

Myer Feldman Oral History Interview – JFK#12, 8/26/1967
Administrative Information

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Biographical Note

Feldman, (1914 - 2007); Legislative assistant to Senator John F. Kennedy (1958-1961); Deputy Special Counsel to the President (1961-1964); Counsel to the President (1964-1965), discusses the Kennedy Administration and the Suez Canal, providing foreign aid to Israel, and supporting the Nile monument preservation, among other issues.

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Myer Feldman – JFK #12

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Twelfth Oral History Interview

with

MYER FELDMAN

August 26, 1967
Washington, D.C.

By John Stewart

For the John F. Kennedy Library

STEWART: I guess the place to start the Suez Canal is during the campaign Kennedy [John F. Kennedy] made a number of commitments as far as changes in American policy towards opening the Suez Canal.

FELDMAN: Well, I think it really goes back even farther than that. I think it goes back as far as I knew Kennedy because shortly after I came with him he delivered a speech at the tenth anniversary of the founding of Israel. That was in 1958. The speech was in Constitution Hall. He followed Abba Eban. We were

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concerned about whether he should follow this great orator, who we believed was the greatest in the world, possibly next to Churchill [Winston Churchill]. But we agreed that he should go on with the speech, and he was anxious to do it. At that time we discussed what he might possibly say that was new, and decided that perhaps it wasn't necessary to say anything new, but he might reiterate some of the solutions to some of the old problems. So, we decided on some of the old problems like...So, one of the old problems was the Suez Canal. He was familiar with its origin, and when I talked to him, was familiar with the fact that there had been a commitment on the part of the United States, at the time of the Arab-Israeli War, to open the Suez Canal which Nasser [Gamal Abdel Nasser] had not honored.

He felt that Nasser should have honored it, and he indicated that he would make this a major point of the speech.

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In fact he did not, because, although it was in the original draft, as the speech was too long, given all the problems of a long session at Constitution Hall, so he left out all of it. As I remember it, there was just a phrase left. That's the first time I talked to Kennedy about the Suez Canal. There was just no doubt in his mind but that Israel was entitled to free access to the Canal, both by virtue of international treaties and by virtue of being a specific American commitment. He didn't say much about it, and we didn't even discuss it much, even in the few speeches he made to various Jewish groups in the United States, until just before August, 1960. That was his major – that was the date of his major speech before the American Zionist organizations.

STEWART: Yes. There had been a plank in the platform at the Convention...

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FELDMAN: Oh yes. I forgot about that, yes. Well, we of course, had helped in drafting that plank and there was no problem about getting it in or having it accepted. As I remember, Chester Bowles was draftsman of it and he too felt the same way. He also was our foreign policy advisor. So there was no problem about that in the platform at the Convention. But we did get into a discussion about it preceding that speech in August of 1960. Now, there, as always, the candidate was looking for a five point program or a six point program or a seven point program or whatever it may be. But, before adopting such a program, he of course wanted to be sure he understood every aspect of it, and one of the things we discussed in connection with that speech was free access to the Suez Canal. The discussion was not so much over whether this was something he shouldn't announce, but rather about how it

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could be achieved. I don't remember that we came to any conclusions as to how it could be achieved, but I do remember his listening intently as I recited – although I guess it was hardly necessary for me to recite it because I think he was familiar with it – while I recited what I knew about the history of the Suez Canal and international waterways and free access to them and so on. And then his question was, "What could the president do about it?" My answer was that obviously you can use force, you can invade Egypt and open up the Suez Canal, and that's silly because nobody would even think about that. He, of course, agreed, I said we could encourage the Israelis to use whatever devices they had to get to the Suez Canal, and we didn't want that either. And Kennedy said, no, of course he wanted to keep peace in the Middle East. That was the major

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point in the speech itself. So he was not then, nor was he ever, as a matter of fact, in favor of quote “unleashing” unquote, the Israelis. He always was in favor of maintaining a balance between Israel and the Arab states. But he said, “Why doesn’t this fit in with another part of the speech, which dealt with maintaining such relationships with all of the nations that we could use our influence on them to have them moderate their views toward Israel. And I guess, although we didn’t reach any conclusions, and although there was nothing in the speech dealing with how this was to be achieved – obviously it was premature to say anything like that – he was thinking then and continued to think in terms of American influence on Arab states. He always felt that there should be an American presence in the Arab states, something that would commit the United States to exert some measure of influence upon them in the

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direction of peace in the Middle East, in the direction of helping American interests there. So, that talk, which was off and on in the course of the preparation of the speech, but was pretty extensive, I guess in all, our talk must have been – it must have been half to three quarters of an hour’s discussion about these, say – and that’s a lot for anything at that time...

