

Oral History Interview
with
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Washington, D.C.
November 13, 1972
by Richard D. McKinzie, Harry S. Truman Library

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MCKINZIE: Mr. Ambassador, you were, I think, in charge of the Legation in Damascus at the time that President Roosevelt died and when President Truman assumed office. Do you have any recollections about what happened on the occasion of President Roosevelt's death, and how the coming to office of a new President affected your outlook and the outlook of the Middle Easterners with whom you had contact?

SATTERTHWAITE: Well, yes, I remember it very dramatically because I was in charge of our legation in

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Damascus. The Minister Plenipotentiary George Wadsworth, lived in Beirut, over two ranges of mountains, and when he wasn't in Damascus I was in charge. President Roosevelt had left tremendous impressions throughout the Near East in his war efforts. I had a [condolence] book and all day long people of an amazing variety came to visit me. The Syrian officials came and signed the book. France was still officially the protecting power, and individuals from General [Paul] Beynet down to a corporal, I remember, came in and signed the book.

Most impressive to me were some of the heads of the great tribes, the still nomadic tribes on the great Syrian desert, who came in in their robes, of course, and their abbas and so on. It lasted all day long with an amazing outpouring of emotion. But they knew very little about President Truman as our Vice Presidents aren't very highly publicized overseas as a rule,

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except maybe [Spiro] Agnew now a little more. And so all I could say was that we're never without a President, fortunately, and that our new President is Harry S. Truman.

MCKINZIE: The Middle East seemed to have a particular interest for President Roosevelt. There is some evidence that he wanted to use Iran, perhaps, as a test case for the Atlantic Charter, that here was a place where you could see if it was going to work. Were you aware, at the end of the war, of any expectations on the part of the Syrian Government, or any other Middle Eastern government, about development plans that they might expect the United States to help them with?

SATTERTHWAITE: Well, in connection with Iran let's go back to my days in Baghdad, which were just before World War II, and of course, the problem

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we had being close to the border of Iran, and very much in touch with Iranian affairs. After the war, by the time I was in the Office of Near Eastern and African Affairs, the principal Iranian problem was Azerbaijan. The Russians had occupied it, even though they had shared the occupation with the British, but they wouldn't move out of this northern province, and this was one of our greatest problems in '45 and '46. Maybe someone would say it was some other problem, but it seems to me this was the first great success of the United Nations, because in the debates at the Security Council, it was the worldwide publicity that this problem got that in effect forced the Russians finally to pull their troops out of Azerbaijan and leave all of Iran to be governed by the old Shah.

MCKINZIE: May I interject here that President Truman wrote a book, with the help of assistants, after he did his memoirs, in which he contends that he said to Stalin that he should withdraw the troops from Azerbaijan, or he, Truman, would send the American Mediterranean

fleet into the Persian Gulf, and historians have not been able to come up with any document to Premier Stalin, suggesting that that was going to happen. In your own personal recollections...

SATTERTHWAITE: No, I don't have any recollections of that, and it seems to me he would certainly have told Dean Acheson at least, whom he thought so highly of, if it were so. I don't recall it ever having been mentioned in any of our many meetings. But I shouldn't dispute Truman if he said so.

MCKINZIE: But historians have been puzzled that such a document has never been found.

SATTERTHWAITE: Certainly I have no recollection of this. Now, as to sending the fleet into the Persian Gulf, of course, it's still a long way from the Soviet Union. One of our fears always -

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and now it can be told -- secretly, was that because of the Russian desire, the Imperial Russian desire, also, to have a warm water port, they might drive down to the Persian Gulf some day. And at one time after World War II we knew they had some airborne divisions poised in the Caucasus. And we were disturbed and took counteraction, to a degree. I don't think there was any real question of our sending ships into the Persian Gulf. We had one old, mother ship there which wouldn't have deterred much of anybody and it would have been almost impossible for us to carry out an action in the Persian Gulf. The kind of action that we would have had to take would have been not of a warlike kind, but, you know, hurting the Russians in all the other ways you could think of economically. I can't imagine how we could have really frightened Stalin, even if we did have a fleet in the Mediterranean.

