

John S. Badeau, Oral History Interview – 2/25/1969
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Biographical Note

Badeau was Ambassador to the United Arab Republic from 1961-1964. The UAR was a union of Egypt and Syria. Syria seceded from the UAR in 1961, but Egypt was still referred to as the UAR until 1971. In this interview, Badeau discusses his and John F. Kennedy's relationship with Gamal Abdel Nasser; conflicts in Yemen, Jordan, and Kuwait during his tenure as ambassador; U.S. aid to the UAR; and the pro-Israel lobby in the U.S., among other issues.

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By John S. Badeau

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John S. Badeau

Table of Contents

<u>Page</u>	<u>Topic</u>
1	Badeau's appointment as ambassador to the UAR (United Arab Republic)
5	Badeau's primary contacts in the White House and State Department
6	Annual meeting of U.S. Middle East ambassadors
8	Gamal Abdel Nasser
10	U.S.-UAR relations
11	Plan for Palestinian refugee resettlement
12	Kuwait crisis of the early 1960s
13	UAR's 1961 nationalization of industry and foreign-owned land
14	Differences of opinion within the Kennedy administration about Nasser
15	1963 attempt to overthrow the government of Jordan
16	Yemen crisis
17, 21	International Monetary Fund and U.S. aid to the UAR
20	CIA activities in the UAR
22	Oil
23	Pro-Israel lobby in the U.S.
25	Badeau's views on U.S. policy towards the Middle East

Oral History Interview

with

John S. Badeau

February 25, 1969
New York City

By Dennis J. O'Brien

For the John F. Kennedy Library

O'BRIEN: Well, I think the logical place to begin in something like this is with a rather obvious question: When did you first meet President Kennedy [John F. Kennedy]?

BADEAU: I first met President Kennedy the day before I left the United States to take up my post in Cairo. I don't remember the exact date except it was in about mid-June or late in June 1961. I saw him at the White House for perhaps forty minutes, for parting instructions and as a matter of learning to know the President and he learning to know me.

O'BRIEN: Did you have any contact with his staff or people who were involved in the presidential campaign or in his office as senator before?

BADEAU: None whatever. I had no contact with the President or indeed with the Democratic party. I'd been home from Egypt for eight years, but I'd not been politically active. I never have fully understood how my name came to the President's attention, although I suspect it was through Dean Rusk [Dean Rusk] and our mutual interest in the Council on World Affairs—Council on Foreign Relations here in New York.

O'BRIEN: There were, as I understand, there were some so-called talent lists that were drawn up by Chester Bowles [Chester B. Bowles] of people...

BADEAU: Well, I suspect Chet Bowles had something to do with it, but I had no evidence. But when the proposal was put up, I took occasion to talk to some of my old friends in the State Department.

[-1 -]

I was concerned a less than non-professional man coming into an ambassadorial appointment might face certain problems; I didn't know what the attitude of the Service [Foreign Service] was. When I talked to them, they told me that it was customary for each administration to have from a quarter to a third of their foreign envoys from outside the State Department just as a matter of fresh blood, but that President Kennedy had gone a little beyond this: He had identified certain countries where he felt our policies were distanced or we had unusual problems, and he wanted to appoint to these people who had a particular background of experience or knowledge or competency in that country. So Reischauer [Edwin O. Reischauer] was sent to Japan, Ken Young [Kenneth T. Young] was sent to Thailand (Ken had been in the government before, but he'd been head of SOCONY-Vacuum [Standard Oil Company of New York-Vacuum Oil] in Thailand), John Everton [John S. Everton] went to Burma, Galbraith [John Kenneth Galbraith] went to India, and I went to Egypt. I was given to understand that this was quite a new departure in presidential appointments.

O'BRIEN: Retreating just a little bit here, what was your reaction to his increasing criticisms of Eisenhower [Dwight D. Eisenhower] foreign policy in the post-Suez period, particularly things like the Algerian speech?

BADEAU: Well, I thoroughly agreed. I was now a great admirer of Mr. Dulles' [John Foster Dulles] policies during this period. I think one really needs to say Dulles rather than Eisenhower policy because I suspect that President Eisenhower, perhaps, played a somewhat less than decisive role. I thought—with the single exception of our action in stopping the 1956 invasion, which I thought was good—I thought by and large our policy had become somewhat moribund.

This concerned me very much. And when I saw the President, I asked him what his intentions were about Middle East policy because if this was merely to repeat what had gone on for the past fifteen years, I'm not sure I would have cared to serve. His answer was that he didn't know what his policy would be. The only thing he could say was that he was trying to make a fresh and unprejudiced look at policy in general. This was good enough for me and I thought this was a fair start.

O'BRIEN: He made a whole series of proposals for settling the Middle Eastern problems in 1957 and '58. Do you recall any of these?

BADEAU: No, I was overseas a great deal in those days. I was working with the Near East Foundation and I didn't follow American politics very closely.

O'BRIEN: That's a rather interesting point about Near East Foundation. Is there a Near East group or Middle East group that is a kind of cohesive group that has relations or...

[-2-]

BADEAU: No, not really. There are a group of people who deal with the Middle East in various capacities. For instance, there is the academic group; I suppose in this country there are twenty-five or thirty centers of Middle East study and you get the professors in this. You get certain organizations which were created out of sympathy for or a desire to help the Arab cause or Middle East cause like The Friends of the Middle East [The American Friends of the Middle East]. Then you got an organization like the Near East Foundation, which simply was a technical assistance organization that grew up in the First World War, and it had absolutely no political purview at all. Now, to be sure, we all knew each other—because, you know, this is your field of work—but in the sense of a cohesive group: no, there was not.

O'BRIEN: As far as your appointment—well, we've gone through some of that—do you know whether there was any.... Well, first of all, how were you contacted in regard to your appointment?

BADEAU: I had been overseas on a trip for the Near East Foundation, as I went every Year, and got home in January. The night I arrived home, my wife told me that Washington had been on the telephone trying to contact me for a number of days and would I please call this number in Washington. I did and interestingly enough found it was a young man whose parents I know very well, James Thomson, Jimmy Thomson [James C. Thomson, Jr.]. Jimmy used to play with my children when he was little and apparently he had used by Bowles and Bowles' talent hunting. Jimmy simply said, "Will you come down to Washington?" Well, I thought at the time that, perhaps, they were looking for some assistance from Near East Foundation. We'd been doing some contract work. I went down and talked to Bowles and this was the first information I had.

O'BRIEN: Do you know whether there was any opposition to your appointment?

BADEAU: I never saw any indication of any opposition at all in the State Department. When I went up for my confirmation, I saw no evidence of any opposition. This surprised me a little bit in the Senate because back in 1948 when the United States recognized Israel so quickly, I was president of the American University at Cairo, and in conjunction with two other Americans in Cairo, we sent a long cable to President Truman [Harry S. Truman], as American citizens, protesting the hasty recognition by the United States of Israel, which we said was not in American interests. This was not a pro-Arab, but a pro-American view. Well, I thought surely somebody would dredge that up. I had nothing to be ashamed of. They didn't. Indeed, the only thing I got pressed on was Senator Fulbright [J. William Fulbright] pressing very hard, and somewhat obscurely until he

brought the point out, to know whether I was pro-Zionist. The implication being if I was, he would have none of me. [Laughter] No. I saw no....

And I might go on to say that I really felt, in Cairo, I received a very unusual measure of departmental and presidential support. I was

[-3-]

not conscious of any outstanding difficulties; I really got what I wanted, not only in staff, but in policy support so that I thought I received most excellent backing.

O'BRIEN: Was this the first time that you.... This was really the first time that you had been involved in any kind of governmental capacity or governmental....

