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YUN INTERVIEW
GIDEON RAFAEL
JERUSALEM, ISRAEL
APRIL 17, 1991
INTERVIEWER: SUTTERLIN

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JSS Mr. Rafael, I want first to thank you for agreeing to participate in this Yale University oral history program. I'd like to start very early in the history of, even before, Israel was established as a country because if I'm not mistaken, you were a member of the Jewish Agency team (GR: Correct). I'd like first of all for you to tell me what were your duties there, what was your position in this group?

GR Well my designation was Assistant to Mr. Sharett who was the head of the Political Department.

JSS And you worked really as a team?

GR We worked as a team. I had all kinds of assignments from providing the tea for the meetings up to some internal information which was very important, and liaison with the Arab delegations.

JSS You did part of the liaison with the Arab delegations?

GR Well, not very officially from their point of view but we had some contacts with them.

JSS How was that handled?

GR Well, the time hasn't come to tell that. But it was handled very efficiently, so efficiently that we knew that on the decisive day of 29 November, 1947, Camille Shamoun would spring a surprise in order to avoid the

vote on the partition plan. We knew a couple of hours before that he would spring that surprise in announcing that the Arabs had reconsidered their position and they're going to support the federal solution, which was the minority report. In order to work out the Arab position he asked for three months delay in the voting. Well, we knew about that planned surprise very shortly before, but had time enough to prepare the chief representatives of the US and the USSR. We could not intervene directly, because as a non-governmental delegation we had no right to speak at the General Assembly. One Herschl Johnson, and Andrei Gromyko ??????.

When Andrei Gromyko was informed of Shamoun's plan he said. "Let me handle that." He was an uncontested master of procedure. He came down on Camille Shamoun like a ton of bricks with stern warning to the President of the General Assembly, Oswaldo Aranha, not to waver and to call for a vote on the partition plan. Herschl Johnson followed, not as forceful as Gromyko but in line with him. Saying, "We have reached the decision that we take the vote today, and at the voting stage you can't come with new proposals." And that was the decisive moment, I would say, in the whole matter.

JSS Well this Soviet contact was very important at that point, also.

GR Yes, of course, Gromyko did not want to let the vote go by default and he could be very fierce in such situations, particularly in handling procedure.

JSS I wanted to ask a question on that. The Soviet Union was in fact more enthusiastically supportive of the partition resolution than the US was. Why do you think that was? Why do you think the Soviet Union was so supportive at that point?

GR There are two reasons, at least. I think, when the Soviet Union at that time, in the Stalinist time, takes a line they go for it, and Gromyko had his instructions to get the things done. And there's no wavering, he had to deliver the goods, that's it. So therefore in his Soviet Stalinist diplomacy there was no - how you call it? - no holds barred? Yes, that's the way it was, whether it was on Korea, or clashing with Hammarskjold on the Congo. They acted with "revolutionary fervor."

That's one thing. The other thing is, on the substance - why did they support the partition of Palestine? I dealt with that in my book on Israel foreign policy and I have come, on the basis of much research and personal impressions, to two conclusions. One is that they really believed there must be a change in the pattern of the Middle East domination and Jews were in their view more effective in making trouble there for the British. They were more impressed by our

capacity to further their objective of undermining the British position in the Middle East. They had very little love lost for the Arabs at the time. They had been collaborators of Hitler, the Mufti, and the delegation of the Arabs and of the Palestinians' Higher Committee headed by Jemal Husseini. The Mufti as you know, was working as a close collaborator of Hitler. So they had no love for them. That was on the Arab side.

And the second point is, I really believe they had the feeling that the Jews had suffered enormous sacrifices in the war. There is a speech by Gromyko, an emotional speech, in the second session of the General Assembly of the UN, where he said, " 6,000,000 Jews (for the first time the Soviets mentioned the figure of 6,000,000) have been butchered by the Nazi executioners and they have a right to independence and to their own sovereignty." And then he added, "After all, they had a longstanding historical association with Palestine in history." So I believe that there was something of the comradeship of suffering at the time.

Whether Stalin was directly involved I really don't know, I haven't found anything on that. Gromyko in any case always showed interest in relationships with Israel. He was always open to discussion and in preparation of the decision we had quite a lot of contacts with him and other members of the Soviet delegation. He showed not

only eagerness to get the revolution adopted, but understanding for the Jewish viewpoint. So I wouldn't say that Gromyko introduced the emotional aspect, because he was not exactly an emotional man - but I think the historic aspect was known in Moscow.

The change of the Soviet attitude occurred when Moscow - after establishing relations with Israel - realized what effect it had on the Jewish population in the Soviet Union, that they had stirred up a hornet's nest. When Golda Meir, Israel's first ambassador to the Soviet Union, appeared on Rosh Hashana in the synagogue the first mass demonstration in Stalinist Russia took place in front of the synagogue by an immense crowd of Jews. This was too much for the Soviet authorities. They decided to separate between their relations with Israel and the Jewish Zionist aspect.

JSS

I want to go back just a minute to the activities of the Palestine Committee on which there were the representatives of the Jewish Agency and ask you in particular about Jerusalem. The partition of course provided for a special status for Jerusalem. What was your attitude, what was the thinking in the Jewish Agency the future Israel representatives, about that subject, about Jerusalem?

GR

The report on the corpus separatum was very painful for us. We had done everything we could before to persuade

UNSCOP not to adopt that position but they were under great influence from the Vatican mainly by means of the Latin American countries. We saw we were up against a wall, we couldn't change that. So our acceptance of that part of the partition scheme was very painful, I would say, it was the price of glory, I mean, the glory of the restoration of Jewish independence. That was our feeling.

JSS So there was that strong feeling ... I have read some places that Ben Gurion was not terribly interested in Jerusalem at that point.