MCKINZIE: At that time, were you aware of the fact

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that very many people in Truman's Cabinet and in the military were seeing the Middle East as an increasingly important area? Secretary [Harold] Ickes, for example, got very excited at the end of the war about the oil potential in the Middle East, as, indeed, did Secretary (Robert P.) Patterson, arguing to President Truman at one point that the United States could fight a major world war for only three years without the oil. This seemed to be a kind of new or recent concern, didn't it?

SATTERTHWAITE: I don't remember that, though it may be true. By the time I was Director of the Near Eastern and African Affairs Ickes was concerned about India in one way. Nehru was to make a trip to the U.S. and I remember Ickes got me on the phone about the details of arranging his visit, but I don't remember if anything came of it. It would have had to have come through the

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White House pretty much. Ickes, being Ickes, would have dealt directly with Acheson if he wanted to, I am sure, or with Bob [Robert A.] Lovett probably. Incidentally, I had the greatest admiration for Lovett, as I did for General Marshall, but Lovett was the one that handled the

details always. You see Marshall operated like a general with a chief of staff, and Lovett was his chief of staff, and he often used to tell me, "The General and I operate as a team."

MCKINZIE: Mr. Ambassador, what about the theory that the United States didn't fill the power vacuum in the Middle East as fast as it might have with the decline of the French influence, and, indeed, British influence in the Middle East, that were leaving a kind of political turmoil.

SATTERTHWAITE: If you will remember -- you may be too young to -- but the first few months after the war we were demobilizing just as rapidly as we

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could, and I remember Larry [Lauris] Norstad, as a young major general, lecturing to the political officers of the State Department saying how fortunate it was that there were great new problems while we were almost completely disarmed, and so we could build up a new army.

MCKINZIE: You mentioned that when you came back to the State Department in September of 1945 there were a lot of ambassadors coming back from the Middle East, and they found President Truman relatively accessible.

SATTERTHWAITE: That's right.

MCKINZIE: What kind of things were they telling him about the Middle East?

SATTERTHWAITE: Well, he was interested in the Middle East. As I said, we were rather surprised how easy it was to make appointments for them. Actually, with one or two exceptions, they were still ministers

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plenipotentiary. The posts were raised to the rank of ambassador maybe in '47 or '48. But anyway, they were our representatives there, and, of course, he was interested in Palestine. But remember that didn't become a real political problem until '47 and I'm talking about the fall of '45 now. And he was interested in that area, what to do about it, and what would happen there and what they were like even though a lot of people didn't know the difference between Iraq and Iran, for instance. That was certainly true of this famous general who made so much trouble in China later on -- Patrick Hurley, this picturesque general, who came to the Near East during the last days of the war, and when he was in Baghdad he was talking as if he was in Iran, and I suspect in Teheran about Iraq, but I'm not sure. But we know the Iraqis weren't especially amused that he didn't even know the name of their country.

MCKINZIE: Later, in 1948 and certainly by 1949 there

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was a lot of talk about "the revolution of rising expectations" on the part of the people. Were you involved in that discussion and how to go about fulfilling these expectations that the peoples of the area had?

SATTERTHWAITE: I'm not sure that that problem wasn't written about subsequently, although we were thinking about it at the time. Certainly we had the problem for getting aid. Now the one country that needed it only briefly, of course, was Saudi Arabia. They felt very poor at the end of the war because, of course, they couldn't develop their oil in wartime. But, I still recall -- maybe in the fall of '45 -- being invited to a reception at which champagne was flowing out of a fountain, the sort of thing that you put your cup under. Ibn Saud learned about this later; you know the Saudis were not supposed to drink liquor, and so later on their parties were dry, but this was nice while it lasted.

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Saudi Arabia, of course, is potentially, except for Kuwait I suppose, one of the countries with the highest gross national product per capita in the world. Kuwait, of course, is way ahead of everybody else. I visited Kuwait from my legation in Baghdad in 1937 when the first oil well was going down, before any oil had been discovered. I went out and visited the rig on the desert.

MCKINZIE: It's changed considerably since then.