STEWART: Yes, it was during the campaign.

FELDMAN: Because normally you submit something to him and you have a meeting and he has maybe five minutes on each point. At the same time, at the time of that speech, there was a meeting which I referred to on one of these earlier tapes, with leaders of the Jewish community, held at the apartment of Abe Feinberg [Abraham Feinberg] in the Hotel Pierre. I think I talked about this, didn’t I?

STEWART: I don’t think so.

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FELDMAN: Maybe I didn’t, maybe I didn’t.

STEWART: No.

FELDMAN: But about that time, and my recollection is that it was after the speech, but it may have been just before. But it was sometime during the summer of 1960, prior to the presidential campaign itself. This speech was in August before the campaign really got started. Sometime around that same time he felt it would be useful to be exposed to the thinking of the leaders or the American Jewish community. This wasn’t wholly intellectual, of course. He would look to them for some support, some financial support during the campaign. He looked to them for advice in a rallying point to get the five and a half million Jews in the United States to vote for him in the campaign. He would look to them as a source of strength, both on ideas and financially.

So, he asked me and

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Abe Feinberg and Abe Ribicoff [Abraham A. Ribicoff] to get together a group of what people that we would consider the leaders of the Jewish community in the United States. This group numbering, I'd guess about thirty, met in Abe Feinberg's apartment in the Hotel Pierre. The purpose was largely, as I say, to have Kennedy exposed to them and have them exposed to him. He started by a short statement on Israeli issues and issues that were of interest to the Jewish community. He regarded them, properly, as kind of a liberal force. His statement wasn't more than ten or fifteen minutes. But then, following that, he was questioned for maybe an hour and a half about all phases of these problems, and he gave frank and honest answers. He didn't – I'll tell you in a minute what the reaction was. But he didn't color them and he didn't say to them what he wouldn't have said to any Arab group or to any other group of people.

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But, in preparation for that meeting, I started to say, we also discussed the Suez Canal and we discussed travel of Americans to Arab lands and what the president ought to do about it – that was a big issue at the time – we discussed the supply of weapons to Israel, we discussed American commitments to the security of Israel and what they would do and so on. We went through the whole range of American-Israeli problems and then we went through the range of American-Jewish problems, really liberal problems, because he wanted to be prepared for any of the questions. Well, at that time we also discussed the Suez Canal, and it was more or less on the same lines as the discussion for the speech. It was a much shorter one because he now knew it and felt pretty comfortable with it.

I said earlier that I would tell you about

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the reaction of this group that met. I think it was an important meeting. I think it did, in some small measure, contribute to the enormous support he got from the Jewish voters because all the people then left that meeting and they went to – there were people from the West Coast like Mitchell; there were people from Chicago like Phil Klutznick [Philip M. Klutznick]; people from Connecticut, of course, Abe Ribicoff; a lot of New Yorkers there; some from Washington, Cy Kenan; John Bailey [John Moran Bailey] was waiting downstairs. He wanted to attend the meeting but the candidate thought it wouldn't be appropriate to have him there. So he waited downstairs on the first floor. I remember John Bailey was also a buddy of Ribicoff's, so he had two reasons for being there; one, his political interest, and two, his relationship to Ribicoff. He was state chairman of Connecticut at that time. Anyhow, that meeting resulted in great support from the people who