GR No, no, I have no evidence of that. On the contrary, he tried immediately after the fighting to establish Israel's position in Jerusalem by moving the government offices and himself to Jerusalem, making declarations which were not very useful to us during the United Nations discussions at a later stage, in 1949 and 1950 when there was the question of Israel's admission to the UN. I once spoke to him about his statement when he had arrived in Jerusalem and made, at the gates of the city, a very strong statement that "Jerusalem is the eternal capital of Israel etc...." This was reported by Cy Sulzburger who was there. A great splash in the New York Times exactly when a new resolution on Jerusalem came to a vote - how to evade a reaffirmation of the Jerusalem corpus came up for voting. So when I saw Ben Gurion

later in Tel Aviv I said "that was not very good timing. You know what effect your statement had". Ben Gurion answered in his way of appearing as utterly naive - "how could this be reported in the American press? But I spoke in Hebrew."

JSS Now I'd like to go to the American stage, so to speak, because in this period when the partition resolution was being considered there was much activity with the Americans and in Washington. I want to ask, what contacts you had with the American side, what was your feeling at the time as to attitudes in the US government toward the establishment of a Jewish state?

GR I don't believe that it was so important for the US to support the corpus separatum. But they thought about counting votes, on getting support. The Latin American vote or the Catholic vote was needed, and for this vote Washington had to concede a position and they were perhaps more or less neutral on the Jerusalem issue. But in the parliamentary terms of the United Nations they supported the ...

JSS And they were working for the resolution at that point?

GR Yes.

JSS Now a little later....

GR It was Ambassador Hilldring, General Hilldring.

JSS Yes, and eventually Ambassador Austin, I think. Warren Austin ...

GR Yes, he became famous in my book and in my memory for a remark of his in a debate of the Security Council. He was a dear old man, Senator from Vermont, and the squabbling and discussions that were going on back and forth annoyed him. So one day he said, "Mr. President, can't we really settle that damned thing with the Moslems and the Jews in a real good Christian spirit?"

JSS But the American position changed rather suddenly for trusteeship and let me ask you this - in your contacts in New York with the American delegation, did you have any idea that the US was going to change its position and move away from partition?

GR No, it was a complete surprise. If it came as a surprise to Truman, then it must have been a surprise to us too. No, we had no advance notice of that. As a matter of fact it followed a meeting between President Truman and Professor Chaim Weizmann. Weizmann had not the slightest inkling of the change of the American position - and he couldn't have - because Truman didn't have and Truman was very embarrassed by that switch.

JSS There has been just recently published in the US the memoirs of Clark Clifford. I don't know whether you've seen them or not, they were in the New Yorker magazine. But he describes in great detail what happened in the White House with regard to...

GR I saw that extract on the recognition of the state....

JSS Yes, because as you know there was a real difference of opinion in the US government..

GR Oh sure. But at that time I was here already at home in the Foreign Ministry ...

JSS You were back here?

GR Exactly, when the telegram of recognition arrived.

JSS You were already here when the recognition took place? Because my question would have been, and it still is, whether you know of any contacts between the Israeli side and Clark Clifford during the days, years, well months, really?

GR No, I think the go-between was Rosenman.

JSS Judge Rosenman?

GR Yes, I think he was the man with whom our representative Eilat, the late Ambassador Eliyahu, was in touch. And Rosenman knew from Truman quite a while before the proclamation of the state, that when it comes to the crunch, Truman would extend recognition to the state of Israel. It was a closely kept secret.

JSS I've seen that written and I always thought it was true. Clark Clifford's version is a little different, which is interesting. Clark Clifford actually took Rosenman's place in the White House and I think you'll want to read the whole memoir when it comes out on that point. Did you have any particular impression at that point of the Secretary-General and the way Trygve Lie functioned as

Secretary-General?

GR

Yes. We were in very close touch with him and I had developed some kind of personal friendship with him. He was very keenly in favor of the establishment of the State and he had this warm European Socialist feeling of injustice done to the Jewish people. I think he was much impressed by the fact that America and the Soviets were working together on that. So he tried to, as far as he could, he tried as much as he could to be helpful. Well, I remember in exactly a year after the adoption of the resolution I had the idea that we should apply for membership in the United Nations on the 29th of November 1948. We did that while the Assembly was meeting in Paris. We went up - Eban and myself - to Trygve Lie with an official letter applying for membership. He was very supportive but he said, "Look I don't think you have the necessary votes right now. After the Bernadotte assassination the mood is not good. For my part, first of all, I will do everything to sound out what the situation is. Of course you have the right as an independent state to be a member of the United Nations.

Well it didn't work out then and Israel gained admission only on 11 May 1949. Then followed the tribulations of Trygve Lie personally when, I wouldn't say really his breakdown, but when his close friend, Abe Feller, committed suicide. So this was for him a

terrible tragedy and shock. When he left I think I sent a report on my last talk with him and said he appeared to me like the man in Miller's "The Death of a Salesman", a broken man. You know, he had a problem with the FBI investigating members of the UN secretariat.

JSS

Yes, but he took a strong stand in the case of Israel and also in the case of Korea. I want to ask you a very general question now. During this period how would you describe the atmosphere that you felt in the United Nations as Israel was, with great effort, becoming a member? Did you find a receptive atmosphere, did you find it difficult to work in this new multi-national organization, the United Nations?

GR

Yes, well we were a very particular case there, culturally and religiously singular. There was only one Jewish state, there was only one Hebrew language. There was no other country that had any kind of a direct cultural relationship with us and we weren't surrounded exactly by the most accommodating neighbors. So we entered the United Nations as a problem child, and we remained a problem child. And of course there are historic and political reasons for that. But we were never really spoiled there by a very friendly atmosphere. It's an institution of real politik with the Cold War and the winds became rather chilly when the two partners supporting the 1947 resolutions fell apart. From then on

we had to swim against a strong current.

