put big signs over the side "CAPE TOWN WE LOVE YOU". 25,000-30,000 South Africans of all races went aboard to visit it. It was truly an integrated activity there.

Q: Had the original plans had explicitly any segregated activities?

ROUNTREE: No, not explicitly. But it was the sort of thing in which I think everybody lost. The South Africans of all races and political persuasion were really unhappy. The enormous trouble to which hundreds of volunteers had gone was a dead loss. It had all been worked out on such an open, frank basis--and then to have it all collapse was sad, but the saddest aspect to me was that the arrangement under which American vessels could again visit South African ports, collapsed.

Q: Did you ever find out exactly what happened in Washington?

ROUNTREE: Oh, yes. The decision was made at a high level.

Q: It must have been the President.

ROUNTREE: The people who had issued the final orders, that is nothing but organized, integrated activities, did not realize the implication of that--that it really meant no leave. Now it's also interesting, too, that after this visit, within a matter of days, there was an American naval vessel passing southwest Africa. One of the crew, in this case a black sailor, had acute appendicitis and peritonitis, I got an emergency call and arranged for this ship to come into Cape Town to deliver the patient. He was put in a hospital and given top flight medical care. And then, within a few days, another vessel coming in from the other side around Durban, had a medical emergency. One of the engineers had metal thrown in his eye while drilling. I had to arrange for this vessel to come in to Durban and deliver this fellow for medical treatment. All this within a matter of days after the FDR incident, before the deep resentment had subsided. So what I'm really saying is that those of us most distressed over the results of the FDR fiasco--and it was a fiasco on our part--fully sympathized with the objectives of the decision. Sometimes in efforts to achieve objectives gross mistakes are made. This, in my judgment, was one of them.

Q: It must have gone all the way to President Johnson didn't it?

ROUNTREE: It probably did.

Q: Did no further ship visits take place then during your period?

ROUNTREE: The ship visits that I mentioned, the emergency ship visits.

Q: No, I mean regular.

ROUNTREE: No, and they've never been resumed. Now it may very well be, and probably is true, that the importance of having that facility available was much greater at that time because of our naval activity in the Pacific and Indian Ocean than it is now or ever will be again. But at that time it was worth going to an awful lot of trouble to achieve.

Q: The Navy didn't, for one thing, have access to the Suez Canal that we've had since the late 1970s.

ROUNTREE: Yes.

Q: Were there any blacks on your staff, any black officials in South Africa during that time?

ROUNTREE: Not during my time or before. The main reason for that was the difficulty in living arrangements for non-whites and the existence of South African laws which made such assignments highly impractical. But after my tour of duty, we were able to assign non-whites in an atmosphere rendering their service there more feasible. Incidentally, the assignment of diplomatic representatives from black African nations was a strong factor while I was in South African in causing the Government to alter its position with respect to non-white emissaries. The last time I was in South Africa we had a top-flight black Consul General in Cape Town and, more recently, we've had a black Ambassador to South Africa.

Q: During 1969 there was, I believe, a very important US-South African agreement on floor price for gold. Did you play a role in that? It was considered at the time a big victory for the United States and the International Monetary Fund. I think it was just before Nixon went off the gold in 1970.

ROUNTREE: I don't remember the details of that.

Q: The UN General Assembly decision on Southwest Africa, was that a bone of contention with South Africans?

ROUNTREE: Very much so. It was one of the matters under constant discussion and review during my tour of duty there. Generally, we urged the South Africans to adhere to

General Assembly and International Court decisions, but unfortunately the court decisions were not all that favorable from the viewpoints which we espoused.

Q: We really didn't have a lot of means to influence the South African government, did we? We needed them in those years as much or more than they needed us?

ROUNTREE: We exercised some influence during that entire period, and considerable influence at times. The South Africans of all races were far more concerned with American attitudes than any other. As I said, one of the most constructive aspects of American influence has been American firms doing business in South Africa.

Q: Was South Africa, to your knowledge, engaged in a nuclear arms program in those years?

ROUNTREE: Not nuclear arms, but nuclear power.