BADEAU: No. During the Second World War, I was on leave of absence from the University with the old OWI, the Office of War Information, where I was Chief Middle East Specialist, which meant I tried to supply the dimension of Middle East knowledge to their operation. This was just a wartime job; sometimes in the United States, sometimes abroad. That, however, was the only contact I'd had with official appointment.

O'BRIEN: Did you have any contact at all with the so-called task forces that worked in the interim period between the election and the inauguration of Kennedy on foreign policy?

BADEAU: I was out of the country a good part of that time. I was, that year, at that American seminar in Austria—I've forgotten the name of it. I was there for, oh, six weeks, I guess, and as a matter of fact, listened to President Kennedy's inaugural speech by short-wave radio over in Austria. So, I had no touch whatever.

O'BRIEN: Did anyone from the White House brief you on U.S. policy in the Middle East?

BADEAU: No. My briefing was a rather curious matter. It interested me because in my capacity in the Foundation and University I had very careful briefing procedures set up. I spent about three weeks in Washington before I went out. I went to this office and that office; I learned something about the structure of the Department of State and how it operates, but I really got no briefing on policy.

O'BRIEN: From neither the White House or the....

BADEAU: Certainly not from the White House. I don't recall meeting any White House staff until I actually met the President. Of course there had been a

large turnover in the department. The Assistant Secretary for the Near East was Phil Talbot [Phillips Talbot], who had been our man in Athens. I had known Phil; Phil was a friend of mine; my son-in-law had worked with him. But nobody sat down, really, and laid out what American policy had been or was contemplated to be.

O'BRIEN: How did the academic community generally respond to the appointment of people like yourself and Reischauer and Kenneth Young...

[-4-]

BADEAU: Well, there again, you have to remember that I was not in the American academic community; I was in the academic community abroad. I'd taught in Cairo or I was at the University in Cairo for almost twenty years, but not at home. My contacts here were not very many. When I came home in 1953—I went to the Middle East in '28 and stayed there until '53 and then came home, you see—and joined the Foundation, I wasn't moving in an academic atmosphere at all. We were an operational organization conducting rural improvement programs. I had friends around, but I wasn't part of the academic establishment, to use a word that was not used then, but you know what I mean. I'm not part of an academic establishment. I really wasn't in the position to get much reaction.

O'BRIEN: Well, in the years that you were ambassador did you have much contact with some of the people in the White House that made up the—essentially the staff on national security matters, people like McGeorge Bundy...

BADEAU: No, not with Bundy. My most steady contact was with Bob Komer [Robert W. Komer] because Komer really appeared to be the person chiefly responsible in the White House staff. He more or less rode herd on the department, on Phil Talbot. I didn't have much firsthand contact with him, either, because I was in the field, but when I came home on consultation, I usually saw him. He visited us out in the field and sometimes messages would be exchanged.

O'BRIEN: Did you ever have any contact with Myer Feldman on the White House staff?

BADEAU: Only once. This was when the Yemen war was in progress. I went to see Komer when I was home and Komer and Feldman and I had a joint discussion about it. As I recall it, it particularly had to do with the possible effects of the continuation of that operation on the military position of Egypt vis-à-vis Israel because Nasser [Gamal Abdel Nasser] had withdrawn many of his troops from Sinai and sent them down to Yemen. The question was what did this do to the military posture.

O'BRIEN: How about some of the other people in the State Department that were involved in Middle East affairs? People like, well, Strong, Robert Strong [Robert C. Strong]....

BADEAU: Well, I had a great deal to do with Bob Strong because Bob was bureau chief. You know NEA [Near Eastern Affairs] is a large area from India to North Africa. Bob was chief and I really had more to do with Bob than with any other single person in the department, because one went through him to Talbot, and he came out, I think, each year I was out in the field. Thus he ended up as, himself, Ambassador to Iraq. So I got to know him very well indeed.

[-5 -]

O'BRIEN: Did the ambassadors within the Middle East countries come together very often for consultation?

BADEAU: Yes, they did. In the first summer—that was the summer of 1961—a meeting was called of all the ambassadors in the area in Cyprus. Talbot came out from the Department of State, and Komer, I believe also came out at that time. This really was the first time that there was a statement of administration attitudes towards the Middle East. Now this was followed by an ambassadorial meeting that was held each fall that I was out there and at least until 1967, I believe, was continued. It had been held before but had been stopped because of fear of being misunderstood. Now it was decided that if it was announced adequately in advance and held at the same time every year so it got to be routine—so I went to three of these things.

O'BRIEN: Were there particular issues that were dealt with in each of these meetings, or were they just sort of general things?

BADEAU: Well, there were certain issues that would be brought out from Washington on which an expression of opinion was asked and these formed the principal agenda. For instance, in '63, '64, the Yemen war occupied a lot of this. This involved our policy toward Egypt: Should we continue to supply her with the PL 480 food [Food for Progress], and so forth. So when Talbot came out he would have two or three issues, but then on top of that, there was not only a general roundup of the situation in meeting, but what in my opinion was probably the most fruitful thing, and that is, private meetings of the Chief of Missions themselves, who got together and talked things over.

Now, in that kind of thing questions came up, for instance, about the Peace Corps. Nobody came out from Washington and asked us about the Peace Corps, but we discovered everybody was concerned about it. We swapped ideas, and I think without any adoption of policy, there was kind of a general meeting of the mind that emerged out of it.

O'BRIEN: Well, before we really get into a more specific discussion of Mideast activities, it might be helpful if you could summarize, perhaps, the way that you were involved in formulating policy towards the UAR [United Arab Republic] and generally towards the Middle East. In other words, sometimes

ambassadors felt that they had a great deal of trouble getting through to the department and to the actual centers of decisionmaking. Did you feel that you had this...?

BADEAU: Well, first of all, I didn't try and formulate policy for the Middle East. I think the Middle East is a very nebulous concept and that it's not probably possible to have a policy towards the area. My responsibility was Egypt and I tried to deal with Egypt. Now, as I said to you earlier, I thought I got unusually good support. And I'm not aware of any sharp difference of opinion, although I didn't always get everything I wanted.

[-6 -]

You know, I came to the conclusion that a good deal of the success of a Chief of Mission in being effective in foreign policy lies on the modality, the way he goes about it. For instance, you have an official distribution list of any cable or any message you write and you know what that is. But then you go on, it seems to me, if you're adroit, and find out who it is in any given organization that really is most influential in making foreign policy decisions: in DOD [Department of Defense], in CIA [Central Intelligence Agency], in the State Department. They're not always the people that are slugged at the top of the cable. And if you know that, you take pains to keep relationships with these people. If you get a policy study made out, you sent it along with a little note on it saying, "Look, Bill, I think you ought to read this because this is a difficult problem." Consequently, this assists, I think, in getting your ideas across.

I think a second factor in this is your ability to forecast what's going to happen. I think one of the troubles with the rapidity of communication is that you live so much on the headlines of today that you don't get any time to sit back and chew your cud. Now what we tried to do at the Embassy was to look down the road or, as the Egyptians say, "to sniff the breeze" and say, "It looks as though in this general area some problems might be brewing in five or six or eight months or shorter than that." Then we would sit down and work out a series of brief studies addressed to this theoretical problem. Then they'd be sent home, both to the regular people and these other people.

If nothing happened, nothing happened. But then if something did happen, I discovered that there were two very interesting results of this kind of fore-preparation. On one hand, the State Department people, like journalists, tend to be lazy enough to use something that's already written instead of something they write themselves, and this is just human nature. So if you've got a good memo in your files that really is illuminating, you tend to turn to it. The other thing is that once someone has been in your files for three months, it no longer was authored by the writer; it now is the idea and property of the reader. And so I discovered that frequently I would get back instructions that were all couched in my own language, although I'm not sure that the people who wrote them were fully cognizant of that fact.

O'BRIEN: Who were some of these people, if you don't mind mentioning them, that you felt were not necessarily in the structure but were the very important people?

