The 1956 Suez War

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JSS Mr. Murray, I wanted first of all to express appreciation for your willingness to participate in this Yale University oral history project on the United Nations. If I might I would like first to ask you if you would indicate for the record what you were doing in the Canadian government before going to New York for assignment at the Canadian Mission to the United Nations.

Murray I was in the Middle East Section of the European Division. I had been posted there by the Department at the request of Elizabeth MacCallum who was the main advisor on Middle Eastern affairs for External Affairs and had served in that capacity for about 12 years. In particular she had served with Mr. Pearson when he was involved in the original Palestine Commission proceedings. The purpose of my going to that position in the Middle East Section was to in effect take over from Elizabeth MacCallum who wanted to have one posting before she retired. By then she was 60 years of age. In fact as my training progressed (and it lasted I think roughly a year and a half) the idea was developed that I would be posted to Turkey to replace an officer
there. But a former boss of mine in External Affairs, R. A. Mackay was appointed Ambassador to the Permanent Mission in New York and one of the first things he did was to ask me whether I wanted to be his Number Two in New York. I had never given that much thought but I was very much concerned at the time that I might be sent to Indochina for the Truce Commissions because 1954 was the year when that began so in 1955 they were in the process of replacing officers after one year of service. So I accepted the post in New York in August, 1955.

JSS So you were there well in advance of the outbreak of the war in 1956.

Murray Yes, I was there well in advance. I got my feet wet, as a matter of fact, in the so-called "new members exercise" whereby 16 new members were added to the General Assembly's membership.

JSS Now, could you tell me what was the working relationship in the Canadian mission, in other words what were your particular duties at that time?

Murray I can't remember exactly how many officers we had in the Mission in those years but it wouldn't have been more than 6. Mackay, of course, was the ambassador and my rank was Senior Counselor. Senior Counselor was usually responsible for the Political Committee items while the other committee items - that is, the Economic
Committee and the Social Committee and the Fifth Committee (which is the budgetary committee) were distributed among the other officers who were not quite as senior as I was. Senior in a sense that I was a middle rank officer, I think at that time I was probably an F504 which is roughly midway in a career. I had been in the Department about eight years by then.

JSS

In what way did you then come in contact with the Secretariat of the United Nations and with the other missions in New York?

Murray

Well of course the whole purpose of having Permanent Missions is to establish regular contacts throughout the membership of the United Nations and with key officials in the Secretariat. The ambassador, or permanent rep as he was called, permanent representative, he would establish contacts at ambassadorial level and with the Secretary-General personally. The counselors and secretaries, their processes, or their means, were to establish contacts with what was called their opposite numbers in other permanent missions. This meant in terms of Canada, that we dealt with people who were slightly higher diplomatic rank, perhaps. For instance in the U.S. mission Jim Barco was minister - but I dealt regularly with Jim Barco and with other members of his staff. I
mean, there was Counsellor, Chuck Cook, and I got to know Joe Sisco of the State Department, during the new members exercise. That’s the method we used - we established contacts with what we regarded, I suppose, as the key missions, ostensibly the leading missions in each of the geographical groupings. The institutionalized geographical groupings didn’t really exist at that time but representatives obviously had come from different geographic regions, and with the exception of Africa, the main continents were well represented at the United Nations.

JSS

Now you got to New York in 1955 and this was a period of increasing tension between Israel and Egypt with cross-border raids, and so forth. My question here is, on the Canadian side did you anticipate in any way the course that developments would take - that is, in terms of the actual hostilities and the invasion by Israel?

Murray

With my experience in the ME section of course I was well aware of the background, the whole background, of the Arab-Israeli dispute, the "Palestine question", which is a sort of caption for it. I was aware too from long discussions with Elizabeth MacCallum that the Arabs had never really accepted Israel’s reemergence in the ME. They of course had voted against partition and had not reconciled themselves in any way to living alongside Israel as one of the states in the region.
Even before I went to New York I knew about the process of Arab raids into Israel and very very sharp retaliation from Israel into the Arab states concerned, at that time was principally Egypt. The main incidents that I can remember occurred across the frontier of the Gaza Strip. These incidents of course - blowing up buses or mining roads or attacking kibbutz, provoked Israeli response, the reprisal was usually quite severe. I learned later that Israel’s hope, in reacting sharply, was that they would discourage the Arab states from encouraging this kind of incursion. In 1956, of course, that kind of tension developed in an acute way. There was a very severe reprisal attack by Israel on Gaza City when I think something like 32 Egyptians were killed. This was always considered by the Egyptians as a sort of turning point in this whole sequence. In that spring in ’56 I was not part of the procedure but Hammarskjold had tried very hard to bring the Arabs and the Israelis together on adhering strictly to the truce terms (the various truce arrangements with the Arab countries), following them to the letter so that there would be a lowering of tension. He didn’t succeed but he made very good contacts in the course of that discussion in early ’56. But then this old situation was very much aggravated by the new situation that began to develop in the Canal,
with the nationalization in July.

JSS Yes. Now was there any intimate contact between the Canadian side and the British side in particular that would have prepared you on the Canadian side for the action that Britain eventually took, together with France?

Murray I have never had any reason to believe that Canada knew about what subsequently was described as the "Great Conspiracy" or the collusion involving Israel, France and Britain about the use of armed force to resolve the Canal dispute. We had people in London, our High Commissioner, Norman Robertson in particular, who were very close to the British government and they talked not only to the ministers but most of the key officials in Whitehall. There was never anything to suggest from any reporting from London that the British were actually planning, engaged in contingency planning, with Israel and France, about the use of armed force in the Canal zone. The British of course, the government, were talking quite vigorously about having to use whatever means were necessary to loosen Nasser's grip on their lifeline. In those days the British regarded the lifeline of the Canal as the continuation of the imperial means of communication and transportation. But the business of actually engaging in this armed conflict in the way it evolved I think came as a
complete surprise - not only to Canadians in New York but virtually everybody, including the British there. I’m quite determined in my own mind that nobody in the British mission knew what was going to happen. The ultimatum was as much as a surprise to them as it was to the rest of us, and the proof of this is that when the Security Council got around to meeting about the armed attack by Israel of October 29, it was the Russians who first drew public attention to the ultimatums. One of the wire service ticker tapes had carried Eden’s speech in the British House to New York and Sobolev, in the Council meeting, read it aloud, to the great embarrassment of Sir Pierson Dixon who knew that there was a statement coming but who obviously didn’t know what it was going to say.

JSS

Now, the Americans were obviously very much involved at this point and it was Eisenhower who made this decision that the United States would go to the Security Council and demand the ceasefire. My question here is, to what extent did Ambassador Pearson have direct contact with the Americans, with Ambassador Lodge prior to the United States move to have the Security Council meet?

Murray

I must correct you, you mean Minister Pearson. By that time Pearson was Secretary of State for External Affairs. I don’t know that there were any direct contacts between Pearson and Cabot Lodge. I think
there probably were telephone conversations with Washington, certainly between our Under-Secretary who was Jules Leger at the time, and Arnold Heeney, who was Canadian Ambassador to Washington. Pearson may have telephoned someone in Washington, but I wouldn’t know who that might be. It was my impression, and perhaps I should say so at this point, that Lester Pearson’s relations both with John Foster Dulles and Cabot Lodge were, in the words of the trade, "cool". I didn’t find much warmth in those relationships. So all I’m suggesting is that, if we were going to get in touch with Americans, it would probably be through the regular embassy channels, both in New York and Ottawa to Washington.

JSS
So there was not the kind of direct contact that subsequently became so evident in Pearson’s relations with the Secretary-General?

Murray
I don’t think so although I believe there were times when Foster Dulles might have called Pearson about some issue. Dulles seemed sufficiently agitated about the Suez deterioration during the summer of ’56 that he may well have called Pearson several times. And I think that the President too might have been in touch with Mr. St. Laurent but you’d have to find all that specifically from some other source.

JSS
Now I wonder if you would describe the relationship
between Pearson and Hammarskjold. It was obviously a close one and what was the background, how did this come about, do you know?

Murray I think that something needs to be said about the Hammarskjold-Pearson relationship, which was very close indeed, not because they were so much alike but because they were so much the sword and foil, one the foil for the other alternately. I suppose they must have at first got to know each other well, only after Hammarskjold was appointed Secretary-General in 1953. In fact, prior to the appointment of Hammarskjold as Secretary-General, Lester Pearson thought he had a good chance to become the next Secretary-General of the United Nations even though he was representing a country which was a member of NATO, and the previous Secretary-General had been from Norway, another NATO country. The chances were that the successor to Trygve Lie would have been a non-NATO. In any event, Hammarskjold was appointed. I don’t think there was much that I ever detected any sort of bad feeling between Hammarskjold and Pearson, because of that contest for the Secretary-Generalship. I say that because I don’t want what I’ve just said to be interpreted as thinking this may well have been the case. Pearson probably blamed the Russians as much as anybody else for his not being appointed Secretary-
General. But I guess that the two men, Hammarskjold and Pearson, got to know each other really well during the later stages of the Korean War, and especially the proceedings relating to it in the General Assembly. In '52 of course Pearson had been president of the General Assembly and that's how he got to know the key players in the Secretariat particularly well. He did know some people in the Secretariat very well from the time of the Palestine question when it first arose in the United Nations circles. Andy Cordier and Ralph Bunche were frequently in touch with Lester Pearson, sometimes on the phone directly to Ottawa but certainly when he was in the United Nations precincts in New York.

