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## Bill Moyers' Journal

### "A Conversation with George Bush"

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**BILL MOYERS' JOURNAL**

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Transcript of "A Conversation with George Bush"

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[Tease:]

**BILL MOYERS:** Last May, when George Bush announced his candidacy for President of the United States, people asked, 'George Who?' just as they asked 'Jimmy Who?' in 1976. But in the last few months, George Bush has emerged as Ronald Reagan's chief opponent for the Republican nomination, only to have that position challenged, for the moment, by John Anderson in this week's primaries in Massachusetts and Vermont. Where does George Bush go from here? And what does he really think about some of the issues of the 1980 campaign? To find out, I caught up with him on the campaign trail in Jacksonville, Florida. Tonight, a conversation with George Bush. I'm Bill Moyers.

[Titles]

**MOYERS:** Mr. Ambassador, you told a reporter a week before the New Hampshire primary that if you won there and in Massachusetts and then in Vermont, you would be on your way to the Republican nomination. Well, you lost in New Hampshire, you won barely in Massachusetts, and you came in third in Vermont. How do you account for what's happened to your campaign?

**BUSH:** Well, I account for the fact that there was an over-promise at the time in New Hampshire. There was a media hype that got my ability to perform exceeded my expectations, and then you have to look at each state separately, and of New Hampshire there was a concentration of attention, unflattering attention, to my campaign by one newspaper up there —

**MOYERS:** Bill Loeb's —

**BUSH:** Bill Loeb — that in total column inches just went after me as brutally as — you know, with total distortion, on issues. And that is bound to have hurt. That Nashua debate hurt. But out of it, what people didn't recognize is the fact that I beat other candidates that were in the race substantially. So there was an over-promise, and I didn't perform as well. Then we come down on the downslope into New England. Vermont turns out to be an anomaly because there no delegates changed hands, and we will get our share of candidates, given the makeup of that convention. But Massachusetts — you listen to the television and I thought —

**MOYERS:** You mean after —

**BUSH:** I know it — even after I'd won, I thought I'd lost. And you think I thought that, I just talked to my mother. She's outraged. All she hears is about another candidate whom I beat, but who came forward. Massachusetts will prove to be a plus for me —

**MOYERS:** Why?

**BUSH:** Because it stopped the hemorrhaging out of New Hampshire. It stopped this writing off that went on in some of the Washington columns 'Well, this proves Bush can't win—'. It showed I could against a very difficult situation. I got 46 percent of the Republican vote. These independents came in, which is fine, but that's not going to happen in a lot of the next races. It's not going to happen in the South, for example. It's not going to happen in Illinois, in my view. So, we're back on track, a little bit lowered expectations, and — if I'd done what I said I, you know, if I had done, it would have moved it all out forward.

**MOYERS:** How do you account for John Anderson's very large showing in Massachusetts and Vermont?

**BUSH:** Kind of like I account for McGovern's — without discrediting him. He attracted a lot of kids, he attracted a lot of crossovers, he attracted people who aren't Republicans. I just don't see 50-cents-a-gallon gasoline tax as being a popular answer, but to some people it had some appeal. I am strongly opposed to that, but he's saying 'I'm talking on the issues' but he's talking on the side of the issues that in my judgment the Republican convention won't vote for. But he captured the imagination of people by that kind of 'I'm honest, I'm talking on issues' campaign. And now we'll see whether it happens in South Carolina.

**MOYERS:** He is interpreting his victory as an indication that in a general election the Republican Party, with a man like Anderson, could branch out from being a minority party to bring in younger people —

4:30 **BUSH:** I think that's a good interpretation. But he didn't do it in these other states. He's got to— you've got to get your own support, before you can go attracting others. So, good luck to him. I mean, I give him great credit 'cause he did something, very candidly, I didn't think he could do, and he did it well. I got a little restless with the bending of the 'Eleventh Commandment' knocking me, but I'm used to that now, Bill. It's a long year we've been involved in, oh it's long.

**MOYERS:** You wish you were over sooner than later?

**BUSH:** No, I've got it paced. For me, it's 80 percent over. For Ronald Reagan and others, it's just starting.

**MOYERS:** Sounds like a jogger—

5:05 **BUSH:** Well, it's a way, if you, say, look at that bridge and you know you've paced yourself to get there, it'll work. So, no, I think it's all right, I'm not one to knock the process. I believe that I'd be a better president than the other for issues, convictions, whatever it is, and yet if I hadn't had to work this hard, I wouldn't even be on the radio, you wouldn't be talking to me.

5:25 **MOYERS:** Well, let me repeat some observations in the press which, to me, suggest a kind of consensus in the fourth estate about what's gone wrong with your campaign, and see what you think about them *in toto*. *Time Magazine* this week says, 'George Bush is trying to be all things to all Republicans,' *The Wall Street Journal* said, 'Mr. Bush muffed the election in New Hampshire by turning cautious and cagey.' *The Washington Post* said, 'Mr. Bush seemed to spend most of his spotlight time telling his audience in New Hampshire *how* he would win the campaign, rather than *why* they should choose him as their president.' *Business Week* said, 'Bush has been slow to make the transition from the flip to the thoughtful.' A recent *New York Times*/CBS poll says that George Bush 'lacks political identity', that 'the public neither knows what its likes nor what it dislikes about him.' *Harper's Magazine* said, 'Mr. Bush unfortunately lacks the gift of coherent speech. His interview with the *New York Times* has brought to mind the desperate chatter of a man trying to talk himself out of an arrest.' Elizabeth Drew, in this week's *New Yorker* magazine says, 'Little is known about George Bush, how his mind works, what he really thinks, what grasp he has of hard issues about governing. He is saying very little, trying to remain as inoffensive as possible. Bush does not give the impression that he has given hard thought to hard questions.' And finally, the *Christian Science Monitor* said, 'As Mr. Bush digs in the public will want to begin asking some hard questions about the issues, and pinning him down on specific issues.' Now I ask you, how do you explain such unanimity among the organs of the press?