JSS

My follow up question to that is, I think on your side you were enthusiastic about becoming a member of this organization but at some point attitudes on the Israeli side became increasingly negative toward the United Nations. How would you identify that trend?

GR

I would say that the realities affecting our country, were different from the spirituality of our approach to the United Nations. And the man who expresses this spirituality is Abba Eban. For him the greatest day was, I think, 11 of May when our flag at the United Nations went up and _____ Israel became a legitimate member of the international community. And if you project that in terms of Israel's history as a people without freedom and without independence - a persecuted people - after what had happened during the Hitler war, so for all of us it was an event of greatest elation which had its effect of course on those who were closely connected to our work and struggle at the United Nations.

But here we had practical problems - we had border incidents caused by Arab raids and we had the Mixed Armistice Commissions and they did not decide exactly as we wanted them to decide. And we got a black eye here and a black eye there, and we had to defend ourselves and sometimes we had to take strong _____ measures of defense which were not welcomed by the United Nations. On the

contrary, they were condemned in the United Nations. We made mistakes, like the retaliation of Kybia for instance. Which was the great premiere of Ariel Sharon - he was in command at Kybia - and in reporting on it he deceived his superiors, a habit he has perfected since.

At the time Kybia occurred, in October '53, I was in charge of Middle Eastern and United Nations affairs in the foreign ministry here in Jerusalem. While the cabinet was discussing the situation created by the ____, Sharett sent me a small note out from the cabinet meeting, "Stand by, you'll have to go tonight on a special mission." They had decided to send Dayan and me to the United Nations as some kind of supporting pillars for Abba Eban, to inform him and hold his hand there. Of course it was not a very pleasant experience for us since the last thing a politician will do is to admit a mistake - the military people certainly even less - so we had to keep up a stiff lip and at home the United Nations was regarded as a great adversary when condemning Israel's action.

But then Eban made a tremendous case in defense of the Kybia action. He referred to the continued Arab hostility, and their continuing a state of war, ____ Israel in violation of the UN Charter. He made a good case of it. Ben Gurion and his aides were greatly impressed by his presentation, but not the Security

Council.

Another action of retaliation later near the lake of Tiberias on the Syrian side of the border, created a great row, a great row internationally and in Israel. And again Eban presented splendidly this case. Whereupon Ben Gurion said, "Well until I heard Eban I wasn't so sure that we were right but now he completely convinced me that we did right."

As a matter of fact, this action ____ became the beginning of an open rift between Sharett and Ben Gurion. Sharett was at that time deeply involved in getting an American equivalent for the Soviet arms deal with Egypt. He hoped that the US might provide Israel with some compensatory arms supplies.

And then happened this raid. The political bureau of the Labor party discussed its repercussions. I was invited to attend the meeting. Sharett gave a report. He did not conceal his anger and perhaps exaggerated in evaluating the prospects of his negotiations on arms supplies from the United States. He used the word, and I was sitting next to Ben Gurion who was sitting on the sidelines, when Shareh said, "And then came this raid, it was as if Satan had intervened." And I felt that the word had hit Ben Gurion like an electrical shock in Ben Gurion, and sitting like this. He didn't say a word, he didn't reply to him but it had caused a rift between the

two men, which led to Sharett's resignation, or better dismissal from the government six months later.

JSS

But the alienation, if I can call it that, between Israel and the United Nations continued further. And going much ahead of the story, I want to ask whether you felt that the eventual resolution on Zionism and racism had a tremendous effect here in Israel or whether it was more important in terms of the American reaction?

GR

Well there's a history to it. The Arab position vis-a-vis Israel was all through the years, and I don't know whether that has really changed, a three-point strategy: defamation, isolation, elimination, these were the stages. In order to isolate Israel you defame it, and when it is isolated then you may eliminate it. So they applied all, the propaganda tricks of the trade they could devise, and one of them was to delegitimize Israel. By that time in 1975 the racial issue was of course very high on the agenda and the highest degree of defamation you could hurl at anybody was "racist" because with the awakening of Africa there was a great resonance to that charge.

So the Arabs used this. On the other hand we were quite involved in a tangle with the Soviet Union on the discrimination of the Soviet Jews. We used the UN Human Rights Commission to draw the attention of the world to the plight of the Jews. The Soviets certainly didn't

like that and they were rude and defamatory in their replies. They thought to silence Israel by tainting Zionism as racism, serving by this the Arab objective of Israeli's isolation, defamation, and eventual elimination. I don't think that the Soviets were supporting the Arabs in their final objective. Elimination was not the Soviets' objective but they went along with the Arabs in their tactical struggle, first of all in order to support the Arabs and secondly to shake us off with all these protestations against Soviet treatment of Jews. The Soviets always used the Hitlerite argument, the Nazi argument, that if you are pursuing Nazi policies you are the scum of the earth, there's no reason to protect you. Not the Charter will protect you, not your friends have to protect you. So they pushed us, together with the Arabs, into this category and basically it was not the Arabs who formulated this '75 amendment; of declaring Zionism as racism. It was the Soviets who added the equation of Zionism with racism to the general resolution on condemning Nazism and other abuse of human rights.

I discussed this matter much later in the Soviet Union, two years ago, and my interlocutors admitted that my analysis was right, that they were just furious with us, this little state, like a wasp, was all the time stinging the mighty Soviet Union in the international

arena. And so they hit together with their Arab ____ That was in my view the background of the 1975 resolution.

JSS Interesting, because this of course had enormous repercussions....