SATTERTHWAITE: It seems to me rising expectations were certainly a part of the developing world, but it certainly wasn't up on the "front burner," as I recall. And of course, it may be that it was being dealt with elsewhere. I am sure that the Assistant Secretary of State for Economic Affairs didn't spend a great deal of time thinking about the Near East, because we had all the problems of getting Europe started, and then we

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had the Far East; but no doubt they were thinking about this, very much.

MCKINZIE: When the large aid programs began in Europe, some of the developing countries, away from Europe, and I'm thinking specifically of Latin America, did voice some resentment at this "Europe first policy." Did you have to deal with that to any large degree?

SATTERTHWAITE: No, but of course, you see, at first it was Turkey and Greece to begin with, the first great aid program under the Truman Doctrine and then, of course, the Marshall Plan did come out of that. And later on the appropriations for '48 and '49 even, certainly '49-'50, aid for Greece and Turkey was included in the Marshall Plan appropriations. I don't remember being troubled by that in the Near East. Of course, you see, '47 was the year in which India and Pakistan got their independence, and then next year you had Burma and Ceylon and some other countries; so the first aid programs in other words, had to come from the British Empire and did, to the countries they were giving up. I don't recall that we gave any aid to Ceylon for years. I may be wrong in that.

MCKINZIE: No, we didn't.

SATTERTHWAITE: Certainly not when I was there, from '49 to '53.

MCKINZIE: What then did you conceive to be the greatest problem in maintaining stability of the area? Since it had strategic and economic importance to the United States it would be in the national interest to maintain the stability of the area,

SATTERTHWAITE: Well, are we talking about the immediate postwar period now?

MCKINZIE: Yes, from '45, let's say, through '47.

SATTERTHWAITE: Well, one of the things that disturbed

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us was the expiration of a law permitting us to give military assistance outside of Latin America. We've long had a basic law by which we could send military missions and give military assistance to Latin America, and I accompanied General Marshall soon after he became Secretary of State to an appearance before the House Military Affairs Committee -- probably the only time, almost, that a Secretary of State has appeared before that committee, trying to persuade Congress to extend this legislation. And the House was willing, but the Senate blocked it; Harry Byrd, I think, principally.

General Marshall didn't go to the Senate hearing as perhaps he should have, but anyway this was fascinating because it was like old home week in the House. This committee was so glad to see General Marshall again that it made it very interesting, and, of course, the House Committee under Vinson would give him anything he wanted nearly. The Senate was more stubborn, as it often is.

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MCKINZIE: There was a gap in there between lend-lease and the creation of ECA, that got operating finally in '48. I'm wondering how you felt about the sort of parallel organization of the Economic Cooperation Administration which dealt directly, in most cases, with countries, and the Office of Near Eastern Affairs?

SATTERTHWAITE: Well, you see, for those immediately postwar years, in spite of what happened in Syria, when the French lost their heads and bombed Damascus, they continued to give all the aid to Lebanon they needed, and even some to Syria after this episode. The British continued, of course, to support Palestine and then after all it was in '48 before they pulled out of there, so, it was pretty much the former colonial powers which continued to give assistance to the Arab world at that period. When lend-lease really got going, I believe Egypt was the first country to get aid from ECA.

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MCKINZIE: Egypt did get large amounts of ECA aid.

SATTERTHWAITE: Of course, we're also talking about another area -- India and Pakistan -- India, I think, got more than any other country in the end, didn't it?

MCKINZIE: Yes, but it got aid of technical assistance nature and developmental nature.

SATTERTHWAITE: That's right, it did.

MCKINZIE: Did you have any particular feelings when this aid effort started about the kind of aid that would be, one, most effective for the country, and, two, most beneficial for American interests in the Near East?

SATTERTHWAITE: Yes, we certainly did think about it, and I kept in close touch with the ECA and the Truman Doctrine group which were giving aid to Greece and Turkey. The actual working out of this

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aid program was not in what was then the Office of Near Eastern and African Affairs. It was handled instead by the aid part of the Department under various names until it finally became AID. We were very much involved and attended the meetings, of course.

