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UN INTERVIEW  
Brian Urquhart  
July 20, 1984  
Interviewer: Leon Gordenker

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Q: This morning, Brian Urquhart, we are going to talk about an historic year, that is, March 1956 roughly to March 1957. During this time there was intensifying tension along the armistice lines in the Middle East, and it is there that the centre of this turbulent year could be located.

Then came the nationalization of the Suez Canal. This was followed by the landing of British and French forces and the attack of the Israeli forces. The Suez Canal was blocked by the sinking of ships. This was followed by intense activity around United Nations Headquarters that eventuated in the creation of UNEF, the emplacement of this new peace-keeping force, eventually the reopening of the Canal and finally, at the end of the year, the withdrawal of Israeli forces to the armistice line.

This was a very full time and one in which you, your colleagues, the Secretary-General and other people around the United Nations were as busy as they had never been before.

Let's go back to the beginning of this.

Clearly the Security Council must have felt some warning signals about an impending crisis in the Near Eastern region because they asked the Secretary-General to go there on a mission. What sort of information were you getting during this time? What warning signs did you see and how did you and your associates go about thinking about it and acting on it?

A: ~~Well~~ I should make it clear first of all that at this particular point neither Bunche nor I was dealing with the Middle East. It was dealt with in a somewhat <sup>in</sup> my view, lackadaisical fashion in the office of the Executive Assistant, Andy Cordier. I think that one of the troubles was that they all had so much else to do that they really did not concentrate on it, which we tried to remedy later; but anyhow that is beside the point.

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In 1955 and early 1956 there were two sorts of ~~current~~ phenomena going on in the Middle East. There was the steady erosion of the Armistice Agreements, accompanied by very serious incidents both on the Armistice Demarcation<sup>line</sup> Line in Gaza and on the Jordanian demarcation line, and also very complicated difficulties between Syria and Israel, in particular over fishing rights on the Sea of Galilee and things like that, ~~and~~ there was altogether ~~clearly~~ a very unhealthy situation brewing up over the implementation of the Armistice Agreements, which I think ~~people sometimes forget~~ were at that point the main basis for peace between Israel and its Arab neighbours.

Hammarskjold was very disturbed about this, and so indeed was the Security Council. Hammarskjold's view was that since there was another arrangement that was <sup>also</sup> supposed to guarantee peace in the Middle East - the tripartite agreement between Britain, France and the United States - he should not jump in and try to do something if those rather key countries were trying to do something at the same time. It became increasingly clear that for different reasons they were less and less able to cope with the situation, and for that reason the Council finally asked him to go to the Middle East in April 1956.

By the time Hammarskjold got to the Middle East in 1956 there was a new and much stronger current running which really did not have too much to do with the Armistice Agreements, and that was the whole business of the relations of France and Britain with Egypt, <sup>and developments</sup> ~~the events over the Suez Canal, the ability of the~~ financing of the High Dam and the nationalization of the Canal, and the whole <sup>noticeable</sup> change in direction of Nasser.

Nasser had discovered, as others have since, that he could not buy arms from the West and had therefore concluded an arms deal with Czechoslovakia - I think it was in May 1956 - which had, as one could easily have predicted, rung a lot of

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alarm bells in Washington. You must remember that this was the time of John Foster Dulles, who was as obsessed with the Soviet Union as some later conservative leaders in the United States have been. ~~And~~ although it was perfectly clear that Nasser would have like to have bought arms from the West but could not because of the Israeli lobby in the United States, when he went to only other <sup>available</sup> source it was considered to be a treacherous and horribly pro-communist act. I have never understood the logic of such thinking, but nevertheless there it was.

This happened to fit in very neatly with the French resentment with Nasser which was due to the fact that Nasser was giving assistance to Algerian rebels, ~~and~~ ~~they were not very keen on Nasser.~~

Thirdly, poor Mr. Eden, the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, having all his life been a card-carrying Arabist and pro-Arab, suddenly found himself first-~~of~~ <sup>(as a)</sup> suddenly rather belated Prime Minister of the United Kingdom being accused by the hawks and right-wing of the Conservative Party of being soft on the Egyptian <sup>withdrawal of British troops from Suez</sup> dictator over the <sup>Canal area, and later over the Canal itself</sup>

This led to a ~~very~~ very confused series of actions and reactions, all of which ~~finished up~~ <sup>led</sup> in the Suez crisis, <sup>as it came to be called</sup> and I think the important thing to remember, as far as the United Nations is concerned, is that we could only <sup>get</sup> gain information by indirection on most of the things that were going on, but Hammarskjold made a very determined effort to try to dispose of what, theoretically at any rate, was the basic bone of contention, which was the régime of the Suez Canal after nationalization of <sup>Canal</sup> the <sup>Company</sup> by Nasser.