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attended it, not because Kennedy said anything that would inspire them, because he didn't. He was very frank and candid, and it was just this characteristic that I think endeared him to them and which I saw over and over again in other groups. He didn't try to color his views to others. Now, all of them were kind of extremists. Ninety percent of them were Zionists. Well, he didn't come out and say that the United States ought to publicly declare a – one of the questions was, "Should they have an allegiance with Israel?" He said, "No." He was very frank about it. He said he didn't believe in that. He wanted to maintain relationships with all those nations in the Near East. But that kind of honesty and candor again and again was typical of Kennedy. And the normal political instinct would have been to say what they wanted him to say, to

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say that he will announce an agreement with Israel that we're going to support them. But he, very honestly, said that he didn't believe that was in the best interests of the United States, and he wasn't going to do that. And, in fact, during his years as President he went farther than he committed himself to go for that meeting. It's worth a footnote to say that Bobby Kennedy [Robert F. Kennedy] had a somewhat similar meeting just before his campaign for Senate, in New York.

STEWART: Oh, really? Was it as successful?

FELDMAN: No, I don't think it was, but we're not talking about Bob. I was there too, and I helped get that meeting together – just New Yorkers, obviously nobody outside of New York. It was in the same place, in the same room in the same apartment in the Pierre.

STEWART: Did you ever hear of any similar meeting Nixon [Richard M. Nixon] may have held?

FELDMAN: No, Nixon had a different tactic in trying to

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get the support of the Jewish community. He, himself, didn't attempt to go out and meet people who might be leaders. I think there were several reasons for that. First, I don't think he could have enlisted the same kind of sympathy, and it would be bad politics to meet with them if he wasn't sure that the result might be favorable. And I think the result would have to be unfavorable, although maybe there's some advantage to meeting the opposition too. It would kind of take the edge off them. But what Nixon did was hired, and spent a lot of money on hiring a group of people who were supposed to go out and write letters and write statements, make speeches, and do a good deal of traveling to try to get the Jewish community people to vote for him. I think a fellow named Katzen was the head of that group. But it was most unsuccessful. It reall – poor attendance, a

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waste of money. I think ours was very helpful. And it was helpful, not so much because of any commitment he made, but because of the lack of commitment he made. He didn't say any more than he would have said publicly. He didn't give them any private assurances, which would be kind of a temptation. But they respected him for that and in the long run, I guess that's good politics. And you know what the result was in the general election. But anyhow, let's get back to the subject of the Suez Canal. At that meeting at the August speech before the Zionist Convention Kennedy fully committed himself to free passage in the Suez Canal, and did not commit himself in saying how that was to be achieved. Then just before he took office, after he'd won the election, and before January 21st, I guess it must have been around December, 1960, he asked the Budget Bureau to go through all

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of his campaign statements and make a list of all of the commitments he had made during the campaign. And they are in a book which I assume is part of the Kennedy Library. It should be if it's not. I have a copy of it. Do you know whether it's a part of...

STEWART: No, I don't. I assume it is.

FELDMAN: Well, there aren't very many copies of it. I'd say there aren't more than two or three copies of it, so if you don't have it maybe I ought to get it for you. But, among those commitments of course were the commitments dealing with the Near East, one of those was the Suez Canal. He took that book and went down to Palm Beach, I think toward the end of December, and showed it to Kennedy and he went over it. There was no specific reference at that time to the Near East commitments. We went over a lot of the others and we did a lot of things in connection

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with that, which I guess other people have told you about or I've told you about.

STEWART: Yes, you've gone over this.

FELDMAN: But, after he was sworn in, I had a discussion with him about general problems of the Jewish community in the United States and it necessarily dealt somewhat with the Near East. And I remember they said, well, he said that the most important problem he had was refugees. I told him that some of the groups were interested in some of the other problems. The American-Israel Public Affairs Committee was particularly concerned about free passage in the Suez Canal. The American Jewish Committee was particularly concerned about the extent to which American Jews could travel in Arab countries, and the restrictions on visas that were given to them, and so on. And the refugee issue, although one of the most important perhaps – none of these

issues alone could

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achieve peace – but perhaps the refugee issue would go farther in that direction than any of the others. But, I mentioned the question of the Suez Canal. Then he told me that it had been suggested to him, and I did not make this suggestion and I don't know who made the suggestion, that he have this correspondence with the leaders in each of the Arab states, again to see if there could be a major American influence in those countries. And again he said more or less what he said prior to the speech. And that was, "Well, maybe this might be some way in which this could be done." But he also said that he thought at the present time this was one of those helpless things, there just didn't seem to be any handle that he could use to get it done, and although he still stood for it and would support it, would do anything that was reasonable, he didn't know how this could

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be achieved at the present time.