JSS Why was that, if I could ask, because that's one of the things that doesn't seem to emerge very clearly for the record. Why was he such an important figure in United Nations matters and looked to for advice from the Secretariat?

Murray You mean, you're talking about Lester Pearson?

JSS Right, right.

Murray Certainly my first impression when I first got to New York was that Lester Pearson was regarded not only as a folk hero but one of the household gods. Whenever we were going about in our contacts there would be some reference, sooner or later, to Lester Pearson and roles he had played. I think of course it derived basically
from the emphasis which he had placed on United Nations affairs, almost from the time - and perhaps before the time - he became Secretary of State for External Affairs. This happened in 1948 - even before then, in the development of the various United Nations agencies (and the World Health Agency comes to mind as one, and he was also at San Francisco at the Charter proceedings), I think he was quite prominent in consultations in the corridors and in pressing for a sort of specific role for the so-called middle powers in the Organization. That was one of Canada's main efforts at San Francisco, to ensure that the middle powers (and who constituted the middle powers, I suppose is one of these flexible things) but it meant that the membership at large were not disposed to let the organization be dominated entirely by the five Permanent Members of the Security Council, the so-called Big Five. I believe that there was a lot of disappointment about the way the so-called balance of power, the concert of Europe type of approach to international affairs, had broken down both in the First World War and in the Second World War. People of Pearson's generation no doubt felt strongly that countries like Canada, that had made a substantial contribution to both wars, should have a greater say in arrangements for international organization after the
Second War. That's my impression of what Pearson said about various things, it's also my impression from reading and watching, of course, the way Canadian policy evolved in the postwar period; because the key to our policy was cooperating with other likeminded states to make collective security work effectively in the pursuit of peaceful solutions. If there is a one-liner for Canadian foreign policy, that's what it was. It was often referred to as a policy of "functionalism", and sometimes called our "traditional middle power role". But in effect it was the kind of policy I have just described and this meant that Pearson was looked to by other members of the United Nations - and not only the great powers but the whole membership - for initiative, for advice, for leadership, for action. That and the fact that Canada, itself, was developing rapidly a new Foreign Service which soon showed that it was as able to hold its own in certain circles as that of any other of the countries with a much longer diplomatic tradition.

So in effect when this crisis arose, would you say that Lester Pearson was one of the people, one of the few people, with the long experience in the United Nations (relatively speaking it was still a fairly new organization), but he had been involved in Korea, as you say, also in the Palestine Commission. Did this
give him then a particular stature, I would say, at the
time of Suez? Was this an element in the relationship
with Hammarskjold?

Murray

I think that he was regarded as a source of moderate
position, or moderate advice, or seeking the path of
conciliation, because that had been his basic
contribution at the time of the Korean War. I
personally studied a paper on the Korean War situation,
a Canadian paper done by a Professor Fred Soward of the
University of British Columbia - I was away in Pakistan
at the time of Korea so I had very little direct
contact with developments. But my impression has been
that the Canadians were very unhappy about the way that
the Korean War unfolded in some respects - especially
of course the movement over the 38th parallel which
followed the defeat of the North Koreans. And I also
think that these events in the Korean War situation
(which after all went on for, what, nearly four years)
influenced a great many of the members of the United
Nations: the Asian, African, Latin American members,
the smaller powers of Europe. They thought that the
United States and the Soviet Union had needlessly and
recklessly run the risk of a Third World War in Korea
without taking into account how this might impact on
the rest of the membership. This struck me as
providing a kind of cohesive force which Canada and
Pearson, particularly, were able to build upon. That's certainly the impression I had.

JSS Now when the hostilities actually broke out in Suez there was the call for a Security Council meeting at which then action was blocked by the vetoes of the French and the British. And as we know it was a Yugoslav draft that eventually brought about the transfer of action to the General Assembly. My question here is, did Canada have any role in this move to use the Uniting for Peace procedure in order to get away from the stalemate in the Security Council, to move the discussion and action to the General Assembly?

Murray I don't think we were much involved in the technical details of moving it, for the reason that Canada was not a member of the Security Council. We were of course aware of the Uniting for Peace procedures, because they had been set up at the time of Korea, after the Russians moved back into the Security Council in 1950. Anyway, I don't think we participated much in that process. I do believe that there was very close contact between the United States mission in New York and the Yugoslavs about moving the issue. I'm reasonably certain in my own mind that this was not a conspiracy, but the kind of modus operandi that worked among and between UN Missions. It could be that Secretariat people were involved in the discussion,
too, because I'm sure that some of the drafting may well have been the work of Hammarskjold himself. I don't know whether Joe Lash's book was read by many Americans but I regard his book about this period is as authoritative as anything else published. And Joe certainly leaves me with the impression, an impression long held (because I knew Joe very well) that Dag Hammarskjold began to take a keen interest in this whole process once he saw there was some way to recover from the shock of those vetoes and the ultimatums. We haven't discussed this yet, but when they announced those ultimatums - the collusion of the British and French - I believe Hammarskjold was as shocked as I ever saw him at any time when I knew him. And the statement he made in response to this action by these two Permanent Members, who had been the mainstay of the United Nations in many ways and the main actors - they with their experience in the League of Nations knew how to get things done. So this constituted a greater shock, that these people who had worked so hard to make the United Nations work effectively would take this kind of action. When Hammarskjold made that statement we had almost an immediate telephone call from Lester Pearson in Ottawa asking us, did this mean that Hammarskjold was planning to resign. Through our contacts in the Secretariat - and we knew the executive
assistant to the Secretary-General very well - we managed to ascertain that he was not planning to retire. What I’m trying to say is, if he was not planning to retire, he would certainly be ready to help to do something to get the United Nations back into working order, which in this case involved moving the issue to the General Assembly under the Uniting for Peace. But I don’t think that we had much to do with it. I don’t say that we were opposed to it; I think we were always, in Canada (my impressions again on reading this paper on Korea), a little bit hesitant about the whole Uniting for Peace business. It fits in with what Pearson used to say about Foster Dulles, to me quite often, he said, "Oh well, Foster is always wandering around with a bagful of legal documents," and the Uniting for Peace procedure had that kind of aspect. It was a fistful of legal documents for...

JSS But at this point, you said something interesting there, that Pearson from Ottawa, recognizing I suppose the critical state of affairs that had arisen, then did get in direct touch with you at the mission.

Murray That’s right, though he didn’t get in touch with me personally, he talked to Ambassador Mackay, Bert Mackay, and Mackay of course asked me, who had the contact with the executive assistant; and that’s how we checked it out, as you might say. I’m a little curious
in my own mind now that we're discussing this why Pearson wouldn't have called Andy Cordier. Perhaps he didn't think that that was quite the way to go about it, I mean, it would be easier done through the Mission channel. Because the people who work in the wings, they can sometimes accomplish things with minimum sort of risk.

JSS Mr. Pearson came to New York relatively quickly after the Security Council consideration, isn't that correct?

Murray Yes, the General Assembly was called into session for I think it was 5 o'clock on November 1, 1956. Pearson and John Holmes arrived a little bit late, their flight was delayed in landing. Anyway, they were maybe 20 minutes late for the proceedings, but they had come from Ottawa where these developments in New York had been discussed in Cabinet.

JSS Now I want to go right away to the origin of the idea of peacekeeping which is associated with Lester Pearson. Can you say anything about the background of his thinking about this? Was there any awareness that he had this kind of approach in mind earlier?

Murray I can't be absolutely certain about this idea of setting up standing forces by various nations, to be used in contingency, various contingencies for peacekeeping. I think it may have emerged from Korea in the sense that there was this one resolution calling
for standby arrangements. Canada, I think, went along with it, although we weren’t, as I said, too keen on the whole Uniting for Peace procedure - mainly because the way it irritated the Russians and possibly because we had our own hesitations about its constitutionality, in terms of the United Nations Charter. The only other thing I can think of now, about the United Nations forces, was an abortive proposal earlier on (I can’t remember the date, the year even) but there was a proposal to set up a United Nations guard at one stage. (JSS: a constabulary) Right, in the early 50’s and at the time the Canadians were attracted to this as an idea, because it fitted in of course with the whole idea of the middle powers being able to play roles that would in effect not be dominated by the great powers, whether the great powers were in disagreement or in agreement - which didn’t seem very likely in those years. The business of this force, at the time of Suez, it didn’t originate in New York, that much I can say. I can’t again remember which day or how long before, but shortly before the fighting actually erupted we were asked from Ottawa by telegram to provide any ideas we might have for setting up an international force which could be placed between opposing forces. Now, as I say, this occurred before the fighting started but of course in that week or so
before, there was a strong possibility there might be a clash between Israel and Jordan. I think it was a smokescreen for what really happened but it probably happened just days before the fighting. Anyway, I know we sent a telegram from New York, giving our ideas. As an old tank corps man, I was convinced that any international force put between Israel and its Arab neighbors had better have tanks, because they would have to be able to sustain themselves in a very difficult no-man's land and at least, it would have to be mobile, to be able to move about. Of course it later occurred to me that the use of tanks was in effect counterproductive, because it meant applying too much force for peacekeeping purposes. The reference to tanks is what triggers my mind now that a telegram was sent from New York. The request was made from the Department and I suppose somebody may have been playing around with international force as an idea. But it would only be a matter of a few days, or even hours, before the fighting actually started.

