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F. T. LIU
BRONXVILLE, NEW YORK
SEPTEMBER 22, 1990
SUTTERLIN, INTERVIEWER

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JSS

Mr. Liu I want to thank you for agreeing to participate in a further session and today I would like to begin by questioning you first about the way in which the organization of the Secretariat under the Secretary-General developed to deal with both the political and the peace-keeping problems in the Middle East that were at the heart of the wars that took place there.

Liu

First let me say that it is a pleasure to participate in this project. Under the organization of Secretariat offices dealing with peace-keeping operations, at the very beginning there were of course no peace-keeping operations and then in 1948 and 1949 the two first peace-keeping operations were created in the form of observer missions, UNTSO first, and UNMOGIP in Kashmir later. At that time matters concerning the peace-keeping operations were dealt with by the Executive Office of the Secretary-General. As you know the chief of this Executive Office was Andrew Cordier, but the responsibility was quite minor. The mandates of the observer missions were well-defined by agreements concluded by the parties. The observers were supposed to assist the parties. The role of the Secretary-General was mainly administrative. Only later with the arrival of Dag Hammarskjold were the peace-keeping operations expanded with the creation of

the first peace-keeping force, UNEF I, in the Mideast and later with the creation of more observer missions. When Dag Hammarskjold assumed office at the beginning of 1953 he immediately created an office, a special office on the 38th floor, composed of two Under-Secretaries (at that time it was called Under-Secretary and not Under-Secretary General), one, an American, and one a citizen of the Soviet Union, to deal with special political problems. The title of the office was first called the Office of the Under-Secretaries Without Portfolio (OUSWP). Later on it was changed to the Office of the Under-Secretaries for Special Political Affairs. The first Soviet Under-Secretary Without Portfolio was Tchernychev and the second one was Dobrynin, who later became Ambassador of the Soviet Union to the United States. The American was Ralph Bunche who was transferred from his previous post in the Trusteeship Department. Hammarskjold and Bunche worked extremely well together but the relationship between Hammarskjold and the Soviet Under-Secretary Without Portfolio was quite strained. So, later on, the Soviet Union requested that their Under-Secretary should resume the functions as head of the Department of Political and Security Council Affairs, and the post was taken over first by Trevelyan, a British Ambassador, and later on by a member of the non-aligned countries, Loutfi first, an Egyptian, and

later on Narasimhan of India. After Narasimhan, a Latin American was appointed to the post, Rolz-Bennett, and when Rolz-Bennett died, another Latin American succeeded him and the post became a Latin American post. In the office of the Under-Secretaries for Special Political Affairs, Bunche was dealing with all peace-keeping operations and related political problems. At that time the main the main peace-keeping operations were deployed in the Mideast and Cyprus, so he was in charge of Mideast conflict and of the Cyprus problem.

JSS

As well as the peace-keeping operations?

Liu

And of course the peace-keeping operations, in their various forms. As he didn't want to have a large office the office was composed of a few members. Therefore he didn't want to take on the complex and time-consuming administrative matters relating to the UN peacekeeping operations. These matters were dealt with by an office called Field Operations Service which belonged to the Department of General Services. But there was a very close relationship between the head of Field Service and the office of Bunche.

Now Bunche was dealing first with the two observer missions, UNTSO and UNMOGIP. In 1956 during the Suez crisis, Dag Hammarskjold created the first peace-keeping force with thousands of soldiers. Bunche was in charge of this very important and complex operation. The force

JSS That is an interesting point and that practice has been maintained as far as you know up to the present, that the field commander is in fact a member of the Secretariat.

Liu That's right. All the military personnel of peace-keeping operations are seconded by governments except one, the head of the operation.

JSS Now this involves really a trilateral relationship in a sense, that is between the field commander, the Secretary-General or his deputy and the Security Council or the General Assembly. Did this create problems in your experience in dealing specifically with the 1967 events, that is the peace-keeping operation leading up to 1967?

Liu If I may I will go back to the beginning. At the very beginning, as I said, the two first peace-keeping operations were military observer missions, UNTSO and UNMOGIP. Those two missions in the beginning were not controlled, were not directed by the Secretary-General, they were directed by the mediator. For instance, the origin of UNTSO was a resolution of the Security Council adopted soon after the eruption of the first war between Israel and the Arabs. In that resolution the Security Council called for a truce and asked the United Nations mediator for Palestine, Count Bernadotte, to supervise the truce with the assistance, of military observers. So, when the military observers came, they were under the

mediator. They were in fact an adjunct of the mediator. Bunche, who was the deputy to Count Bernadotte and who became mediator himself after the assassination of Bernadotte in September 1948, organized the first operation and laid down its various principles and rules. And in order to direct the observers, the mediator appointed a chief-of-staff, a Swedish officer for Bernadotte and an American officer when Bunche took over. He was the chief-of-staff of the mediator, not the chief-of-staff of UNTSO, you see. When Bunche drafted the four 1949 Mixed Armistice Agreements, he gave a very important role to the chief of staff and the observers of UNTSO. And in August 1949 when everything was concluded he advised the Secretary-General and the Security Council that the remaining task of mediation could be taken over by the Palestine Conciliation Commission, which was composed of France, Turkey and the United States. They would deal with the political problems, but UNTSO should be maintained because of the tasks given to UNTSO and the chief of staff of UNTSO by the general armistice agreements that were approved by the Security Council.