Now, at various times during his Administration we also discussed – but it was always in those terms, that although he was fully committed to it, he would sign any statement that I would draft which would call for it; he made no secret about the fact that this ought to be done; he still wouldn't, he still felt that it was largely a waste of time, that at this date nothing could be done. So, I guess, on balance, although he was strongly for it, we didn't have any new ideas concerning how it was to be achieved.

STEWART: Keating [Kenneth B. Keating] I think offered an amendment in 1961 that Fulbright [J. William Fulbright] had beaten down, regarding that.

FELDMAN: I remember that, but I'm a little bit vague on it.

STEWART: I don't know specifically what the amendment meant, but it was a freedom of the seas type

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of thing.

FELDMAN: Oh, I think I remember. Yes, I think it was a sense of Congress resolution that was attached to the foreign aid bill...

STEWART: Right, right.

FELDMAN: And we did have a question as to what the Administration's position should be on it. I guess we felt that, although we would support that concept, this was not the way to achieve it. It's kind of hazy in my

mind, but I know with all similar things we believed that it was in vain to support this and it wouldn't help us. I think Keating's idea was that this could support us in any negotiations with Arab states to attain free passage in the Suez Canal. It was the view of the State Department, and frankly I didn't pay much attention to it myself, it was the view of the State Department that this, far from helping, would hurt; it would simply

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compel the Arabs to react very strongly against it. Since I thought, and I guess the President thought, as I said before in any event that all this was in vain, that nothing would be done no matter what happened until the climate was more favorable, until there was some opening that could be exploited. The – I guess we didn't pay an awful lot of attention to it, but we, our position would have been, I think, to support Fulbright in rejecting it.

STEWART: Was there much criticism that nothing more specific was tried than that?

FELDMAN: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. I got lots of mail in the White House. Mail would come to me in which they would ask what the United States was doing about this. It wasn't a major issue...

STEWART: No, no.

FELDMAN: But I still would get letters from many people. I mentioned one of the organizations, there were other organizations interested in this, of

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course. And I'd get the letters and I'd answer that if they had a good idea as to how it could be done, we'd like to have it, but we were doing all we could and although we stood for this principle, there was nothing that could be done at the present time. So, I wouldn't...

STEWART: It's an interesting...

FELDMAN: The interesting thing is what would he have done now? Now there is an opportunity to exploit it, and I guess it's not for me to speculate about that. But certainly this would have presented a different picture from the one that faced him.

STEWART: Curran [Joseph E. Curran] in the Transport Workers Union got involved or was making quite a few statements about that whole area. Did you have any dealings with him?

FELDMAN: Yes, he called a couple of times, and again, there just was nothing, no comfort we could give him. I admit that I was personally sympathetic to Curran and I would guess that Kennedy was too;

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but publicly we had to take the position that we were running foreign policy and there wasn't any possibility of achieving what Curran wanted, so we'd just have to reject it. But I do believe that – I know that I was sympathetic to Curran's resolutions. I think he had a couple of resolutions from his union, and made statements in his union paper, and he made some speeches. I was personally sympathetic to it and I believe the President was too, but we took a public position that this was none of his business.

STEWART: Okay, in the whole matter of foreign aid, was the question of an increase in the number of loans and the rate of interest of concern, did this come up? Of course, then the actual grant program to Israel had ended, or was about to end. It was just a matter of continuing the loan.

FELDMAN: Yes, that's right. That's right. I thought I – didn't I discuss the foreign aid problems? Oh, I never....

STEWART: No.

FELDMAN: Let's see where we begin on foreign aid. I guess

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the first time I was involved was with our first foreign aid bill. That would have been the '63 budget...

STEWART: '62...

FELDMAN: No, '62 budget. At that time I went to see Kennedy at the urging of other people – I didn't know an awful lot about what had gone on in the past – to see what could be done to strengthen the Israel program. It was true that the grant program had just been phased out, and Israel was pretty proud of it. I guess I can – a lot of these things are going to be secret now, but I guess it's all right.