Another aspect of our relations with South Africa, far more important then than now, was our space program, which simply could not have operated as it did without South African tracking stations. Their cooperation and the technical excellence of their participation were very real factors when I was there.

Q: Did they take any actions to try to hurt us when we got into conflict over Southwest Africa or others things, or threaten to close the tracking stations?

ROUNTREE: No. They were always meticulous in this and there was never any threat, while I was there, of if you do this we will do that. Of course, quite naturally, they pointed out the mutual benefits of one policy as opposed to another, but never made threats. Nor am I aware of threats made by the South African government following the imposition of the drastic sanctions in more recent years which rendered it illegal to import almost anything from South Africa or to export almost anything to South Africa. We closed down South African use of civil air facilities, banned imports of the Krugerrand, and so forth. It has never, to my knowledge, been the position of the South African government that if you do these things to us, we will not permit you to import our chrome, platinum, manganese, or other strategic materials without which you can't run your industries. Alternative sources are only the Soviet Union and communist countries. That has surprised me, and pleased me.

Q: Was there a change in the domestic interest in South Africa that was reflected in the Congress and the Nixon Administration when they came in as a result of what was happening in the United States, for one thing, during the 1960s, but during that five years you were in South Africa, by the end of your tour, was there a much higher sensitivity to events in South Africa?

ROUNTREE: Oh, I think so. American domestic interests in South Africa increased every year during the 1960s and 1970s. You see my first responsibility for relations with

South Africa began in 1955 when I was Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for the Near East, South Asia and Africa, and then from 1956 when I was Assistant Secretary of State for that region. In these early years, public interest of the United States in South Africa and the racial policies of South Africa was relatively small. But since then, and particularly after the 1960s, when so much was happening in this country with respect to our own racial problems, the concern of the American public and consequently, the American Congress has increased dramatically and constantly. The answer to your question really is, when I went to South Africa in 1965 it was still during the process of racial awakening in the United States and demonstrations were leading to fundamental changes here. Naturally, during the course of my five years in South Africa interest in racial matters outside the United States increased.

Q: What about the Afrikaners, Afrikaner officials in particular, during this period? Did they know a lot about the United States, about our system, our racial problems?

ROUNTREE: They did, indeed. All of them made a study of it and, of course, drew parallels between our respective histories. Most of the educated Afrikaners became students, of race relations. Not only in South Africa but in the United States and elsewhere, because they wanted to inform themselves for their own purposes. Every aspect of racial developments in the United States was big news to them. They followed with great interest reports of demonstrations and so forth, and noted with equal interest the consequences of these demonstrations, changes in American laws and practices.

Q: Aside from matters of race, when they looked to the outside world, when and if they did look to the outside world, did they look more to Europe? Did they visit Europe? Did they have contacts with Europeans more than they did with the United States?

ROUNTREE: English-speaking South Africans constitute about 45% of the white population, and look mainly to England. Many still feel close attachment to their place of origin. Afrikaners, who are descendants of Dutch, French and German settlers, no longer look to Europe. They consider themselves to be white Africans. That's one of the main differences between the Afrikaners and other whites in South Africa.

Q: They didn't come to the states either.

ROUNTREE: They would visit Europe, but they did not look upon Europe as the fatherland, the homeland. The most important foreign country in the world to Afrikaners then and now is the United States, even with the existence of economic and other sanctions.

Q: When the South African government established black homelands and pursued the policies with regard to the land, they left the blacks with some of the worst land and a very small percentage of the land, given their population. What was the Afrikaner rationale behind being so stingy with the land distribution, do you think?

ROUNTREE: Possibly the most ludicrous aspect of apartheid was the decision to assign to such a huge percentage of the population such a small percentage of the land area, most of that being extremely poor land. The homelands concept was merely to establish some rationale for the deprivation of civil rights to the blacks occupying territory in what the Afrikaners considered to be white South Africa. I know of no South African, Afrikaner or otherwise, who has provided any logical justification for this concept.

Q: Well, we're up now to the move to Brazil. Again, you continued when the Nixon Administration continued. They must have asked you to stay on in South Africa because you stayed there quite a while after the change.