JSS And did Lester Pearson then, when he was in New York, seem to have already a fairly clear concept of peacekeeping when he was presenting the idea before presenting the actual resolution to the General Assembly?

Murray Well the first thing I want to say is that, almost as
soon as he and John Holmes came in the door Bert Mackay
and I met them at the bottom of those long stairs that
lead up the Assembly Hall - and they said to us right
away that they had in mind, at some stage, to float the
idea that maybe what was needed in this situation was
some kind of an international force, which would be
placed between the two opposing armies, in this case
Israel’s and Egypt’s. At the time - and this is
something that I’m very clear in my own mind about - at
the time they were saying, "Well initially what we
propose is that the British and the French and some
other forces in the immediate area, they could be used
as the basis for an interim force which would be used
immediately, but eventually be replaced by a more
representative United Nations force." And the reason
they mentioned this to Mackay and myself was to ask,
"What do you think?" When it came my turn to say what
I thought, I told them that I didn’t think the idea of
putting the British and the French in any United
Nations force at that juncture was going to work at
all; it flew in the face of the highly emotional
response from the membership at large, that the British
and French had behaved abominably in the ultimatums. A
lot of people had become quite disabused, during the
course of the summer, over the tactics employed in
negotiations with Egypt, the pressure tactics. As I
had said it would work at all, immediately Pearson said to John Holmes, "John, I better get in touch with Norman" (meaning Norman Robertson in London). Now, my interpretation of this is that they had been discussing this kind of approach with the British before coming to New York. I'm pretty sure that's what happened. I now know of course from reading Pearson's memoirs, and also from looking at Cabinet records which are now released, that there had been some kind of discussion in Cabinet, about floating the idea of an international force of some kind. The Cabinet records, incidentally, are very fuzzy on these things, they're not very precise and may have been deliberately fudged. But that encounter with Pearson and Holmes, was basically when I first heard that this force idea was coming off. Now I believe, on that same day (Nov. 1) in the British House of Commons (which was earlier by 5 hours) Eden may have said something about an international force. Maybe the United Nations - the "UNO" he would have called it - would be able to provide some kind of cover but that in any event, some police action was needed to separate the two opposing forces. I'm saying all this because it's not what happened in the event.

Yes. But as far as you know there was no contact between the Canadians and the Americans on this? The reason I'm asking this is that Cabot Lodge in various
places has said that he had a piece of paper describing what a peacekeeping force should be and he was in the elevator with Lester Pearson and showed it to him and Lester Pearson got the Nobel Peace Prize as a result.

Murray I think there was contact between Ottawa and Washington about this force idea. By that I mean between the Department of External Affairs and our embassy in Washington about the way things were developing. Arnold Heeney seemed to be very much in the picture. I’ve seen notes that he did for file of telephone conversations that he had, say, from the first on - from November the first on - and it was clear to me that he was aware that this kind of idea was being kicked around in Ottawa. I never heard the story about Cabot [Lodge] in the elevator. It all depends on what day it was.

JSS Well, Sisco, whom you have mentioned earlier as somebody that you’ve been in touch with, also indicated that in Washington he was Assistant Secretary, I think at that point for International Organizations, that they were giving some thought in IO in the State Department to this kind of approach. But from what you say it would appear that the legend is correct, that in fact it did originate in Canada, primarily.

Murray This is a very interesting part of this discussion, simply because I have a certain hesitation in my own
mind about which came first, the chicken or the egg? I certainly had the impression at the time that this was an idea which had been developed in Ottawa or between telephone conversations London-Ottawa. Now I’ve done a lot of study on this for a manuscript I’ve been working on and I’ve come to the conclusion there’s no paper anywhere to show this, which says to me there must have been some telephone conversations going on between London and Ottawa and that these kinds of ideas may have been batted around a bit. I don’t think it was a British idea but I think it may have been discussed, of course, between say Pearson and Norman Robertson on the telephone, or John Holmes and Norman Robertson and somebody in Ottawa. It wasn’t discussed in New York, I don’t know when Heeney first heard about it but these papers, his notes for file which are on telephone conversations starting on November 1, don’t suggest that this came as a big surprise to him because he had some inkling that the Department was developing this kind of idea. It could have been, you see, that if they were discussing this London and Ottawa and Ottawa and Washington, that is, certainly to the embassy, that this idea was sort of germinating here. I want to make something clear about the time of Suez and the time before Suez in Canadian operations in the United Nations. Prior to the new members, which is something
else we don’t need to go into, but prior to the new members’ exercise, most of Canadian operations in New York having to do with the top political affairs probably resulted from very close Canadian consultations with the British on the one hand, and with the Americans on the other. And they all kept very close together — whether they kept in step is something else — but they kept close together on most of these things and discussed them quite freely, that is certainly at the professional level. And I guess all I’m trying to say is that at the time of Suez, what happened was the British were cut off from Washington and Canada was the link. So I suppose that if ideas were being discussed London/Washington, at least London/Ottawa, that the only way they would be discussed with Washington would be through Ottawa/Washington. You know, Canada was the link between the two. Once Eisenhower decreed there was to be no contact whatsoever — and I had it from my friends in the United States Mission that that order was very rigid — I know that we carried messages in New York. Now Hammarskjold at first was very dubious about the feasibility of a peacekeeping force. Apparently from the record that’s available, Lester Pearson talked to him at length and had a great influence in bringing him to at least accept the idea of trying out the
peacekeeping approach. Can you give any background on that, on the conversations that took place at that point?

Murray I can’t really because the business of persuading Hammarskjold began at a luncheon that Pearson organized in the Drake Hotel (he always stayed at the Drake when he came to New York). That luncheon involved Hammarskjold and Andy Cordier, I think Bert Mackay, John Holmes and Mr. Pearson. I wasn’t there, he didn’t know me well enough then and I wasn’t then his closest advisor, which is what I became later on. So I didn’t go to the luncheon. I know from my contacts in the Norwegian delegation particularly, the Norwegian mission, and their contacts in turn with people in the Secretariat who worked closely (Hammarskjold’s executive assistant was a Swedish official) that Hammarskjold was very depressed at the time, at the time of Suez because, as I said, he could not believe that people with this Charter commitment could abandon the Charter so readily — certainly without consultation with him, if nothing else. He regarded himself as the custodian of the Charter. So I think he was depressed and he was depressed, too, I guess because he had worked so hard in the spring of ’56 to develop his own rapport with the leading people. It was the first really shuttle diplomacy that he practiced was that
runaround in the spring of '56 to get to know all the main leaders in Arab countries and in Israel. He thought he had established a very good rapport with Ben Gurion, for example. What I am trying to say is that they (UK and France in particular) should throw all this over - and then you have to bear in mind, too, that the Canal issue had been discussed in the Security Council, early in October, and proceedings had been adjourned after they got the six principles on the Canal operation in the future, after they got them adopted by the Security Council. Proceedings broke down, of course, on the means, the means of putting the principles into effect, the arrangement was (and this was certainly Hammarskjold's understanding because it was passed on to this and we believed that this was going to happen) that they would resume these private discussions, involving the principal parties to the Canal - that is Egypt, and Britain and France - in Geneva on October 29. So what I'm try to say is that the whole deck of cards collapsed and I believe this had a very profound effect on Hammarskjold. He believed so much in the Charter and the sanctity of the Charter commitment. It's not some sort of legalistic approach, it's simply that this was what the organization was all about, that he didn't see how he could really make much out of this mess. And this idea
of coming along at the last minute and putting in an international force - I don't know on what terms it was first discussed with Hammarskjöld, as I say I wasn't at that lunch. If it was discussed in terms of putting an umbrella over the British and the French, I'm sure Hammarskjöld would not have countenanced that, because it would have run right against his whole idea of - "how can you possibly suggest this kind of approach?" It just looked like a papering over of mistakes of these people, who had turned against the Charter, with their ultimatums and all that. That, I suppose, could have been the atmosphere in the Drake luncheon. Pearson certainly came away from the meeting feeling that he hadn't convinced Hammarskjöld 100%.

JSS Yes, and I believe there is evidence that as Pearson presented it at that point, it was the concept of incorporating the British and French troops which Hammarskjöld said was totally unfeasible.

