

Later I had an interview with Sheikh Salim, not spelled S-O-L-E-M-N although he does look a little bit that way. He's the Foreign Minister of Kuwait and I asked him this question and he said sure, Schwarzkopf was here several times prior to the war as part of a general programme of consultation with the Americans and he saw the Emir, the Minister of Defence and he gave us a great deal of confidence in our dealing with Iraq during the period of crisis. I was a little surprised at how easy it was to put the pieces of this story together. It was just a matter of asking the right questions. I think journalists didn't know which questions to ask and I think we got led astray.

Well, what is the significance of this item of information about General Schwarzkopf? It's just one more piece, it seems to me, in the puzzle. Maybe it proved how smart General Schwarzkopf was and how precocious he was about where the threat was coming from. Depending upon your perspective, that might be a legitimate explanation. Or if you're cynical, you might say it proves that like any good and ambitious general, he was looking for a war to fight before he retired and that he had a vested interest in a war with Iraq. I think his next biographer may look a little bit more carefully into that, because it certainly is not outside the realm of possibility. Or you might see it the other way around, and this is the principal issue as I saw it, that it was one more item of evidence, that the United States had a great deal of influence on the attitude of Kuwait in the months prior to the invasion. And perhaps this was a very unhealthy attitude in terms of a tense set of negotiations that were then under way with Iraq.

Many of us forget after all, that Kuwait was involved, in the spring and summer of 1990, in these very tense negotiations with Iraq. We have forgotten that George Bush was telling us rather stridently how brutal, how unprovoked was the invasion of Kuwait by this Hitler clone whose only interest was aggression. I fully agree with all of those terms, but it's only part of the picture. He is a pretty awful fellow. I certainly agree that he had no right to invade Kuwait, but I think we have to understand much more about the context in which all of this happened. There is much more to the story.

Certainly the President didn't tell us. The President in his role as chief propagandist for the United States told us what he wanted us to know, but the problem was that the press did not challenge what he was saying; the press took Bush's line along