BADEAU: Well, you know, I'd have to go back really among my papers because I confess in saying that my five years here now at Columbia Law has obliterated a good many of these names.

O'BRIEN: You don't happen to remember any right offhand?

[-7 -]

BADEAU: I'm sorry, I don't offhand. There were some.... I just don't; it's not reticence, it's just that this belongs to a past chapter and it's gone. No. I think there are other things. I think another thing one has to realize is that the Department and every member in it is flooded with messages every day. And your messages are competing with a thousand other messages. Therefore, I believe, not only the content of the message, which of course is highly important, but the way it's drafted and put together is a very important factor. So when a fellow picks it up, he reads it and puts it in perspective. Now, I don't mean that we were literary geniuses at all, but I think sometimes it's forgotten that some of these modalities are the setting in which the substance of an idea is transmitted. The idea may be a good idea and lack these things; on the other hand, no amount of modality will take the place of a bad idea.

O'BRIEN: In way of summary, what were some of the major problems, you know, in a sort of general way, that you inherited when you became ambassador, in the way of U.S. and UAR relations?

BADEAU: Well, you know, our relations with Egypt had been suspended in the aftermath of the 1956 Suez Canal incident. By the time that I came on post in '61, they were just getting underway again—just moving out of the period of frigidity—so there was a great deal of mutual suspicion, and one of the most immediate problems was to find a basis for the restoration of genuine confidence.

One of our problems with Egypt has been that we've had so many policies. To confine it simply to the revolutionary period—the first two years of the revolution—we have what I call the “honeymoon policy;” we believed in the revolution and thought it was good. Then we had the Suez Canal incident and our policy was one of trying to isolate Egypt from all its neighbors and possibly to overthrow Nasser. This didn't work; we got into an absolute bind, and so we passed on to what I would call a “cool but correct policy,” which I inherited.

Now, the question was: How do you move from that back to good normal relationships? Behind this, there lay the fact that both sides of the equation had certain images of each other that affected relations badly. The Egyptian image was almost entirely one of a Zionist-dominated government and, therefore, anything that we did was bound to be pro-Israeli. On the other hand, there were considerable groups of people in the United States, not that I dealt with directly in NEA but considerable groups, who simply went on the assumption that Nasser was a communist stooge, that anything that he did was bad, and that, therefore, any good relationship with him was against our interest. Now you had to deal with both of these things, and let me say that it's just as difficult, perhaps more difficult, to deal

with your own government eight thousand miles away, than it is with the government that you're accredited with on the spot.

O'BRIEN: This is the so-called "crisis of confidence" that you spoke of in...

[-8-]

BADEAU: This is the crisis of confidence and it was a genuine crisis. I think we got along pretty good. When I saw Nasser to present my credentials—I had known him slightly; not very well, I'd known him slightly before—we had a long talk. The substance of it was: Look, what's the use of use of starting every conversation with an argument about Palestine; we're not going to change our policy and attitude, and you're not going to change yours; we recognize this, so why don't we just put this in an icebox and devote ourselves to points of mutual interest. Well, somewhat to my surprise, Nasser agreed to this and on the whole he did this. Up toward the end, before I left, we began to heat up a little bit, but at least it made a new beginning. On the other side, Kennedy was unprejudiced, I would say, in his attitudes towards Nasser. He neither liked him or disliked him; he was unprejudiced. He would not allow judgments to be made simply on the basis of his image. So I thought we got over both sides of it reasonably well to begin with.

O'BRIEN: President Kennedy and President Nasser carried on a rather long series of correspondence, didn't they? Did you have much insight into these?

BADEAU: I saw them all and knew them all. Now, these have never been released, they're all classified. But there were some six or seven exchanges, as I recall it, during these three years. I think it is possible to say something about their general character, however. They were a very effective diplomatic ploy in this particular case. For one thing, Nasser is a man with whom you can deal very frankly. I never found he took umbrage at a bold statement as long it's done with politeness. You really got much further with him by laying your problem on the table. Now Kennedy did this. Kennedy was very frank indeed in what he wrote; correct and polite, but very frank indeed. On one hand, this minimizes misunderstanding and gives you a feeling—gave Nasser the feeling—that Kennedy really cared about relations, and he cared enough to lay the thing on the table. On the other hand, it also involved, if it's correctly drafted, a somehow feeling you're dealing with equals. This in particular, I think, is what Nasser responded to. And I think President Kennedy was aware of this.

I know one time, when one of those letters was being drafted, and I saw the text of it at home, Kennedy said, "You know, we have to remember this guy has got his problems too. He's got a public opinion. I understand there's some things he can't do." Well, he never wrote this in the letter, but the spirit of it breathed through the letter.

Now, I had a fine illustration of this: One time when I was going back I was to take a verbal message from President Kennedy to Nasser. A verbal message is verbally delivered, but it is written down and read from a text, and the text is afterwards given as an aide-memoire. So it was the day before I was leaving for Cairo—I'd been home on consultation—

and the President had obviously ordered his staff to prepare something and had it brought in and read to him. And he said, “You know, this won’t do at all. In this first paragraph, you pussy-footed, you really haven’t

[-9-]

said what I had to say. You’ve got to say it square and straight.” And he said, “The second paragraph sounds like the end of a treaty. This isn’t a treaty, this is a personal letter.” So he called a secretary in and he re-dictated the letter while I was waiting to have it typed up. The first paragraph was a strong direct statement of what he had to say and the second was a warm friendly greeting between equals. Now this had impact. This was very useful indeed.

O’BRIEN: In the Kennedy administration, one of the first things you had to deal with was the problem of the Canal. There was a series of things that happened in the Congress of the United States—I was thinking in particular of the amendment to the foreign aid bill in 1961 on freedom of the seas. How did President Nasser react to this?

BADEAU: Well, you will remember that all of these things left the President, our president, discretion if national welfare was involved. Since these actually never eventuated in policy action, it didn’t cause as much havoc as one might suppose.

Now one of the things that I was most concerned about and never fully accomplished was to try to explain to the Egyptians, explain to Nasser, how the American government works. This is a fearful and wonderful creature as far as they are concerned. You’re in a difficult position: On the one hand, you had to indicate that the President of the United States did not have absolute power, that he has a public opinion, he has a congress, too; on the other hand, you don’t want to degrade the position of the American president too much and give the opinion that he is simply the pawn of forces in the United States. I don’t think I ever fully got that across.

But what I finally succeeded in doing, and I tried to do it the other way back to Washington was to say, “Look, what you want to keep your eye on is what is actually done, not what is legislated and said because there’s a considerable gap between these two things. Let’s look at the record of the United States on Israel.” Well, if you look at the record, it’s not at all the same as the public statements.

O’BRIEN: Did the initial correspondence and perhaps some of your efforts bring the UAR to taking a rather moderate stance in the neutralist conference that took place in 1961?

BADEAU: Yes, I think so. We were very much concerned about that at the time. I’d say my efforts—I wouldn’t rate these too highly. I talked the situation over with the Egyptian authorities: Somewhat with President Nasser, but more with Ali Sabri, who at that time was his chief aid to Cairo, with whom I did a lot of business. I pointed out how badly it would affect American relations if Egypt allowed itself

to be used as a sounding board for violent anti-American propoganda on behalf of Guinea and Ghana and Cuba—they were the particular ones.

Now, our government, or certain sections of it, really wanted to flood Egypt with CIA agents and I was entirely against it. I didn't think this would do any good and I kept most of them out. We had some there. I just didn't see any use in having this. As a matter of fact, we had an exceedingly moderate conference. It was a good, constructive conference and I think I

[-10-]

got the clue of it. When it was over, I went to see Ali Sabri and congratulated him on conducting a constructive, useful conference without dragging in side issues and a conference that didn't hurt our relationships. And he looked at me and said rather quietly, "I presume you noticed, as I did, while we were having this conference, that the Congress of the United States was debating the foreign aid bill." Now, I think there it was. I think they had enough sense to recognize there was a connection between those things.