STEWART: Yes.

FELDMAN: There was a strong feeling that Israel shouldn't get any development loan money either. The recommendation from State, reflected in its testimony to the congressional committee, was that Israel had attained a degree of self-sufficiency where it didn't need any more development loan money, that it was no longer a less developed country and if any savings

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were to be affected in the budget, why, it ought to be at the expense of Israel. The recommendation of our first AID administrator was that Israel should get zero. The Israeli ambassador came to see me and told me that in the preceding budget he had been promised thirty million dollars in development loan money, had received only fifteen million. He was under the impression and he had gotten this from Douglas Dillon [C. Douglas Dillon], who was then Under Secretary of State with Eisenhower [Dwight D. Eisenhower], that the additional fifteen million would be added on the following year's budget. Instead the movement seemed to be toward eliminating it completely. I discussed with him the basis for anything like forty-five million dollars – it was a lot of money in development loan assistance. Well, Israel doesn't have projects that are in most instances, as good as the other countries, but they do a lot of

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things to help the United States. And he said that this was the basis for the request. For instance, they were maintaining – some things I can't even say on this tape...

STEWART: All right.

FELDMAN: But they were maintaining relationships in Africa and in Latin America that were useful to the United States. And he said that if they didn't get some assistance, they'd have to cut those out and the United States would suffer directly. He said, moreover, his second point was that it was understood that Israel didn't get any grant money for military aid, Jordan did, other nations in the same position as Israel vis a vis the United States got grant money for military assistance; Israel didn't get a nickel. It was always understood that some of the development loan money was a substitute for this. If they got the development loan money they could use some of their

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resources for their military equipment. So, all in all, he said he thought that forty-five million dollars was very modest, he thought it ought to be more than that, and he was hopeful that that would be what he could get. I talked to the AID administrator, and it was at that time Fowler Hamilton, I think -- New York...

STEWART: Fowler Hamilton.

FELDMAN: Fowler Hamilton, wasn't that his name?

STEWART: I think so.

FELDMAN: Yes. He was a New York lawyer. And he showed me the reports he had gotten from his people and said, well it just didn't support that kind of funding. And he said he was prepared to recommend nothing but – the same thing was true of State Department. I also talked to Phil Talbot [Philips Talbot] over at State, who was the Assistant Secretary for the Near East, and they both said, "Well, we might recommend as much as ten million dollars, but not any more than that." And they made that recommendation

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to the President. And all the recommendations were in and this was after the legislation had passed – I'm a little ahead of myself on the time sequence – this was after the legislation was passed, which didn't have specific amounts for specific countries. A lot of the supporters of Israel had done a lot to get that legislation through, however, on the assumption Israel would participate to some extent. But after it was passed and on almost the very last day when they were parceling the money out to the various countries I went down to see the President and told him that we had this problem. He said, yes, he knew about it. He had been talking to the AID administrator and he had said that the recommendation from him was for ten million dollars. And he showed me a memorandum that he had, and he said that the State Department supported that. And then he said, to me, "What

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do you think they ought to have?" And I said, "Forty five million dollars." And he said, "Why?" And I told him, I gave him more or less the reasons – I had checked the reasons that the Israeli ambassador had given me. I gave him those reasons and I added a couple of my own that were more emotional perhaps, which dealt with the relationship between the United States and Israel and the need for supporting it, the financial condition it was in, that even though AID pointed out that they had the highest per capita income in that part of the world, they also had the highest per capita debt, which was left out of the AID memorandum, and so on. I don't think we talked more than ten minutes. It was a relatively brief conversation. But at the end of it he said, "Okay, forty five million dollars. You tell them."

STEWART: Just like that?