And one of the things Loy Henderson did when he was Director (1945-48), because of this aid program (the Near Eastern Division had included at one time the Balkans as well as the Near East), was to transfer from the Near Eastern Division Greece, Turkey, and Iran, all three of which bordered on Communist countries, and all of which were getting large aid programs, and formed a division of Greek, Turkish and Iranian Affairs. And, of course, they were involved very much in the aid program, whereas the Middle Eastern countries were much less so, except for Palestine, or Israel as it became after '47.

MCKINZIE: Would you say that by 1947 a large percentage of the time of the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs

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was occupied with the Palestinian problem?

SATTERTHWAITE: Yes, of the Near Eastern Division certainly. It was so important that there were a lot of people doing nothing else. Every Arab country, of course, was deeply involved in the Palestine problem, felt very strongly and emotionally about it. So the dominant problem up until the recognition of Israel, was the future of Palestine, and after that the problems created by the fact of the existence of Israel.

MCKINZIE: Did the Palestine issue strain the relationship that you had had previously with leaders of Arab governments?

SATTERTHWAITE: Not particularly, because we were career men and while we were loyally carrying out the policy set for us by the President's Secretary of State, we had known and worked with so many of the Arab leaders; and of course their diplomats in Washington, they'd generally get along with

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us. So, while it was certainly difficult for them, it created no particular problem for us,

that is, the day by day relations were not affected. There were still good working relations right along no matter how much they disliked our policy toward Israel. And although I was not an Arabist we had in our office quite a number of Arabists whose whole career was dealing with Arabs and who spoke Arabic. Of course, it was not necessary to speak Arabic with their diplomats, all of whom spoke English or French fluently. This changed interestingly enough in the years after World War I. In fact all the representatives of former French areas at the United Nations spoke French for the first three or four years of the United Nations and then gradually changed over to English. There were rare exceptions. Israel used to have one of its delegates who spoke in Spanish. He was a Sephardic, and had come out of Argentina to boot; and so, with his tongue in cheek -- and the Israelis loved having him do

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it because they wanted the Latin-Americans on their side anyway -- he made all his speeches in Spanish.

MCKINZIE: Was there a lively dialogue within the Office of Near Eastern Affairs about resolution of the Palestine problem? I know that some people believed that there was hope for a binational state. Would you characterize that as the dominant view of the Bureau?

SATTERTHWAITE: Well, this was the hope, that partition wouldn't be necessary because of the fear of exactly what did happen and has continued to happen. The hope for peace in that part of the world was a binational state we felt, and it may have been a false dream or hope that it could take place, but it was worth the effort certainly. And maybe it could have been worked out except for the unfortunate fact, maybe, that we had the city elections in New York in '47 and the national elections in '48.

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MCKINZIE: You personally think that was so?

SATTERTHWAITE: Well, they had an impact, of course, understandably, and we have always accepted this fact. There weren't many Arab votes, you know, and in New York City, after all, the Jewish vote was of greatest importance to both parties. I can't remember exactly the timing, but my recollection is that Bevin, probably on the eve of the '47 election in New York City, in a confidential telegram to the President, expressed the hope that in a speech he, the President was about to make, he wouldn't ask for more than 50 thousand additional Jewish emigrants to Palestine. Nevertheless, he came out in a speech not two hours later for a hundred thousand, and Governor [Thomas E.] Dewey made a speech in New York City the next day advocating 200 thousand. So you can see this was a domestic problem in a very big way. The impact of that, I think, probably as much as anything made a binational state impossible.

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I think we still might have had one on 50 thousand more. Maybe this would never have worked, but we thought it was certainly worth trying.

MCKINZIE: Was any other solution to the Jewish refugee problem seriously considered by the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs?

SATTERTHWAITE: Not that I can recall. You see people talked about, "Why not go to Kenya, that's a great area;" but it was perfectly clear, it wasn't just a question of going someplace; after all it was the fact that their homeland was Israel and that was where they wanted to go; not just to go anywhere where they could make a living.