ROUNTREE: Yes, I returned to Washington at the change of Administration when President Nixon took office. I met with him and we went over our policies in South Africa. I learned from him his views on our relations with that country. I was very pleased that, at that time and subsequently, I found myself in complete agreement with President Nixon and with the general course of American policy in South Africa. I was told in 1970 that he wanted me to go to Brazil as his Ambassador. I was rather surprised at the change from the Near East and South African area to South America, never having served in Latin America before. I was told that it was his desire to have someone have a fresh look at our policies and relations in South America, and he decided that I was the one to do it in Brazil. I welcomed the assignment and enjoyed it tremendously.

Q: Before we go on to Brazil, we didn't talk about Secretary Rusk. Did you have a lot to do with Secretary Rusk during his eight years in office?

ROUNTREE: I knew him quite well and had a very good impression of him, a fellow Georgian whose service in the Department of State I'd had the opportunity to follow very closely. I admired him greatly.

Q: In your capacity as Ambassador to Brazil, did you also have an opportunity to get to know Henry Kissinger?

ROUNTREE: Yes, I had known Mr. Kissinger even before he came into the White House as one of the principal advisors to President Nixon. I did not serve under him when he became Secretary of State. I had retired by then. But I had followed his work with great interest.

Q: When you went to Brazil, one of the big issues, I believe, was personal safety and the threat of terrorism. Was it not?

ROUNTREE: Yes, terrorists were very active in Brazil in those days. As a matter of fact, my predecessor as American Ambassador in Brazil had been kidnaped and was injured in the course of his capture. The Brazilians had embarked on a program of anti-terrorism that created some criticism in the United States and elsewhere because of the extreme pressures they put on terrorists once they were captured. One of my tasks in Brazil was to

articulate American concern for safety and security in Brazil on the one hand, but on the other hand concern that the means of coping with prisoners should be civilized.

Q: Were there any terrorists incidents involving you during your tour in Brazil?

ROUNTREE: No, not an incident directly involving me, although there were many reports of plans of assassination or capture. I was provided by the government of Brazil with a strong security guard wherever I went, particularly in Rio or Sao Paulo. There usually were police cars preceding and following mine, with armed guards. A policemen with a machine gun rode in my own car. The embassy premises were strongly guarded. There was never an occasion in which my life was put in immediate danger. Other ambassadors, in addition to Ambassador Elbrick, were kidnaped. The German ambassador and the Swiss ambassador, for example. In each of these cases the government of Brazil agreed to free captured terrorists in return for the release of the diplomats. The United States Government never engaged in negotiations with terrorists in the case of Ambassador Elbrick or others. The decision to meet the demands of the captors was one made entirely by the government of Brazil. As I said, Ambassador Elbrick did suffer injury which could have had a highly detrimental effect on his subsequent health.

At the outset of my service as Ambassador to Brazil, I announced that I would move the embassy from Rio to the new capital of Brasilia. I was the first Ambassador to make the full-time move. This was not an easy task because we had many hundreds of employees in our Rio embassy, and facilities for our diplomatic establishment in Brasilia had not been completed, and in some cases not even begun. It took a year to make the move from one city to the other, during which I was required to spend most of my time in Rio. Over the months I was able to spend progressively more time, with progressively more staff in Brasilia. Eventually we were there full time. It was a fascinating experience to be a part of this historic move from Rio to the new capital and I enjoyed it.

Q: You were one of the few people that had experience in it, too, having done it from Karachi to Rawalpindi.

ROUNTREE: It is interesting that in three of my Ambassadorial posts, Brazil, South Africa and Pakistan, I had to maintain more than one diplomatic residence. There were only four such countries in the world, to my knowledge, and I happened to be Ambassador to three of them. The fourth was Libya, but Libya ended that practice with the revolution that overthrew the King.

Q: President Medici visited Washington in December 1971, the first time that a President of a military government in Latin America visited the White House. What brought that about? Was that your idea?

ROUNTREE: I think it was an idea of a good many people, including President Medici, who wanted very much to meet President Nixon, and Nixon himself who attached great

importance to our relations with Brazil. Nixon had a particular interest in our relations with Latin American neighbors. Brazil, after all, is half the land area of South America, has about half the population of South America, and possesses more than half of the natural resources of that continent. Thus its importance in the context of US interests and relations can be understood.