GR Oh yes. Because we understood this as a part in the campaign of the delegitimization of Israel to make it an outcast. Our positions in Africa i.e., which we had steadily built up, were affected by it. Who cares for a country which is racist? In 1967 when I was Permanent Representative, I had these altercations with Federenko, the Soviet representative. He called Israel acting like Nazis. I knew what he was up to and I answered him very strongly, reminding him that the Soviet Union was the first which entered into an alliance with the Nazis and didn't care a damn about the defense of civilized humanity.

JSS If you would have to draw a balance now as to the utility of the United Nations to Israel and the hardships, difficulties the United Nations has caused, where would you draw the line? Obviously Israel exists in part because of the United Nations.

GR I would say that Israel, without the United Nations, would have had great difficulty establishing itself in the world, given its hostile environment. In the United Nations, we had to pay a price for being a legitimate member of the international community. Nobody in Israel

however would have sought - except for some extremists on the right to leave this organization, or we should boycott it. We knew that we had to be there and we had to defend our position there, recognizing that the UN was after all was also an important forum of political warfare and propaganda, where we had to take our stand. Now that the United Nations is changing. Some people may say that's bad for Israel because they all will now gang up against it but others will say well the UN may become a positive force ____ for Israel.

JSS

What do you think? Because that's going to be one of my questions. There is a basic change in the United Nations because of the basic change in the world where the Soviet Union, which was hostile to Israel for most of its history, now is friendly at least with the United Nations and its relations with Israel have improved. Do you think this is going to make the United Nations a more effective instrument, a more supportive instrument, for Israel and bring about greater possibilities for a settlement?

GR

I wrote an article two months ago - I think the heading was "the Ring is Closing" and I said 43 years ago, the US and Soviet Union worked together to redress the injustices to the Jewish people and to help restore its independence. But they were not able to work for peaceful adjustment between the Arabs and Israel because

the winds of the Cold War were blowing between the Soviet Union and the US, and hot winds of hostility were blowing here in Israel-Arab relations. Now, I write after 43 years the ring is closing, the Soviet Union and the US are now, going to work together to bring about a peaceful settlement of this conflict which cannot be completely satisfactory because a settlement can only be reached by compromise. In short, the Cold War and the state of hot hostility had prevented a settlement.

Therefore I believe that we've reached a point now where it's very clear that the Soviet Union and the US will try, under their auspices, to promote a settlement. It's a completely different question whether they can succeed but we had the first indication of that attempt in 1973 at the Geneva conference where it was handled in a different way because the Cold War was still on. Kissinger used the conference to proceed with his own diplomacy which then led, as a matter of fact, to the peace agreement with Egypt.

This time I think the cooperation between the Soviet Union and the US will be more coordinated. It would not be a situation where one side will just support one party and the other the other side, or that the US or the Soviets will try to settle the conflict by imposition. The United Nations will be involved in one way or another. The present government of Israel won't like it,

but the UN will be involved, for the following reason.

The load is too heavy for both sides to lift it, they're just not capable to pull themselves out of the conflict by their own strength. They don't have enough flexibility in their political process - I wrote a piece about it a few days ago in the Herald Tribune. Therefore in all Arab-Israel diplomatic encounters, which were successful, third party assistance was needed, whether it were the armistice negotiations at Rhodes or in the General Assembly in 1947, or whether it was at Camp David in 1978. Otherwise it just doesn't work, these are the mechanics of the conflict resolution.

Now, certainly we would be happy if the peace negotiations could be conducted on the Camp David pattern. But the US is committed to cooperate with the Soviet Union for understandable reasons and the Europeans wouldn't stand aside. I mean it is nonsense to believe that one can have a major security conference and the Europeans will stand aside. And even in order to convene the security conference, or whatever they may call it - a regional conference - the ____ need a convener, as in 1973.

Who will be the convener? The convener can be the United Nations, with a very limited function as in 1973. We accepted resolutions 338 and 242. 338 has a companion resolution which authorizes the Secretary to organize

negotiations and to report back from time to time to the Security Council about their program, so that the Security can assist the parties if necessary.

JSS

As a matter of fact that brought me to a subject that I want to ask you about and that is precisely resolution 242 because I think that you were quite involved in the various negotiations that went into that. I wonder if you would just describe how that developed from your perspective in 1967?

GR

I think I gave a very detailed account in my book about this. The discussion of 242, as a matter of fact, was started on the first day of the war in 1967, by two opposing positions. The US took the position of ceasefire but not return to the pre-war lines, as they had done in 1956. Our position was to content ourselves with a ceasefire at the appropriate time, when the military had accomplished its mission. So when the Security Council discussions ended in a ceasefire which was then in place on the 11th of June, the problem of the future territorial dispositions which would be made, remained open.

Then the Soviet Union called a special session, Emergency Session, of the General Assembly and sent their first team - Prime Minister Kosygin - and his assistants. On the day before the opening of the session President Johnson made a statement of policy of 5 points which in

my view have remained the basic policy of the US until today. Some additions were made, but not much change: the armistice regime to be replaced by peace treaties, including guaranteed freedom of navigation.

The Soviets and the Arabs, of course, were trying to avoid the political consequences of the changed situation. The Arabs insisted on the evacuation of all the territories occupied in the fighting and compensation for war damages. No resolutions were adopted but many drafts were tossed around from one side to the other. This special assembly was a great marketplace for the diplomatic busybodies which business effected.