7:00 **BUSH:** Among the organs of a small— Let's put the nation in perspective. These are your— I better not use the word elitist, because that's what they use about me, but this is a kind of core of very respected journals. I think there's— I think I plead guilty to some of that. ✓

**MOYERS:** To some ambiguity?

7:20 **BUSH:** Not necessarily ambiguity, but to less than clarity on issues. And yet, Bill, I've been on every Meet the Press, every Face the Nation, every Issues and Answers. They're not softballs they're throwing in there. I've been across the country answering in townhall meetings from Amherst, New Hampshire, to Cedar Rapids, Iowa, and so I'm speaking on the issues, but if it's not coming through clearly there's something I should try to do better. I think there are different phases in a campaign, but if you'd have asked them about that— that same cadre, you name those names, I know what they said six months ago.

**MOYERS:** What?

7:55 **BUSH:** That I didn't have a snowball's chance. At least, they're paying attention. So, as you go forward you go with more emphasis on certain things. I accept that criticism. And we'll move to try to correct it. But it doesn't hurt my feelings, because frankly Elizabeth Drew wouldn't even have written about me six months ago. Literally wasn't on the radarscope.

8:15 **MOYERS:** And she got the name— She spelled the name correctly.

**BUSH:** And she spelled the name correctly. So that's a plus.

**MOYERS:** Well, let me, let me—

8:20 **BUSH:** And yet perfect? Heck, no! I got plenty to learn about this. But, somebody has some perception, or I wouldn't be doing as well as I— wouldn't be locked in a one-on-one race with the front-runner. This is a two-man race, and why? It's got to be something. It's not gotta be because I got a red tie on and a gray suit.

**MOYERS:** All right, let me get to some issues then which you are willing to address, and think the time has come to address. And I'd like to pose—

**BUSH:** Well, the time has *been* to address. They just haven't been listening.

**MOYERS:** All right.

8:50 **BUSH:** You don't go for three days—for three hours in a car in New Hampshire and then come back and say he's not talking about the issues. I mean that— let's— there's a little bit of a failure to— I don't think anybody should be sentenced to have to stay with me for a year, but you don't just kind of drop in from New York, from the East Side, and then make a perception and then drop out. Although the cumulative nature of it is, I think, valid.

9:15 **MOYERS:** All right, let me pose to you some hypothetical questions, on the assumption that you've been inaugurated president of the United States, including some questions which William Buckley put on January 14th to Ronald Reagan on the same assumptions, and which Mr. Reagan answered. Fair enough?

**BUSH:** Sure.

9:30 **MOYERS:** All right. Suppose that you were advised in the Oval Office that a race riot had broken out in Detroit. What would you do?

9:40 **BUSH:** I would call the governor of the state, Bill Milliken, and I would say, 'I will offer you federal backup support if it's needed.' I would prefer to see that solved by the mayor of Detroit, and his local forces. The mayor would clearly go for the National Guard for assistance, if it was something of major proportion. The federal government's role is— would be third in line.

**MOYERS:** All right, suppose it were established that the riot grew out of legitimate complaints having to do with violated constitutional rights denied to the rioters. What would you do?

10:20 **BUSH:** You mean, where a federal law would have been violated? Then I would have done what Eisenhower did. I would use federal assistance. But not with the most militant show of force. I would try to do it in a peaceful manner first. I would not be a flamboyant, reacting, line-in-the-sand president on a matter of that enormous sensitivity.

**MOYERS:** Suppose that Marshall Tito dies, and the pro-Soviet faction in Yugoslavia has called on the Russians to send in troops to restore order. What would you do?

10:52 **BUSH:** Well, first I would consult our allies, and I mean fast. Because you're not gonna have in Europe today, given the alliance, unilateral U.S. action and then ask your allies to do something later. One thing that experience teaches you is quick, instant, strong consultation. And once that was done, and I'm confident that the allies would see a threat to them, I would make a multi-lateral representation over the hot line to the Soviets and make it very forceful, not saying what force I would use or wouldn't use or whether to use force at all, but to say that we were not gonna tolerate a Czechoslovakia, or a Hungary, in Yugoslavia. I'm not sure, having studied that problem as Director of Central Intelligence, that that scenario is valid. I hope it's not, because you have various factions inside of Yugoslavia that would be struggling like mad against a faction doing what you've suggested. But I believe that the United— that the free world would have to make clear that the Soviets' coming in and dominating and sucking Yugoslavia back into its solid orbit would not be tolerated.

11:22 **MOYERS:** But that and the representation on the hot line to Moscow carries with it the potential threat of— a real threat of force, which implies the use of it as necessary. You're not ruling that out?

12:20 **BUSH:** I would never rule it in or out. One thing a president must not do is to say where he would use force or that he wouldn't use force, especially dealing with the Soviet Union. But, I'll tell you something. The Soviets under-

estimated world opinion on Afghanistan. And part of it is because they're confused about U.S. foreign policy. They don't know where Carter's coming from. I would be surprised, close though they feel to the Yugoslavian situation, to see them try why might appear to world as another Afghanistan. Nevertheless, your question: not say what you would or wouldn't do, early consultation so you're dealing with unity, and clarity of purpose so that aggression — what would be clear aggression — would not be tolerated. We're no longer impotent. We act like it sometimes, but we're not.

13:15 **MOYERS:** Third, suppose that Congress passes a bill providing that all future bonds offered for sale to the public by the federal government be guaranteed purchase price bonds. In other words, if you buy a bond in 1981, maturing in 1999 for \$100, and in that period the dollar loses *half* of its value, when the bond comes due, it would yield \$200. Would you veto such a bill if it were passed by Congress?