After that the functions of the mediator were terminated. But the chief of staff retained that title because it was mentioned not only in the General Armistice Agreements but also in the Security Council resolution. That's why UNTSO is the only peace-keeping

operation with a chief of staff as its head (because normally the chief of staff is number two, the chief of staff of the commander). Now since the mediator no longer existed, something had to be done to administer and direct the observer missions and that function was taken over by the Secretary-General as a practical arrangement. This change did not cause any political controversy because the responsibility involved was not very great. As I said, the functions of UNTSO are well defined by agreement between the parties and the role of the Secretary-General in directing the military observer missions was mainly administrative. But when the third United Nations peace-keeping operation was created, it was a different matter, it was no longer a military observer mission but a peace-keeping force with thousands of soldiers, and here we have to recall briefly the creation of that first UN peacekeeping force. When the Suez crisis erupted, which came with the invasion of Egyptian territories by Israel and two major powers - France and Great Britain. The Security Council immediately met to consider the matter, but it was paralyzed by the veto from France and the UK. So the matter was referred to the General Assembly in accordance with the provisions of the Uniting-for-Peace resolution adopted by the General Assembly after the Korean crisis. The General Assembly wanted to settle this matter and it

was able to do so because both the United States and the USSR wanted the withdrawal of the invading forces. Eisenhower, as you know, took a very strong stand on this issue. 1956 was an election year in the US. His advisors told him he shouldn't do it because "you might lose the election" and Eisenhower said, "well a principle is a principle for foe or friends", Israel and France and UK must withdraw their troops. So the General Assembly called for the withdrawal of their troops under the supervision of a peacekeeping operation. It was realized that a military observer mission like UNTSO would not be enough. The French and British governments said that they had sent their troops to Egypt to maintain law and order. If the United Nations could do that, they would withdraw. But to maintain law and order you need more than a few military observers. It was Lester Pearson of Canada, not Hammarskjold, who had first the idea of a kind of police force to do the job. The General Assembly agreed and adopted the draft resolution proposed by Canada. But once the resolution was passed, it was Dag Hammarskjold who took all the necessary practical measures to set up the force and make it a success.

That was the history. Because the General Assembly had no executive capability - it was a big body with many members, they meet regularly once a year and couldn't possibly handle the complex task of organizing and

directing a peace-keeping force - because Dag Hammarskjold had demonstrated his extraordinary ability, the Assembly gave him a free hand to carry out this task. He did everything, he decided on the form and shape of the force. He decided that it should be commanded by a force commander and should be composed of national contingents, borrowed from the various member states. He decided that the major powers should not participate in it; that the force should be provided with light defensive weapons but should not use force except in self-defense. That force called UNEF was a big success. Within a few months the invading forces were withdrawn, and after the withdrawal of Israeli forces, UNEF was positioned along the border between Israel and Egypt - on the Egyptian side only, because Israel refused to accept it on its side. And once deployed there, it maintained an effective peace in this very dangerous and strategic area for 10 years. Because of this success, when the Congo crisis erupted, the Security Council decided to have a force very much like UNEF and to give the Secretary-General a free hand to organize it. So the Secretary-General came, by force of circumstance, to assume very important powers, to organize and direct the force, under the authority of the Security Council or the General Assembly but with only a modicum of supervision from them.

That is how it was done. But perhaps, with hindsight, we realize that the Secretary-General assumed too much power. The power assumed by the Secretary-General became excessive in relation to the nature of his office. Some problems arose in the Congo when the Congo operation became sour. And also with UNEF I when the head of the Egyptian government, President Nasser, requested its withdrawal. U Thant had to assume responsibility for this very important move. So in 1973 - when the October War between Egypt and Israel nearly led to a direct confrontation between the two superpowers, the situation was saved by the Security Council when it decided to establish UNEF II on the night of 24 to October 25. When the Security Council decided this, it asked the Secretary-General to submit a report within 24 hours on the implementation of its resolution. At that time the Israeli forces were pushing towards the Suez Canal, and they could take Suez City any day. If the Suez City should fall, the Egyptian Third Army, which was the elite army of Sadat would be trapped in the Sinai and would have to surrender. That was a very very crucial matter for Sadat. So Sadat addressed a direct appeal to the United States and the USSR and asked them to send troops to Egypt to enforce the ceasefire. The United States refused because it was its policy not to have superpower involvement in the area. But the Soviet Union, which

wanted to play a more important role in the Middle East, accepted and was preparing to send troops there. There upon, Nixon addressed an ultimatum to the Soviet Union and placed the United States forces on general alert. At that time we were very near a Third World War and a nuclear holocaust. That was the most dangerous situation since the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962.