Murray That's right, we're talking now about a luncheon on November 2, which was a Friday, we're talking about that. That timing is very very important because, it's clear to me, I've read these notes for file that Arnold Heeney did and this kind of thing is very clear, that that was the way we looked at it. That meant of course they had ignored my advice completely but that wouldn't be the first, or the last time. In any case the next
day, the 3rd, in Ottawa the Cabinet met in the morning, the Canadian Cabinet met in Ottawa to discuss this business of the force proposal because, - I don't have to go all through this: somebody else has no doubt brought out that once Pearson got up and made his little speech about how he had this idea of proposing an international force, Dulles immediately popped up, or shortly thereafter, to say this sounds like a good idea and he encouraged the Canadian minister to develop his thoughts more and produce it in some form of a proposal. Now that was all arranged, of course, I mean I was present when Dulles and Pearson spoke in the dinner break. Pearson said he was going to do this and Dulles, well it would certainly help out if he could find it in his heart to subscribe to this sort of approach. Then began the discussions of ways and means with Washington in detail - I mean, the text and so forth, because Arnold Heeney had passed the first draft they had in Ottawa to the State Department, by the time the Cabinet met on the 3rd. And that particular resolution was the one that called for putting the umbrella up, forces immediately available, that's what - he didn't say the English and the French, of course, he said "forces immediately available" which meant the British and French, and the Turks and I suppose Iran, perhaps, or somebody else nearby. In any case, the
Cabinet were meeting on this kind of proposal and Jules Leger was Under-Secretary, he - oh, I guess Pearson first of all had phoned Heeney before the meeting in Cabinet which was 10:00 a.m. He phoned Heeney to tell him what was going to happen, and I guess had told him to get this resolution around to the State Department (JSS: the Draft Resolution). Yeah, to see what they thought about it. Well of course about 11:00 or so, Leger was on the phone, or perhaps Heeney called him out of the Cabinet meeting to go talk to him. And he informed Leger that the State Department were not wildly enthusiastic about this at all, in fact they didn't think it would work. In fact, they said, it was not on. The President wasn't about to rake the Anglo-French chestnuts, the USA was going to proceed with their own two proposals, the two United States "working documents," one on Palestine, one on Suez, setting up separate commissions, etc. Well, anyway when that intelligence was passed back to the Cabinet by Leger, that the Americans didn't like this approach of "forces immediately available," the Cabinet then revised their whole approach. They changed it from a police force too, I think, to a United Nations "intervention force" - that was a key thing about it. And when this was reported out of Cabinet, they had this idea that there would be a committee of five set up to draw plans
for a United Nations force, an international United Nations force, to secure - I don't know if they used the exact language - but it is in effect, to secure the ceasefire which was in the United States resolution which had already been adopted. Okay, so the Cabinet bought that revision and it was sent back to Arnold Heeney in Washington as a new draft of the force resolution and he discussed it with Murphy, who was Deputy Under-Secretary - whatever his title was - and Phleger was there, he was one of the people.

He was the legal advisor.

There was someone there too, was it Elbrick? Anyway there was a third person and they looked at the new text with Arnold - I think it was about 5:30 to 6:30 anyway in the early evening. The Americans made a number of suggestions about it. First of all they didn't like the committee idea very much, and the other thing, they didn't like specifically saying the idea of "policing" something, they thought that rather than a force to try to police or impose something, its mandate should be just left open and flexible as a "means" type of thing. And then they thought there should be this notion of the consent of the parties concerned, "with the consent of the nations concerned," I think it came out eventually. That was at 6:30 (Nov. 3). Pearson by then was on his way or just about ready to leave for
New York because a meeting was being called again for the 3rd, at 8:00 p.m. on Saturday night, that's the 3rd of November. It was being called because of the British and French reaction to the ceasefire resolution, you see, they didn't say they would cease fire; so the Egyptians had to have the Assembly meet again right away. By the time Pearson - do you want to go on?

JSS That's very interesting, no, because I think this degree of cooperation between Ottawa and Washington in developing that resolution has really not been known.

Murray Well, I'm bringing this up because I want you to understand that's what happened, because this business of "the Canadian resolution," it's a Canadian resolution in the sense that Canada had the idea and Canada carried the ball. But the resolution was the work of a very close collaboration between Canada and the United States and the United States contribution was as significant as anybody's. Now the next thing after Heeney passed it over to the State Department - Pearson was on his way to New York - Heeney, I guess, had reported on his discussion with Phleger and Murphy to Jules Leger. The way it was left was that Heeney should tell Pearson in New York what had happened in this Washington discussion; and that Murphy would let Cabot Lodge know what had happened. And so
when Pearson and John arrived again - this time they were ahead of time it might have been 7:45, 7:30 maybe - we went straight from the door the delegation door - see, we were always over there because in this kind of situation you have to keep in touch every minute of the day, otherwise you’re going to lose track of something. So we were over there - there weren’t too many of us to do those things, so we had to keep running around - we were at the door again and the first thing that happened Lester Pearson and I went off to Cabot Lodge’s little office in the United Nations building. I don’t know whether it’s ever come out but the British and French and the Americans - and maybe the Russians, maybe the Russians, but anyway - the three Western powers had little cubbyholes stuck away in a basement in the United Nations building (they weren’t suppose to but they had them just the same). And we went to Cabot Lodge’s cubbyhole there and he was there with Barco and Chuck Cook - there may have been a few other guys, but I don’t think so. Then we went in and almost the first thing that Cabot did, he seemed to be very upbeat, he passed Lester Pearson a text of a resolution, and it was printed in blue type on white paper (that I remember, just blue and white paper, at least the blue print on the white paper, I remember that very clearly). That’s the text that was put into
the Assembly, that’s the text.

JSS That’s probably what Cabot Lodge was talking about....

Murray It wasn’t, that isn’t where the idea came from, that was the text - what I say to you, and I put it in my manuscript - somebody had tinkered very skillfully with the text that had been sent from Ottawa to Washington through Heeney to the State Department. Because they had brought Hammarskjold into the act to be the one who would come up within 48 hours with a plan for a force, they’d got with the consent of the nations concerned in it; they’d got rid of any idea of police action; it was to be a United Nations intervention force type of thing, a United Nations emergency force. (I don’t think it was quite those words, but anyway... The text is available.) That resolution I’m pretty sure had been discussed with Hammarskjold. Joe Lash says that it was and Barco and Cook said that there had been discussions with the Secretary-General. I don’t think there would have been argument between the Americans and Secretary-General about putting him into the act to draw up the plan for the force because, you see, Pearson, when he was uttering in the first Assembly meeting, the November 1-2 meeting, had said we should ask the Secretary-General, "blah, blah, blah". So that was really what the resolution did. And that’s the resolution we took. The first thing we did was step
across the hall to the British room - the American
door was here and the British door was there (adjacent)
and they weren't talking. So we had to go across and
show it to Pierson Dixon and he said "Well this is not,
of course, what you showed us before where forces
immediately available" would be used and we said "No,
but that is what it is now." And we said too, "Well I
hope you'll be able to abstain," that sort of thing.
Well, of course, Pierson Dixon didn't know what he'd be
able to do but he said "well . . .

JSS So, if we can go ahead there. You were mentioning that
there was the particular issue of getting Hammarskjold
specifically, or the Secretary-General specifically,
covered in the resolution.

Murray Well, I spoke before about fanning out to get in touch
with key delegations about this kind of resolution that
was going to be submitted to the Assembly. While we
were waiting in the great hall for the proceedings to
start, Pearson sent me around the back of the dais,
there's a little office in back where the Secretary-
General used to go in and rest for a little while and
do his own business (JSS: there still is). Pearson
had written a note to Hammarskjold saying that "this is
the text of the resolution I'm going to introduce at an
appropriate time in the proceedings. I'd be interested
in any views you have on it." I don't know what
Hammarskjold wrote on the response but it certainly wasn't any lengthy comment, which in a way substantiates my own view that he had probably seen the text beforehand. But he did not say, "This is great, press on" type of thing, he said he would be in touch with Pearson very soon about it. Anyway, the resolution had not been introduced at that point though it was to be introduced in a little while in the Assembly. I don't know quite when it was, but the verbatim record would show exactly when it was introduced — probably sometime shortly before midnight. In any case the main thing at that point was to have our resolution fitted in with the renewed withdrawal resolution because the 19 powers, which were the US plus Africans, Asians and others, Latin Americans, had introduced a renewed call for a ceasefire. This time they attached a 12-hour deadline, or something, for ceasefire and withdrawal. That meant of course that there were two resolutions on the Suez item. They were not repugnant in any way, they weren't really competing but it was very desirable to get them both adopted with as many votes as could be assembled behind them. And it was also very important, especially in the case of the UNEF — I emphasize this — to have it introduced, without necessarily the acceptance of the principal powers — that is Egypt, Israel, Britain and France —
but at least with their acquiescence. In other words they wouldn't vote against it, they would abstain. There were a lot of quick consultations needed on the floor of the Assembly to try to bring about this result. And we also reckoned it was very wise procedurally that the UNEF-type force resolution be adopted before the ceasefire resolution, because this would accentuate the positive, as it were. There was always a chance that, if you got the ceasefire one there might be some balking at voting for UNEF if it came along afterward. In other words, a lot of people who supported the ceasefire might just trail off somewhere. We wanted to have the UNEF resolution voted on first, and originally in Ottawa they had the idea (when I say "they", it may have been the Minister's own idea) that we would try to get the Assembly to vote priority. I know you're familiar with that technique. I was never much of an enthusiast for that procedural approach - moving priority - because it always seemed too slick. You know, if you were first in with a resolution, why shouldn't you have the right to have it voted on first. Anyway, we all agreed after a very short discussion that we shouldn't try this move on priority. Instead, we put it to the ceasefire and withdrawal people (basically we dealt with the Indians but there were other people we talked to, the Yugoslavs
and other people in the A/A camp and the Americans, of course) that we would get our people to vote - meaning people who were behind, the Pearson move on the force - to vote for the ceasefire resolution if its supporters would vote for our force resolution and allow it to be voted on first. We knew the 19 powers wanted as many votes as they could get. It meant too that our Canadian vote would be shifted on ceasefire - Canada's vote - because we had abstained the first night, for tactical reasons, but we'd abstained just the same. In any case, that arrangement - I mean this is part of the game in New York - what was agreed to came off and the two resolutions got roughly the same vote. We voted for a ceasefire and they voted for the UNEF. And so it was adopted, I think 2:17 a.m. was the exact time.