13:40 **BUSH:** I do not favor indexing of everything. Indexing in some things I do support, but indexing in everything is a surrender to inflation. What is needed are— is, instead of that, indexing investment, so that nobody takes a loss, everybody is guaranteed something, even a full faith and credit instrument of the U.S. government. In my view that surrenders to inflationary pressures, that gives up on the real medicine that is needed to fight inflation. I would not favor that kind of government instrument.

**MOYERS:** Reagan said he would not only— would he not veto such a bill, he would sing hallelujah while signing it into law. But you would veto it?

14:25 **BUSH:** Well, I— I wouldn't be for it. I wouldn't— Yeah, I would veto it, because I don't want to see us give up on inflation. But, you can't just ask it standing alone because I would have other inflationary— anti-inflationary programs that would make such an instrument unnecessary.

14:45 **MOYERS:** We're going to come back to that in a minute. Suppose on the very morning that you're inaugurated president inflation is running at 25% annually, and a Democratic Congress has met that morning and overwhelmingly passed wage and price controls, and has the bill on your desk when you return from the inaugural parade to your new office. Would you sign it?

15:00 **BUSH:** No, because what I'd say to them is this: 'Look, let's wake up.' I come back to the hypothesis. 'Let's wake up. A Band-Aid— A Band-Aid, the same one that was used under Democrats, same one that was used under Republicans — used Band-Aid — isn't gonna work. We've got to go to fundamentals to fight inflation. But, Bill, your question is too hypothetical. It's really visibly hypothetical, because the Congress that's elected in 1980 won't be elected, in my judgment, if it's going to be a do-nothing, Band-Aid Congress. What they *would* be prepared to do— The people are angry about Jimmy Carter's inflation. They're angry about the fact that it has quadrupled under this president and this Congress, and they are looking for fundamental answers that you and I can talk about that would be much, much more substantive than this Band-Aid approach. Wage and price controls guarantee against innovation. They guarantee in favor of inefficiency in production. Fill out forms, hire more people, 'cause the bottom line doesn't mean anything. They assign to the person — the small business that wants to grow and thus provide more jobs — no incentive: don't do it because profit is going to be gone. So that is not an answer; and it's failed, and let's try something that hasn't been tried.

**MOYERS:** But some people say that, given the ravaging inflation rate now, you have to have the shock treatment to hold things in line until you can get a longer range program.

**BUSH:** I've heard the argument. I still would prefer to go to the fundamentals of economics.

**MOYERS:** Suppose the Supreme Court rules that it is unconstitutional for the House and the Senate to open every day's business with prayer. Would you support a constitutional amendment to overturn the court's decision?

16:50 **BUSH:** Yes. We're one nation, under God, and the concept that the House and Senate should be *prohibited* in this country from that tradition of long, long standing offends me. And I would do it in such a way that we preserved the great diversity of religious faith that exists in this country. But that— be like saying 'one nation under God'— take that off the currency because it's a violation of church and state. I don't believe that. I favor the perception of one

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nation under God. And that perception is not incompatible with a country who, who prides itself, and reveres, its religious diversity.

17:40 **MOYERS:** Suppose the Supreme Court rules unconstitutional legislation passed by the House and Senate prohibiting federal funds for abortion. That legislation would mean that poor women cannot get federal help for abortion. Would you support a constitutional amendment to overturn the Supreme Court's decision?

17:55 **BUSH:** Well, my point on that is, I have favored the approach that would pass an amendment to let the states make this determination. I have not favored the amendment you're talking about, and I still prefer, under the 10th Amendment to the Constitution — leave to the states those things, you know, unnamed — that it would be better to do it in *that* way, rather than the kind of amendment you asked me about.

**MOYERS:** You are opposed to federal aid to abortions?

**BUSH:** Federal aid to abortions, *except* in rape, incest and the life of the mother.

**MOYERS:** Suppose — this is the last of these hypothetical questions — suppose that you're called in the Oval Office and told that postal workers have gone on strike. What would you do?

18:35 **BUSH:** I do not approve of strikes against the federal government by public service employees. That is not my perception of working for government. Yes, there's bargaining; yes, they should have full bargaining rights. But when the public good — policeman, and that wouldn't apply because we're talking about federal level — but when — postal employee's a good example. I just don't believe that striking by the postal service should be a part of the process.

**MOYERS:** You don't approve of it, but what would you do as president?

19:10 **BUSH:** Well, I'd tell them not to do it, and I'd invoke whatever it is that you have available to invoke — I don't know if Taft-Hartley comes into the postal service or not — but if they insisted on it, I'd have others deliver the mail.

**MOYERS:** National Guard?

19:25 **BUSH:** Sure, you got people out there to do it, and I think we've done that in the past. Seen them in there sorting out stuff, probably a little less efficient, and what we don't need is anything to make the postal service less efficient, I agree. Although in some places it's gotten better. But, no, you can't do that. There's a public good. You know, there's private rights, and one of the troubling things a president always has to do is balance between the rights of individuals — or collective rights of individuals in their senses — and the public good. But if the president isn't willing to look out for the public good, then we're in trouble.

20:00 **MOYERS:** Mr. Ambassador, how do you see yourself different from Ronald Reagan? Most of your responses have been compatible to the responses he gave to William Buckley, and I'm wondering: How do you see yourself different from Reagan.

20:15 **BUSH:** Well, most of the responses, Bill, would be the same as, I believe, the responses you'd get any other Republican candidate, or from the majority of Americans. I really believe that. I don't see that there'd be, on these questions, that there's that much room for difference. So then you get into other issues. And you get into experience. You want me to talk about issues. I'm a little embarrassed to go back and talking about 'breadth of experience'. But what the American people want is a strong leader, no question. But they want *reason, reasoned* leadership, and they want *experienced* leadership—

**MOYERS:** Is Reagan—

**BUSH:** —There's no substitute—

**MOYERS:** Is Reagan not experienced?

20:50 **BUSH:** Not as experienced as much as I am in the things that I feel a president has to be experienced in. Foreign affairs is a very important part of it. Dealing with Congress. It's different than a state legislature. He'll be putting forward his qualities. He ran a big state, and that's a good qualification. I'm putting forward mine. Building in the private sector, that he hasn't done— And we Republicans all lecture about GNP and shifts back to private, but I

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understand the private sector better, Congress, and then *experience* in foreign affairs and certainly in intelligence. So that'll be a difference, and we'll— if you want me to develop with you differences of positions or response, I can do it.