Nasser is thought to have nationalized the Canal <sup>company</sup> after the British, <sup>Americans</sup> and French, having promised financing of the Aswan High Dam - which was Nasser's blue chip, number one national survival project, rightly or wrongly - suddenly withdrew it, apparently as a demonstration against the Czech arms deal, though nobody quite knows

and possibility of Egypt's recognition of the People's Republic of China.

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would appear on 29 October to ratify it. They were to meet in Geneva with Hammarskjold, <sup>but</sup> and of course it was on 29 October that the Israelis invaded Sinai as the first step in the combined plan <sup>with</sup> ~~of~~ the British and the French.

Q: Do you regard that negotiation as deception?

A: No, I do not think it was. I think that it was muddled. I think the trouble was that the people who were negotiating ~~may or may not~~ <sup>were not all aware of the Israel-France-British plan.</sup> - Selwyn Lloyd, whom I knew quite well and who was the British Foreign Secretary, certainly believed in what he was doing. <sup>and did not know of it</sup> I do not think the French Foreign Secretary - was <sup>EAU?</sup> it Pin~~off~~ - did. But when they got home they were left in no doubt that that agreement was a disaster because it destroyed the reason for invading Egypt, which was what they <sup>their governments</sup> wanted to do. They <sup>if governments</sup> wanted to topple Nasser; that was the thing, the French because he was helping the Algerians, the British because he had insulted Eden, or Anthony Eden thought he had. ~~And I can tell you~~ it was really the most pathetic period that I can remember in Western affairs. It was awful.

And of course an additional annoyance was that both the French and the British were furious with John Foster Dulles: for having triggered the nonsense about the High Dam, and then having played footsie with the Egyptians over the nationalization of the Canal, <sup>Company</sup> which they regarded as a <sup>piece of brickwork</sup> (anintelligible). So the relationship between the three Western major Powers was abysmal.

Hammarskjold was, I think, extremely disgusted by this for two reasons: one was that he had been negotiating in good faith with these <sup>governments</sup> ~~birds~~ right up to the time they invaded, and although there were a lot of stories about collusion between the Israelis, the British and the French, you couldn't prove it. We didn't know <sup>then</sup> for certain. We knew there was a lot of jiggery-pokery going on. The Americans didn't know it either. The Americans detected the collusion only when they found that communications between Paris, London and Tel Aviv had increased about

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four-fold over this period and that there was obviously something that required minute-to-minute co-ordination.

Q: Were they telling you this?

A: No. The Americans never told us that, but there was a lot of speculation about this in the press. Hammarskjold was disgusted partly because he felt he had been dealt with in bad faith in those rather important negotiations in which he had got the Egyptians to make a series of extremely important concessions, and partly because he was disgusted by that hole-in-the-corner behaviour of the British and French, as were indeed an awful lot of British and French <sup>people</sup>. It was the ~~most~~ <sup>most</sup> pathetic scenario, which nobody believed and nobody even attempted to make credible, ~~because the scenario~~ was that the Israelis would invade the Sinai and get down to the Canal and the British and French would then give an ultimatum to Israel and Egypt, saying that unless they both withdrew their forces 10 miles back from the Canal, the British and French would intervene to separate them and thereby keep the peace. It was one of the most self-serving pieces of bullshit ever created by <sup>governments</sup> anyone and no one believed it.

But they went through with this abysmal scenario, and then it was made even worse by the fact that the British and French plan called for a widespread aerial attack on the first day, bombing military installations, airfields and that kind of thing in Egypt. But then the landing troops couldn't get there for five days because they were in Malta and were ~~sort of~~ paddling across the Mediterranean. And of course in those five days any possible idea that the campaign might work completely unravelled. There was no surprise. A vast <sup>international</sup> opposition, including the United States and Canada, was mounted against the plan. We even had the bizarre spectacle that when the United States and the West were violently denouncing the ~~the US and the Soviet Union as the Soviet Union in~~ Soviet Union over Hungary, ~~they~~ were on the same side ~~of~~ the vote over Suez. It was

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the most preposterous period, and Hammarskjold was ~~sort of~~ disgusted with that. He just thought that <sup>near</sup> ~~the~~ European Powers didn't behave like that, and I think it was a very big disillusionment for him.

Q: Were you in on this?

A: I got in on it really very late on when we got into the UNEF business. because I was the only person on the thirty-eighth floor who had fairly extensive military experience and so I became rather unexpectedly useful at that point, and <sup>in fact</sup> ~~in fact~~ Bunche was brought into it only very late on. We did not deal with the Middle East up to the Suez crisis. After that we took over everything, including all the observers, but we didn't deal with it before then.