And that resolution then gave the Secretary-General the 48 hours in order to present the plan for this new undertaking, and that is my next question. How closely did the Canadians work with Hammarskjold in developing his plan?

Well I think that in that respect that Mr. Pearson personally and probably John Holmes too - with Hans Engen - they were very close to Hammarskjold as he developed the plan. The first thing we developed was - and this happened about 9:00 or 9:30 on Sunday the 4th - which was after the overnight session - we went
and met with Hammarskjold. Pearson was there, I was certainly there, there may have been one other, I can't remember who it was, from Canada. The Norwegians were there, that is to say, Hans Engen plus his advisor, Per Naevdal, Arthur Lall was there, and the Colombian, Dr. Francisco Urrutia. These people were there because in Hammarskjold's view, as he explained it, they represented people who were representative of large sections of the Assembly who had voted for these two resolutions and the question was, the appointment of a force Commander. Hammarskjold had already moved Burns from the UNTSO over to Cairo. He was involved in the early discussions with the Egyptians about ceasefire and all that sort of stuff, and whether they would accept the ceasefire resolution. So there wasn't much argument that Tommy Burns should be appointed Commander of the proposed UNEF. The UN would find a replacement for him in due course but he would become the Commander of UNEF and he would be allowed to appoint from his UNTSO staff people who could work as his immediate staff officers. UNTSO had a very good group out there so there was no argument about Burns and his command staff.

JSS

Now was it at this point, leaving aside Burns as the Canadian personality, was it at this point that the decision was made to establish a United Nations
command?

Murray: Yes, that was the point, that you were appointing a Commander and setting up a UN command staff and the Sunday meeting agreed, they all did. I think it may have been suggested by the Secretary-General, but there was no argument about it, that the sooner this could be done the better, because it would show both the British and the French who, don’t forget, were still sailing down the Med toward the Canal Zone, that the UN meant business - they were going to get that force in there as smartly as they could. So the basic thing that came out of that first Sunday morning meeting, there on the 4th, was that we would have a new resolution that evening, setting up the command. And that UNGA meeting ran from about 8:00 p.m. until about 12:00, it didn’t last very long and there was no sweat about it at all. I believe Canada, Norway and Colombia - the Indians, Arthur Lall said he couldn’t co-sponsor because Delhi had not agreed yet, though this whole UNEF business was something India wanted to go along with. And India had not yet - oh another thing I guess I missed, the resolution asked that anyone wanted to volunteer armed forces should put in their names to the Secretariat.

JSS: Force contributions, yes. Now certainly later Hammarskjold referred to the concept of peacekeeping as in accordance with the Charter as being a provisional
measure. Did this concept, was this discussed at this point, how it fitted in under the Charter, if at all?

Murray In that first meeting on the 4th - it was in his office on the 38th floor - I don't think they got into that kind of question. They were basically concentrating on getting some action going right away. It was when they came to discuss the actual report, which was supposed to be done within 48 hours (SG called it his "second and final" report) it was in that report that we began to get into the philosophy of the proposed United Nations force. I don't have to tell you that Hammarskjold was very cognizant all the time that he was the custodian of the Charter but he was also the servant of the Charter, and the Charter was his Bible. I mean, he didn't have any leeway where these things were concerned, and I think he felt very conscious of the Military Staff Committee constituted under Chapter 7, because there was a lot of talk, as things developed for the second and final report, about distinctions between Chapter 6 and Chapter 7. The conclusion was that we were engaged in a Chapter 6 exercise, that's how we rationalized the charter situation why was the setting up of the force in SG's thinking and word, "provisional" somewhere along the line?

JSS Yes.

Murray That doesn't surprise me, you see I've always wondered
in my own mind whether Hammarskjold really believed that using military force for peacekeeping, would it jibe? It has always been a kind of wonderment in my mind, because when they did an experience report on UNEF later, it was about '57 or '58, anyway when the Secretariat produced it, in effect it said to members: you can’t always be thinking simply in terms of sending a military force and putting it on the ground, as peacekeeping. Each peacekeeping arrangement will always be whatever the situation requires in any given situation; and that you should move more to the idea of peacekeeping presence and whether it was going to be a special representative of the Secretary-General, or a three-man group or whatever, these were all manifestations of a basic idea, of United Nations peacekeeping operation.

JSS

In that connection, in this initial report also, Hammarskjold stated already that the force would not include contingents from any of the Permanent Members of the Security Council. I wonder, do you know where that came from?

Murray

Well, there may have been some discussion of that in the Sunday meeting because there is a book written, I don’t know whether you’ve read it, by Terence Robertson, he calls it Crisis and he makes quite a big... The thing about Crisis is that Terry Robertson
(I helped him quite a lot with that book at the request of Mr. Pearson) you would have thought he was writing really for some kind of a TV or Hollywood show, there was a lot of scripting, in words that may or may not have been uttered. There probably was some discussion but there was no argument at all about the great powers. First of all, there was no possibility that UN members were going to have Britain and France, and they certainly weren't going to have the Russians - the Russians by that time were cleaning up on the Hungarians. And China of course was Nationalist China and the US didn't - you know there was never a suggestion that the US would be part of the force, although they were going to have to wade in with logistics, there was no doubt about that, that was always understood. In any case, I think that whole question probably was discussed at that meeting, but I repeat there was no argument about it, I mean, nobody...

JSS  
Now, moving ahead a little bit.

Murray  
Excuse me. I should say that Terence Robertson, for instance, produced a statement - not a statement but a remark - by Arthur Lall that at this point the Great Powers have become "untouchables." Now's a cute thing maybe for an Indian to say but I don't know whether he said it. You could ask Arthur,....
Yes, he’s been interviewed. Another thing that was stated by Dag Hammarskjold at this point which has proven to be surprisingly true, but anyhow, his concept was as far as financing was concerned that the supplying states should cover all costs of equipment and salaries. That was later changed, of course, in subsequent operations, but I wonder if you knew anything about the background of that, was that just his...

Did that come in the initial report?

Yes.

I suppose it would have had to. I wasn’t involved very much in that kind of discussion at that point and I think it must have been something that came out of the Secretariat consideration. I was quite heavily involved in the financing question later on, when the Russians and others balked at paying their contributions. But I don’t think there was any detailed discussion earlier, I can’t remember any sort of discussion. But one thing I wanted to let you know, about the second and final report - that is the one that came out in 48 hours - that was voted on I think November 7 - which in effect launched the force, I had very little to do with its drafting. That was something that Pearson did personally, closeted with the Secretary-General and Hans Engen, they were the
three principals, as far as I was concerned. Andy and Ralph [Bunche] may have been involved, too, but the three principals worked closely and it was all done on the 38th floor. I was busy running around below, you see by that time they'd got into the idea of having an advisory committee for UNEF. I kept busy canvassing who was going to constitute this advisory committee.

JSS: And Canada became a member, right?

Murray: Yeah. Some Canadians have tried to make out that this advisory committee was another Canadian idea, because we were the ones that wanted to have a committee initially. I don't really believe that, I mean, it's possible that we pushed for an advisory committee because we wanted to be able to say afterwards, "well we got a committee". The advisory committee was in no sense a negotiating committee. It was in no sense, either, something else that's been made very popular by the media, that it was a kind of Cabinet. It was not a Cabinet in the sense of a Canadian Cabinet, or an American Cabinet, where you had people arguing their different cases and then getting some kind of consensus. It was an advisory committee to the Secretary-General and he took its advice, or didn't take its advice. He was glad to have their advice, he was glad to use the committee as a sounding board, he was glad that he could float ideas in front of them to
see how they reacted. But he was the executive officer in the Organization and this was not an executive committee, they were advisors to him for the running of UNEF. I'm making this point to you because it says a lot about Hammarskjold and it says a lot about his concept of the Secretary-General. He was very strict on this business of not taking advice from member governments, you know, Article 100. He was very strict on that kind of thing. It's part of his general approach to the Charter, I suppose, and his own responsibilities as Secretary-General.

JSS On the Canadian side, did you feel that this advisory committee worked well?