**MOYERS:** Let me ask you this first: if you were to lose to him in Detroit at the convention, would you support him in November?

**BUSH:** Absolutely. Absolutely, and he would beat Jimmy Carter. But I'll beat him— I'll beat him more.

**MOYERS:** If you were asked, would you be his running mate?

21:50 **BUSH:** Well, again, here we get into the gum and offense with you politically. I've taken a Sherman-like statement and challenged the reporters to find Mrs. Sherman, or somebody that went further than old Sherman in saying he wouldn't do that. And I'll stay with that. I am focusing on winning the presidency, and if I permit you to divert me, I will not be true to my single purpose. ✓

22:12 **MOYERS:** It is true, that when you elect a president you actually elect the government. You elect a cabinet, you even elect a Supreme Court, because appointments are made to the court. There's a lot of talk going around that if Gerald Ford came into the race and were re-elected he would ask Henry Kissinger to be his Secretary of State. And I've seen Mr. Kissinger out in the country, campaigning for Republican candidates as if he were campaigning for Secretary of State again. And my question to you is, if you were elected president, would you ask Henry Kissinger to be your Secretary of State?

22:40 **BUSH:** No, but I can't tell you that I wouldn't. The answer is no at this juncture, because I'm not saying who I'd elect— put in any job, and I don't know— It's a two-way street. The person has to have confidence in the president, as well as the president having confidence in the person, and I don't know where Kissinger is on— right now. Some have been telling me that he is encouraging Ford to get in the race—

**MOYERS:** Evans and Novak had a column the other day saying 'conservative operatives in George Bush's campaign are quietly putting out the word that in a Bush administration there will be no Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, and no Vice President John Anderson.'

23:20 **BUSH:** Well, conservative operatives or liberal operatives in the Bush campaign are entitled to their opinion, but they will have absolutely *nothing* to say in the final determination of who will or will not be in a Bush cabinet. But that's about all I want to say about it here, too, because I want people knowledgeable. I've been talking about excellence, all these broad terms which are essential— But I'm not gonna go in to who will or won't be in it. I would have a wide array of advice in foreign affairs, and I'm getting it now, and Kissinger has not been identified with my campaign, and leave it that way. I'm not going to tear him down, nor am I gonna in any way hint that he would be in a Bush administration.

24:05 **MOYERS:** Let's stay, then, for a moment with foreign policy. If you were president right now, what would you do to get the hostages out of Iran? Jimmy Carter has prayed over them; he kept the Christmas tree dark at the White House. He sent Ramsey Clark, he has pleaded at the U.N., at the International Court of Justice. He dispatched a naval force to the Indian Ocean. And the hostages, as of this moment, are still there. What more could be done?

24:30 **BUSH:** Right this minute? Right this minute I expect Carter is doing everything he can do — except, he's not leveling with the American people. Bill, when that commission was formed, that U.N. commission, I had the distinct impression that the fix was on, that before that commission started its work, the hostages would be free. And I believe everybody behind these cameras, everybody in this room, had that same impression. But we appear to have been had by the Ayatollah Khomeini.

**MOYERS:** But we're not dealing with stable people, are we? A stable regime?

25:00 **BUSH:** Well, absolutely not. But when you're not dealing with a stable regime, that's more and more good reason to be cautious. That's good reason to get it written in blood that they're going to fulfill a commitment, and not mislead a frustrated, and increasingly frustrated, American people. So, you mentioned a couple of things— Ramsey Clark. I would never have sent Ramsey Clark on the mission, even if he only got half way.

25:25 **MOYERS:** What would you have done differently?

25:35 **BUSH:** Well, if you go back, what I'd have done differently and had them— you know, now, and it's not quite fair— I'd have started tightening up much, much sooner on the economic side. I do believe that it is proper to go to mobilize world opinion, as we *tried* to do, at the United Nations. I think that's a proper thing, and you can't do it overnight. But today, look, if I had a quick and easy fix, I would be up there with a great sense of urgency, passing it along to Jimmy Carter or Cy Vance. And I don't. But you permitted me a little broader scope at it, and I think there are certain things, including *leveling* with the American people right now, that I *would* do.

**MOYERS:** Would you have permitted the Shah into this country?

26:05 **BUSH:** Again, I have not the evidence to make that judgment. Because, as I keep hearing there were intelligence reports that overwhelmingly said that if he came in our embassy or, something would happen to Americans in Teheran— I don't know that to be true. And one thing I learned in intelligence business: don't make judgments on less than full information. But if that was there and that was clear, we could still be compassionate to an ally and friend without heightening that probability. So I don't know the answer to that, you see, because I don't know about the intelligence information. And I don't think you do — maybe you do.

**MOYERS:** No, I have read the reports that there were warnings, that the embassy—

26:50 **BUSH:** — and if they were that clear, and you're now giving me hindsight, I think you could still look like you weren't turning your back on a friend in the face of international tyranny, international anarchy, international diminution of human rights, as we see in Iran today, by turning you back on the man. I think you could have, you know, sent a team of people to help — *if* the evidence was that clear. But I am trying to— now I'm doing that which I said I wouldn't do, and that is don't want to be in there in *any* way — not that my words are so weighty, but I don't want to be in there in any way heightening the complication of the lives of those hostages. I think when Teddy Kennedy made his statement about the Shah it played right into the hands of the Ayatollah and those people.