Q: Was this, in fact, the first time the President of a military government had visited the White House? Was a big thing made of that?

ROUNTREE: About Latin American governments, I don't at the moment recall, but certainly there had been other military governments, such as those of Pakistan and Sudan, whose heads have been invited to make state visits to Washington.

Q: Was that a successful visit?

ROUNTREE: It was a very successful visit and gave us an opportunity to review many things that we and the Brazilians have in common. Brazil, over the years, has been one of the best friends of the United States. It has never been our enemy. Brazil has been consistently with us in military operations, including World War I, World War II, the Berlin Airlift, and various situations in Latin America. We have maintained in Brazil, since 1922, a military mission that has been very important to us, and military facilities established during World War II have been continued in one form or another. Our military have cooperated in many respects over the years, and the Brazilian economy has greatly benefitted by American investments in that country. There had never been a time in which anti-Americanism was a factor in relations with Brazil. We extended enormous amounts of financial and economic help to the Brazilians when they needed it to expand their economy, and the progress which they made rendered it possible greatly to reduce aid levels during my terms of office. I think our relations were at an absolute peak in 1972, the time of the visit of President Medici. So it was a good visit in a good situation. The main problem that we were having with Brazil related to their treatment of captured terrorists but even that had by then greatly abated and the situation had begun to return to normal. The process of transition between the military regime and a return to democracy, which we advocated, had only just begun.

Q: It was also a period of great economic growth for Brazil and by 1972 they had finished the first 1200 kilometers of the Trans-Amazonian Highway. At that time, was there any concern about the destruction of the Brazil Amazon rain forests and the species and all that?

ROUNTREE: There was a great deal of concern, but the magnitude of this program and its effects on the world ecology was just beginning to be understood. Perhaps the international community should have been far more forceful at the time, although whether this would have made much of a difference is questionable. We were, indeed, concerned with the ecology. We were concerned not only with the effects on the ecology of the Trans-Amazonian Highway, but also the effects of pollution, which was rampant in

Brazil at that time. I was instructed on several occasions to take up with Brazilian authorities, including the President, our hope that the Brazilians would join us in anti-pollution efforts we were making through the United Nations. During this period, Brazil was making the greatest economic progress in its history, achieving solid gains across the board, particularly in industrial and agricultural production. And, for the first time, Brazilians were seeing the benefits of turning more to the interior of the country in their development efforts, capitalizing on lands that theretofore had never effectively been utilized. As I indicated, one of the few differences of real importance that we had with Brazil during my term of office concerned the ecology. Whenever these questions were raised with them, they would reply quite frankly that they hoped the time would come when they could undertake anti-pollution measures but, for the immediate future, their main concern would have to be increased production and improving the economic welfare of the Brazilian people. Their response to American approaches at high levels bilaterally and through the United Nations would, therefore, be simply that they'd have to "reserve their right to pollute". And that is a term they used, quite literally. I think the pollution problem in Brazil has gotten even more out of hand. Since then the devastation wrought by the development of the Amazon, the Trans-Amazon Highway and all the new projects in that region has increased the alarm of the international community. Hopefully, it's increased the concern of the Brazilian government as well. Clearly, what was a matter of concern to us in 1970-1973 when I was there, is a problem of far greater proportions today.

Q: Brazil has the reputation of having one of the most inequitable distributions of income in Latin American, or in the world for that matter. Was that true and noticeable in those years?

ROUNTREE: Yes, it was noticeable then and it continues to be so. There is extreme poverty in all of Brazil, and particularly in the northeast part of the country. It is this situation that initially prompted the government to undertake the Trans-Amazon program. It was their hope that by opening up new areas, substantial relief could be given to disadvantaged Brazilians in the northeast and other parts of the country, and productivity would be increased. I suppose that this has helped but it is my impression that it has been marginal because of the character of the land. The farming projects undertaken do not lend themselves to the kind of small land holder that originally had been anticipated.
Q: How did you find Brazilians in comparison to Afrikaner officials, in comparison to Ayub Khan? Are they in your opinion, competent, capable, serious?

