

VICTOR ATIYEH

July 7, 1993

Tape 44, Side 1

C.H.: This is an interview with Governor Victor Atiyeh at his office in downtown Portland, Oregon. The interviewer for the Oregon Historical Society is Clark Hansen. The date is July 7th, 1993, and this is Tape 44, Side 1.

I just asked you about the treatment that the other Arab countries were also giving the Palestinians.

V.A.: Well, there's certainly got to be some element of it. To say that that's the way the other Arab countries treat the Palestinians means it's okay if we treat them that way too. It is not a good answer - on behalf of anyone.

Like way back when, we were talking about gambling, and they'd come up and say, "We have dog and horse racing." Well, don't use that as an argument for me, because I don't like either one of them, but I wasn't here when it happened. So don't use that as an argument with me.

To say that maybe some of the other Arab countries may - I don't think there's mistreatment. They may not be able to live, assimilate, maybe they don't want to, I don't know which, within the culture where they are.

Jordan, you know, they're a little gun-shy because the Palestinians had Palestine, and Jordan had Jordan. And then the Israelis pushed the Palestinians out of Palestine, and a lot of them -.

And they also, the Israelis, you know, took off a chunk of Jordan during the war, and that's that now never-never land where the Palestinians are.

C.H.: The West Bank.

V.A.: Yes. But still and all, it's not an excuse. Not an excuse at all.

C.H.: Has there ever been any attempt to combine occupied Israeli with adjacent territories of other Arab nations where the Palestinians live to create a Palestinian homeland?

V.A.: Well, they're scattered. Now, I know when I came in, I remember coming in from the airport in Damascus, you go by a place where a whole lot of Palestinians are living. In Damascus. Or on the border of whatever, the boundary of Damascus, I'm not quite sure. And I'm sure there's similar places, as they move around.

There aren't too many Palestinians really in Lebanon, as far as I know. They may be scattered around, but not like I just saw in Syria. I'm sure that they are similar in Jordan, what would be Jordan.

However, having said all of that, the position that Israel takes, first of all, there's no discussion of land for peace is not going to happen. If they say, "No, we will not talk about giving back this land in order to get peace," and there won't be peace, because they're as strongly adamant on the other side: "This is my land you're on." And it is. That's undisputed. That's occupied.

"Get out of there, and then we'll talk about peace." So, first of all, that has to happen. Second, there has to be a home for the Palestinians. Now, where that's going to be - I bet they talk a lot about a lot of different places. But certainly the West

Bank. Certainly the West Bank. And then how much of Jordan, or whatever, or anything else of Jordan, it's hard to tell. Obviously, the total desire would be Palestine would become Palestine again, but that is so politically impossible that there's really no point in wasting a lot of time on that. So there's got to be another home.

C.H.: But then you have the area over on the Gaza Strip, which is very separate from anything on the West Bank.

V.A.: Yeah.

C.H.: How would you deal with these autonomous areas separated by their enemies, essentially?

V.A.: Well, if I had the real answer to that, I'd ...

C.H.: Wouldn't you have the same problem with the Pakistanis or the Asian ..

V.A.: Yeah.

C.H.: ... Muslims that separated from India into Bangladesh, what became Bangladesh - East Pakistan and West Pakistan - they wanted to have a, what is it, eighteen hundred mile corridor about five or ten miles wide running between the two countries, which obviously they didn't have. But you know, it seems like you don't hear about any solutions suggested ...

V.A.: Well, you haven't really gotten that close yet. You're still talking about the shape of the table.

C.H.: Yeah.

V.A.: And you know, Bush was the first President that really put pressure on Israel to sit down at a peace table. And they did, as we know. What I thought would happen has happened. I said that with Clinton's election, the pressure was off. You really haven't read an awful lot about peace talks where the Israelis and the Arab

world gets together and talk peace. The heat is off. They don't really have to do that anymore. Clinton is back like Reagan was and Carter was, you know. Bush wasn't - was not anti-Israel. He was as close to the end of the table as any President that I've seen. Now Clinton has moved back over to the side of the table with Israel, so Israel doesn't really have to anymore. They got their \$12 billion loan guarantee, there's really no pressure at all for them to really go to peace talks. They could do it in a cosmetic way, but they've no intention of arriving in it because there's no pressure on them to do that. So what we've delayed now is another generation of misplaced Palestinians, and it's too bad. It's too bad to think of that part of the world and those kinds of things happening.