27:30 **MOYERS:** All right, let's take a situation where hostages are not involved. What can we do about the Soviet troops in Kabul? In truth, could we have done more to keep the Soviets out of Afghanistan than they could have done to keep us from sending troops into the Dominican Republic?

27:48 **BUSH:** I don't think so at that moment in history. I have read, and again— you know, sensitive information, one thing experience teaches you, is available to the president and not to others. I have read, true or not, that the president made forceful representations — 'cause I heard the talk intelligence was good, that we saw movement of troops and stuff — to Brezhnev, and if that was done, let's face it, it's a neighboring country. They're small borders. I don't think there's anything that, *at that moment*, he could have done. But I think there are things that he could have done *before* that would have made that kind of invasion, that kind of aggression less likely. And I think there are things afterward — support for Pakistan, and redefining our strategic interest — that would make future aggression less apt to happen.

**MOYERS:** Did —

**BUSH:** I'll tell you what— One last point, one last point, Bill. I think you're going to see this peace offensive. I think the Soviets overestimated their own ability to pull this off. And when you see the neutrals—

**MOYERS:** But they're still there—

28:55 **BUSH:** That's right, but let me finish. But you see the neutrals, and you see a lot of non-aligned with whom the Soviet— and you see a kind of united Islam. This the Soviets didn't count on, and I wouldn't be surprised— You start hearing now 'internationalization' and all of this. They want to get into some kind of a peace offensive mode before these elections, and I think you're going to see that— be more apt to see some kind of show by removal of force. But what they underestimated is the fierce patriotism and independence and religious conviction of the Afghans themselves.

29:30 **MOYERS:** But for all that, Mr. Ambassador, they have stabilized the situation in Afghanistan, in their favor, they have a regime there that, at least on the surface, and probably more so, is fully in their pocket now. They've accomplished their purpose. And I'm wondering if there's anything you would suggest that we could do that would  
29:55 get their troops out of Afghanistan.

30:00 **BUSH:** I don't think they're going to come out. But, I don't think there's any immediate answer to get them out. I think you're going to see them do exactly what I've told you, because I think they underestimated world opinion. I think the firming up of U.S. posture in the Middle East is a helpful thing there. I think we have common interest in this, even with somebody as unpredictable as the regime in Iran. I *know* we have common interests with China, and China is making *very* firm and forceful representations as to what would happen if it goes further. So, getting them out, I think, will be part of a Soviet peace effort, an idea to show that they really aren't the brutal aggressors that they are, and I think that's what's going to do it. It's going to be more world opinion than it is bristling weapons lined up against them. But, the ideas that they've stabilized things is not quite accurate. They've stabilized it militarily, but they haven't stabilized the heartbeat of the Afghans, and don't forget it, and we haven't heard the last of it. You do not brutally aggress and crush a people and have permanent stability. That's not what's happened.

31:05 **MOYERS:** You mentioned Pakistan, and the president has proposed that we give Pakistan over \$400 million worth of aid, and the Pakistanis want more. Should we tell Pakistan that they can't have it if they insist on developing the capacity for nuclear weapons?

31:20 **BUSH:** No, what we should tell Pakistan is, 'We made a mistake when we cut you off on a single interest,' and what we should have done is build into any assistance the safeguards, as they develop their nuclear capability, that it not be used for weaponry. But the idea that they were building is something that I— We're not going to be able to control. We should put constraints on. We should put on safeguards. But the idea that they are clearly out to develop neutron— hydrogen bombs and this kind of thing, yeah, that should concern the United States. But we— they're still doing what they were doing. And we belatedly come in to help them. I mean, I think our policy ought to be more forward looking than that.

32:05 **MOYERS:** But doesn't sending aid to General Zia, who is a dictator, bring echos in your mind of what we did in the '50s and '60s with Diem and Ky and Thieu in Vietnam? And the Shah of Iran in Iran?

**BUSH:** I don't see it as so sinister—

**MOYERS:** Well, not sinister, but—

**BUSH:** and I frankly am not a revisionist, I'm not a revisionist on Iran.

**MOYERS:** No, not sinister—

**BUSH:** Where were the interests of the U.S. and the Iranian people better off?

**MOYERS:** Not sinister, but the fact that Saigon fell, with one of the best equipped armies in world; Teheran fell, with one of the best equipped armies in world—

**BUSH:** Yeah, but *why* did Teheran fall? Do we know the answer yet?

**MOYERS:** Well, I don't know the answer yet, but it fell.

**BUSH:** I'm not sure I do.

**MOYERS:** And all that time—

**BUSH:** What happened to that military that was that strong? Were they encouraged by a U.S. general to stay in their barracks? Were they—

**MOYERS:** Don't you think it's more difficult than that? There was a revolutionary tide—

**BUSH [overlap]:** Yeah, I think the revolutionary pressures were stronger. But I'm talking about the fall, just as you were talking about.

33:07 **MOYERS:** I'm only asking whether or not going in to back a dictator and a military strongman in Pakistan for what you might conceive to be good strategic reasons doesn't sound like the same mistakes we made in Vietnam and Iran in backing a military regime that lacks the support of the people. So that, if the Russians *were* to move in, with local, sympathetic help, we'd still be powerless.

33:33 **BUSH:** Bill, what I've found from experience is, sometimes you're choosing, not between good on one hand and

33:45

evil on another. You're choosing between wide varieties of imperfection in between. You mentioned Vietnam. You know and I know that it was alleged in Vietnam if the U.S. would just get out of Vietnam, you'd have a nice, indigenous, united Vietnam. We got out—I remember criticism from the free press in South Vietnam. We got out, there is no press at all in Vietnam, Vietnam is united, Vietnam has aggressed against Laos, they have aggressed against Cambodia, and they have less human rights respect today than almost any society over there — brutalizing the ethnic Chinese.