The Secretary-General was aware of the importance of having a UN force there immediately, but he also knew that the Soviet Union might hesitate to accept such a force. So in his report, and we prepared it in the Office of Special Political Affairs, he voluntarily surrendered some of the Secretary-General's prerogatives to the Security Council. In the report, he said that the Force commander should be appointed by the Secretary-General, with the consent of the Security Council. Before, the Secretary-General, and particularly Dag Hammarskjold, could appoint anyone he wanted without consultation with the Security Council. He also said that the national contingents would be chosen by him in consultation with the parties and with the Security Council. And more important, he said that any important matter which might affect the future functioning of the force would be reported to the Security Council by the Secretary-General immediately for the Council's decision. We included that clause in the report because we

remembered the agony, the dilemma of U Thant concerning the withdrawal of UNEF I. Now if the Secretary-General has a crisis like this, he will simply refer the matter to the Security Council.

UNEF II was a big success. But we had a major crisis with UNEF II after the conclusion of the peace treaty between Egypt and Israel under the auspices of President Carter. That peace treaty provided for the deployment of a United Nations force along the border. In the mind of the authors of the treaty, it was UNEF II which would be deployed there. But since the Soviet Union was opposed to the treaty, we knew that it would veto the extension of UNEF II. The treaty was concluded in March '79 and UNEF II's mandate was coming to expiration in late July '79. During the whole month of July, we tried to persuade the Soviet Union - when we say we, it means the Secretary-General and various concerned governments, including Egypt - not to veto an extension of the Force. But when we became certain they were going to veto it, the Secretary-General referred the matter to the Security Council. The Security Council held a number of informal meetings. When the deadlock persisted on the last day of the mandate, the Council decided to let UNEF II lapse. But there was no crisis, and the Secretary-General was not accused of destroying UNEF II. So I think it works better now.

JSS So you think this procedure works better now,....

Liu I think so. Particularly now, with the new situation, with more cooperation between the Permanent Members, I think that the Security Council and for that matter, the newly created peace-keeping operations, are functioning much more according to the spirit of the Charter.

JSS And actually, with hindsight, if this had been in effect in 1967 then U Thant would have had to consult the Security Council.

Liu That's right, he would have automatically referred the matter to the Security Council.

JSS Now, what you're saying, I believe, is that with the establishment of UNEF I, Hammarskjold established a kind of guideline for how peace-keeping operations should be organized and how they should be managed. Now at somewhat later as a result of the Congo situation, the special committee was established under the General Assembly which became known as the Peace-keeping Committee. And while its first concerns were financial, it later had the task of drafting guidelines which would be applicable to peace-keeping operations. My question is, did the Secretary-General or the Secretariat seek to influence the way in which those guidelines (which were never agreed) were drafted?

Liu No, no. We very carefully, scrupulously, stayed out of it. We let the special committee do it - in fact the

responsibility for serving the special committee belonged to the Department of Political and Security Council Affairs and not to the Office of Special Political Affairs because we wanted to stay away from it. As you know, for a long time there was a deadlock in the Special Committee on the question of command, direction and control and on the question of finances. So there were never any guidelines, they submitted reports, very short reports, saying that they couldn't agree. Only recently did the special committee make definite recommendations.

JSS Do you think that the operations have suffered because of a lack of such guidelines?

Liu No. I think that the guidelines worked out by Dag Hammarskjold and modified in 1973 work very well because they were flexible. We followed the guidelines in a very flexible way according to the political circumstances. In fact, as you know, over the years the nature of the operations has changed and UNTSO, for instance, which was created in 1948 to supervise the truce, later had its mandate changed several times.

JSS Now, to continue, Mr. Liu, I want to ask where you were, if I'm correct you were actually in Mr. Bunche's office, that is the Under-Secretary's office, during most of this period. But you were sent to Jerusalem in 1967 - is that correct description of your position at that time, and what is the background of your move to Jerusalem?

Liu

Yes, I was sent to Jerusalem in January, '67. Now when we talk about the Six Day war in June '67, we have to go back at least to 1966. In 1966 tension rose again in the Mideast. This time not in the Egypt-Israel sector, which remained perfectly quiet thanks to the presence of UNEF I, but in the Israel-Syria sector. The relations then between Israel and Syria were governed by the 1949 General Armistice Agreement. Under the Agreement all violations of the Agreement could be brought before the Israel-Syria Mixed Armistice Commission, or ISMAC. They were brought in the form of complaints from one or the other of the two parties. The Commission would examine them in the order of their submission - one by one. The decisions of the Commission were taken by simple majority but since almost always the two parties would vote in the opposing direction, the decision was in fact taken by the chairman of the Commission, the Chief of Staff of UNTSO or his representative. Soon after the establishment of the Commission, there were so many complaints that the Commission could no longer examine them in the order of their submission and was completely bogged down. It was decided that the most urgent complaints would be dealt with by the Commission in emergency meetings. But soon Israel boycotted these emergency meetings as not in conformity with the spirit of the armistice agreement. So since the mid '50s, there were no meetings of ISMAC at

all. The function of ISMAC was mainly to have observers monitor the general situation and report any breaches of the armistice. In 1966 there were many incidents in the Israel-Syria sector, mainly because of the disputed land in the demilitarized zone. At the conclusion of the '49 general armistice agreement, the Syrian soldiers occupied one pocket in Galilee, in the Israeli-controlled territory. They agreed to withdraw from the pocket but that area was made into a demilitarized zone in which Israel was prohibited from maintaining troops. But they could maintain some security police. In that area all the land had originally belonged to Arabs but slowly, after 1949, the Israelis bought as much land as they could through various devices - for instance, by creating a company in Iran, which would buy any available land and then turn it over to the Israelis. And when the Israelis got the land, they would prevent the Arab farmers from coming near and even harass the Arab farmers to force them to sell their land.