C.H.: What were you hoping to accomplish by going to Israel?

V.A.: I wasn't looking for anything - that is, politically. I have a lot of good friends in Portland and Oregon, but mainly Portland, Jewish friends, and I mean real good friends, we know them very well, like them very much, and I think they like me. And they wanted me to go to Israel. Obviously, I've got it mixed in my mind it's - I know it's Israel, but you know, it's Palestine as well.

And it's such an historic part of the world. Just it is, it's truly marvelous, truly marvelous. To see the things we saw, I enjoyed it very much. Really did enjoy it, with the exception they kept telling me about it, and those are things that I wasn't interested in. I was interested in the history and the things that took place and what it was all about. But I enjoyed my stay. But I wasn't looking to - not like when I told you about going to Syria

the last time, and I had a mission, a personal mission of mine. I didn't have anything like that in mind for Israel.

C.H.: What did you accomplish from this trip, the whole trip?

V.A.: Well, we really have to - not thinking about myself now, it was a trade mission. I think that we bolstered the amount of work that Oregonians were doing over there. It gave them some leads. It really was left up to the business people to follow up and do whatever business they could do.

They did get a better feel - mainly in Saudi Arabia, but to a lesser degree Egypt, and even lesser in Syria - as to the potential for business, so that they could, you know, have their antennas out and see if they could do business. The trade mission was the basic fundamental reason that we put this group together and went to that part of the world. The Israeli trip was an entirely separate thing. It just happened to follow the three countries that we had gone to.

C.H.: But you felt obligated to go to Israel, if you were going to the other countries?

V.A.: No, I felt the reverse of it. If they wanted me to go to Israel, I felt obligated to go to the Arab world, particularly Syria. Which is what told my friends when they asked me. I did mention that earlier, that I sure would like to go to Israel, but you understand if I do that, I've got to go to Syria - which they did understand here. You know, here they understand it. It wouldn't be that - they're not as broad-minded in New York or Florida as they are here in Portland, Oregon. But they understood that. Matter of fact, one of them said he'd sure like to go to Syria. But there was really no hope for him to go to Syria, but

he'd like to do that. I don't really see any reason why he shouldn't be able to, but the animosities are kind of deep.

C.H.: There was some criticism that the trip was basically a vacation and should have been dealt with as such. That there was no real important business reasons to be going to the Middle East for Oregon, but that it was basically a vacation. How did you respond to that?

V.A.: I didn't. It really wasn't. All you'd really have to do is ask those that went on the trade mission, and they were all perfectly happy. Matter of fact, they were ecstatic. We met more cabinet heads in one day that they would probably receive in two years, if any, if at all.

That's what a Governor does, open those kind of doors. And the fact that they were with the Governor raised their prestige among the people they were trying to do business with. So they were perfectly happy with it. And when one looks at it, Oregon may be there - certainly Saudi's not one of our major trading partners, but if you take a company or two, they're real important to them. We sell a lot of wheat right now to Egypt. It depends on how it goes, but Egypt is up. It could be Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Egypt, in terms of size of trading partners, but in this case it would be the sale of wheat.

So, you know, how do you know? Too many people expect an instant, you know, "Where's the beef?" Doesn't happen that way. But for these people to go with a Governor to that part of the world was quite a boost to them. And then the rest was up to them to try to do business.

C.H.: Did you return early from your trip?

V.A.: No. Our trip was pretty well planned. There was a group, this separate group, that went to Israel, and part of their trip was to go to Israel and then to Egypt and then come home. That was part of their trip. Well, I had done mine, and so after I was finished in Israel, I had done all of that, so then I came home.