O'BRIEN: About the same time the Johnson [Joseph E. Johnson] plan for the settlement of the Arab refugee problem begins to jell. Were you consulted on that at all?

BADEAU: I was informed about it and I was asked to give judgments on what I thought Egyptian reactions might be, but not beyond that point, no. I saw Johnson; he came to Egypt. I took him to see proper authorities and so forth, but I wasn't asked in advance whether the mission was a good approach or not.

O'BRIEN: What did you recommend?

BADEAU: I recommended that we do it because I felt that no reasonable effort should be turned aside in an attempt to solve the refugee problem. I know Joe Johnson and I have the highest respect for his ability and calmness. I thought the basis on which it was mounted—and that is simply to act upon resolutions already on the book without passing new ones and to design it in such a way that no state was forced to take any quota of people from Israel—I thought it was a very realistic approach. I was very disappointed when it didn't get further than it did, although I think it made some progress.

O'BRIEN: A little later Myer Feldman made a trip under the cover of a vacation to Israel, and as I understand it, after he consulted the Israeli government in regard to this, he was to give you some sort of signal and then you were to talk to Nasser. Do you remember...?

BADEAU: I have no recognition of any signal at all, no.

O'BRIEN: Did you consult Nasser in regard to the Johnson plan at all?

BADEAU: Well, I didn't consult him, as I recall, as to whether or not it was a good idea. I didn't think that this was quite the way to go about things. I kept the Egyptian government informed very fully about what was going on and I reported back comments that came out of conversations.

Incidentally, let me say that one part of the Kennedy diplomacy in Egypt that paid very large dividends was—and this comes right from the President, as far as I know—was the decision that Egypt would be informed beforehand of difficult or unpleasant decisions so it wouldn't be caught off guard. This was done on a number of occasions and again, it paid very great dividends.

[-11-]

Now, let me give you an example. I guess this is still classified information, but we decided to sell Hawk missiles Israel. This is an unpopular policy as far as Egypt is concerned. But before this was announced, a special emissary was sent to Egypt, whom I took to see Nasser. This was in August and Nasser was down at his home in Alexandria. I took this man to see Nasser, who gave him a message from Kennedy: I want you to know we're going to do this; these are the reasons why we're doing it; I understand that you'll probably disagree, I'm not consulting you in any way, but I don't want you to be taken unawares.

O'BRIEN: Do you remember the emissary?

BADEAU: Oh, yeah. It was Bob Strong.

O'BRIEN: Bob Strong?

BADEAU: Bob Strong. This was done and Nasser listened very quietly to what was said. He said, "Of course, I don't like this. You knew I wouldn't like it, but I'm grateful to have been told." Now strangely enough, we had practically no reaction in Egypt to this: no newspaper attacks, no artificially created crowds, people continued to come to my parties. And while I think there were other reasons for this general American.... I'm sure that part of it was the fact that we had this—and on two or three other occasions, when we were going to resume nuclear testing, we told the Egyptians before it happened. This was a very useful approach, I felt.

O'BRIEN: Well, there were a series of amendments that were done on the original Johnson plan. Did you happen to follow those at all?

BADEAU: I don't remember now.

O'BRIEN: Israel, as I understand it, claimed that the original Johnson plan as it had been presented to them was amended through a good deal of it and rejected it on that basis.

BADEAU: Well, I'm sorry, I don't recall much about that. Not until Joe Johnson

arrived in Cairo did I really have much firsthand touch with it. I had the general ideas given and I reported back Nasser's comments, but I don't recall any of this.

O'BRIEN: Did you get involved in the Kuwait problem at all in those years?

BADEAU: No. Not really, because the Arab action in Kuwait was taken through the Arab League [League of Arab States]. I don't recall any particular relationship except personal conversation. I did have a very interesting conversation with Nasser about this, which I felt not only said something about Nasser but also said something about the way policy is made; I keep reminding my research colleagues here. When this was at its height,

[-12-]

I went out to see Nasser, and after discussing the situation, I asked him how he accounted for Qassem's [Abdul-Karim Qassem] move toward Kuwait, what he thought Qassem was after. And Nasser said, "Well you tell me what you think they're saying in the diplomatic corps." And I said, "I think most of the diplomats here think that it's very closely related to Kuwait's role as a major oil producer. Qassem has been threatening to nationalize the Iraq petroleum company. They noted that when Iran nationalized its oil, the nationalization did not effect them because Kuwait took up the slack. If he could now control Kuwait, as well as Iraq, he'd have a real corner on the oil market and could really get his economic objectives."

To this Nasser replied, "Well, there may be something in this." But he said, "The trouble with all you people, the trouble with my people are you make things too complicated." He said, "I think it was very much simpler." Now this is an exact quote. He said, "I think Qassem and his chief of staff went to the men's room one morning. And one said to the other, 'Why don't we take Kuwait?' And the other one said, 'Well, Mufti by god, it's a good idea. Let's do it.'" [Laughter] He said, "That is the way many of our decisions are made."

Now of course, this is oversimplified, but there is a certain pragmatic element here he was picking out that I thought was very interesting. And as a matter of fact, we learned afterwards that there was a measure of truth in this. That there were certain circumstances that kind of threw this problem up suddenly to Qassem and he picked it up.

O'BRIEN: Well, during 1961 the Nasser government moved toward a total—more of a kind of control on the economy, more total control in socializing the economy. And they also nationalized a great deal of land. As I recall, in December, they nationalized all land owned by foreigners. Did you have...

BADEAU: No, not quite. No, no, not quite. Now, they nationalized the industry, but land owned by foreigners was not nationalized except as it was the appurtenance of an industrial complex. It was not until the winter, I think, of '63-'64 that they passed legislation forbidding non-Egyptians to own agricultural land. At that time, all agricultural land in foreign hands was not nationalized, but they were forced to

sell it either to an Egyptian purchaser or to the government. That was three years after the nationalization of industry.

O'BRIEN: Were there many American interests involved in...

BADEAU: No. Not very many interests involved, not very many commercial interests and not very many land interests. Ford Motor Company was an assembly plant; it was not affected by this. Shell [Shell Oil Company] was nationalized and there was some American money in Shell. I'm not aware of any other large scale—but I was there. The number of Americans who had any land in Egypt was miniscule. The largest number of land owners were Turks. The Lebanese were the next, and we were way down the list. The problem didn't arise at this point. The problem arose because it was maintained by many of these countries, by Turkey and Lebanon, that if the

[-13-]

United States would withdraw its aid program, the Nasser regime would fall. We were supplying about one third of all the cereals consumed in Egypt as food. So they put pressure on us to withhold food from Egypt until Egypt denationalized Turkish and Lebanese land. That's where the pressure came.

O'BRIEN: Then there was very little pressure from American interest in this regard.

BADEAU: Very little indeed, because there just weren't very many.

O'BRIEN: In your recent book, *The American Approach to the Arab World*, you documented the Yemen crisis rather well. One of the things that appears to the reader of this, as well as, I think, anyone who gets involved in the Yemen problem, is that there are, perhaps, some very philosophical differences between people who are involved in Mid-East problems. Did you find any of these in your relations with your colleagues in the department, particularly with the recognition problem?

BADEAU: Oh, yes. There were so many differences, but I wouldn't say they were philosophical. I think it goes back to the factor that I spoke of earlier. The one group of people who really said anything that Nasser's for, we're against because Nasser's ultimate objectives are inimical to the American objectives; his whole internal system is inimical to the United States; he's the greatest stirrer-up of trouble in the area; the conservative regimes of Jordan and Saudi Arabia, where we have interests, are his targets, and therefore, anything he does is bad for us, so anything he does, we're against it. Therefore, anything that looked like the support of Egypt or making possible the continuation of the Egyptian presence in Yemen by continuing to supply aid, they were against. Now, this is the point of our argument. I think it was philosophical; I think it was very gutsy myself.