In 1966 there were quite a number of disputed lands, claimed both by Arabs and Israelis. The Arab farmers could not get into those lands because they were prevented from doing so by the Israeli security police. When the Israeli farmers went into the land to till it, the Syrian soldiers positioned on the Golan Heights would fire at them. The Syrian shelling would invariably be

followed by air attacks by Israeli war planes. In 1966 there were many of those incidents and the situation became increasingly dangerous. In January 1967 the then Secretary-General, U Thant, issued an appeal to both sides for restraint. He proposed that the two parties try to settle their differences on the disputed land in what he called special emergency meetings of ISMAC. He chose the title of special emergency meetings since regular meetings couldn't be held and Israel had already boycotted the emergency meetings. Syria immediately accepted. A few days later, under pressure from the United States, Israel also agreed. So the first meeting took place around mid-January, but they couldn't agree on the agenda. The second meeting was scheduled for the end of January.

In the meanwhile the principal political advisor to the chief of staff fell sick. This principal political advisor was Henri Vigier. He was 80 years old. He had worked with the League of Nations and he had been the deputy to Bunche in the negotiations in Rhodes, which led to the conclusion of the 1949 General Armistice Agreements. When someone 80 years old has pneumonia it may become very dangerous. Vigier was completely incapacitated and Bunche sent me there to replace him. This is how I went to Jerusalem in January 1967. One day after my arrival I attend the second meeting of the Mixed

against the Syrian position on the Golan Heights and against many villages. Some Israeli planes went even to Damascus. There was a dogfight over Damascus in which six Syrian MIGs were downed. There were no Israeli losses. We immediately reported the incident to the Secretary-General and in fact, I drafted a cable and I said that the incident created a new dangerous situation which could lead to war.

So from that day on Syria approached President Nasser. For many years the Syrians had accused Nasser of shielding himself behind UNEF and of not participating in the common struggle against Israel. But this time with this very serious incident, Nasser acceded to the Syrian request. There were troop movements on both sides and tension rose very rapidly. A joint command was created on the Arab side, a joint command of Egyptian, Syrian and Jordanian troops, led by an Egyptian general. There were cries of "holy war" everywhere in the neighboring Arab lands.

JSS

Now you mentioned the fact that there were troop movements at the time. I want to ask about UNTSO, and that is the military observers, because they were able to move along the borders between Israel and Syria at that time, as well as in the south of course there was UNEF. They followed - or did they follow - closely the movement of Israeli troops at that point?

Liu Yes, we followed. There were troop movements. According to the General Armistice Agreement, IMTSO monitored the limitation of troops around certain zones along the Armistice Demarcation zones. But beyond that zone we had no control. They could deploy their troops as they wished. The deployment of troops was visible mainly on the Arab side where troops and heavy artillery were positioned beyond the zone of limitation of armament. On the Israeli side the deployment was much less tangible because the Israelis had a different system. They could call in reservists by, I think, a secret signal through the radio and they could do that very quickly. So the movement of troops was more visible on the Arab side, and particularly in the Sinai when Nasser started to mass a very large number of troops.

JSS Now it has been said, and I think it's now known, that the Soviet Union passed information to the Egyptians, both in Moscow - in fact, to Mr. Sadat who happened to have been in Moscow at that time, and to Nasser in Cairo - that the Israelis were massing troops on the Syrian border, evidently intending an invasion of Syria. The United Nations military observers did not confirm that, is that correct?

Liu That's right. Now, as I said, you have a zone of limitation of armament in the border area. Beyond that, they could have any number of troops. The United

Nations's responsibility was to check that the provisions of the General Armistice Agreement were respected. When that complaint was aired, the chief of staff of UNTSO, as was his right, asked Israel to admit the military observers in that area. In the area at the border where the limitation of armament applied, there was no excessive deployment. And we could not check on the area beyond, but we did check in a special inspection according to the procedure defined by the standing operation procedure of UNTSO. We reported that there was no excessive deployment and armament.

JSS And that was reported to New York.

Liu To the Secretary-General, and the Secretary-General made it public as a means of lessening tension. But tension continued nevertheless. Then on the evening of 16 May 1967, General Rikhye, the commander of UNEF I, received a message from the Egyptian local commander asking him to withdraw the UN troops from two positions. That was the start of the crisis.

JSS Right. Now, being in Jerusalem at the time, how did the UNTSO office interpret this Egyptian move?