But Delores, as a matter of fact, and the rest of the people that were with us, they went on to Egypt, and then actually Delores and my good friend Donna Campbell, her good friend, they actually stopped a day or two in London before they came home. So each had their own plans. But there was this entirely different group of people in Israel than there was that went on the other three Arab countries.

C.H.: There was a news article that suggested that you came back, or part of your party came back early, because of Crown Zellerbach's decision to shelve the construction of a \$30 million state-of-the-art sawmill at Tongue Point, which was a big priority for you here in Oregon.

V.A.: No, that wasn't it. I was finished.

C.H.: Did they indeed shelve that project?

V.A.: Yeah. We've had trouble with Tongue Point, trying to find something really for the community of Astoria. It was by my own motion that the State of Oregon actually bought Tongue Point, which we did. The State Land Board owns Tongue Point.

But I recall many years ago there was something that was going to go there, and then - I think Wayne Morris was involved, and there was some kind of big scandal - and then nothing was happening at all in terms of Tongue Point, and Astoria really needed some kind of economic development. So I said, "Well, the best thing to

do is for us to buy it, the State of Oregon, and then we'll try to, within the State of Oregon, try to find some kind of economic activity." Thus far, it really hasn't happened. It's been disappointing all the way around.

C.H.: They tried to put an automobile loading dock there.

V.A.: Yeah. Yeah. The one good thing out of that, although it didn't happen, but the one good thing out of that is they did some dredging right around there so the ships could come in. So now it's even better potential.

C.H.: Oregon has a disadvantage with Washington, particularly Puget Sound, doesn't it, in terms of shipping in that we don't have the deep sea ports that you have either in Washington or California?

V.A.: Well, we have to continually dredge, that's true. However, the maritime side - there's two sides of our we call Port of Portland. One's the maritime, the other's air, which is the airport.

I was just talking to Mike Thorn the other day. I said, "How's the maritime doing?" And the maritime is doing quite well. The Washington ports, Seattle and Tacoma, particularly Seattle, they jumped on the container thing very early, and we were behind that power curve, so we lost out on that. But we are doing much better than they are on car imports, for example. We're a major car importer, not just from the Far East. We've got the European cars coming in here as well. We're far ahead of them in that department.

We are equipped, not necessarily as well equipped, for containers, but we are equipped. The whole thing, though, is getting ships to call on us, and that's a very difficult thing,

because what we really need is - you're a company, and you say, "I want my goods shipped out of Portland." You don't really say that, you want them shipped by a company that calls on Portland. So you are the one that asks for the carrier.

Well, when you don't really have too much in terms of container, you know, it's very hard for somebody to say, "I want to ship out of Portland, or carry the calls on Portland," because when you get that kind of thing going, then the carrier will call on Portland because they've got a lot of customers to call. So it's kind of hard to put that together.

But Seattle got the jump on us for containers, and the distance up the Columbia River doesn't really seem to bother them too much. We do pretty well on the maritime side. It has been said, and it's true, that Oregon, the Port of Portland, is the largest dry cargo shipping on the West Coast. But that's wheat. You take wheat away, and we wouldn't have that. So - but they're doing well. They're doing okay.

C.H.: Just a short time after your return from Israel, you had another trip then to Taiwan and Korea, didn't you?

V.A.: Yeah.

C.H.: When did that take place?

V.A.: I can't remember.

C.H.: The one to Israel ...

V.A.: That was in '84.

C.H.: ... was in '84. That was in the spring of '84, wasn't it?

V.A.: Okay, this would have been in the early fall, or September, October, and that also went into China, to decide the state province relationship of Fujin Province.

C.H.: Part of your reason for going was to secure sister-state relations with Taiwan; isn't that right?

V.A.: Well, I kept working on that, because the legislature - well, to start it all off, what happened was that Ken Jernstedt, who was a Flying Tiger, state senator, and he put in a resolution for a sister-state-province relationship with Taiwan. May Yi, who is Chinese, she was chairman of the committee at that time. I was Governor. And she took it and turned it around and had the ~~Fujian~~ ^{FUJIAN} Province, which is directly across from Taiwan. That's the province directly across.