O'BRIEN: Was there a difference of opinion, let's say, in the people who are

concerned about problems of economic and political development as to the best way of doing this, through, let's say, a regime that...

BADEAU: Oh, yes. There are some very sharp differences. There's differences even within agency. Take for example CIA. There were two very sharply contrasted opinions in CIA: One group who said, "Nasser's a communist and we should be against him;" the other group said, "He's probably a protection against communism." No, there were quite differences of opinion that both reflected differences in the department and among one's colleagues, because almost inevitably an ambassador has to have a certain understanding of the country to which he's sent. Now you do your best to keep your objectivity, but if you're ambassador to Lebanon, and Egypt nationalized a lot of Lebanese property, you tend to be anti-Egyptian. If you're stationed down at Riyadh and you see the impact of program in Saudi Arabia, as Pete Hart [Parker T. Hart] did, you tend to be somewhat anti-Egyptian. This I fairly understand. Part of it arose out of that, and part of it arose out of the analysis back at home.

[-14-]

O'BRIEN: Was the matter of German arms technicians in UAR kind of "tempest in the teapot" or was it really a substantial problem?

BADEAU: Well, I don't think it was a very substantial problem. It was surfaced in this country primarily because of the development of rockets in UAR. As a matter of fact, (a) the rockets were very poor rockets, as far as I knew, and (b) the main task of the German technicians was not rockets at all, the main task of the German technicians was aircraft. They were working on air frames and engines. There was an Indian-UAR project. I felt it was somewhat of a "tempest in a teapot." Frankly the chief reason why Nasser did this was because he didn't want to be dependent on the Soviets. The Soviets charge a lot of money for their aircraft and they would withhold spare parts at times if they wanted something. He wanted to get out from under it. I had the feeling that Egypt's military capacity was going to be developed one way or another, and that if it could be developed with less reliance on the Russians, it would be a much better thing.

O'BRIEN: The month of June '63 saw the development of a movement within Jordan to overthrow Hussein [King Hussein I]. And, of course, it brought the Sixth Fleet and all from the west end of the eastern Mediterranean. Were you consulted in this and what did you recommend?

BADEAU: I wasn't consulted about the Sixth Fleet, but things went about somewhat differently. All that winter there had been trouble and the thing was blowing up. The Egyptian broadcasting was whipping it up. Finally, I was so concerned that without instructions I went to the government. As I recall it, I don't think I could see Nasser; it seems to me that he was away or something. Anyhow, I went to the man I usually dealt with and I made a very, very strong representation that we would respond to this and it was against our interests and ultimately against Jordanian interests and that the

UAR ought to keep their fingers out of it and stop their broadcasting. I hope it was this that had some effect. In any case, their involvement appeared to lessen. I was very strongly backed in this from the department, but I don't recall being consulted on the movements of the Sixth Fleet itself, no.

O'BRIEN: Well, in that crisis, as I recall, the Sixth Fleet was reversed, wasn't it, or they put in at Malta rather than...

BADEAU: What they did, they put in at Malta over the horizon. It seems to me, as I recall it, they sent one or two ships as a presence down in the Mediterranean. No, I don't recall being asked about that. In general, my feeling was—and this is true in the last brouhaha we had up in Turkey—you don't have to brandish the Sixth Fleet around, everybody knows it's there. Egyptians were perfectly aware of the fact it was there. Showing the flag I don't think does very much good. If you have to use it, go in and use it. If you don't have to use it, let it rest where it is. Everybody knows it's in the offing.

[-15-]

O'BRIEN: By this time, you'd really developed a rather close relationship with President Nasser, hadn't you?

BADEAU: Yes. It was very interesting. It happened largely because the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mahmoud Fawzi, who again was an old friend of mine, really was not in a policy making position in the government. He was a holdover, a diplomat of the old regime, a very adroit, very astute diplomat, but not really in the inner circle of the government. So he was like the chauffeur that drives the car when all the maps are in the back seat with the passenger, you see. So there was no use in going to Fawzi to get anything done; you could exchange courtesies, but you never could find out anything. Therefore, I had to go to the presidency. With the outbreak of the Yemen war in the fall of that year, there was plenty to go to the President about. As I recall it, in the thirty-six months I was on post, I saw the President officially at his home, for business and other things, forty-three times, which was better than once a month. This was more than all the Western ambassadors together. It was really quite an interesting experience.

O'BRIEN: Do you still keep in contact with him in any way?

BADEAU: Yes. I don't write to him directly. There were one or two people that we used as intermediaries. I send him articles from time to time, not necessarily pro-Egyptian articles at all; I sent him a lot of books when I was out there and I keep this up; on two or three occasions I have written through this intermediary to the President. Not on policy. I don't believe in mixing after you've left, but in general, concern about what's going on and so forth. And every time I go out—I've been out about three times since I left and I've seen him every time.

O'BRIEN: Well, in the summer after the Jordan crisis you came back to the United States, and as I recall, you were in a meeting with a Middle East group of people of the CIA and State Department.

BADEAU: That is very possible. I had to leave...

O'BRIEN: Remember anything about it?

BADEAU: ...that summer. I was home in the summer of '63. I was home on leave which I hadn't had. I was in Washington, but I can't tell you now without looking in my diary just what I did.

O'BRIEN: You don't happen to recall—I think you saw President Kennedy a couple of times—you don't happen to recall anything about those meetings, do you, right offhand?

BADEAU: No. I don't specifically those. The thing I recall most about the consultation that summer was again the question of Yemen. Komer professed to be urging much stronger tactics: possibly, letting American planes patrol the border and any Egyptian plan that got out of line, shoot them down. By this time Yemen was called "Komer's War." I set myself very strongly in opposition to that course of policy. That's the chief recollection that I have of that.

[-16-]

O'BRIEN: Reading again your book on *The American Approach to the Arab World*, you put a great deal of emphasis on economic problems and economic aid. In one place there, you say that the IMF [International Monetary Fund], in regard to monetary matters, was very much influenced by the predominance of United States voting power.

BADEAU: This was at one period.

O'BRIEN: Did you see any evidence of...

BADEAU: No, not while I was there. By this time, it had fairly well worked out. I think if you will read the passage carefully, you'll note that this really was at the inception of the IMF fund. No, I didn't see much relation to this. There were sections, the IBRD.... What is it? The IBRD [International Bank for Reconstruction and Development] or IDA [International Development Association] certainly was influenced, in my opinion, by the fact that Nasser developed what was technically a socialist system. Whether it happened—I didn't see that in the International Monetary Fund. I thought the IMF relations were really very good with Egypt. Their representatives acted fairly.

O'BRIEN: Egypt managed to get some rather substantial aid out of the IMF.

BADEAU: Oh yes, Egypt got some very substantial aid out of this and the conditions the International Monetary Fund finally laid down, I thought, were perfectly reasonable conditions. They had to do with stabilizing currency and control of consumer spending and other things.

O'BRIEN: U.S. assistance to the UAR went up considerably in those years, 1960 to...

BADEAU: Oh yes, it matched the Russian. I can't tell you offhand—the figures are easily available. But it has to be remembered that about 80 percent of this was PL 480. We had some hard currency. In principle, I was opposed to grants. I just don't believe in grant programs in this particular case. The problem was that the counterpart funds generated by the PL 480 program, in order to be spent efficiently, sometimes needed some dollars to push them along.

For instance, we had a silo project generated by the fact that without proper water storage facilities there was a very heavy loss in Egyptian grown grain due to rodents, rats, and so forth out in the villages. So that a good silo project up and down the Nile would be self-liquidated in about five years and would hit the country's greatest problem in food supply. Now you could pay for a great deal of this out of PL 480 money, but you couldn't pay for it all. And in order to use a large amount of PL 480 money, you had to have a little hard currency. So in that case we put a loan in it. So about 80 percent of the help, when I was out there, was on the PL 480 program.