**MOYERS:** I don't quarrel with that.

34:20

**BUSH:** Well, but my point is this: You're not always choosing in the world between perfection and imperfection. In Pakistan, it is in the interest of the United States to have a Pakistan that will not be dominated by the Soviet Union. That is our interest. Now, if that means at least having some negotiation with General Zia, who is less than perfect in human rights — fine. But what kind of government, if you *don't* do it, and if Pakistan falls, do you get? You get one less interested in human rights. And I point to Iran as a good example of what I'm saying. I point to Iran.

**MOYERS:** Should we have intervened in—

**BUSH:** —where rights of women have been diminished, where revolutionary councils line people up and shoot 'em. All we hear about is Savak and its brutality.

**MOYERS:** Should we have intervened in Iran to keep the Shah in power?

**BUSH:** No, we didn't need to intervene in Iran to keep anybody in power.

**MOYERS:** But, when he started to fall. Should we have helped him?

**BUSH:** I asked you the question. What was the role of General Heyser? And now I'm doing even more of that which I said I wouldn't do, by going into Iran.

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**MOYERS:** I'm not running for president, though.

35:30

**BUSH:** I am, and therefore I don't want to, you know, go back— go fine tuning Iran, because I've said I wouldn't do that. Question, that should be answered by this administration: What was General Heyser's instructions? Nothing about American troops. This was the old argument that was used in Angola.

**MOYERS:** But you—

**BUSH:** We don't want American troops in Angola. We negate a commitment to Savimbi, and look at Africa today.

**MOYERS:** When do we use troops, in—

**BUSH:** In Vietnam.

**MOYERS:** But when *should* we use troops in a situation—

**BUSH:** That's too hypothetical. You never can answer that question.

**MOYERS:** But you said it's in our interest to have a General Zia, who is imperfect, in power, rather than to have a Soviet regime in Pakistan. Now, if Zia were endangered should we send troops?

**BUSH:** You can't answer a hypothetical question like that. I've learned—

**MOYERS:** In principle can't you?

36:10

**BUSH:** No, you can't, because everybody wants you to say, 'I'll send troops to the Persian Gulf or to Pakistan.' I'm not going to say that. I'm not going to say what I would or wouldn't do. I know enough about foreign affairs to know that you cannot go into that kind of hypothetical question halfway around the world. I mean, what I'm saying is, support doesn't have to be troops. And support can be safeguarding against nuclear proliferation and still helping, and we're doing it today. We are doing it today under the Democrats who, under Jimmy Carter, who is so naive he didn't think he had to help him. And he wakes up and sees the Soviets as they really are, and thus he does it. That's all I'm saying.

36:55

**MOYERS:** All right, but we've come full circle. If you don't use troops you have to use military aid, and I repeat

that one of the best equipped armies fell in South Vietnam, and one of the best equipped armies fell in Iran.

37:07 **BUSH:** But you don't know *why* it fell in Iran, and nor do I. Because you don't know what the role is. There were revolutionary pressures, of course. But there was also a role of the army in Vietnam that is yet to be clear. It's yet to be clear, it's yet— The American people are yet to be told why that army stayed in its barracks.

**MOYERS:** How, with those policies, do you expect to keep the Arab world, the moderate Arab world, close enough to our interests to protect our strategic and energy interests?

37:40 **BUSH:** You know what concerns the moderate Arabs, the sheikdoms in the Gulf? Do you know where their main concern is? Destabilization of their own regimes by the Soviet Union. A fear that the Soviet Union, having aggressed against Afghanistan and long before that want to overthrow them. They know that there's subversion by the Soviets in Yemen. They know that there's mucking around inside of Saudi Arabia and inside a stimulation of revolutionary pressures inside of some of those other countries. And they don't know what the U.S. would do. They don't know that the U.S. would keep commitments under Jimmy Carter. They don't trust the United States' word.

**MOYERS:** What does that mean to keep commitments—

**BUSH:** They think we've lost our will. And that's the problem.

38:20 **MOYERS:** What does it mean to keep commitments in the Middle East? Should we—

**BUSH:** Jimmy Carter spelled them out the other day.

**MOYERS:** All right, he said that if our vital interests in Saudi Arabia, the Middle East, are threatened, he'd consider troops?

**BUSH:** Well, there you go again. Hung up on troops out of Vietnam. We're coming out of this post-Vietnam syndrome. I think he made the right statement.

**MOYERS:** All right, then how do you protect those interests?

38:50 **BUSH:** Protect them by— We're doing it today, better. We got a naval presence. One of the big shortcomings of the Carter administration: bragged when he came into office that in the first two weeks he cut three billion in defense. And in it was the ability to strengthen the Navy. Project naval power, if necessary. Our navy is going right down the tubes, getting weaker and weaker. And so you can strengthen those things.

**MOYERS:** Would you put bases in the Middle East?

**BUSH:** You can turn it around.

**MOYERS:** —With bases in the Middle East?

39:25 **BUSH:** I don't favor permanent bases. That's where I differ with some of the other Republican candidates. And the reason I don't is not that I don't want to— don't recognize that you need at some point to project power or show force, but I see a permanent base in the Middle East as an invitation to the Soviets to do the one thing that the Sudanese and the Egyptians kept them from doing: getting a foothold in the Middle East again. I think that the Soviets would love to have an air base somewhere down there in Iraq or maybe Ethiopia or wherever it is. And I don't want to see that. But I do favor temporary basing, utilization of existing facilities in Somalia, for example, or off Oman in Massawa, or in Kenya. And the Soviets did that. The Soviets have, as you know, bases, navy bases there — they have a sub base there at Berbera. And that is the answer, not the permanent base. And I know good people differ with me, but I think that is a much more sensible, less escalatory answer.

39:54 **MOYERS:** You talk about experience. What recommends you to be president, other than your desire for it?