Of course, one of the anomalies, is that relatively few American Jews actually have settled in Israel. And I think the Zionists groups have felt that Israel is much better off with the ethnic Jews remaining in the United States where

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they could keep the money flowing into Israel, which they have done with great success. There have been a few thousand American Jews who settled in Israel. I don't know what the number is, you may?

MCKINZIE: It is not large. When Israel was finally formed there was a huge Arab refugee problem, which must have caused some interesting maneuvering in your office.

SATTERTHWAITE: Yes, and of course, as you will recall, they were put in the Gaza Strip, and we thought it would have been better if we could have put more in these great vacant places in Syria, but it didn't work out that way.

MCKINZIE: Do you recall why? I am not familiar with the reason.

SATTERTHWAITE: No, I think that the Arabs wanted it the other way. But anyway, you know about the eleven Jews killed at the Olympic Games. Remember,

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these Arabs boys who did it were born in the Arab refugee centers, and brought up with this hatred in their hearts from children that they had been put out of their homeland.

MCKINZIE: Was there some recognition of the fact that that might happen at the time?

SATTERTHWAITE: Why, I think so; but of course one couldn't know. This was 25 years later; but they were brought up in these camps and had the hatred instilled in them at having been displaced from their homeland.

MCKINZIE: There was a United Nations mission sent to the Middle East in 1949, as I recall, headed by Gordon Clapp.

SATTERTHWAITE: That's right.

MCKINZIE: Did you have any connection with that?

SATTERTHWAITE: Yes, we were very much involved and there was one very prominent Democratic politician

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also on that mission. It's a shame not to remember his name; he was very important, and still is, in the Democratic Party. Of course their recommendations couldn't be carried out, if I recall. In any event it was worth the effort, certainly.

MCKINZIE: Well, they did recommend economic developments, projects, and even some work programs for the refugees.

SATTERTHWAITE: Yes, that's right.

MCKINZIE: Did you have the impression that Secretary Marshall, and later Acheson, conceived of the Middle Eastern problem as primarily a United Nations problem or a U.S. problem?

SATTERTHWAITE: They would have loved to have made it a United Nations problem; but of course, as the top politicians of Jewish faith in the Democratic Party could get to see the President and anybody they wanted to immediately, it really

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became more than that, of necessity.

MCKINZIE: Well, I'm thinking specifically of these development schemes.

SATTERTHWAITE: Yes, and I think it would have been much better to have the U.N. do it. In this connection the Israeli representatives for several years, you know, couldn't talk to the delegates whether in a subcommittee or the main committees on either side of them, because they were always Arabs. This was before the year we got so many new members, and the problem was solved for them. Oh, I've forgotten the year now, but fortunately for them, the new delegates on each side of them were no longer Arabs. I used to watch before that. Every time the Israel representative had to go to the bathroom, for example, and there wasn't anybody else sitting behind him, he had to take all of his papers with him. This was at the Security Council meetings of course, not at the General

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Assembly.

MCKINZIE: How did you happen to get appointed as the head of the special mission to Nepal?

SATTERTHWAITE: Well, I was available, I guess. It was exceedingly interesting. Loy Henderson, whom you're seeing -- incidentally (I believe he's been working on this problem for his memoirs and will be much more au courant) will be better prepared than I to tell you. I should have, but I haven't taken time, with other things I'm doing, to go back and review the records, which involves going to the National Archives now. I had done it for an article on the Truman Doctrine, and I have access there; but I'm doing other things, so I haven't reviewed the

literature and as I've told you, I believe, I never kept personal papers of classified nature. And practically everything was classified in those days, rightly or wrongly.

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MCKINZIE: Could you narrate for the record a little bit of what happened on this special mission to Nepal?

SATTERTHWAITE: Oh, yes, I have lots of material on that; and I wrote an article for the *Foreign Service Journal* about it too, in, maybe, August 1947. But this was probably one of the most fascinating missions in my service in the sense that it meant opening up relations with a country which had been, literally, almost completely isolated for one hundred years and that's the way they wanted it -- the ruling Rana family. The reason they asked the United States to send the mission was that they finally became convinced that the British in August 1947 were really leaving India.