O'BRIEN: In '62, I believe, Edward Mason, Edward S. Mason, came out to evaluate the development programs in the Nasser government. Did you talk to him once or...

[-17-]

BADEAU: Oh, yeah. I did indeed, I did. I took him out to see Nasser twice, and I spent a lot of time with him.

O'BRIEN: Well, he came away from that apparently not too impressed. You don't happen to recall...

BADEAU: Well, I would say, as I recall it, he put it in these general terms. He felt that if you took Egypt's performance to date—which was a growth rate of about 5.9 percent in the GNP [Gross National Product] and about 2.8 percent in the per capita development—that this was extremely good for Egypt with its population problem and everything else. And he told us this was very good, indeed. But that the plan of the government to double the GNP in eight years was just poppycock. He pressed this very strongly on Nasser not to be discontented with what he was doing and tried to point out that the only way you could get this doubling of the gross national product was to severely hold down all kinds of consumer spending. Nasser says, "I can't do this, these

people have waited too long.” And Mason said, “I know they have. That’s why you can’t get this objective.”

Now I think that Mason was right in his economic judgment. Where I thought he was a little misled, perhaps, was the fact that because everybody told him that Egypt was going to double its GNP in what was it, eight years’ time, that the President and everybody expected it would. This is not the way the Egyptian operates, at all, you know. You have to remember that if you buy a chair in Egypt, you start—fellow will tell you it’s worth fifty pounds; you find you’ll pay twenty for it and you go home very happy. I felt that he took some of this a little too seriously but in general, I felt that he was.... He felt that Egypt had done pretty well with what it had, but that its plans were somewhat grandiose.

O’BRIEN: Well, how did Nasser react to this kind of inquiry? Did he...

BADEAU: Very well. As I told you, you could be very frank with Nasser, and Mason was extremely frank with him. But I couldn’t see that it had any adverse facilities at all. I took Mason out for a long session. It was during Ramadan I remember, and we went out to the President’s country home where he was spending time, and we must have had three hours together.

As we got into it, the President said rather plaintively, “You know, the trouble with economists is they’re always telling me what I can’t do.” And he said, “I’ve got people; I’ve got to do something to take care of them. They’ve waited too long for these things.” And he said, “Besides, I don’t understand economics. When Dr. Kaissouni [Abdel Moneim El Kaissouni] comes in, he’s always telling me things I don’t understand.” And Mason said, “Well, Mr. President, you know, economics are not difficult. Development economics are very simple.” He said, “There are just two rules. You cannot have a, b, c, d, e, and f. You’ve got to make a choice. And when you

[-18-]

make the choice, you choose the thing that gives the greatest economic benefit.” He says, “It’s as simple as that.” Nasser said, “Well, nobody ever told me that before.”

So it was a very good meeting. One of the values was that it tended, I think, somewhat to strengthen the hand of some of the economic advisors, like Abdel Moneim Kaissouni, who really were much more realistic than Nasser was. To have a well known, foreign expert come and take the same line, I felt, helped these people, at least momentarily.

O’BRIEN: The aid program.... Aid was cut back the next year. Was it done as a result of any of Mason’s recommendations?

BADEAU: No. We had a three-year contract. We wrote a three-year PL 480 contract and the situation had to be revised at the end of every year. There was that kind of an escape clause in it and Egypt had not fulfilled some of its obligations under this. It had to do, for instance, with the sale and export of rice for currency when they shouldn’t have been using it. Well, I took the attitude that I did not believe in putting political conditions on an aid program—I don’t think it’s effective that way—but that

I thought you could put reasonably economic conditions and that if Egypt had not carried out its economic bargain, it ought to pay the price for it. This could be done without any political imperilment. At the same time, as I recall it, I think that funds available for dollar loans were somewhat cut back by Congress.

O'BRIEN: Getting back to the PL 480 program that was put into effect, as I understand it, AID [Agency for International Development] opposed the three-year provision, and wanted to do it on a one year basis. You don't happen to know the reasoning on this, do you?

BADEAU: Yeah, I know in general. This happened, you know, when I had first come on post, so it was new. If it had come later, I'd known it better. It all had to do with this image of Nasser. The argument was that if you put it on a three-year basis, you don't have any instrument of pressure. People feel too secure. They feel that they can do anything they want to and they're safe for three years. If you renew it every year, then they're always on a tight rein and they'll be checking up on it. Well, I was new at the time. In general, I did not believe that you have good relationships on this basis, but in particular, people in the department, Strong and Talbot both, would not buy that argument.

Also, it was really in line with what Kennedy was doing. Kennedy tried to get along with Egypt. Not by giving in to them, but he said, "Let's make a fresh effort and buy anything that's reasonable and will set the stage for better relations." He supported this quite strongly. I talked to him about this and he evidenced that this was the fact. The point that I tried to make was that when you give aid simply on a one year basis, you may, perhaps, increase its political effectiveness a little bit, but you decrease its economic effectiveness. You've got to be able to plan ahead a little bit. And if you plan to have 30 percent of your cereals this year cared for by PL 480, but next year that drops out, you're in an awful pickle. So

[-19-]

I felt that for the sake of sound economic progress you had to have some commitments into the future.

O'BRIEN: You don't happen to remember some of the personalities on the other side of this for the one year....

BADEAU: No. I don't.

O'BRIEN: You came home in December of that year and saw the President with Robert Komer. You don't happen to recall any of the things that went on in this meeting, do you?

BADEAU: No, I don't particularly. I don't recall now any major problems. There had just been the separation of Syria from the UAR. The Kuwait business had

come about. I don't have a clear vision of any particular thing that was called at that time.

O'BRIEN: Let's pass over to the country team idea that was brought in in '61. Did you use the so-called country team...

BADEAU: Who brought it in? The country team idea was an Eisenhower concept. He's the fellow who talked about the country team. And it wasn't brought in under Kennedy. One of the first things Kennedy did was to write a letter to every ambassador reaffirming an ambassador's authority. Now, in one sense, there was nothing new in this; it was always inherited with the position. On the other hand, it backed it up very much, you see. The country team idea was really, as I say, an Eisenhower phrase, an Eisenhower concept.

Now, it was not one that I accepted and I did not use it, and we did not use the phrase in the embassy. This was not because one failed to consult one's colleagues or utilize them to the full, but the suggestion of a country team is that you arrive at policy by sitting down and taking a vote and if 51 percent of the country team think this is the thing to do, this is what you do. Now, you can't do that in an embassy. You can avail yourself of all the information skilled people have, but in the end you've got to make up your own mind and then be responsible for it. I didn't cultivate it and I didn't have much trouble. I stabbed it out. We didn't try and think in those terms.

O'BRIEN: Were you fully informed of the activities of the other agencies like the CIA and AID?

BADEAU: I don't know how it is every place, but I thought that with this authority that if an ambassador didn't know what was going on it was his own fault. I got the size of CIA somewhat reduced before I went out. I talked to Dulles about it. I felt it was too large a...

[END SIDE 1, TAPE 1; BEGIN SIDE 2, TAPE 1]

...group out there. It wasn't reduced as much as I later would have liked, but I got it reduced somewhat. I felt I had a very satisfactory

[-20-]

working relationship with my CIA man. I didn't want to know every detail of what was going on because there are times when diplomatic ignorance is a very healthy thing. But I wanted to know what I was being ignorant about, you see. I really didn't have difficulties.

O'BRIEN: You ever have any real problems at all with....