Murray Yes, it did, it worked very well. As a matter of fact I think it worked much better than if it had been in a sense a committee that was trying to be an executive committee. I suspect that they would never have been able to do much execution if they had depended on reaching consensus or agreement, or even a majority vote in that kind of committee. It worked much better as a panel of people who discussed openly these things. They fielded ideas and of course the SG took them on board if he felt they were good ideas. But once he got into the act, once he was appointed by the Assembly to take over, that he was asked by the Assembly to do it, he was then Secretary-General of the Organization of
all the membership and he did what all the Organization
had asked him to do. Just as he was supposed to
negotiate the ceasefire and withdrawals, he had both
those things. That was what he believed was his role
and responsibility.

JSS Yes, and when it came then the need to negotiate the
conditions of UNEF’s status in the Sinai in Egypt, he
had the extensive conversations as we know with Nasser
and reached the memoranda of understanding which I
believed he did consult the advisory committee on.

Murray Yes, he kept quite closely in touch with the advisory
committee once it was set up. The whole business of
getting the entry of the force and the composition of
the force, these were agonizing questions, just as it
was quite agonizing getting the advisory committee
composition itself. I mean, that took place on the 5th
and 6th of November and there was quite a commotion
about it at first, because up on the 38th floor, I
don’t know what came over them, but they got the idea
that the advisory committee would consist of Canada,
and Colombia, and Norway, and India, and that was it,
at first. I think they were aiming for five, Iran I
guess was the one they came down in favor of. Then in
the first place the Indians were wild because they, I
guess they hadn’t picked India, at first because the
Indians hadn’t yet put up a contingent, that’s it. And
Pakistan had - now it comes back to me - Pakistan had volunteered a brigade, the biggest one of all and the Indians hadn’t said "boo", and Menon had just arrived. Menon hadn’t been there up at all to this time. Menon arrived on the 5th and about the first thing he did, he charged into the African-Asian group and tried to tear down this whole business of the United Nations Emergency Force. Because he said, it was just a trap, a trick by the imperialists, they wanted to suck the A/A members in, and this sort of thing. Then he went from there to see Pearson and Hans Engen may have been there too. Anyway, Menon was reassured after talking to Pearson that it was no trap at all, that they were all serious that this would be a truly United Nations force. That is supposed to be the point where Menon advised Nehru that it was OK to put a contingent into the force and India had quite a big contingent. And that would get India into the Advisory Committee too. But when the Indians heard, for instance, that the planners were contemplating putting Pakistan and Iran on, along with Canada and Norway and Colombia, they got quite excited, the Indians. I remember Arthur saying, his eyes just as big as saucers, we’re going to make terrible trouble for you people if you go ahead and put Pakistan on. I said first of all, I don’t know much about this but: "My guess is they picked Pakistan
because they offered a big continent." I also said the other thing was that, if they’re thinking about Iran, it’s because the Iranians are chairmen of the African-Asian group this month - whatever it was, yeah, they did it by month. That would be just the same as the Columbians. You see Urrutia was Chairman of the Latin American group, that’s why he was there. So Arthur [Lall] calmed down somewhat. In the end, you see, there were too many people because as soon as the Brazilians put in a battalion, and Brazil wasn’t going to be second fiddle to Colombia (not in Latin American politics) so Brazil was added. Now things were getting on. I think by then they had 7 candidates when Indonesia offered a battalion, and wanted to be in the committee too. Then the Burmese, it was rapidly getting out of hand so it was decided to stop at 7. A deal was made with Krishna [Menon] that somehow or other we’d persuade Iran to gracefully withdraw. You see Iran had already been accepted in draft language. So Nazrollah Entezam - he was a very dignified man, a very fine man - he got up and made a very fancy withdrawal and bowed out in favor of Sri Lanka. We had told Krishna [Menon] "Iran will get out and you can have whomever you want, as long as it’s another African-Asian". The Ceylonese had only got there the year before but he was a very pushy ambassador and
wanted to become a big name in the United Nations. So they got Ceylon. India wanted Ceylon because in those days they thought Ceylon was under their thumb. In any case, we got that advisory committee, but before the manoeuvre was finished, was it the Poles? The Poles recommended that the Czechs be added to the advisory committee, but the Czechs were out too, nobody wanted the East Block dabbling in all this business.

JSS The Poles actually did - did they actually provide a contingent, I forget?

Murray No but the Czechs were prepared to provide one if they were put on the advisory committee, that was the whole idea.

JSS My question here again goes back to the agreement which Hammarskjold reached with Nasser on the status, and on particular on the conditions under which the force would be withdrawn. In your recollection was this controversial at the time among the advisory committee members? Was there a recognition that this was a fairly sensitive issue?

Murray Well, I think there was a recognition that it was a sensitive issue but certainly from Canada's point of view and Pearson's point of view there was never any idea that it could be withdrawn at the request of Egypt alone.

JSS It was not?
Murray It could never be that. It was politically impossible in this country (Canada) for him to accept that. You see in this country the opposition was in full cry because there was an election coming on pretty soon and they had been lambasting the government all summer, because they had been letting Mother down on this Suez thing. The idea of this neo-Nazi Nasser should be allowed to call the shot on whether the force went in and whether the force came out was simply not politically - it wouldn't wash politically. But the thing that really made it virtually certain that Pearson couldn't accept that (and I don't think he should have either, as far as that goes) was the big hassle over Canada's being accepted for the force. I suppose you know that story but it was partly our own fault. I say that without hesitation because in Ottawa we rushed ahead and said that they were going to send a contingent which was going to be a battalion, supported by certain administrative troops, and the organizers wanted to put them all in the Magnificent, which was an old tub of an aircraft carrier Canada bought secondhand from the British after the War. They were going to send it all down to the area and the Magnificent was going to be a sort of floating base, etc. etc. This was all before the force was even established that we were talking this way. Word got around, so the
Egyptians, I think, got really nervous about all this sort of stuff, especially after all the British talk in the debate about the United Nations force "taking over" from the British, "we would be glad to hand over blah, blah, blah." So we Canadians had a very tough time. Burns was told flatly in Cairo there couldn’t be any Canadians in the force at all and again, from Pearson’s point of view, you know, it would have been politically untenable for him to have been the instigator of all this force business and then not be in the force. So politically it became very tough and eventually, of course, I don’t know whether this has come to your attention, somewhere along there, the Secretariat set up a military planning committee under Ralph Bunche, which was operating at his end of the 38th floor. It was made up of military advisor guys, most of them were military attaches from Washington, but our Ottawa people sent down three staffers - a logistics man, a medical man, and another guy, who was a general administrator, Brigadier George Leach. They met in the Secretariat tower at the same time as the proceedings were going on in the Assembly. Their whole purpose was to get a force put together quickly and without their good work there wouldn’t have been a force of course, because - practically speaking - the military had to get into the act somewhere. Tommy [Burns] and his
staff in Cairo couldn't have worked all that out. You know, the military planners have their manuals and their lists of this, that and the other and what they needed in the way of supplies and so forth. I think the discussion rapidly came to the point; you see, they had about 25 contingents volunteered but most of them were a company of this or a battalion of that, mostly foot soldiers with rifles. There was no cadre of housekeepers. So the discussion eventually got around to housekeeping, with these birds from Ottawa (I was sitting in all the time, because Pearson had to do so; because he wanted me to make sure they didn't get out of step with the political - not the politics - but the political notion, the political concept that we were working with). And so these officers from Canada had as much to do as anyone with coming to a conclusion that we had to have a gang of housekeepers. In fact, Canada was the only country that could provide housekeepers. Why? Because the logistics were coming from the US and by that time our military had switched over, our basic suppliers were the same as the suppliers of the US army. We didn't work the British system any more, we worked the American system. So they understood it all, you have to understand all the forms and manuals and all that sort of stuff. These people agreed with Tommy Burns (who came to New York
about November 14) that Canada should provide the administrative tail for the UNEF.

**JSS**

A question I wanted to ask at this point is, in the negotiations that took place among various people about the withdrawal of the Israelis from the Sinai, again Lester Pearson seems to have quite a prominent role. And in fact he dealt directly I believe with Abba Eban on the subject at times, I think, in Ottawa. My question is, again, why was Lester Pearson so directly involved? Was is simply because of his prestige, or why?