So they decided they didn't want to be completely dependent on India and "let's open relations with another power." And, of course, at that time the United States was the dominant power in the world militarily, and in many other

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ways, and so they asked us to send the mission.

I happened to be available; I was on Loy Henderson's staff. We had a very good group going out. Ray [Raymond A.] Hare, who later became director for Near Eastern and African Affairs, went with me. Hare was in Washington, and he was about to become the chief, I guess it still was, of the Division of South Asian Affairs, later the Office. So after going to Nepal with me, he visited this new area, the consulates in India and what in a few months became Pakistan. This is April '47, and the partition of India was in August of '47. And we did have the privilege of seeing India in the last days of the raj and having luncheon with the Mountbattens, "a small intimate luncheon" of about 50 people with bearers behind every chair in magnificent uniforms, and ADC's flying around. We were seeing the last days of the splendor of the British Empire.

And the Mountbattens were interested in my mission because he had been to Nepal. But, the

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British in general, couldn't get beyond the Tarsi, the lowlands, and were seldom allowed into the Valley of Nepal. Nevertheless the British had a Resident Minister there. Moreover in spite of the fact that the Minister clearly realized that my mission meant the eventual end of the exclusive control of Nepal by the British, he was very helpful to me. And when our communications broke down he let me send coded messages through his office to New Delhi, and I had a chance to tell him some years later, "At least my mission meant that you got promoted from minister to ambassador," which it did. And I had the pleasure of entertaining him when I was Ambassador in Ceylon a few years later, when he finally left Nepal. And he also was knighted.

MCKINZIE: I take it there were considerable formalities in connection with this.

SATTERTHWAITE: Always. This was out of this world because one could only think that probably this

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was the way it was in Calcutta 50 years before, before the British moved the capital to New Delhi. All the splendor and everything. And of course, I kept thinking of my secondhand Ford back in Washington while I was taking the rounds with these beautiful, almost magnificent, coaches and four for each of us, with most magnificent uniforms, and the outriders. There would be six horses pulling the carriages. And Durbars, which you read about in Indian history everyday. And finally signing the agreement of friendship and commerce at the auspicious hour fixed by the Hindu priest, which was at 2:13 in the afternoon, with a hundred and one guns going off for the maharajah and seventeen for me.

No, this was unique, and I have to thank Loy Henderson again for asking me to head the mission.

MCKINZIE: What was the residue of the mission?

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SATTERTHWAITE: Ray Hare went out with me from Washington. In New Delhi the Economic Counselor, Sam Day, and Lieutenant Colonel Hosket, the Assistant Military Attache, joined the mission and I got a vice-consul, J. Jefferson Jones, in Bombay, who had already visited Nepal with George Merrill, who was acting U.S. commissioner in Delhi. And I picked up a vice-consul clerk in Karachi, which was still part of India, to act as secretary. Let's see, in addition to Day and Hare and Hosket, we also had Bill Johnstone, who was in the Public Affairs Office in New Delhi.

And we had three bearers (servants), one Christian, one Hindu, and one Moslem; and when we got to Raxaul on the frontier the Maharajah had a private railroad of about 25 miles, and so we rode in great splendor in this. Then we were taken in cars for the next 25 miles to a rest-house where we spent the night. And there we picked up over a hundred bearers, because we had

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to be carried in sedan chairs, seven of them, and hundreds of porters, and with lanterns at night it was a sight to remember, until we got to his rest-house up in the hills. Then from there on we declined riding in the sedan chairs, until we got over the second range and were coming into the Valley of Nepal and they asked us as a favor to ride down in them, because we either preferred to ride the ponies or walk.

What a beautiful part of the world it is. It was the wrong time of year to see Mount Everest, but the mountains cleared just at one time for a glimpse, and I never saw it again until I got to Darjeeling when I was Ambassador in Burma and went to Darjeeling on a short vacation.

MCKINZIE: Then would you talk a little about your work in Ceylon between 1949 and 1953?