Basically the US and the Soviet Union tried to work it out, Arthur Goldberg and - not Federenko, he had already lost his usefulness - but Kuznetzov, first Deputy Foreign Minister. Also Dobrynin participated in the talks and in the end Gromyko himself. After some weeks of wrangling they worked out, from our point of view, a very unsatisfactory draft resolution on ending the state of war, a formula which certainly did not advance us toward a peaceful settlement. It was the only time we had some differences with Arthur Goldberg. He was quite annoyed that we were not very happy with his work of art which he had worked out with Gromyko. He explained to me in quite stern terms that " you don't think I know how to negotiate. I was a labor negotiator all of my life and

whatever you want to say to me, you don't come to teach me how to negotiate. And I said, "Arthur, I will tell you what the difference is between a labor negotiator and a diplomatic negotiator with the Soviet Union. Of course I recognize your enormous experience as a labor negotiator. When you negotiated with Ford in Detroit, you had a common objective, to manufacture a car. But when you negotiate with the Soviet Union you want to manufacture a car and they want to produce a road accident and we don't want to be a party in that accident."

Well he laughed and that restored the friendship. The man who really answered Kuznetzov in the same way was Dean Rusk. He said to Kuznetzov, "What you want me to do is to swap a rabbit for a horse and we are not dealing that way." The US and the USSR had worked out the formula, but thanks to our great collaborator, the Syrian delegation, the Arabs rejected the draft resolution.

Therefore the Emergency Assembly, dispersed without a resolution. With the resumption of the diplomatic season in September the delegation renewed their search for an acceptable resolution. The Indians were the first to draft something. The US believed that they had an agreement with King Hussein on the principal points. King Hussein had come to New York after having met Nasser on September 17. He told the US delegation that they had

reached an agreement on an acceptable resolution. But was apparently no more than wishful thinking on the part of Hussein. The Americans wanted to be the main sponsor and take the initiative. But Jerusalem's position was too hesitant to encourage Arthur Goldberg to go ahead. He was right at that time and Washington was right that they themselves should keep things under control. So Lord Caradon, the British Representative, took the initiative. He was more inclined to compromise in favor of the Arabs but he kept close contact with the US, and with us, too.

JSS

That was what I wanted to ask you, he was in touch with you?

GR

Oh yes, and he realized that certain things just wouldn't work and he tried then to find a compromise between the parties and did it with great skill. He managed to put the most contradictory things into one resolution, the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory, and the probability of retention of some of the occupied territory as well as the inadmissibility of the use of force. If the Arabs had not used force for 40 years there would not have been a question of the acquisition of territory. He had to include the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory in his _____ because the Latin Americans insisted on this very vague principle although it is not a Charter principle at all. The

Charter principle is the inadmissibility of war and the admissibility of self-defense. Kissinger later called this ambivalent wording of Resolution 242, constructive ambiguity.

President Johnson was very firm to get the resolution adopted without any further changes. He corresponded with Prime Minister Kosygin until the last minute on the wording "withdrawal from territories" as distinguished from "all the territories" _____

it, Johnson was very firm on that. And so the Soviets came along. The resolution was adopted on 22 November 1967, but on the 20th the Soviets had introduced their own draft which was much milder than any of the drafts which they had presented since the break of the war. It included a paragraph on curbing the arms race in the Middle East.

The original American draft also had included a paragraph with nearly similar language, that the arms race should be controlled. Despite the Soviets and the US agreeing on the same paragraph, this particular paragraph was eliminated from the British draft resolution, as I understood because of Arab opposition. They wanted freedom to replenish their depleted arsenals after their defeat in 1967. Therefore, it was not in their interest to have a limitation on supplies of armaments. So that was 242, I think, one of the most

durable resolutions and diplomatic workhorses ever reared.

JSS Now I want to ask you again a rather broad question in this respect. 242 is in a sense an expression of territory for peace, exchange of territory for peace.

GR I don't say no. I wrote about that this Saturday in the Herald Tribune.

JSS Really, I haven't read that. Let me ask the question, let me then hear the reason why you don't think so because I was going to trace it back a bit and ask you a related question. In 1956 Ben Gurion, after the war was over, wrote a letter to President Eisenhower that you're familiar with, maybe you wrote it.

In this letter to Eisenhower Ben Gurion suggested that the Israeli objective in the 1956 undertaking was basically to achieve peace whereas earlier different objectives had been defined. And I believe that Abba Eban suggests that he gave some speech or some statement early - well before resolution 242 - suggesting that territory should be exchanged for peace, that this was the right approach. My question to you then, coming back to where we were, is - do you see a consistent strain in Israeli policy from 1956 on until now, aiming toward that objective of peace in exchange for territory?

GR Well you have one proof for it, the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty, stipulating the complete withdrawal of all

forces from Egyptian territory. You have another evidence of this stance in the decision of the Israeli cabinet of I think 16 of June, 1967, an internal decision, which said that Israel was ready to evacuate all Egyptian and Syrian territory - under certain conditions, foremost the conclusion of peace.

JSS That's my question right there. There was a cabinet decision to ...

GR Israel was ready to withdraw up to the international border with Egypt with some arrangements necessary for security. It was ready to withdraw to the international border with Syria provided that the water supply from the Jordan headwater was not affected, or was guaranteed and demilitarization of certain parts of the evacuated or established area. With regard to the West Bank the government decided to consider at a later stage how to proceed taking into account Begin's position. This decision of the government of Israel was communicated to us in New York, Eban was there, and we were directed to submit it as our peace proposals to Dean Rusk, the Foreign Secretary.

The meeting with the Secretary of State took place on 21 of June, 1967. I would nearly say he gasped at our generosity, he didn't expect that Israel would agree to return to the international boundaries and so on. He said, "Well we can transmit that to the Arab states." He

brought up the question of Jerusalem saying, "This issue is the most delicate question because of the three religions involved. We must be very careful in proceeding." But he didn't go into the substance of what should happen in Jerusalem.

So that was that, peace for the return of all of Sinai, for all of Golan, which keeping open the question of the West Bank which was discussed from '67 on with King Hussein. Our leadership made far-reaching concessions to him, even Golda Meir said that the great, the decisive part of the West Bank would be returned to Jordan in conditions of peace. So even on that point there was a readiness to compromise. It found its application in the Egyptian-Israeli treaty.