ROUNTREE: As you know, relatively few Brazilians have reached high levels of education, but among those who have are some of the most capable people I know. Brazilians excel in various facets of the economy, in banking, in industry. Their engineers and architects, for example, are among the best in the world. Brazilians benefitted from the fact that most American investment in Brazil over the years has been in productive, rather than extractive, enterprises. Brazilians learned from American industrial firms how to produce. They were given on-the-job training and were also trained in the United States over the years. Brazilian educational institutions have excelled in many fields. Yes,

they are serious and some are highly competent people. Perhaps, the period in which I served in Brazil was the one in which the Brazilians had more sense of cohesion and direction than ever before. Even though a military regime was in control, more constructive progress was being made. They've lost some of that. One cost of a return to democracy has been the loss of the kind of central direction that moved Brazil forward so rapidly. Right now the Brazilian economy is in terrible shape, and it is difficult to see how it can be turned around.

Q: Was anybody in the United States Government disturbed in 1972 when Petrobras went in in the midst of the Iraqi conflict with the international oil companies and their nationalizational dispute, Petrobras went in and got a concession in Iraq, which upset the "majors"?

ROUNTREE: I don't remember. I can't cite chapter and verse with respect to expressions of concern.

Q: Wasn't that big a deal though.

ROUNTREE: I don't remember it was that big a deal. I don't think anyone in Washington or among the oil companies lost any great amount of sleep over it.

Q: By that time, the writing was pretty much on the wall in the Middle East, I guess. Could you say something about your evaluation of your Foreign Service staff, not just in Brazil but your four Ambassadorial posts and if there were any differences among the bureaus?

ROUNTREE: In retrospect, I would say that although I had not planned on the Foreign Service as a career--I came into it by accident during the war years--I would not have exchanged it for any other. One reason is that I consider the United States to have the finest Foreign Service in the world, bar none. My experience with career Foreign Service Officers during the war and thereafter, as a subordinate officer in various embassies, in the Department of State and as Ambassador, confirmed that judgment. There are, of course, degrees of excellence. Some Foreign Service Officers naturally are better than others, but there have been relatively few cases during the course of my career in which I have felt that Foreign Service Officers have been inadequate for the positions to which they have been assigned. And I have felt that, on the whole, the selection-out process has worked well to keep the quality of performance very high.

Q: What do you consider your greatest accomplishment in your long and distinguished career, or a couple of greatest accomplishments?

ROUNTREE: The things about which I have felt the greatest sense of accomplishment have not necessarily been those for which I have had primary responsibility. That is, some activities in which I have participated, not necessarily those I have directed, are among my fondest memories. For example, my involvement in the Greek-Turkish Aid Program

is a source of very great satisfaction to me. I was a part of a vast new undertaking, a new departure in American foreign policy that proved to be highly successful in containing international communism at a critical time. I felt that my personal contribution made a real difference then, as it did later when Greece and Turkey were brought into NATO. I also take a great deal of personal satisfaction in the resolution of the oil controversy in Iran following the ouster of Mossadegh. Not that I played a major role but because I was a significant part of a mechanism that brought about great things. In my initial assignment to the Middle East as a part of the Anglo-American Middle East Supply Center, we were working with the British in war-time operations that were of considerable importance to them and to us. I claim no credit for miracle cures, but I did feel that I was an important part, however small, of a machine that was highly successful in achieving war-time objectives in that area. And so it is with the Foreign Service, generally, which on the whole has done an enormously good job, has served American interests and purposes extremely well. Being a part of that. That has given me great satisfaction, but never more than during the period of several years in which I served as Assistant Secretary of State in charge of one of the most active bureaus in the State Department. During my term of office we dealt with a couple of dozen crises of various degrees of importance and danger, and I had the satisfaction of feeling they generally were well-handled. Certainly President Eisenhower and Secretary Dulles made me feel so. It is good to be able to say after all those years that I was a part of it, that I was glad I was a part of it, and that I feel I made some useful contribution.

Q: Is there anything that as a unique experience tops the week or ten days with King Saud in Saudi Arabia, wearing Saudi dress, negotiating that agreement?