Liu Oh, we took it very seriously, very very seriously, in fact we were the first to know about the crisis because all the cables went through Jerusalem. We were a relay center. We told the Secretary-General of course that we were here, that we would do anything he instructed us to

do but the next day the Secretary-General sent a cable to General Rikhye and to General Bull in UNTSO saying that he was going to handle the matter in New York.

JSS So that the advice from Jerusalem was not requested then by the Secretary-General on what to do...

Liu No. So we just followed. We followed the very tense negotiations which lasted two days, from the evening of the 16th to the 18th when the Egyptian government, President Nasser, formally submitted the request for the withdrawal of UNEF I and U Thant decided to accede to the request. Many events took place during these 48 hours in New York, but of course we knew them, because we were kept informed.

JSS Now this initial Egyptian message has been interpreted in various ways, but as you say, it only asked for the withdrawal of UNEF soldiers from the observation posts...

Liu Two positions.

JSS What would have been the result if simply that had been done and nothing more? What would the result have been for UNEF I?

Liu Well, if nothing more, I think the crisis could be contained but there was no assurance there would be nothing more. And also, during those crucial 48 hours the Egyptians, the Egyptian army, had already pushed our soldiers from their positions and also they were trying to push our position from Sharm el Sheikh. And that was

very important because Sharm el Sheikh controlled the access to the Gulf of Acaba.

JSS I wanted to ask that specific point. How important was that post in terms of maintaining freedom of access to the Gulf of Acaba?

Liu Essential. Because the Strait of Tiran is very narrow and it can be controlled only from the Sinai side. From the Saudi Arabia side you can't because of the configuration of the coast. A small position there could close completely the Strait of Tiran. That's why in 1957 Dag Hammarskjold was so keen on getting control of that position because that was essential for his peace plan. Naturally we didn't know on the evening of 16 May what was the intention of Egypt except that this was a big crisis.

JSS Now, had UNTSO made any assessment of the relative military strengths at this time, given the likelihood of war?

Liu We didn't have the exact knowledge of the military strength, but we knew more or less. Egypt seemed very strong; it had massed in the Sinai close to 100,000 troops with many tanks. As you know, quite recently the war in Yemen had ended and Egypt withdrew their troops from that country. Israel forces were also very strong and extremely efficient. Syria was less of a factor. The Jordanian Arab legion had lost much of its power

since the departure of Glubb Pasha; so the Jordanians also were not a major factor.

JSS So actually then the United Nations observers were as surprised as many others by the total defeat of the Egyptian army so quickly.

Liu Yes, that was a surprise not only to the United Nations but to many people. Now, the defeat of the Egyptian army was caused mainly by the defeat of the air force, the destruction of the air force during the first 12 hours.

JSS Yes, it clearly illustrated the importance of air power at that point. Now how long did you stay in Jerusalem?

Liu I was sent there really for two months but because of the rising tension I was asked to stay on and I stayed until I arranged for the ceasefire operation in the Golan Heights. Then I came back to New York.

JSS So you were still in Jerusalem at the time when Resolution 242 was being drafted in New York...Now we'll continue a minute on the outcome of the '67 war...You were still in Jerusalem then when the Egyptian army collapsed. What did UNTSO do at that point where clearly a new military situation had been created in the area?

Liu As I said, during the very tense period from the 16 to the 18 May, the negotiations, the efforts of the Secretariat were carried out by the Secretary-General and Ralph Bunche at United Nations headquarters. We were told not to do anything, in fact. So we just followed

the events. But when on the 18th of May U Thant acceded to the request of Nasser and ordered the withdrawal of the United Nations troops, we tried to be helpful. When UNEF I was deployed along the border between Egypt and Israel, UNTSO still maintained a small group of observers in Gaza. Israel had denounced the General Armistice Agreement between Israel and Egypt and no longer recognized the Mixed Armistice Commission. But U Thant's position was that the General Armistice Agreement was concluded by two parties. And the agreement could be ended from the United Nations viewpoint, only if both parties agreed, or if the Security Council so decided. Since Egypt insisted on the maintenance of the Agreement and the matter was not taken up by the Security Council, we decided to maintain the Mixed Armistice Commission in Gaza, in Egyptian territory, and with only the Egyptian members. It was a symbolic presence and we maintained six observers there. These observers carried out periodic patrols along the border. All that was symbolic, but now it became useful because we thought that if UNEF I should be withdrawn, if the United Nations soldiers should be withdrawn, some of their functions could be performed by the military observers. We could in that way still have a United Nations presence. Egypt had always agreed on the presence of the observers, but we had to deal with the Israeli government. We went to

the Israeli government and we told them that peace was important. The withdrawal of UNEF did not mean war, we had to maintain peace at all cost. We should maintain a presence of the United Nations for that purpose. We proposed to increase the number of observers in Gaza from 6 to 20 as a first step. The Israelis agreed. They said, "we'll continue not to recognize the Commission but we will cooperate with you." And with their cooperation, additional military observers were sent from Jerusalem to Gaza through the Israeli checkpoint.

JSS Now were they limited to the Gaza area or did they go across into the Sinai?