Now, one can say that Begin had in mind that he was trading the territories of Sinai for our holding on to the West Bank and Gaza. This was the reason he agreed to the withdrawal from all of Sinai. But if he really meant that he couldn't have, he shouldn't have signed the Camp David Palestinian framework. The Camp David language does not bear that out at all and he signed there a formulation which I never would have believed he would accept, the recognition of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people and their just requirements. So this stands in the way of the policy of the present government, it's one of the obstacles to Mr. Baker's

endeavors.

JSS Going back then to 242, why don't you think that was a...
GR Well I'll say it this way. It's a simplification, to
just quote it as meaning: a territory for peace. First
of all, 242 insists on no use of war, no use of force -
it says this twice. So no use of force, and if force is
used then of course you have the right of self-defense
under article 51 [of the Charter]. If you occupy
territories in self-defense, that's not the acquisition
of territory by war. So therefore this cancels the Latin
American principle.

Not only this, the operative part says peace must be
established, a durable peace for all states in the
region. And Mr. Kuznetzov made it clear when he
supported the resolution on the 22, "every state" means
Israel, he said that explicitly. So there must be a
durable peace. There must be safe, secure and recognized
boundaries. Where do you withdraw the forces to
recognized and secure boundaries. Then comes the freedom
of the navigation and so on, this is a secondary
question. And the settlement of refugee problems, not
Palestinians' alone, the word Palestine doesn't appear in
the whole text of the resolution 242 but it says the
solution of the refugee problems.

So if one is strict on 242, one would even say the
Palestinians have in it only a very indirect standing,

only as refugees. That situation has been more developed and this government say, "Well we are ready for a peace settlement on the basis of Camp David." Camp David includes recognition of Palestinian rights so that's an addition to 242. Resolution 242 doesn't say "the withdrawal of the forces of Israel from the territories occupied in the recent fighting, the recent conflict", it says deliberately "of Israeli forces" - "from territories occupied in the recent fighting."

We did not exactly stick to this provision in the Egyptian treaty and therefore we established a precedent. Mr. Begin gave an explanation saying, "Well we have fulfilled our obligation under 242 by withdrawing from territories," as we did. But the US is of a different opinion. It refers to all the fronts with Israel's neighbors. It is simplification to condense 242's meaning into "territories for peace". In my view, it is a resolution which provides the liberation of the Palestinians from the shackles of occupation. The withdrawal would enable Israel to devote itself to its true preoccupations - the integration of Aliva, the preservation of its democratic values, its economic progress, all in the context of peace. Above all that, 242 accepts the principle of an agreed settlement.

And why do I explain it this way also to our won people? To make it clear that it's not just giving up of

territory, it's gaining for Israel, enormous gains - in terms of international standing, of material and political support which it needs to master the tasks with which it is confronted.

JSS So I judge from what you're saying that you feel considerable pride still that you participated in the achievement of this resolution which you see as being in Israel's interest, 242.

GR On the 7 of August, 1970 the national unity government split because Begin decided to leave the government with his Likud partners. He decided to leave it because the ceasefire, terminating the war of attrition, which was concluded on the 7 of August 1970, included a paragraph that the Jarring mission should be renewed, to promote implementation of resolution 242. Thereupon Mr. Begin said the implementation of 242 would have the most nightmarish consequences for Israel and resigned from government. I attended this meeting of the cabinet and when Mr. Begin got up and walked out I said, "Mr. Begin, you will hold on to 242 with your fingernails because that's the only diplomatic anchor we have." He looked at me wildly. Well, Mr. Begin signed the document to implement resolution 242 in all its aspects and parts, at Camp David in September 1978.

JSS You mentioned the ...

GR As a matter of fact we remained on friendly terms because

he must have realized that, after all, I was right.

JSS You mentioned one other part of 242 just now and that is the Jarring mission because 242 does provide for that, for negotiating. What was your attitude towards that at the time in accepting that part of the resolution?

GR We accepted the Jarring mission who was entrusted by resolution 242 to his good offices to the parties. We wouldn't recognize him as a mediator because of Begin's opposition. He would never say the word "withdrawal". To accommodate his foible m at this time I replaced it with the term "redeployment of forces". He was satisfied with this "redeployment of forces". Where do you redeploy them? He just wouldn't say. He had his taboos including the term "implementation". It goes to show that the wording of 242 was flexible and could mean many different things to many people.

JSS This is a somewhat strange question now because I want to go backwards again, from '67 to '56 to the beginning of the crisis in '56. Again, you were in New York at that point, I believe. One of the things that has never been clear is the extent to which you and Mr. Eban were kept informed, or were at all conscious, of the planning in Israel for military action and the eventual involvement of the French. Were you at all aware of this in New York as you carried on your duties there?

GR I was in Jerusalem when the "French connection" was

established to camouflage the planned operation against Egypt. Israel claimed that the entrance of Iraqi forces into Jordan would create a dangerous situation. This problem was filled of competence, being in charge of Middle Eastern Affairs in the Foreign Ministry. We had to open the consequences of an Israeli military interaction, in case Britain were to act in accordance with his treaty with Jordan.

I was sent down to Eilat to see what the situation was there. British forces were stationed on the Aqaba side with about 200 tanks. I took this seriously but I had my contacts with my military friends, and I remember when I was discussing with a top military commander my experience in Eilat here in this room, so he said, "Forget it, why are you so naive? This has nothing to do with Jordan. We are massing our forces in the south. This is the problem. Have you never heard about the Czech arms deal with Egypt?"