ROUNTREE: There are many things that parallel it, but I don't know that any have topped it in terms of the impression that it made on me personally and the influence it had on my subsequent career. But I reflect on various missions that I had in the early days; for example, of trying to find out for the Lend/Lease Administration why so many goods were being damaged or destroyed in transit to Russia and to the British forces in the Middle East. I made an urgent survey in the whole Middle East area, seeing how things were handled, who handled them, and what improvements could be made. I formulated telegraphic recommendations to the Lend/Lease Administration in Washington setting forth my views and those of British and American shipping experts in the region as to what would reduce losses of valuable goods and material. These recommendations were translated into new directives by Washington which came into effect with incredible speed. Then, within a matter of a few months, there was a wholly different situation as new goods arrived in the Middle East. Seeing such prompt and constructive results of one's efforts in Government service is an experience to be savored and in retrospect that's one of the happiest aspects of my career.

Q: What about the other side of the coin, what was your greatest disappointment in your career?

ROUNTREE: One of the greatest disappointments was the result of the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry on Palestine. We were given an opportunity by President Truman and the British Prime Minister through the efforts of twelve appointed members, six American and six British, with a staff of which I was one, to find a solution to the Palestine question. The problem of the future of Palestine had plagued the British and others directly involved for generations. The Anglo-American Committee represented one of the last chances for a peaceful, fair and rational solution. It is a great pity that it failed. The post-war history of the Middle East could have been wholly different and far more favorable to our interests.

Q: Was that because of the committee itself, or because of the political circumstances that already existed?

ROUNTREE: It was because of many factors, including the political circumstances. It is highly unlikely that the recommendations of the committee would have been or could have been accepted in their entirety, or that a formula could have been found without substantial additional efforts. But to see the attempt fade and fizzle as soon as the report was filed was a disappointment.

Q: What about your post-retirement activities? Was there anything that you'd like to mention? There was one thing you did after Brazil, but you were still on active duty.

ROUNTREE: No, I was not on active duty. I had retired. I had come to Gainesville, established residence and begun negotiations for the construction of our retirement home. I was asked by Secretary Rogers to undertake a mission to Rome as head of the United States delegation to an international conference on air security, to be paralleled by a conference of the International Civil Aviation Organization to consider additional measures within that organization to cope with the problem of air piracy. I was initially reluctant, but I'm glad that I agreed. I spent a few weeks in Washington to help organize the staff and brief myself on the mission. I then spent a month in Rome for the series of conferences involved. We explored various avenues for improving air security. Perhaps, the mere fact that meetings were held had some positive value, but in the final analysis we were unable to agree on any new conventions or treaties, or amendments to the charter of ICAO. Most of the proposals on which we and the Soviets, and other larger countries could agree, were opposed by some of the Arab or African countries. Thus the effort was not a huge success, and this I particularly regret since that was the only post-retirement project that I undertook for the Government. Locally, my post-retirement activities have been confined to the things I like to do most, including some small participation in activities related to the University of Florida. A few guest lectures, and participation in such organizations as the Friends of Music, Friends of the Library and the Gallery Guild, occasional speeches, Mostly I have traveled, read and played golf.

Q: Could you say something about both the importance of your family in your career and also the benefits for the family of your career?

ROUNTREE: My enthusiasm for the Service was always fully shared by my wife and our daughter. We treated assignments in the Foreign Service as family affairs, and enjoyed what we considered to be our respective roles. Any feeling of accomplishment that I have or satisfaction with the career, is shared equally by my wife who carried out important functions at every post we had. There is no doubt in my mind that the success of Foreign Service Officers has often been greatly enhanced or diminished by their families who, wittingly or unwittingly, are diplomatic representatives of our country.

In my time, most families felt that they benefited from the service, though there are obvious disadvantages as well. The excitement and interest of life abroad are broadening and rewarding. Not such favorable factors as these are offset to some degree by such considerations as raising children in a foreign atmosphere, the usual experience of making and leaving friends so often, and the inability until after one's career to become a permanent part of a community.

Q: Anything else you'd like to add that I haven't asked?

ROUNTREE: No.

Q: Well, thank you very much Ambassador Rountree.

End of interview