FELDMAN: That's how the decision was made. I called up

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Mr. Hamilton right away and I said, "The President said, it's forty-five million for Israel." "Where are we going to get it?" I said, "That's not my problem." [Laughter] And that's what they got in development loan assistance. The following year we had a replay of the same thing again. And it's almost the same amounts. Oh yes, this year the Israeli ambassador said to me, "Sure it's nice to have this money," he said, "but it's hard for us to plan unless we have an assurance of some level of support in

succeeding years too. What can we expect in succeeding years?" And I said, "Well, I just don't know, but I'll try to get that commitment next year." So, the second year, and that was in '62, when we went through just about the same scenario as we did before in almost the same amounts, only this time I guess Dave Bell [David E. Bell] was – by then he was there, I guess, or did he come in the following year?

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STEWART: No, he came in in '63 I think.

FELDMAN: The following year, '63.

STEWART: Labouisse [Henry R. Labouisse], the fellow who went to Greece.

FELDMAN: Yes, that's right. But they were unwilling to make that commitment for two years, they said – and we came out with forty-five million dollars again the second year. I'm just talking about the development loan assistance. The problems of the Food for Peace assistance are separate, different. They were easier. This was tough because there was an argument all the way. But the second year was easier than the first year because we had the President and Mr. Hamilton said, "Well, the President makes the decision anyhow," so he didn't urge anything very strongly and we got the forty-five million the second year. But the third year I guess was when we really had a lot of problems. There I met with both Dave Bell and Bill Gaud [William S. Gaud]. I had lunch with them in the White House mess on

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three occasions and discussed it with them. We then had a round table lunch I remember, in which Bob Komer [Robert W. Komer] was brought in. Bob's position generally was supporting Aid and State on the amount. I was all by myself against the White House, and State, and AID. And as I remember it, I think it was then cut down the third year with a promise – oh yes, I remember what happened. It was cut down to, I think twenty million, because at the same time they got the twenty-five million for Hawks, and they said that argument didn't apply any longer. So, if you get twenty-five million dollars for the Hawk missiles, which gives you some military support and the United States is providing that, you don't need as much in development loan, so we'll only give you twenty million, making the total still forty-five million. We said at that time, "Well, we'll settle for that and that will be all right, but let's now understand this

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is the level at which it's to be maintained, twenty million each year, and this is the level for the following year, also." And we had that firm assurance, not in writing, but orally. But it wasn't kept. The following year as I remember it, it was ten million. By then I was – Kennedy wasn't there any longer and since this is not my recollections of Johnson [Lyndon

B. Johnson] I don't...

STEWART: That'll come later.

FELDMAN: I won't go into all the things that happened in connection with that, but it has been cut in spite of the commitment through Kennedy that it was going to be maintained at that twenty million dollar level. Although down at the twenty million dollar level the argument should have been that it should have then jumped to forty-five million because the Hawks had been granted and there wasn't any

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major military assistance of that kind going on. But we were satisfied with the twenty million level without being out to ten million. Of course this year it will be zero.

STEWART: Yes. Senator Gruening [Ernest Gruening] had made a trip to the Middle East in April, 1963...

FELDMAN: That's right.

STEWART: And I think you got involved with him when he came back...

FELDMAN: How did you know that?

STEWART: Well, it was in his report.

FELDMAN: I see.

STEWART: But he made no recommendations in that report as far as the amounts that should be granted to Israel. Did you go into that with him or was this...

FELDMAN: Yes, I did. I met with Gruening after the report and after his speech on the Senate floor, which he seemed to say in the speech that he wasn't in favor of any military

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assistance to Israel at all. I asked him how he could say anything like that in view of the situation in that part of the world and in view of the needs for some support for Israel, and that the Arab states were getting everything that they wanted, and that was to leave Israel defenseless. But he maintained that position. And I was so angry about it that I wrote to him and said that he couldn't really mean that in view of what was going on. And he replied, and I have his letter in my files, in which he said that was exactly what he meant. Even to this day. To me that's just unbelievable. He's generally a supporter of Israel. He generally

wants to do the right thing, but on this issue of bombs to Israel, he came out against the United States supplying them to them now. Now on the question of the limit of assistance, he didn't oppose, certainly, the United States giving them some assistance, he was just against bombs to them.