Ken came to me and said, "Gee, what are we going to do?" Obviously, he doesn't have the votes to get the job done that he wants.

"Well, don't worry about it, Ken, I'll write an executive order." Which I did, but it just sort of dangled out there. But I still wanted that relationship. I don't know at what point you want to talk about this whole thing, but ...

C.H.: You had actually, there were other trips that you made over there, and this was the first of those.

V.A.: Well, let me just package this as a package.

Anyway, they finally passed it, there was a resolution, the ~~Fujian~~ ^{FUJIAN} Province of China and then in '84 I went there to sign it as the Governor. I remember that extremely well, because I wanted to make sure, again my own personal credibility was at stake, that Taiwan was a great trading partner with Oregon. Had been for a long time. I even met with the consul-general of Taiwan in my office on the afternoon and that evening.

~~Later on~~ is when Carter had said that we'll no longer recognize Taiwan, we're going to recognize the People's Republic of

China. I felt very offended by all of that, because Taiwan was such a great trading partner with Oregon, and they'd send delegations and they would buy. Certainly they bought a lot of wheat from us, but other things. They worked hard at trying to do business. So, you know, to me it's a matter of loyalty. And I'd visited Taiwan and had good friends there. So I didn't, in my own personal credibility, I just wanted to make sure that the people in China understood where I stood.

And basically it was, "I have no problem signing this relationship with China. I think it's a good move, and a wise move, and I'm delighted to be here to do that. But you do understand that I personally have a loyalty to Taiwan, and that I intend to do everything that I can to continue our good relationship because they are our good trading partners. You, China, might be. Taiwan is."

And I had that discussion when I met with Zhao Ziyang, he was kind of curious about it. Apparently all of this had come in advance, and we had a very frank and friendly, very friendly discussion. The only understanding that we had was that that if - we never quite said I was going to work for a province-state relationship with Taiwan, but it was kind of understood that if we did that, we would not refer to the Republic of China - ROC - because we were talking with, dealing with the People's Republic of China. And that was kind of an agreement.

I will always remember, I went from there then - that's Beijing - to Fuzhou. There I met Governor Hu Ping, and there we spent quite a long period of time, in a very personal discussion, the two of us. And I wanted to make sure that he understand that I was perfectly happy signing this, but to understand my loyalty to

Taiwan. And I will always remember - of course this was done through an interpreter, I'd say something and it would be interpreted, then he'd say something and interpret it back. But then, very quietly, he got up, smiled, stood up.

We were sitting down, facing each other. The traditional style is you have this long table and the dignitaries sit in the middle on opposite sides of each other on this long table. He stood up and reached over and shook my hand. He reached his hand out, and that was just marvelous. I remember that vividly, like a photograph, like saying, "I understand, it's perfectly okay with me, I'm happy, I understand where you are."

Actually, Governor Hu Ping is interesting. I can imagine how the press would treat that over here. You know, Governor Who? So we made the signature. Then I continued my interest in trying to get a province-state relationship. The province is the province of Taiwan; although it's the whole island, it's the province of Taiwan. I have some good friends there, so I talked to the Deputy Minister of Affairs, John Chang. Very nice man, knew him quite well. I went to see him - this would now be in 1985. Yes, 1985.

"John, I've got an idea."

"What's that?"

I said, "I will declare this unilaterally." They kept saying they want ROC, and I said, "Gee, I can't do that." With the legislature doing what they did, they pre-empted my ability to put ROC, so that was the kind of hang up. "I will declare it unilaterally, then you declare it unilaterally. You're Governor, do that. And you can say ROC as many times as you want."

Well, he said, "I'll think about that." Then the word came, well, yeah, that's okay. At that time we were down there at this

celebration of the fortieth anniversary of retrocession. There was a signing by Montana, Ted Schwinden, and Montana had signed a province-state relation. I was sort of an addendum because this was now only a few days and I'd just proposed this idea.