**BUSH:** Experience.

**MOYERS:** Why kind of experience?

**BUSH:** — and conviction about this country — how we can solve problems and go places and do things.

40:35 **MOYERS:** Where you talk about experience—

**BUSH:** — and help the lives of others.

**MOYERS:** One of your friends was recently quoted, anonymously, as saying, 'Bush has kept moving. Sooner or later, when you're in a job you make a mistake. The real question is how you confront that mistake. He's never had that test.' Do you think you've ever been seriously tested.

40:55 **BUSH:** Yeah. Some of it you haven't known about because some of it happened in the intelligence community. I think I was tested when I was chairman of the Republican Party, during Watergate. A lot of people said, 'Why don't you be more loyal to Nixon', and a lot of other people saying, 'Why are you holding the party so close to Nixon?' I was tested under fire.

**MOYERS:** But how could you have been more loyal to the party?

**BUSH:** I was tested under fire by the most cynical—

**MOYERS:** I understand what you do, but how could you have been more loyal to the president when you were chairman—

41:20 **BUSH:** 'Cause I refused to get in there and say that the Ervin committee was a kangaroo court when that was the administration line. I refused to go forward and do a lot of things that I was asked to do by the administration in its kind of reactive way.

**MOYERS:** On April 7, 1973, you called the Watergate bugging a 'Mickey Mouse decision'. On June 12—

**BUSH:** It still was. I'd say that in 1980.

41:45 **MOYERS:** All right. On June 12, 1973, you said that you did not believe John Dean's testimony. On October 22, 1973, you compared Nixon's dismissal of Archibald Cox to Truman's dismissal of MacArthur. On December 11, 1973, you reported a 'mounting, growing feeling in the country to get off the president's back'. On January 19, 1974, you said that for the president to resign would amount to hounding a president out of office without any proof of guilt. On April 26, 1974, you said you remained convinced that 'the president is telling the truth'. You know, all this time the country was growing more and more aware that something was rotten—

**BUSH:** Yet, more and more—

42:15 **MOYERS:** — and you became more and more dogmatic in your support of the president.

42:20 **BUSH:** I beg your pardon. I didn't become more and more dogmatic; I became more and more fair. What I was saying is 'the system should try this, the system should work'. I didn't do it by the leak or the innuendo. Not that— And, you know, there was a lot of things printed — and history will record this — showing there were a lot of charges made that *were*'t true. We condone journalistic practices of threatening a source with blackmail because some people were so certain of guilt. I stayed out of that. And I will stay with my position. I did what was honorable. I was the head of the party, but the president is the head of it. I did not condone Watergate. You left out of your quotes— You left out, in fair play, a lot of quotes about Watergate being wrong. The very first press conference I had I came down against Watergate and its allega— its all-inclusive diminution of our system. So, Bill, in fairness, you read only a handful of quotes, which, in retrospect, kind of look funny. I'm telling you—

**MOYERS:** They represented a growing—

**BUSH:** — there were plenty of— They weren't growing. It was consistent. And there were plenty of people saying to me, 'Why are you doing this? Why aren't you supporting Nixon more on that?'

**MOYERS:** Did you ever consider resigning? Did you ever consider resigning?

43:35 **BUSH:** No. Do you bail out when the party isn't connected to something? Do you leave the sinking ship? Do you get your headline in the papers because a lot of journalists would love it? Do you leak things to show how good and strong you are? Or do you chart a principled position and stay with it? And I have more credit today in the Republican Party for what I just said that I woulda had if I had got my name in the papers by inrighteous [*sic*] indignation, leaving. I was head of the party. The party was not involved in Watergate. And the reason I have strong support from the party is 'cause they know I kept

44:05

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the party from being dragged into the ugliness of Watergate. That's the other side of those quotes.

**MOYERS:** Fair enough. Did you feel compromised by the fact that in 1970, when you were running for the Senate in Texas you received some of the clandestine money that was passed around?

**BUSH:** Compromised? I was honored to get it. Watergate had not taken place until two years later, and I felt no compromise. I thought it was great, and I was grateful for it. And the money was reported, and it was—you know, I was very pleased.

**MOYERS:** Did Nixon lie to you?

**BUSH:** Yes, he did.

**MOYERS:** What does that say about the power of the presidency today to—

**BUSH:** 'Don't lie'. That's what it says. And I've not been— That's not been one of my shortcomings.

**MOYERS:** Did you do anything as Director of the CIA that, if you were president and it were exposed by a domestic or foreign power, would embarrass you personally or the country?

**BUSH:** No.

**MOYERS:** Not one thing?

45:08

**BUSH:** No. And I did plenty, that, if it were exposed would show a certain fiber and a certain respect for Americans, but also a respect for the need for strong intelligence—

**MOYERS:** Can you give me an example?

**BUSH:** — to protect sources and methods of intelligence. No, if I started doing that, I'd be starting to be a bad ex-CIA Director.

**MOYERS:** Doesn't that put us at a disadvantage in trying to judge you on the basis of your experience?

45:25

**BUSH:** Yeah. It puts *me* at a disadvantage, because I would be getting better marks. Why do you think a lot of ex-CIA people support me? Some people say that's a liability. Do you know why? 'Cause they think I was a good leader. I went out there and the viewed me as a lot of these liberals Democrats in Congress did as pure politician. They fought me, Frank Church and some of those people. I was a good CIA Director, and I had to prove it. And I proved it by being sure that the abuses of the past, codified in an executive order, not be repeated. And I assured it by standing up and saying, 'In an open society, some things, to protect the republic, are going to have to be closed'. And I found that balance. In the Congress, some of my severest critics in Congress will tell you I was a *good* CIA Director. People that voted against me. What better— That, plus working with your peers saying you did a good job.

46:23

**MOYERS:** You're quoted somewhere as talking about the 'hamstrung intelligence-gathering operations'. What can't the CIA do that it ought to be able to do?

46:30

**BUSH:** It can't keep things as confidential as it should. Part of intelligence comes from cooperation from other services. But if other services, other intelligence services, don't think we're going to protect information they give us, and it's going to come out, and thus embarrass other countries, that haven't gone through what we have, they won't cooperate.