**Murray**

Well I just want to make a slight correction to your question. It wasn't so much the withdrawal from Sinai as the withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and Sharm el Sheikh. Those were the two important things, the two key places as far as we were concerned. Gaza because that's where most of the raids had come from, from the Fedayeen I think they were called, anyway, the freedom fighters in the lexicon of some people. Anyway, the incursions into Israel, they came from the Gaza Strip, that was number one. Sharm-el-Sheikh, of course, because it commanded the entrance to the straits of Tiran. Pearson was involved in the discussions about this because, you see, the farther away we got from the crisis, that is to say the critical two or three weeks of November, the bolder people got about what they
thought they could get out of these various manoeuvres. The British and the French, for example, thought that they could hold up their withdrawal until they’d got a firm understanding that somehow the UNEF would be there in the Canal Zone to make sure that ships could pass freely and all that type of thing. In terms of the Israelis, what they wanted to get as a minimum was a reassurance that the two kinds of hostile act wouldn’t happen again, in other words, they could pass through the Straits of Tiran and get into Aqaba without any interference from the Egyptians. And there would be no further incursions from the Gaza Strip. That meant in their terms that something had to be done about the Straits of Tiran, maybe there should be an international force there permanently. And in terms of Gaza, maybe the United Nations should take over the administration of Gaza. At one time we were even talking about whether there should be a United Nations navy - an international UN navy flotilla - meaning two or three ships that could insure that the Straits of Tiran would be open. These were ideas being kicked around. Now Pearson was involved in these discussions with the Israelis I think basically because the Israelis could see the value of getting him on their side on their basic positions. And Pearson, of course, had been understood all along - he had never been
suspect by the Israelis, in any of these proceedings; they knew what he was trying to achieve. I don't think they believed he had some kind of ulterior motives that were anti-Israel. Whereas the Arabs were very suspicious of Pearson throughout this thing. I didn't mention this before, but dating back to 1947 and 1948, when he had come down on the side of partition against the Arab position, this made him very suspect. That, I think, is partly why we had so much difficulty getting Canada into the force, that and of course the fact that we were members of the British Commonwealth and as a former colony, and we had the same Queen and all that. These things all militated against Pearson in Arab eyes. The Israelis on the other hand, I think, saw advantages in the fact that he had gained so much prominence and praise generally about the UNEF proposal that they could make use of him. I'm not talking in any sense of criticizing the Israelis; they felt it was to their advantage more or less to have him on side in their positions. I think he was sympathetic to those positions, too, because I sat in on discussions that he had not only with Eban but also with Michael Comay, who was Israel's ambassador in Ottawa, and Mrs. Meir. Mrs. Meir didn't show up in New York until after Christmas, in 1957 she was there. And we met in the Plaza Hotel in New York and these were the questions that we
discussed. The Israelis were trying to get him pinned down on various positions that he would take both in relation to Gaza and the Straits of Tiran. And they were, of course, very tough negotiators and I was the only one there supporting Pearson, but there was never any suggestion that I would enter into any sort of discussion with the other side. I was Mr. Pearson's advisor, not in any sense his alter ego. It was always part of his technique. He did all the talking. He didn't have big armies of people hanging around, he usually had just one or two at the most. In any case, the Israelis tried to get him pinned down on these positions. The other thing, of course, we and they wanted to avoid was sanctions, because at that time people were starting to talk about sanctions against Israel if it didn't clear out of those two places. You see, those were the last things to happen, let's say, through all of February perhaps into March. UNGA did discuss this idea about Gaza and some kind of United Nations administration. We discussed it first in the advisory group, I think, because it finally came out that the question had been studied in the Secretariat. The legal people in the United Nations, I recall, looked into this to some extent but it became terribly complicated for two reasons. First of all, there was a big question of what kind of law to apply, and who was
going to provide the officials to make it work. The other thing, and this may have been more important, certainly in Hammarskjold's view, was the question of sovereignty. There wasn't any doubt in Hammarskjold's mind that sovereignty in Gaza was Egyptian. I mean, the Gaza Strip was a key part of the old Palestine that the Israelis hadn't been able to conquer in the '48 war. And it was a very sore point with Nasser, because he had been a unit commander in the Gaza Strip and held out. So we were was not going to budge the Egyptians on that one. In the end a kind of minuet debate was arranged in the General Assembly, whereby various people expressed their "understandings" about what would happen. They understood that the Egyptian military wouldn't move back in an any great rush. They understood that the UNEF presence would be all over the Gaza Strip and that there would be no . . . it would minimize the business of organizing for the raids and that sort of thing. And that down in the Straits of Tiran, it was understood that Israel's ships would be allowed to pass. Anyway the fortifications, there, the gun emplacements, had all been destroyed. The idea of the Navy didn't take off at all. But this was the nature of discussions.

Part of this had to be worked out in Washington between the Israelis and the Americans and I believe that when
it came time for Cabot Lodge to make his statement in the Assembly he did not say exactly what the Israelis had expected. I wondered if the Canadians were in on that, if you were...

Murray No, we weren't in on it except in the sense that, as part of their position, I'm sure the Israelis would be pushing Pearson to urge their point of view on the Americans. My understanding of what happened in Washington was that it was Hervé Alphand of France who worked with the Israelis and with Dulles. I wonder, was Dulles back by then? Anyway with whomever was in charge..

JSS Yes, and Eisenhower himself was directly involved.

Murray And the Israelis thought they got certain guarantees which afterwards they said had not of come off quite the way they thought. I suppose it could have been that the US statement really didn't live up to their expectations.

JSS But the Canadians were not involved in that?

Murray No, no.

JSS There was in fact at that point, with regard to the Gaza Strip, there was some statement in the Canadian press almost in the form of a declaration by the Canadian government, in support of a joint United Nations-Egyptian administration of the Gaza Strip. Do you recall if that had Pearson's blessing, or whether
that was Pearson's idea?

Murray It certainly could have been. I remember that at the time we discussed a lot of different arrangements that we could try to work out. Because, I think, in a way we felt that maybe some such approach was a good way to advance things in the broader Arab-Israeli conflict. And that was to get a little more United Nations cotton wool down in that area, you know. I mean really cushion the thing against these incidents after incidents. You know, they just build up, incident followed by reprisal, the kind of thing that's been going on in Lebanon lately.

JSS I have a legal question now, really going back to the whole concept of peacekeeping. The Soviets of course rejected it as being contrary to the Charter primarily because it was a decision taken by the General Assembly. Was there any concern on the Canadian side as the originators of the idea concerning the legality under the Charter of the General Assembly's action?

Murray The first thing I want to say is that Lester Pearson didn't believe much in lawyers' approach to international affairs. I'm a lawyer, as I explained to you while coming here, he didn't have much faith in international law - I always had my own doubts. This is really why I think he had difficulty with Foster Dulles, who was very much a corporation lawyer.
Politically I don't think we would have accepted that the General Assembly acting under the Uniting for Peace resolution, could not authorize whatever measures were decided necessary. If the Uniting for Peace procedure was held to be legal in 1950, then whatever you did under the procedure was legal as well. But Pearson, you have to understand Pearson, primarily as an instinctive diplomat and probably an instinctive politician. He was probably the most effective improviser, a player by ear, and sure sense of touch, that I ever saw. Hammarskjold was brilliant too, but Hammarskjold was what I think of as a true pragmatist. Hammarskjold had the idea of moving from a to b, to c, to d, to e. But not in any kind of instinctive way - well, there was a lot of instinct in it, too, but it was an intellectual dictum in the back of his head that said: "by the time I get to where I am, or whatever it is, then that's where I want to be." In other words, it was, a progressive move in a direction that was determined beforehand - there might be a certain amount of weaving but his manoeuvre would end up there. Whereas Pearson's approach was strictly improvisation in face of events, actions and reactions. That and his timing, I think, were quite extraordinary and certainly worked very well in UN terms.

JSS Could you tell me what were your impressions of the
other principal players on the UN side, that is, the Secretariat other than Hammarskjold? I'm talking now in dealing with the Suez Crisis?

Murray

Well Ralph Bunche I guess was one of the people that provided a lot of advice to Hammarskjold, Andy had provided advice too (JSS: Andy Cordier, that is?) Yes, Andy was more of an administrator, he kept the shop going while these operations were being carried on. Ralph of course had had a long experience of the Arab-Israel thing, he knew all the ins and outs, he knew all the sort of nuances, he knew the tricks and skullduggery. And, of course, he had got the Peace Prize for the armistice agreements. So Ralph would have to be one of them. Ralph was a very conscientious and humanistic and very well-oriented. He had great sympathy with the underdog in all these kinds of things. The Egyptians to some extent may have been considered the underdogs given the fact that two great powers had in effect sided with Israel against them. Ralph provided a lot of the English texts for Hammarskjold's Swedish thinking, but I mean, he didn't provide it all because some of Hammarskjold's (language) constructions, it could only be Hammarskjold that did them. But Ralph, I know, used to read the scripts and make sure that the English syntax was OK and that kind of stuff. And Ralph [Bunche] certainly
was one, who was very loyal and very effective in the military planning, that is, in keeping the Secretary-General's point of view in front of the soldiers. Ralph's executive assistant at that time incidentally was Brian Urguhart, I don't know if you knew that, and he probably had quite a lot to do with these things, too. And Ralph of course carried on all the correspondence with UNEF once it was established, you know he drafted the telegrams and instructions, and that sort of stuff. Other people in the Secretariat - certainly I would have to include the legal advisor, what was his name?

JSS Stavropolous.

Murray Yeah. Maybe his staff were responsible as well because he had an able staff there. Their working out of the status of force agreement, which is quite an important thing and the legal basis for positions vis-a-vis Egypt, in particular, they were, I thought as a lawyer, pretty skillful work.

JSS Would you say that in general from the Canadian perspective at least you found that the UN staff was a fairly efficient, effective staff at that point?