SATTERTHWAITE: Well, yes, of course, President Truman was my President, and Ceylon was a beautiful

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remote place where I pretty much called the signals if I wanted to, until June of '50 when the fighting in Korea broke out. Then, of course, Ceylon became of some importance as a fueling station for our naval vessels, and liberty for the sailors. We didn't send troops that way, but the Mediterranean fleet would go out from time to time and go back again. We had sometimes an aircraft carrier, mostly one cruiser and maybe four or even eight destroyers. Of course the Ceylonese thought it was fine because they were there for the day, spent a lot of money, had a wonderful time, and were well-behaved, our sailors -- no troops going that way.

MCKINZIE: Did you have extended discussions with the Ceylonese Government about development plans for Ceylon? Were they interested in that to the point where they were willing to make formal application for it?

SATTERTHWAITE: No, because they had the Colombo plan

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from 1950.

MCKINZIE: I wonder if you would talk about that for a while.

SATTERTHWAITE: Well, you see, in 1947 India and Pakistan, and in 1948 Ceylon, all got their independence under the "Commonwealth" and the question was how the British would continue to aid. And they had the Colombo conference of Commonwealth foreign ministers in Colombo in January 1950, and I had presented credentials in November '49. So Ernie [Ernest] Bevin, the Foreign Minister of Britain, Percy Spender and all these people showed up in Colombo, which most people didn't know much about, except maybe for Lipton tea bags which had a map of Ceylon. This was a tremendous occasion, and Sir Percy Spender, whom I saw quite a bit of during this conference and who later was Ambassador in Washington, was quite annoyed, because during the first or second afternoon of the meetings J.R. Jayawardene, the finance minister of Ceylon,

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asked to speak, and he pulled a speech out of his pocket and stole Sir Percy's thunder, because he was going to propose a Colombo plan.

But anyway, I remember Percy walking up and down with scotch in his hand in his hotel room talking, "that damn" -- he's a colorful character as Australians often are. And this was fascinating, because we weren't involved; but I entertained all of them except Nehru, and this is a long story, he sent his number two.

I was the only ambassador, the others were high commissioners, so this was the only time in history, I suppose, that from the moment I presented credentials I was dean of the diplomatic corps, and this changed, because the Canadians didn't want any of this damn nonsense that an ambassador had precedence over a high commissioner. But the Foreign Office in England

correctly said this is true, that a high commissioner can't present credentials to the Queen, he is representing the

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Queen, you see. But anyway, the pressures came from India and Australia and never again was an ambassador, so far as I know, at the head of the diplomatic corps in any of the Commonwealth countries.

MCKINZIE: How long did this last?

SATTERTHWAITE: Oh, I don't know, but anyway it did mean that I was dean of the corps during the Colombo Plan Conference, but I entertained the high commissioner and we weren't involved; and I was only invited to the final session which was the only public session.

I was of some help during the conference to Percy Spender, but especially to Mike Pearson of Canada. And the last day he made a speech, and I remember his saying he thought it was only fair that there should be at least one speech in a North American accent, and he didn't say Canadian. We also had great numbers of correspondents.

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They soon formed together in two non-competing groups which shared the information they picked up. But I formally got most of my information from Pearson and Spender. I was told that Roger Makins, who was British Minister in Washington, would keep me informed. So I got in touch with him and he said, "Well, we had a meeting of our delegation the last night and it was decided that this was really a family [Commonwealth] problem. So I'm sorry I won't be able to help you."

As a result I went to see Spender and Pearson and first thing Spender said, "We know we should keep no secrets from the United States, but we have to depend on the United States for our security." And Pearson said, "After all, I've got all these newspapermen, I got to tell them what's going on, so I can certainly tell you, from the Canadian standpoint." We were only very indirectly involved in the Conference but naturally we wanted to know what was going on,

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and with their assistance I could tell the State Department of developments.

One of the interesting by-products was, that we only had old strip codes then in Ceylon, which nobody had ever heard much about. But the Colombo Conference put us on the map and I got coding machines out and all kinds of things as a result of this conference, and we got organized like a real embassy. It had just been a consulate up to 1948.

MCKINZIE: Did you, then, make any trips back to the United States during your tenure as Ambassador to Ceylon?