**MOYERS:** How do you protect it then? Do you punish those who leak?

**BUSH:** Yes.

**MOYERS:** Do you punish those in the press who use it?

**BUSH:** No, of course, we never would punish the press. We'd never want to do that, 'cause — you know, we're not going to do that.

**MOYERS:** Would you have an Official Secrets Act.

47:00

**BUSH:** No, I wouldn't have an Official Secrets Act, because that does exactly what I said I wouldn't do. And what I

47:15 would do is protect sources and methods by getting after the leaker; and the most important thing you do is consolidate oversight. So you're not going to eight different committees. You know, when a staffer, in his righteous indignation, can abort an effort that the president has found to be in the national interest, and found in writing, there's something wrong. So, somebody has to look after the interests of this country, and you don't do it by weakening the Central Intelligence Agency.

47:38 **MOYERS:** Do you believe that the full House and Senate intelligence committees — the *full* committees — should be notified in advance of covert activities?

**BUSH:** No. No. I would do it in a timely fashion, under Hughes-Ryan.

**MOYERS:** But how do you—

47:50 **BUSH:** This is the difference. I don't believe you need prior notification. I believe the president of the United States is not dishonorable. I believe if he gets a finding based on, not secondary, but principals—

**MOYERS:** But if a president lies to you—

**BUSH:** May I finish my question?

**MOYERS:** But if a president lies to you—

**BUSH:** May I finish my question?

**MOYERS:** Yes.

48:10 **BUSH:** The answer. The Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, the Attorney General, the head of the NSC, the Director of CIA, all recommending to the president something, and he finds it's in the national interest, I think timely notice is just exactly fine. And I don't believe you need prior notice.

48:30 **MOYERS:** Now, after the fact, in oversight, do you believe that the full House and Senate oversight committees should be notified *after* the fact? I'm just trying to find out what you mean by oversight.

**BUSH:** Sure, we did it to eight different committees. I testified—

**MOYERS:** But, you're saying that's wrong.

**BUSH:** in one year to 54— Yes, eight is wrong.

**MOYERS:** You're saying that's wrong.

48:48 **BUSH:** Consolidation is right. I'd love the concept of a Joint Atomic Energy Committee. But I don't think that'll be. I think you're going to be dealing — *if* the Senate and House recognize the error of their ways — I think you're going to see it with two committees. And that would be a lot better than eight.

49:00 **MOYERS:** I was interrupting you a minute ago. I meant to let you finish your statement. I interrupted you by saying that you were talking about an honorable president, but you just got through admitting that one president lied to you. And what's to keep a president like that from lying to the Congress, from lying to the public, about the abuses of the CIA?

49:15 **BUSH:** Plenty, because you have a lot of disclosure today that you didn't have before. You have an executive order today. You have oversight responsibilities in the executive branch as well as in Congress. You have safeguards that I helped build into the system that didn't exist before. And so, you know, that's what it is. Things have changed dramatically. But for those that want a weak CIA, they better not have me as president. 'Cause I'd want one respectful of the rights of Americans but one that would be improving the quality of the information that our president gets. And you don't get it if everything is out in the open. Some friend can pick up a phone, and say 'I saw something I didn't like. I saw this Soviet general saying this and he's disloyal to the revolution and because you pick it up and you print it, that doesn't help intelligence.

50:05 **MOYERS:** Two final, quick questions. With all due respect, it does seem hard for some people to understand how in one or two years you can learn enough about a job to serve in it with distinction. You had four jobs in six years, and I ask you what job have you held in which you think you served with distinction?

50:20

50:25 **BUSH:** All of them. And the idea that you can't do anything well and that you have to be there 20 years to do it, I don't believe that. Every single job I've done well. And the best attestation— don't take my word for it. Go talk to some of the people that I served with. I'm not one who bullies the State Department. I got good cooperation at the U.N. I understood the initiatives, and I could lead, and that U.S. mission to the U.N. knows it. I believe the Chinese leaders know that I was a good, strong ambassador for the U.N., at least in representing our opinions and saying, 'Look, all this anti-U.S. propaganda is bad.' I've already cited the party. And go back to private business. Go out on the oil rigs, talk to Joe Tullis or Carl Johnson. They're no elitists, they're no inside-Washington people. Talk to 'em. The best thing I've got going for me is the respect of my peers. And that says something about leadership.

51:20 **MOYERS:** All right, last question. Really the last question. It seems to me that many people today are looking for more than answers to the issues we've been talking about. That they are looking for someone who can understand, explain and act upon the underlying disorder of our times, which violates the laws of proportion and harmony and has led to the disintegration of the social fabric in our country. Do you have anything to say to that. Do you really believe that our social fabric is unraveling?

51:48 **BUSH:** No. I think we're coming out of an anomaly. You're still harping in these questions on 1960s, which I understand.

**MOYERS:** And the '70s.

51:55 **BUSH:** And the '70s. Watergate. Vietnam. And the election of a president who had not had a lot of experience. Three things, the first two being much more substantive. But I'm not one who feels there's a great unraveling of fabric. If you look relatively at things, there are some enormous problems, but there's also some enormous progress.

52:15 And part of the hopelessness that your question at least implied to me is because economic conditions have gotten worse, inflation has quadrupled under Jimmy Carter. Interest rates have gone off the chart. People now realize that this one-party control of Congress has resulted in a certain malaise. But that can change. And I am an idealist. And I believe in the fundamentals of our institutions, and that they're still able to cope. Everybody wants to go and take a meat-ax to the constitution, when they see these things. But I don't. I think things— I think we can solve the problem.

52:50

**MOYERS:** Thank you, Mr. Ambassador.

**MOYERS [voice-over]:** From Jacksonville, Florida, this has been a conversation with George Bush. I'm Bill Moyers.

[Credits]

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