BADEAU: Now Luke Battle [Lucius D. Battle], who followed me, did have some problems with CIA. And there were times when I disagreed with lines

they wanted to take. As I said, they really wanted to flood the country at the time of the nonaligned economic conference. I stood against this and got them cut down. No, I didn't have much difficulty. Mind you, there wasn't too much, we weren't mounting black operations in Egypt at the time. Their information gathering went on quite steadily, but no, I can't say I had many problems.

O'BRIEN: In reading the Gruening [Ernest Gruening] study on Middle East aid, particularly in the Middle East...

BADEAU: Yeah, Gruening was out there when I was there.

O'BRIEN: How was the Gruening study received in Egypt? Were the Egyptians and Nasser aware of it at all?

BADEAU: Oh, yes, they were aware of it. They follow all these things. They didn't like—well of course, whenever you get this they were sure it's just a case of Zionism in the United States. This blankets it and turns it off. Gruening was not in Cairo very long; he left a young aide there to do the work and it was quite apparent that he was only interested in the things that would discredit the situation. But we weren't uncooperative, he got them on his report.

O'BRIEN: Yes, I was involved in it to the extent that I was, first of all, made aware of it, and second, gave judgments on what its utility was. However, the government had a representative—his name has just slipped my mind at the moment. He was an engineer who was working on UNESCO [United Nations Economic, Social, and Cultural Organization] and he came out to Egypt and carried this as a UNESCO-United States representative directly so that my involvement was minimal in it.

O'BRIEN: There was some congressional reaction to that, as I recall in the....

BADEAU: I'm not aware of it and there very probably was because, again, anything that seemed to focus attention on Nasser—this was even true when the Tutankhamun exhibit came to this country. You know,

[-21-]

initially it didn't come to the Metropolitan [Metropolitan Museum] because there was such a furor in New York City. But this was extremely peripheral as far as I was concerned.

O'BRIEN: In regard to American oil interests in the Middle East and the UAR, were there any instances in which oil as a matter of national security came into play in regard to your relations with Egypt over the Canal or with American industry?

BADEAU: Well, not with the Canal, particularly. In the case of Yemen, our whole

effort was to prevent the Yemen situation from causing turmoil in Saudi Arabia. In the course of discussing the situation on numerous occasions with Nasser, it was necessary to state very crisply what the American interest in the Arabian Peninsula was and oil was central in this. Whenever one did this you always got the answer from Nasser, “Yes, I understand this. I know you’ve got oil interest. I’m not after the oil of Saudi Arabia.” Now, many people didn’t believe that, and I’m not sure what his intentions were.

The oil interests in Egypt proper was very minimal. Phillips [Phillips Petroleum Company] and Pan-American [Pan-American Petroleum Corporation] both came out while I was there and invested fairly large sums of money in development and only did so after very, very extensive conversations with us in the embassy. SOCONY-Mobil [SOCONY-Mobil Oil Company] was largely a distribution agency out there and it was somewhat affected by this. But we had no really strategic values there. You see, the Canal was not in question when I was out there, it was open when I came out and when I left.

O’BRIEN: Well, in those years, the Soviet Union made some moves to develop a marketing organization for oil and made some contacts with Middle Eastern countries. Did they.... Were you aware of any contact there?

BADEAU: I saw no sign of this contact in Egypt, no.

O’BRIEN: Was there ever any time in which the White House assumed, that you can recall in your tenure as ambassador, the White House assumed direct contact with you and sort of superseded the normal channels in regard to crisis problems?

BADEAU: We only had one crisis problem and we knew that was Yemen, morning, noon, and night. But even in that, I’m not aware of that, no.

O’BRIEN: On your book again, *The American Approach to the Arab World*, as well as a lot of other literature, it seems to me that many of you that write on the Middle East touch on the business of the of influence of pro-Israel groups on U.S. foreign policy. Much of this is a kind of unspoken sort of thing. Who are they, in essence, in the Kennedy administration?

[-22-]

BADEAU: You get a combination. Now, don’t misunderstand me, I think one has to be careful how one writes. The fact that American citizens have interests in Israel is perfectly legitimate. I used to tell Nasser this; I used to say, “Look Mr. President, your Pan-Arabism bothers a great many people in America. They think that you should have no business diddling with the Arab world. But you have Egyptians who are Pan-Arab and you got to take them—we have Americans who support Israel and it’s a perfectly normal thing.” So you have to differentiate between fact and its legitimacy. I don’t think it’s in our interest, but that’s another matter.

Now, you find these groups in various ways. First of all, you find it expressed through members of Congress who come from areas where it is assumed there is a Jewish vote. I say, “where it is assumed” because I don’t believe there is a Jewish vote in this country, most of my Jewish friends don’t believe so, but this has been a myth that’s been created, you see. So that when Keating [Kenneth B. Keating] runs in New York against Kennedy [Robert F. Kennedy], he has to make a speech about what he’s going to do for Israel. This is not because anybody has put pressure on him, it’s because he’s got an electorate which he believes responds to this. This is true in Chicago. When Edward Kennedy [Edward Moore Kennedy] first ran for the Senate, he made [a] red hot pro-Zionist speech in Boston. I don’t think anybody put him up to it; I think he was just out trying to get votes. So in the first instance, you have the straight political process of people who come from areas where they believe there is a Jewish vote. This is a very considerable number of areas.

Secondly, you have a whole variety of organizations in this country—Jewish organizations of one kind or another go all the way from Hadassah [The Women’s Zionist Organization of America] to B’Nai Brith to The Zionist Organization of America—and these are all put together; there is an organization of the presidents of them. This represents some organized voice speaking on behalf of the interests that they believe. Now if you’ll read the hearings that Senator Fulbright had about four years ago on lobbying in this regard, you get this spelled out very directly. How far this is connected directly with the Israeli government itself is open to some question.

Then you have the influence that is mounted by individuals. Now, take for instance the sale of Hawk missiles to Israel in the summer of, what was it, ‘62 I think it was. On one hand, this had a military justification; that is, the Pentagon said that Israel was vulnerable because of its lack of certain defensive measures and that the sale of Hawk missiles would not increase its offensive capacity and therefore, you could justify it militarily. But I don’t think this is why it was done. It was done because the Congress was facing the first election to Congress after Kennedy had been elected and individuals, who were contributors to the campaign funds of various candidates, withheld their contributions in that summer along into August and said, “You don’t get this until we know what you are going to do for Israel.” And finally, the President said, “Well, I’ve got military justifications, I’m going to sell Hawk missiles to Israel” and then he got the funds. This is private individual pressures.

Or take Humphrey [Hubert H. Humphrey] when he came out to see the President. I took him out to see Nasser. I’ve often wondered how—I didn’t take him; he

[-23-]

knew Nasser so I sent him out. I think he was five hours. I bet you Nasser didn’t say three words, anyhow. When he came back, Humphrey said to me, “This is a very brave thing I have done. I get lots of campaign money from Jewish friends, and it doesn’t please then when I go to see Nasser.” And I think a great deal of it comes in these terms.

O’BRIEN: How about other areas like the State Department and Defense, perhaps for other reasons than this, were there...

BADEAU: I’m not aware, particularly. I knew the Department of Defense only at a

distance and certainly, I didn't see any pronounced evidence of this during my period in NEA, although I'm sure there were people who differed on our policies one way or the other.

O'BRIEN: On the other hand, I often hear charges that the State Department is pro-Arab or influenced by so-called "Arabists." I'm just curious, what is an "Arabist?"

BADEAU: Well, I'm curious too, because there is a great spread of people who have been interested in the Arab world for one reason or another. Technically speaking, an "Arabist" is a man who is a scholar in the Arabic language. Now, I don't think these fellows influenced the State Department very much; I don't think they cared two hoots, you know. But there are people, like the people who formed the American Friends of the Middle East, Hocking [William E. Hocking], Dean Virginia Gildersleeve [Virginia Crocheron Gildersleeve], and other people like that, who attached themselves to the Arab cause and who believed that injustice had been done, and I think these people are generally referred to.