So I signed something at that point in time, but it still was hanging out there, not really completed, and I wasn't sure that they really liked that idea too well - they in the Republic of China. Nothing happened. I came back, and then I recall during the Chinese New Year's, ^{DINNER IN PORTLAND} the consul - well, they don't call him consul-general, the Director of the Coordinating Council of North American and China, it's a euphemism for the consul-general - and I said to him, "Can I talk to you after this Chinese New Year dinner?"

And I had a good heart-to-heart with him. I said, "Look, I don't want to embarrass, I don't want to offend Taiwan, they're good friends, but I really do want to have this happen." And I think at that point it kind of broke through. They understood, you know, after this discussion with him.

It's right there on the wall. I kept my own copy, the state has a copy, and Taiwan has a copy.

C.H.: This is a proclamation?

V.A.: And mine is above - no, mine's below and theirs is above, and I made the unilateral declaration and they made the unilateral declaration, and if you'll notice that, I think it was in December 1986, just before I left office, we finally got it done.

C.H.: Proclamation of the establishment of a sister-state relationship between the State of Oregon of the United States of America and the Province of Taiwan of the Republic of China.

V.A.: There you are. And mine is down below. Now the language in that one is mine. I sat down and wrote that.

So anyway, I got it done. I got it done without any explosive diplomatic gaffe, the media around here was worried that Atiyeh was going to screw things up badly, and actually it worked out really famously well. Now the formula, the best I can understand, Taiwan finally likes that because there are some states that had signed with the PRC, so they're kind of using the Atiyeh formula.

C.H.: There was a question I had, I was wondering whether you ran into it, in terms of having a sister-state relationship with Taiwan, either from the Chinese, which you mentioned a little bit, in terms of their non-recognition of Taiwan as a separate country, and from the Taiwanese of being considered a province rather than a country or a state instead of a country. Would that have caused problems with them?

V.A.: No. Because a state has a relationship with a province. A state doesn't have a relationship with a country. We have a relationship with a province. So actually Oregon does. The one thing that they - they meaning ROC and PRC - would both agree, that Oregon has a relationship with two provinces of China. The disagreement comes as to which China. PRC says Taiwan is a province of China. The ROC says Taiwan is a province of China. They both say the same. But as to whose China, that's where they disagree.

C.H.: Right. Right.

V.A.: Taiwan would say "It's our China" which includes Taiwan and all the rest of the mainland.

C.H.: So there wasn't an issue over Taiwan being a country.

V.A.: No. No. Because states ...

C.H.: The Taiwanese don't recognize themselves as a country, an independent country?

V.A.: Oh yes, they do. ^{with the U.S. and the mainland} But you see, I didn't get involved with that kind of thing, because states don't have relationships with countries.

C.H.: But wouldn't this be a tacit recognition of that, that it was in fact a state and not a country, by the very fact that you have a relationship with them on a state-by-state level?

V.A.: No, we never got to that point. See, my agreement is with the province of Taiwan. I signed two agreements, one of which was the province of Taiwan and the province of Fuzhou - ^{Fujian} Fujian Province. I signed two agreements. With provinces. And so what Oregon has is an agreement with two provinces. Of China. Now we don't jump then as to - we don't say it's the PRC China or the ROC China. We don't get involved with that. That's maybe the nuance in the Chinese mind, which said okay, but don't put ROC on yours. Then I would have slopped over into, you know, which country we're dealing with.

C.H.: Were you getting counsel on this from anyone?

V.A.: Nope. I was the only one. Actually, I told them that I didn't think that Goldschmidt - or then, I said that - well, let's see, it was December. No, I'm not sure whether Goldschmidt had been elected at the time of this Chinese New Year's, but you know, it's not that whoever might be Governor would dislike Taiwan, they just don't have as strong a commitment as I do. And so if it doesn't happen with me, it probably won't happen. And I wasn't trying to intimidate them, I wanted it to happen. And I think that's true, as it turned out, Goldschmidt, he doesn't have any

particular dislike for Taiwan, or choosing up between PRC or ROC,
he just ...

[End of Tape 44, Side 1]