Murray Well if you're talking 38th floor I'd say yes, that's what we're talking about. I was after all part of the UN staff later on and down on the 35th floor, I don't know whether it was so much inefficiency there as
infighting that happened in other parts of the building, let's put it that way. The only thing, I suppose, the only reservation that I might offer about this kind of operation is - political it was a mistake to concentrate so much of that stuff in so few hands on the 38th floor. A lot of the things that happened after UNEF was established, that is to say after the political hurdles were overcome, that could have been done as more or less routine administration in other departments, and it would have encouraged the Secretariat a lot more. The trouble with having all the juicy political stuff done on the 38th floor is that the Political and Security Council Affairs Department, which is the one I happened to serve in for a year and a half or so, it really didn't have enough work to do and certainly didn't have enough information, because none of these goings-on on the 38th floor were ever communicated directly to them. And that creates all kinds of problems in an organization like the Secretariat. It creates jealousies, it creates rivalries, it creates people being busybodies, it creates people launching themselves on all kinds of personal projects.

I'd like to go back just for one minute to the military staff that was assembled. If you could explain a little bit more just how that functioned because that
doesn't exist any more and it obviously was quite important in that point.

Murray Well it was set up I think quite soon, you're undoubtedly familiar with Brian Urquhart's book (Knopf 1973) on "Hammarskjold", of course (JSS: yes, yes). It says that the Secretary-General "constituted", but it doesn't give it very very..

JSS It gives very little about...

Murray Yes he's not very precise about exactly when. Hammarskjold used to refer to Ralph Bunche as "my minister of defense," in charge of military affairs, and "he works with the generals and the military staff people." That committee though, I was with it from the first and as long as it kept going, which was probably about a month altogether, you know, when they finally got UNEF fully assembled. It was remarkable the way things happened. In addition to the people I mentioned earlier, first of all there was these - I say first of all, but from my own point of view - there were three Canadian officers who had come down from National Defense Headquarters especially to do this job once it was established that there was going to be a force. I'll tell you something very interesting that perhaps would be worthwhile for historians. When those people were coming down on the train, the overnight train, the Washingtonian from Montreal, they told me, these guys,
because I was supposed to brief them on what was going on. They said: "We sat up all night talking about this thing, how we were going to go down to organize a UN force to clean up on Nasser." And I thought to myself: ... "What's afoot in Ottawa?" Because it was the Korean model, you see, everybody thought Suez was to be just like Korea, like now, in the Persian Gulf as far as that goes. Anyway, I got them straightened out on that; but in addition to those three people there was General Rikhye, he was the youngest general in the Indian Army and a great favorite of Krishna Menon, who I guess was Minister of National Defense at that time. There was a Yugoslav from Washington, a Yugoslav military attache, I think he was a general, too. He had been a partisan in World War II. He was quite a young guy, and looked like a partisan, too. And then there were some very stiff-looking cavalry officers from Sweden and other countries, and some people from Latin America - I guess the Colombians and Brazilians, probably. And then there was the way they talked about things. Tommy Burns came to New York - about the 14th or 15th - he came from Cairo and he sat at the head of this committee with Ralph. You know, they were helping him, Burns as commander, in getting his force in shape. And the committee considered what contingents they'd accept. For instance, let's take
the Indonesians, they decided they’d ask Indonesia to provide one of the battalions. The only trouble was the battalion that the Indonesians were going to send had neither shoes, nor guns, nor caps, nor pants without holes in them. And that meant the UN had to bring in stores for those people. First of all, the US Air Force had to pick the battalion up. And the US officers present, they were in civilian clothes, right there in the room listening to the discussion, one would pick up the phone, as soon as he heard the decision, he would phone Guam, or wherever it was, and tell them that half a dozen or so planes or whatever it was, would be needed to pick up the troops. And then he’d phone Frankfurt or whatever it was in Germany, and tell them to load up 800 pairs of boots and caps and so forth, and M-1’s and get them down there (in the M.E.), they all had to be there at the same time. And it was incredible just to sit there and watch all this going on because every time a decision was laid on the table, something started to happen in a logistic sense.

JSS And no thought was ever given to utilizing the Military Staff Committee for this purpose?

Murray No, you see the Military Staff Committee was considered dead, defunct because of the veto. There was certainly a big big resistance to getting the Russians involved in any way. I don’t know that the Russians really
wanted to be involved. You have to remember that Hungary was always going on. Also the other thing in the Soviet Union of course, the leadership was at sixes and sevens. I mean, that was after Stalin had moved on and his enforcer Beria; and the rest of them, they went through that period of shuffle, you know, the foreign minister that came to discuss Suez was a guy called Shepilov who only lasted, I think, about six months! Anyway there was no thought of having the Russians involved in Suez. I don’t know whether that’s good or bad, but it didn’t happen.

JSS Just as a final question. Is there any other particular point with regard to this era that stands out in your mind that would be worth putting in this interview?

Murray I think that nothing’s been said about the Canal, and the clearing of the Canal. That, of course, was a vital operation and something that had to be done quickly. And that was another thing where the British thought they had all the cards, the British and the French because they had assembled a very impressive fleet for clearing the Canal. I don’t know whether they had expected that Nasser was going to block the Canal but I suppose it was certainly a likely prospect. There was a big job of clearing to be done and the Egyptians wouldn’t hear of the British or the French
being involved. There was a long long negotiation about how the UN would do the clearing. But the UN was able to assemble very rapidly, mostly because of Hammarskjöld, I mean, Hammarskjöld was what I call a grand illusionist (as in the old film classic "Grand Illusion"). If he wanted something done by somebody he didn’t waste time with anybody lower down than the President, the King or the Prime Minister or the top man. He got them on the phone and said, "Well I’d like to have....". And the UN assembled an alternative force of technicians for clearing the Canal in double jig time. They also arranged, of course, to take over some of the contracts because the British had contracted out, I think, to Germans and Dutch, and people like that. Anyway people who were very very good, and had the proper equipment, those heavy lift ships, they needed. But the second aspect of that, of course, was the financing for the clearance, I mean it was going to cost say 25 million - whatever it was going to cost, anyway. They needed some money in a hurry and where was that money going to come from? I mean, there was a big yell in the Assembly at the time, about every Monday, "Aggressors shall pay", well of course the aggressors didn’t consider themselves aggressors. Nobody had branded them as aggressors, that’s one of the things that didn’t happen. So it was
a question of finding money somewhere else. And Hammarskjold got in touch, maybe he did it on his own, maybe somebody put him up to it, I mean advised him to do it, with John J. McCloy. John J. McCloy was head of the Chase Manhattan Bank and it was decided that the UN would borrow the money from the bank. The bank of course wanted some guarantors and a few of us, of the Suez "Fire Brigade", including Engen and I and a finance advisor from Canada's department of finance, and a few other people, went down to sit with McCloy. It was very impressive, the Chase Manhattan Bank. McCloy knew how to operate, too, and we had it all done in no time. There were 11 countries I think that guaranteed the loan.

JSS Including Canada.

Murray Yes. And so they proceeded and lifted the obstructions just as quickly as anybody could have. And the British were quite fussed up about this because I remember they sent an admiral over to New York. He was all dressed up like a civilian but he was constantly bending our ears about, "There's no way, it's impossible that the UN can do this, it can't clear this ever. I mean, we are the only ones..."

JSS But General Wheeler, I believe, was in charge of that operation.

Murray Wheeler, right, well that's the other thing. Wheeler I
think, well maybe McCloy suggested Wheeler, but anyway Wheeler was a very good engineer and he was in charge of the operation, I mean the lifting, the clearing operation. And the UN team did do it very very smoothly and quickly. And there was a fabulous picture of it. The UN information department did a film of it called Blue Vanguard. I'd love to know where that film is today because I saw it two or three times, run through. It was directed by one of the very good directors - it may have been David Lean, somebody like that anyway, that sort of stature. They did the advisory committee, they did scenes in the Assembly, they did this lifting business, they did the UNEF forces arriving in Abu Suweir, they did the Egyptians moving back into the Sinai. And it's a really marvelous piece. I think it was about a 20 minute thing. And it was supposed to be put out, and it should have been put out - but of course the British didn't want it put out, the French didn't want it put out, the Israelis weren't all that keen. And we had a change of government (in 1957) so the Canadians weren't very keen on it either. And I don't think it was ever shown. I saw it several times, while I was still in New York, at the UN.
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It is my understanding that a typed transcript will be made of such tape(s) and returned to me for any necessary corrections. I hereby agree that if for any reason I have not returned the transcript with my corrections to the Institution for Social and Policy Studies within three months of the time it was sent to me, the Project Staff may edit the transcript and make it available for research and other use as provided here below.

In the understanding that the tape(s) and transcript(s) will be preserved at the United Nations and made available for historical, scholarly and (as deemed appropriate by the United Nations) public information purposes, and that copies will be placed on deposit at Yale University for research and study, I hereby grant, assign, and transfer legal titles and all literary rights in the tape(s) and transcript(s) to the United Nations. However, it is agreed that neither the United Nations nor Yale University will publish or authorize publication of the transcript(s) or any part thereof during my lifetime without my written permission.

[Signature]
(Interviewee)

[Signature]
(Interviewer)

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