Liu They were in Gaza, but I think their presence was useful. Anyway, we had not considered going to Sinai because with 20 observers we couldn't do very much. What we wanted was a presence, made as visible as possible. So we increased the patrolling, and so on. So with this the UNTSO presence was increased and became more active. During our meeting with the Director-General of the Israeli Foreign Ministry, he said that Israel would exercise restraint and would, to the extent possible, avoid a war. He also said however that there were two matters which would be considered as *casus belli*. One was an increase of terrorist activities by the Palestinians from Gaza and secondly, the Gulf of Acaba should not be closed to Israeli shipping. So we

immediately cabled this information to the Secretary-General and I think that it was this message which caused the Secretary-General to go to Cairo on 22 May. He was to visit Cairo much later but he advanced the date in order to get Nasser not to close the Gulf of Acaba. We received a cable from the Secretary-General asking us and General Rikhye go to Cairo to meet him on the 22nd, and on the 21st of May we were there, waiting for him. But during the night of 21 to 22 of May, while the Secretary-General stopped over in London on his way to Cairo, President Nasser proclaimed the closure of the Gulf of Acaba to Israeli shipping. And that sealed the fate.

When U Thant came, he immediately saw Nasser and asked him, "why did you do it? I came here to ask you, to beg you, not to close the Gulf of Agaba. Now this is war." And Nasser said, "I didn't want to say no to you, therefore I did it before you arrived."

JSS

Yes, to go ahead now with what you were saying. You were in Cairo then when the Secretary-General came to meet with Nasser and to make this appeal for a moratorium. What was your impression of U Thant's mood and attitude at this particular point?

Liu

He was extremely depressed, extremely sad. I believe that, of course you know, U Thant was a very religious man, a very peaceful man, a very kind man and he agreed to the withdrawal of UNEF I in good faith, thinking that

somehow peace might be maintained. Now with his conversation with Nasser, he realized that war was almost inevitable but he didn't want to believe in war. He went to see Nasser with General Rikhye because Rikhye was the force commander of UNEF I. Then he met with Bull and at 11:00 when I was going to bed, suddenly he called me. He said, "F. T., come into my room." I saw him alone and he was very sad, in a confiding mood. He was hoping that peace could be preserved, now he was less sure. But he still wanted to hope that peace could be preserved. He said, "well, I think I want to call for a moratorium." Moratorium might not be the right word for this situation but for him it was. It's like a debt, and you could extend the moment of truce so that he could find some way of making an agreement.

JSS And this concept of moratorium that he had, that was simply in a sense a standstill on all fronts?

Liu That's right, for them not to take any action which would lead to actual war, to active war...

JSS Which would have meant not stopping any Israeli ship going through the Strait of Tiran.

Liu Yes, and not to increase the troop movement at the border, not to make irresponsible statements - something, but at that time he wanted to gain time.

JSS And when he left Cairo did you have the impression that he felt that he had succeeded to some extent?

Liu No, he knew because the main thing, quite simply, it was the closure of the Gulf of Acaba, and when Nasser took the decision and refused to reverse it, it became hopeless. But he still hoped that something might happen, a *deus ex machina*.

JSS But you had to anticipate at that point that there would be war and the Israelis would not stand back.

Liu Yes, at that time the Israelis made it quite clear. They used the word, the latin expression, *casus belli* to emphasize the point.

JSS And of course we know the outcome of that. Now going ahead to the outcome, were you still in Jerusalem or were you back in New York at the time when the SC was meeting and when Resolution 242 was eventually adopted?

Liu Yes, I was in New York, and in fact I saw Lord Caradon discussing with his staff about changing some words to get the resolution adopted. And I was in the SC chamber when the resolution was adopted. The whole room broke into loud applause, it never happened before - well, not in my memory. It was as if all the members of the Council, all the persons in the Council room thought that finally we could have a peace agreement, of course that hope was to be frustrated.

JSS Now, this is known of course as the British draft - was there any input from the Secretariat that you know of?

Liu No, no. Normally, on this very crucial question, the

Secretariat would not want to put in any input, unless asked. That resolution was prepared by the British delegation. In fact I was near Lord Caradon when he told his staff, "try to reword the resolution to have it adopted unanimously."

JSS Now, to your knowledge, was the resolution subjected to what I would call a legal examination by the Legal Department of the Secretariat? The reason I ask this question is, was the significance of the word "the" recognized at that point in front of the Occupied Territories?

Liu At that time I don't think that was recognized, it was recognized later when Jarring started his negotiations.

JSS So that the subtlety of that, if that was the intention of the British draft and I suppose it was, was not recognized immediately..

Liu I don't think so, and also when you consider a resolution and so on, each delegation considered the resolution in one language. I don't think that many delegations would compare the English and French texts. It was assumed that the translation was correct, so the resolution read - the original was in the English text, "withdraw from occupied territory," (without the "the") but, the French considered the text in their language with the "le," "des territoires." In fact the problem is that you can't translate this phrase exactly in French because this

would be bad French and therefore you need to add something. You need either "from the territories" or "from certain territories." The "the" would be too much, "certain" would be not enough. But the French didn't realize that, the French text was drafted in very good French, and the English text was equally good, and the translation sections didn't pay much attention to the . The problem came later. In fact, it became an issue because the political will was absent, otherwise it didn't really matter. But when the political will is not there, then you look for reasons to disagree.