SATTERTHWAITE: Yes, I came back to sit on a selection board, and I had home leave.

MCKINZIE: Did you talk to President Truman any of these times?

SATTERTHWAITE: No, not in those days; I had before I went out to Ceylon, but I didn't get to see him again.

MCKINZIE: Do you recall your conversation with him before you went out?

SATTERTHWAITE: Well, the old rules in those days was that we in the State Department weren't supposed to keep records of conversations with the President. I may have scratched out a few notes, but I haven't found them if I have. And actually I am in the process of going through those papers now, but not very rapidly. But anyway, it was a very pleasant conversation, and as I mentioned in this letter, he was fascinated with that part of the world -- only he got Adams Peak mixed up with Mount St. Thomas which is the hill outside of Madras. I never told him; I'm not so sure that I knew it myself at the time, but as soon as I got out there I realized the mistake. But I had an extremely pleasant conversation with him -- did I ever see him again? No, but I saw Eisenhower his

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successor several times.

MCKINZIE: President Truman may have had a slightly different way of using the State Department from, perhaps, President Eisenhower. I'm not sure.

SATTERTHWAITE: But actually, he had Secretaries of State whom he had confidence in, and I was lucky to be in the Department when he was President because the White House wasn't running foreign affairs except through the Secretary of State; with both General Marshall and Dean Acheson.

MCKINZIE: So you felt that the talent that the State Department had was being used?

SATTERTHWAITE: Yes. I had also however a very short time with James Byrnes as Secretary. Of course General Marshall could see the President anytime, but being a general he never took advantage of this. In fact, on one occasion, I think it was over Palestine actually, he told the President -- I was told by somebody at the meeting -- "Mr.

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President, if you take this action I wouldn't vote for you, but of course I don't vote."

He as an Army officer never voted apparently in his life. I always voted by mail when I could, but I always called myself an Independent, because I felt that I shouldn't be partisan; I still have that feeling.

MCKINZIE: Did you feel that you were shielded pretty much from political pressures and pressure groups in the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs?

SATTERTHWAITE: Yes, I never had any pressure from the White House that was objectionable in the least. Obviously pressures were brought by Congress sometimes, but that's something else, that's just par for the course, you can expect that; but certainly not from the White House under either Truman or Eisenhower. I think this is true of Kennedy, too -- he was President and then Johnson -- during my four and a half years in South Africa.

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I don't know why, but maybe it's because of the job I had. It wasn't that they wouldn't send political people to see me, but I certainly never felt under any pressure to take any action I thought was wrong. If they made a decision I accepted it, of course, because a career man either does or resigns if it's anything of vital interest, and it never was.

MCKINZIE: Where do you think, as you look back now, President Truman will rate as a President?

SATTERTHWAITE: Well, I was astonished to see the other day in some poll that he didn't have a high rating, because I think those of us that worked with him would rate him very high, maybe not in the very top category, but certainly as an outstanding President. He made decisions, and usually the right ones we felt, and was a man of courage. While he didn't have any great background in foreign affairs except that fortunately he did have the

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Truman committee on lend-lease, and he had had that exposure as a Senator, when he suddenly became Vice President. But, in any event, he did have an interest in foreign affairs in that experience. His first great mistake was one he realized, when he accepted the advice of politicians rather than foreign service experts on lend-lease and, as I recall, he admits it in his memoirs, doesn't he? And he didn't let that happen again.

Palestine was something apart, you'd have to accept the fact that this was -- I think he felt strongly himself. He stuck by Eddie Jacobson, who was his great and good friend. Certainly as one or two of our boys in the United Nations said, he was right there on the job. And lots of funny things happened. One day during a United Nations session the President couldn't get, first, General Marshall, and then he couldn't get Herschel Johnson, both of the United Nations, so he got someone else who carried out his instructions

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with a great enthusiasm. Either of the others would have persuaded him to modify them a little at a crucial time in the U.N. Security Council debate. This is just luck, you see.

MCKINZIE: Getting ahold of the right man.

SATTERTHWAITE: Yes, instead of getting the man that he got unfortunately when he couldn't get either Marshall or Johnson.

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