But Ben Gurion, in the meetings which we had in October 1956 with our ambassadors in Washington, Paris and in London who were summoned to Jerusalem, would not reveal what he was up to, and he would not reveal it when he was analyzing the political and military situation. He would not say that at the time he was negotiating with Pineau in Sèvres in secret. He indicated to Eban rather vaguely on the eve of his return to Washington that

something may have happened. I don't think that made a very deep impact on Eban because when he was sitting with Roundtree, the Assistant Secretary of State, on October 29, discussing the threat from Iraq somebody brought in a note to Roundtree and Roundtree. He became extremely angry and said, "Well there's no need to continue this discussion, your forces have just started attacking Egypt." He more or less showed Eban the door. So if Eban had been convinced that this was going to happen on this day I don't think that he would have been found in Mr. Roundtree's room arguing about the threat from Iraq via Jordan. He could have found a better diplomatic shelter.

So therefore Ben Gurion kept his cards to himself. I was at that time on my way to New York to attend the UN General Assembly. On my way I stopped over in Argentina for a family visit. I arrived in New York on the 1st or 2nd of November. On this day already the question of the ceasefire was discussed.

I remember the following situation which I was asked to deal with when I arrived. Eban had informed Hammarskjold that Israel had accepted the ceasefire. The British representative who heard about that blew his top and said "how can you do this? Our forces are still at war, involved in fighting, and this is not in conformity with the arrangements between our two countries. We are

deploying forces on the Suez because of the fighting, not because of the ceasefire." So Eban was rather embarrassed, and asked me to go up to Hammarskjold, given my good relations with him, to tell him "we have to withdraw this statement because there was an error in transmission", (you can imagine how Hammarskjold accepted that), "and therefore the statement is not valid."

JSS You actually told that to Hammarskjold?

GR Yes, an "error of transmission". The British blustered around the banks of the Suez Canal and a few days later they collapsed diplomatically at the UN and decided to withdraw their forces. I used the words "error of transmission" deliberately and ambiguously because it could mean that the cable introducing us was garbled or erroneously transmitted.

JSS Eban didn't want to do that himself?

GR No. He was not very keen to face Hammarskjold. It was easier for him to address a crowd of many thousands of people.

JSS Why was that? They did not match intellectually? Weren't both very intellectual men?

GR Yes. But Eban didn't like angry one on one dialogues. He doesn't like that, he likes an anonymous audience, that's easier because his strength is in oratory. But anyhow, after the resolutions were adopted in '56, we had very strenuous discussions between Hammarskjold and

ourselves. Well, we were a team. He had his people there and our team was sitting on the opposite side of the table.

Knowing that Washington was running the show, Eban showed to Hammarskjold a certain disdain. I mean basically he wanted to show him, "look, why do you put up here such a stiff show when I can arrange these things in Washington in a certain way?" Hammarskjold didn't like this at all, we had quite some scenes there.

At a certain point Golda Meir, who was foreign minister, wanted to participate in the meetings, she wasn't sure whether we were really standing our ground. She came and spoke emotionally about our situation. Hammarskjold got all red in his face, he couldn't restrain himself and he suddenly said, "Why are you so bitter, madam?" She'd never heard such a thing, she was struck by it. She replied soon, "Well I'm bitter because at every step where we make a mistake, we'll have to pay with the lives of our young people and soldiers. After all that has happened to the Jewish people, our responsibility is to be so careful and not just go for general formulations. We have to know where we go from here."

So we had very strenuous discussions with the Secretary General, but basically Eban was right. The conditions of our withdrawal from Sinai were decided in

Washington.

JSS

I have a specific question on that because there was the withdrawal, not just from the Sinai but the controversial question of the Gaza Strip and Sharm el Sheikh. Pineau indicates that actually he worked with Dulles but in agreement with the Israelis and that he was more or less authorized by Israel to make certain agreements with regard to the withdrawal, especially from Gaza.

GR

That's right, I can confirm that. Pinneaus intervention came a little bit as a surprise to us, but we accepted it because we were negotiating on withdrawing on the basis of an aide memoire, between Dulles and Eban of the 12 of February. This laid down the points and conditions relating to Sharm el Sheikh and Gaza, freedom of navigation, and so on. But the fine points had still to be worked out in order to make it operative.

Here I think at the last minute Pineau was helpful because the agreement with Dulles was consummated by two statements at the United Nations, on the 1st of March 1957. One was by foreign minister Golda Meir and the second was the response by Cabot Lodge, the US Representative. I participated in the discussion with Dulles, when we finalized these two statements. Dulles was very meticulously explicit on the Israeli statement, what our foreign ministers would have to say. He dictated every word. He was sitting at his desk with his

yellow legal pad in front of him. When it came to the Cabot Lodge companion statement, Dulles was vague, and I remember I said the points made by the Secretary have fleshed out in detail. He answered, "Why don't you trust me? These are the principles which are agreed upon." We returned that same evening to New York for a meeting with Hammarskjold.

Eban being satisfied with his success in Washington having worked out everything with Dulles, showed a certain impatience for Hammarskjold's reservations. He drew Eban's attention in his diplomatic way, to the fact that our version was not exactly consistent with what he knew about the Dulles-Eban agreement. Eban brushed him off curtly, and I remember that Hammarskjold said, "Well, I have a different version from Washington about the summary of your conversations." That means they had talked to him while we were flying back and Eban insisted that his report was the authorized version.

One or two of these points which Hammarskjold had challenged in Eban's report on the agreement later became points of contention between Israel and the US, because Cabot Lodge did not present what we were given to believe would be his response to Golda Meir's statement. His statement was much more ambiguous and less committal, even on freedom of navigation. So obviously Hammarskjold was better informed or that his diplomatic ear was better

tuned to what the Americans really had in mind.