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And I did meet with him on that. We did discuss the report. I don't know if we paid an awful lot of attention to it. It's just like – when you're a senator you think that what you're writing and saying and doing is important and is influencing the direction of government. But you, from the White House, you find that what the senators – at least during the Kennedy years, I think it's a little different now – what the senators are doing reflects a general feeling but the specifics are more the Administration, and we don't take our leadership from the Senate. That seemed to me to be the Kennedy philosophy. I'm not sure it's the Johnson philosophy. I think Johnson has gotten into trouble as a result of that.

STEWART: Did you get involved to any extent with any relationships with people in Congress on any of these events?

FELDMAN: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Anything that had anything to do with the Near East was my responsibility in Congress.

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I was the one, who would call the meetings of members of Congress in the White House to discuss any troublesome thing, the problem of Jewish service men being barred from Arab airfields or the problem of the Hawk missiles – I told you about how we had that meeting with congressmen...

STEWART: Yes.

FELDMAN: Or a problem which involved giving the Jewish members of Congress perhaps advance information that they could take advantage of, something affecting Israel. So I had a good deal to do with Congress in my job. Certainly everything dealing with the Near East, and anything having to do with any area that concerned me, like tariffs and trade, legislation that I was involved in, fiscal bill, and things like that.

STEWART: Okay, unless there's anything else on AID, I think there were a couple of other minor things. I think you said last time you knew something about it. One was the preservation of the Nile monuments business, and the other was the US-Iraq cultural

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agreement that the President signed almost as soon as he came into office.

FELDMAN: Well, the Nile monument preservation was originated with the Assistant Secretary of State for Cultural Affairs. Egypt had the problem of preserving these monuments – what do they call them, the – well, whatever it is, you know those things on the Nile. They had a name – the Phaero, what did they call them? They had a name, an identifying name...

STEWART: One was the Isas Temple...

FELDMAN: No, no. That had an identifying name for all of them. Well, I've forgotten, anyhow. But it originated there, and then the dudgels in the White House were picked up and wheeled in on behalf of them by Dick Goodwin [Richard N. Goodwin], largely. Dick was strongly in favor of having the United States use the counterpart funds it had in Egypt for this purpose, getting authority

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to do it. I had considerable qualms about it on the ground that this would be pictured as the United States helping, you know, with an enormous amount of money – I think it was nine million dollars – the United Arab Republic. People wouldn't say that this was money that they had anyhow, and the United States couldn't use. It would be of considerable assistance to the UAR and we weren't getting anything for it. If we would get anything for it, then I would be in favor of it. But if they were just giving them the nine million dollars for nothing, then I didn't see any merit to it. Well, Dick came in and argued with me because I had expressed this to Kennedy and Kennedy seemed to be listening, Dick came in and argued with me, saying that the benefits were not specific and concrete but, one, it didn't cost us any money. We had an enormous

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amount of counterpart funds there. So we were giving them paper. We'd never be able to use it anyhow. We were giving them their own money. That doesn't cost us anything. Secondly, whatever we got out of it then would be a plus. And he argued to me, as he did to Kennedy, that this would be a gesture in the direction of the Arabs that might make them more reasonable, that this would be a good posture for the United States to be in as an international power and to show the American interest in culture. And third, that this was a valuable cultural artifact and we just ought to be interested in preserving it, no matter where it came from, whether it was Communist China or Egypt or where. They were persuasive arguments. The only argument against it, and I, you know, I'd lost my opposition as we discussed it. The only argument I had against it vanished too when I

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talked to the Israelis. I thought the Israelis might misunderstand it, but they seemed relaxed

about it when I talked to them, and if they were relaxed about the United States doing this, I thought it was possibly all right. But then they had trouble with Congress anyhow. Congress was not going to...

STEWART:

FELDMAN: Congress was unwilling to do it. And the Administration position then became, I think, once I gave in, that we were for it. But, Congress adopted the arguments I had earlier used, and they didn't want to do it. So then Dick and others – I've forgotten all the people who came to me, but many of them – not the President. He wasn't that interested in it. He thought it was a good thing and he supported it, but he wasn't going to actively lobby for it himself. They asked me whether I couldn't enlist the support of Jewish members

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of Congress to show that this was not pro-Arab. If we got Jewish members of Congress for it, why, they thought the opposition in Congress would vanish. I talked to two or three of them....

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