JSS I want to go ahead now to Mr. Jarring and his mission. Could you give a personal assessment of Mr. Jarring and of his efforts to bring about a peace settlement?

JSS Well, Jarring is a very [good] diplomat, very hard-working, very thorough. He tried everything possible and he was helped by the major powers. At one time the four major powers (except China) met regularly in order to foster his efforts. He was helped by the Africans, there was a high-level African mission, a mission of four African presidents, led by Senghor. He went to the area to help him. So he had many assets, and at the end he arrived at the right conclusion, which was that the problem had to be dealt with *seriatim*, first in the Egyptian sector and later going on into the Jordanian sector and the Syrian sector. So he started with the

Egyptian sector and he proposed, as you know, an exchange of territory for recognition. Also, in order to make the problem less complicated he dealt only with Sinai, not with Gaza which was part of Palestine. So he proposed the withdrawal of Israeli troops from the Sinai in exchange for recognition. The Egyptians accepted, but Israel rejected it and that was the end of the Jarring effort. But that was the same proposal that was later taken up by Carter and led to the peace treaty between Egypt and Israel. The problem with Jarring was that he didn't have the clout of a major power.

JSS Right. Now I wanted to ask in this connection again the relationship between a negotiator like that, a mediator, Jarring, and Headquarters in New York. Was he being given continuing guidance from the Secretary-General, or was he largely independent?

Liu Well he was not guided daily. But he himself consulted the Secretary-General and Bunche very often. He came to New York and they worked very closely.

JSS Now in the course of time when it came to 1970 there had been the war of attrition on the Egyptian-Israeli front. Jarring was able to arrange a ceasefire at this point, is that his personal ...

Liu I think that really the US arranged a ceasefire in order to facilitate the Jarring mission, the resumption of the Jarring mission. I think that the main role was played

by the US.

JSS So that in fact you needed a major power to do it.

Liu But this ceasefire did hold for a while. It held until October, 1973. In fact the biggest surprise, the eruption of the October war, the October war was a big surprise for everyone because the situation was very quiet, almost normal. You had some exchange of fire, but that was very normal. The situation was extremely quiet and the Israeli authorities didn't believe there would be a war at that time. For the first time they were surprised. They were taken aback.

JSS Now, in the process of trying to achieve a ceasefire and eventually a disengagement, Henry Kissinger was in touch with the Secretary-General. How would you describe the relationship between Kissinger as the major negotiator at that point and the Secretariat of the United Nations and Waldheim?

Liu It was good, it was good. I believe that in the beginning he didn't believe too much in the United Nations. But with the October war, he came to see the usefulness of the United Nations and he used the United Nations in a very skillful way.

JSS In particular, are you referring to the talks at km 101?

Liu First, 101. The talks at 101 were under United Nations auspices. They were chaired by Siilasvuo, that was the United Nations. Only later you had the second

negotiation dealing with the partial disengagement, that led by Kissinger. What he did was to conduct indirect negotiations between the parties in his shuttle diplomacy. You could really not go into great detail in such negotiations. So he would seek an agreement in broad terms and then pass it to the United Nations. The United Nations would then discuss the detailed arrangements in direct negotiations between the two parties.

JSS Right. Now in his memoirs Kissinger stressed the importance of the talks at km 101, but he said that he never knew quite what was happening because he got different reports from the United Nations, from the Israelis and from the American observer there. What was the reporting procedure on the United Nations side from km 101?

Liu You mentioned the American observer, you mean the American observers of UNTSO?

JSS Well I think, weren't there also American observers actually at the talks?

Liu Oh, I see. Yes, yes.

JSS Not the military observer but the...

Liu Yes, yes. Well you see, the same thing is seen by different people in a slightly different light. That is normal because the perspectives are different for each. But, I would say that on the talks at km 101, the main

source, the original source was the United Nations. We organized it, we chaired it.

JSS And James Jonah was there ...

Liu James Jonah was sent there to advise Sillasvuo.

JSS Yes, he was a kind of a political advisor,

Liu That's right, he was the political advisor, in the same way as I was advisor to Bull in 1967.

JSS And so Jonah was really responsible for reporting back what happened?

Liu Yes. I'm sure that Siilasvuo and Jonah thought in the same way.

JSS In fact when the so-called peace conference was then organized in Geneva, the Secretary-General, who by now is Mr. Waldheim, opened the conference, but that was his only role, is that your impression?

Liu That's right. The Geneva conference was sponsored by the United States and the USSR, but the Secretary-General was asked to invite the parties and to open the negotiations. And of course the United Nations was there.

JSS Now was it your impression from the perspective of Headquarters that General Siilasvuo and his staff were able actually to contribute to the successful achievement of the implementation of the ceasefire, and ultimately the disengagement agreement. Was there a substantive United Nations contribution to this?