When Golda Meir realized that Cabot Lodge's answer to his statement of March 7, was not what we had reported it would be she was very, very angry believing she had been misled and especially when she received confidential information that the Egyptian authorities would return to Gaza in contradiction to what had been agreed upon.

JSS There was some confidential information to that effect?

GR Yes. She was extremely angry and she insisted that Eban should send a telegram to Ben Gurion not to accomplish the withdrawal from Gaza which was fixed for the date of 5 March. There was a scene which I described vividly in my book - she threatened she would throw herself out of the window. Eban refused to send the telegram, banged the door and left.

I was left alone with her and tried to quiet her down, making it clear to her that Ben Gurion knew what we knew and that the matter was much too advanced and it wouldn't be good for her to intervene at this stage. It would be very embarrassing to her and to Ben Gurion turning her down.

We returned together to Israel and arrived still smarting from the Dulles' deceit. Ben Gurion knew how to handle this kind of hot potato until it became a cold issue. He said to her, "Well really, it was shameful what they have done and you must return to Dulles in

Washington and tell him to check the records of this, how he has misled us." He knew, of course, that it would have no effect whatsoever.

So Golda asked me to accompany her to Washington. We had a meeting with Dulles. He tried to circumvent the issue and to allay Golda's anger and anxiety. We discussed the question of what kind of statement should be made. It would have to satisfy Golda in a certain way, but not to change anything with Dulles. The whole episode created quite some tension between Golda and Abba Eban, but she realized in the end that there are realities in politics which she couldn't change.

JSS But the interesting thing is that there was a basis for her concern and your concern, not just that Lodge had said what was not expected but also because you did have some information that indicated that the Egyptians were going to come back, as in fact they did.

GR Yes, we had received that information that they would send back their administration and their military into the Gaza Strip.

JSS But you did not think that the Americans knew that, or did you?

GR We knew they knew. No, no, I think we were misled. It was the Dulles way of doing things. You will hear more about it when you speak to the secretary of Anthony Eden. Anyway, you can ask him about that. Anthony Eden told me

the following story. In order to save the relations with the Americans, he phoned Eisenhower the day of the British intervention in Egypt, that he wanted to come over the same night before they took any decision on the crisis that had erupted. Eisenhower, in his gentility, said, "Of course, of course, Anthony Eden told me he was happily leaving Downing Street to inform the Parliament where a storm was brewing to "be quiet, I'm going to see Eisenhower and we will settle the whole thing."

He continued telling me, "I was just entering my car when I was called back to the telephone. Eisenhower was on the phone again. He said "Anthony, it's not convenient for me this week. I have a schedule I didn't realize and I just can't do it this week. You know, you arrange these things first of all on your side there and then you come and we discuss everything quietly." "Well after Eisenhower agreed that I should come, of course, Dulles intervened and this was the voice of Dulles." ^{Eden}~~Eden~~ concluded his story with a sigh: "I should never have gone back to the telephone."

JSS

A final question on that and on everything. Dulles - what is your final judgment on what his efforts were, what was he aiming at in this particular crisis?

GR

I attended a centenary meeting for Dulles at Princeton last year, at the time I was teaching there. This was kind of the meeting for the beatification of Foster

Dulles.

JSS Yes, Eleanor Dulles arranged it, I think.

GR That's right, she was there, Eleanor Dulles. As a matter of fact she managed to get \$2,000,000 for a Foster Dulles memorial of Princeton. In the symposium the question came up of the British-American difference on Suez interventions. I made one intervention, saying, "I only know one thing, that Dulles - to his dying days - regretted the policy line he had taken, and he said so to Selwyn Lloyd. "I should not have interfered, you should have finished the job. Why did you hesitate?"

Why did ^{Eden}~~Eden~~ hesitate? Dulles had attacked the pound sterling, which was the strongest weapon he could use against Britain. The whole official performance was anti-British. So this was a sad story about Dulles. It was apparently rather new to the participants though it had been confirmed in all kinds of memoirs.

JSS Pineau has the same story, that Dulles told him...

GR You may talk to Selwyn Lloyd's secretary. I suppose he will confirm the story. It was the typical Dulles ambivalence.

I think Dulles was a very complicated personality with poor judgment and a mixture of many strains. I think he had thought that he could influence the Arab-Israeli conflict in a way which would bring about some sort of reconciliation. Therefore he made his earlier

trip to the Middle East. On the other hand he had challenged Nasser in a very abrupt way by withdrawing the American offer on the construction of the Aswan dam. It's not clear to me how he really operated. He had principles on the one hand and on the other he had lots of expediencies.

JSS Those are the main questions I wanted to put to you this afternoon. Unless there's something else that you would like to make a matter of this historical record on any of these subjects that we've covered ...

GR No, thank you.

JSS So it's just time for me to thank you very much.

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ORAL HISTORY AGREEMENT

I, Gideon RAFAEL (Interviewee) hereby agree to participate in the United Nations Oral History Project, sponsored by the Yale University Institution for Social and Policy Studies, and consent to the recording by magnetic audio tape of (an) interview(s) with Mr. James S. Sutterlin (Interviewer) on April 17, 1991 (Date) at Jerusalem (City), Israel (State).

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 for a period of 10 years, or until after my death, the transcript(s) and tape(s) will not be made available for research, education (or any other purpose) without my written permission. It is further understood that neither the United Nations nor Yale University will publish or authorize publication by others of the transcript or any part thereof during my lifetime without my written permission.

Addendum

Notwithstanding any thing herein contained to the contrary, it is agreed and understood that I shall be free and ~~at liberty to make such~~ use as I shall deem fit of the contents ~~(Interviewee)~~ (Date)

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James S. Sutterlin Oct. 15, 1991, 15 October 1991
(For the Institution of Social and Policy Studies) (Date)

Gideon Rafael