Now frankly, I never saw very much evidence of that. I think it is much more accurate to say that the State Department, as I have known it, and this includes Forrestal [James V. Forrestal] and others of the Truman period, took the attitude they did because they believed that a strongly pro-Israeli policy was inimicable to the interest of the United States, which is a different thing.

O'BRIEN: There was a group in the State Department.... The term that I recall is, Nasser is the (quote) "wave of the future" (unquote). Would those people be considered...

BADEAU: Well, there were some of those, but you know, when I got in the Department I didn't find really anybody that believed this in any depth. I certainly didn't believe it and I would say the people that believed Nasser was not the wave of the future were far more.

I think, however, there was a different attitude that was oversimplified in this: because our interest in petroleum and other things largely lie within conservative countries, there has been a tendency for American policy to have a closer connection with countries like Saudi Arabia and Libya and at one time Morocco and Jordan than with the other countries. This is quite a natural thing, you see. This has somewhat played into the Russian hands as they

[-24-]

have attempted to polarize the situation and depict us to the Middle East as the supporters of the vanishing order and they are supporters of revolution.

Now in this situation, there are a good many people who believe, as I do myself, that the traditional order is doomed. There's no one pattern of the new order that you can follow—I don't think Arab Socialism is a pattern of the new order. You may get an

evolutionary development of Saudi Arabia or some of these other countries. But I think there's been a good deal of feeling that the United States could not allow itself to be forced into a position of simply being the defender of the status quo and therefore, it had to relate itself across the border some of the other movements. To this extent, change, development, a certain degree of radical change probably is the wave of the future but this is not the same as saying that Nasser is the wave of the future.

You see, if that was in the Department, you probably found it right after 1956 when Nasser emerged triumphant from the Suez Canal business and when the union with Syria formed: then he seemed to be riding the crest. Now, I'd scarcely gotten on the field before Syria broke up the union and this was the beginning of Nasser's decline. He still is an important figure, but on the whole, since then, he's declined. So I think the question was less urgent when I was in the field than it was at a slightly earlier period.

O'BRIEN: Do you think U.S. policy in those years—well, let's say from the Eisenhower years on through the Kennedy administration and into the Johnson [Lyndon Baines Johnson] years—became more of a policy to check Nasser than to rather contain the Soviet Union?

BADEAU: No. I wouldn't say that. Kennedy didn't allow it to become this. There were those—he didn't allow it to become this. I think that under Johnson they were more attentive to this, but I'm not sure if Kennedy had remained alive that it might not have happened under Kennedy, because one thing about Kennedy was, he was bold, he was visionary, he also had a temper. And I could just see that when you've tried long enough and you get what you want, you tend to say, "All right, now, damn it. I've had it," you see. I wouldn't have been surprised if he'd done this. And when we had this series of incidents in the fall of '64, just after I came home—the burning of the library, the shooting down of the Mecom [John W. Mecom Oil Company] plane, Nasser's "go drink up the sea" speech—I think that Kennedy might have reacted like Johnson did. You don't know. Certainly, the feeling on the part of both Rusk and Johnson was, "Look, we've done our best. We've gone the second or the third mile with Egypt. Nasser doesn't respond so let's relax. If they want relations, let them take it up."

O'BRIEN: In retrospect here, in your years that you spent there as ambassador from '61-'64, did your long range views change as to what policies should be in the area and objectives for the U.S.?

BADEAU: Oh, I think they've changed in many details, but I wouldn't say fundamentally they've changed. Mind you, I don't think it's possible to define a long range policy; I think you can define long range objectives. The problem is that the Arab world is so fluid that

[-25-]

it's very difficult to have a steadily pursued plan. In general, I have believed that the essence of our position in the Middle East must lie upon the discovery and cultivation of shared

interests; and that our ability to override events and to control people, and the Russians I believe likewise, has been steadily decreased and therefore, we can't get in this direction; and that in general, we ought to reduce our commitments in the area to match our hard interest. I think there's been a tendency to proliferate without a great many—without really asking what our interests are. While I would say my period sharpened very much some of my ideas, I wouldn't say I'd done any bold face, no.

O'BRIEN: Did the Kennedy administration live up to your expectations as far as foreign policy was concerned?

BADEAU: Well, I don't know what my expectations were. You know, you have to remember that this thing dropped on me like a thunder clap. It was the last thing in the world.... I just never had envisioned, thought about, desired, longed for, or anything else—I mean, all of a sudden to be confronted with this. I took a long, long time before I decided that I would do it. It raised a great many very serious questions for me. I did feel that Kennedy was honest in his statements that he was trying to look at a fresh approach and he certainly did that.

O'BRIEN: Well, we've covered a number of points here. Is there anything else that you would recall or care to put on the tape for posterity?

BADEAU: Well, we've covered matters pretty well. One of the great disappointments in this period was that I was unable to get Nasser to visit the United States and to see Kennedy. Now, I wanted to do this primarily for two reasons: One reason is that there were certain things that Nasser needed to understand very clearly. Things that we were not going—he needed to understand what our policy in Palestine really was, which was not what he thought it was. American policy has never been as pro-Israeli as the Arabs think, nor has it been as pro-Arab as the Israelis think. I think if you look at our actual policies, these are pretty defensible. I think there were certain cautions that had to be sounded in Nasser. Now, I did the best I could, but in the end nobody could do this but the president of the United States: This is the real horse's mouth. I thought if Nasser could have sat down for an afternoon with Kennedy and Kennedy would be as frank with him as he was in his correspondence, I felt we would get a much better basis to get along together because he would be under no apprehension about where we stood and where we wanted to go.

On the other hand, I'm sure that Nasser didn't understand what made America tick. He didn't understand American capitalism which he thought of in terms of the Levantine capitalists that he knew—our mix of public and private enterprise—and I felt that it would do a great deal to make our relations more understanding if he would just come to this country and see it and talk with businessmen and so forth. So I worked very hard toward that end and I would

have gotten it had not the Yemen War broken out and that put the end to it. That I think was too bad. I think it might have had a very real effect not just on American-Nasser relations, but on the developments within Egypt itself.

O'BRIEN: Well, thank you Ambassador Badeau. It's been a very informative interview.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

[-27-]

John S. Badeau
Name Index

B

Battle, Lucius D., 21
Bowles, Chester B., 1, 3
Bundy, McGeorge, 5

D

Dulles, John Foster, 2, 20

E

Eisenhower, Dwight D., 2, 20, 25
El Kaissouni, Abdel Moneim, 18, 19
Everton, John S., 2

F

Fawzi, Mahmoud, 16
Feldman, Myer, 5, 11
Forrestal, James V., 24
Fulbright, J. William, 3, 23

G

Galbraith, John Kenneth, 2
Gildersleeve, Virginia Crocheron, 24
Gruening, Ernest, 21

H

Hart, Parker T., 14
Hocking, William E., 24
Humphrey, Hubert H., 23, 24
Hussein I, King, 15

J

Johnson, Joseph E., 11, 12
Johnson, Lyndon Baines, 25

K

Keating, Kenneth B., 23
Kennedy, Edward Moore, 23
Kennedy, John F., 1, 2, 4, 9, 10, 11, 12, 16, 19, 20,
25, 26
Kennedy, Robert F., 23
Komer, Robert W., 5, 6, 16, 20

M

Mason, Edward S., 17, 18, 19

N

Nasser, Gamal Abdel, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14,
15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26,
27

Q

Qassem, Abdul-Karim, 13

R

Reischauer, Edwin O., 2, 4
Rusk, Dean, 1, 25

S

Sabri, Ali, 10, 11
Strong, Robert C., 5, 12, 19

T

Talbot, Phillips, 4, 5, 6, 19
Thomson, James C., Jr., 3
Truman, Harry S., 3, 24

Y

Young, Kenneth T., 2, 4