Liu Oh yes, yes. His role was very important. You see I know

that Kissinger had an agreement in broad terms. Let's take the more difficult of the two agreements, that between Israel and Syria. Syria was the enemy, you see. After Kissinger got an agreement on broad terms that was very important, direct negotiations took place within the military commission of the Geneva Conference. In fact they used this channel as an umbrella. When the peace conference was opened in Geneva in December, 1973, they held just a few meetings and then they adjourned. But the military committee, that is the military committee with Israeli and Egyptian representatives and chaired by Siilasvuo, remained in function. And the matter was dealt with by the military committee, with the Israeli, Egyptian and of course Syrian representatives sent there especially for the purpose. And chaired by Siilasvuo with Jonah as advisor. And they pinpointed all the problems to be resolved and made the detailed arrangements.

JSS Including the geographic pinpointing, I believe.

Liu Yes, that's right.

JSS And in effect the United Nations then could assist in the technical aspects of the agreement which was under negotiation but you're suggesting that they also could provide a substantive input by ideas of how difficulties could be overcome.

Liu Yes.

JSS And General Siilasvuo was quite expert in this area by that time, is that right?

Liu Yes, he was then commander of UNEF II, and he was very good.

JSS I was going to ask if you could give your impression of the effectiveness of General Siilasvuo at this point because he was in a very crucial role.

Liu That's right, he played a very crucial role and he was a general with a political mind too, which is important. He played a very important role.

JSS Because I want to depart a little bit here from the '73 war on this question of the military commanders because in the recent study you did for the International Peace Academy you've pointed to the fact that the quality of the force commanders varied in the history of peace-keeping. Some were good and some were not so good. Are there instances in this history that we've been talking about where the quality of the force commander made a real difference?

Liu I think so. I must say that all the very successful operations were led by very good generals. UNEF I owed much to General Burns who was the force commander and UNEF II owed very much to Siilasvuo. A good force commander is essential in time of crisis. It is not important when there is no crisis. UNTSO, for instance, for many years was just a presence and the role was not

too significant. So if you have a less good general there, it doesn't matter that much. In fact, too active a general would be a handicap sometimes and I know that Israel doesn't want that; they just want a presence with a general whom they could handle easily. Of course we need a general who would not let the parties handle him. I mentioned Burns for UNEF I, Sillasvuo for UNEF II. I should mention Prem Chand. In Cyprus there was a big crisis when the Turkish army entered (I don't want to use "invaded" because the Turkish government doesn't like the word), took military action against Cyprus. They of course immediately took over quite a lot of land and next they wanted to take the airport of Nicosia, that was very important because Nicosia was the capital and if they took the airport the balance would be changed drastically. He got from the British, (we had a British battalion), some heavy equipment, I think including Stinger missiles, and he positioned them with an internationally composed unit at the airport to resist the Turkish forces and the Turks never took the airport.

JSS And this was General Prem Chand who was there at that point, who had been in Katanga..

Liu And also in Katanga without Prem Chand and his troops. We might not have resolved the Katanga secession.

JSS So you would say that the UN has been fortunate in the quality of its force commanders in the major peace-

keeping operations except for perhaps partly in the Congo.

Liu Yes, in the Congo, that's right. From time to time you have had less-good generals - as I said in my booklet. I really don't want to name names. But that happens everywhere but in the UN we need very good generals, particularly for crucial operations.

JSS I want to return now to the question of the military observers in UNTSO. And I wanted to ask whether you felt from the perspective again of Headquarters the presence and US and Soviet observers when that occurred, made any difference - was it an advantage or a disadvantage or simply made no difference at all?

Liu It didn't make much difference but there is a political advantage obviously. It was a proposal, a joint proposal, by the US and the USSR to have that. It was imposed on the Secretary-General and the Secretary-General had to accept it. But I think it's a small price to pay to get the support of the two superpowers. The continuous support of the US and the new support of the USSR. In fact, the USSR changed its position at that time which later led to Gorbachev's dramatic change in '86.

JSS Which would take me back to a question about a much earlier period which you mentioned a little earlier and, which is, why did Hammarskjold take the position that US

and Soviet forces should not be included in peace-keeping operations?

Liu

I can only guess. First I think that the peacekeeping force would be in his mind very different from the force under Chapter 7. Chapter 7 envisaged a force mainly based on the support and the participation of the major powers. During the Suez crisis he wanted a force without the major powers. Since that conflict involved two major powers, he thought it would be good not to have any major powers in the force. In one of his first reports on the subject, he said that there were three ways of planning the force: copying the Korean method (that is, give the task to one country, probably one major power) and he didn't think that was advisable. Or give it to the two major powers already there since they said that they went there to maintain law and order, and he thought that that too was not a good option. So he proposed a new force which would rely on the small and medium powers without major powers involvement.

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UNITED NATIONS ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
ORAL HISTORY AGREEMENT

I, F. T. Liu (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. Sullivan (Interviewer) on March 16+23, 1990 (Date) at Bronxville (City), New York (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 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.

F. T. Liu
(Interviewee)

3/16, 3/23
(Date)

James S. Sullivan
(Interviewer)

3/16, 3/23
(Date)

(For the Institution of Social and Policy Studies)

(Date)