Q: What about initiatives now? Was there anything much that could be done in this confused and secretive atmosphere in which you were feeding on rumours and which was confusing the most concerned Governments as well?

A: I think Hammarskjold thought - which was then proved to be wrong - that if you removed the basic contentious <sup>the Canal</sup> issue, people would go back to the starting line. But of course the trouble was that that was not the issue over which the French and British wanted to go to war with Egypt. They wanted to go to war with Egypt to topple Nasser, and the Suez Canal and all that were a pretext. It was, I say again, one of the most preposterously silly performances ever put on. Incidentally, it coincided with the American election, which confused things even more because <sup>one</sup> ~~the other~~ presidential candidate, Adlai Stevenson, followed the conventional wisdom that you can't go against <sup>during election year in the United States</sup> ~~the Israeli lobby~~, and he went overboard for the British, French and Israeli invasion of Egypt. Eisenhower said that this was matter of international principle, ~~totally~~ denounced the whole thing and said that he would do everything he possibly could to reverse it, ~~and greatly~~ <sup>and</sup> ~~to everybody's surprise~~ Eisenhower won the election in a landslide, <sup>L</sup> That buried

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Stenvenson finally; that was the end of him as a political figure, which was a ~~part~~  
~~of~~ interesting footnote to the whole thing.

But I don't think Hammarskjold could have done anything. Everybody always believes, for some reason, that things were much better in 1956 than they are now and that Hammarskjold was like a policeman, fearlessly stopping the Soviet Union, or the United States, or France or Great Britain or anybody else from doing things. It wasn't like that; it never had been and it isn't like that now. Hammarskjold tried to remove the fundamentally contentious issue and on paper <sup>he</sup> succeeded. But it wasn't any good because it wasn't the fundamental issue really.

He then got into the business of negotiating the cease-fire, and at that he was quite successful, but that in turn depended on the progress we could make in producing an alternative to the British and French presence in Egypt, and that is where the UNEF idea came in. The UNEF idea was originally to subsume the British and French forces into a UN force - that was Pearson's idea, Lester Pearson of Canada. Hammarskjold from the beginning said that that was politically a complete non-starter because you could never get the Security Council, not even the United States, to vote for the British and French staying on under the UN flag after what had happened. Furthermore the Egyptians would never have accepted it, and later on, when we came to argue about clearing the Canal, the Egyptians wouldn't even accept British or French dredgers and things, on the basis that they were the invading Power - which was reasonable.

So then we had to get to something completely different, ~~but~~ <sup>the</sup> trouble was that the condition under which the British and French, who had to go through with their landing which ~~was~~ on 5 November ~~and~~ which was a most abysmal military operation, would then declare a cease-fire and their ~~intention to withdraw was that~~ <sup>provided</sup> the United Nations would put in a peace-keeping force. And so we had really to put

on a great burst of speed, ~~to see how this would~~ -- ~~We~~ had never done this before, and this <sup>was</sup> where Bunche and I came in. We were put on as sort of practical executives to put this bloody thing together.

Q: Let's stop here for just a minute. You say this had never been done before. But was it really that new? What were the new elements here?

A: ~~What was new was~~. It was really all in Pearson's speech to the Assembly. Pearson said that it is not enough this time to ask for a cease-fire and to put in UN observers. You need <sup>ed</sup> something much larger than that. That ~~will~~ <sup>would</sup> not do it because that ~~will~~ <sup>would</sup> not secure the withdrawal of the Israeli, British or French forces. You need <sup>ed</sup> a peace and police force that ~~will~~ <sup>would</sup> really <sup>get between the armies and</sup> police the border and have the physical power to do it. ~~And~~ <sup>the</sup> concept that was new was having actual troops. We had had individual officer observers - in the Middle East, in Kashmir, in Greece - at ~~one~~ point before then, but nothing approaching a force. And that was the difference. And of course once you get people who are armed you are in a different ball game, and that was another very major difference. We didn't in those days, for example, even have any identifying symbols for observers. <sup>Other than armbands and blue scarves</sup> ~~They had~~ ~~armbands~~. ~~And the first thing, I remember,~~ ~~We~~ had this sort of 24-hour day meeting on the thirty-eighth floor in our office consisting of military attaches and various people in the Administration - Dave Vaughan and people like that - and Hammarskjold and Bunche used to drop in whenever they could - simply going through checklists of things that had to be done, <sup>A</sup> and the simplest things had to be done. For example, the Egyptians were very much against the Canadians being part of this Force ~~on the grounds that the Canadians~~. In fact, the regiment they earmarked for this was the Queen's Own Canadian Dragoons, which, after they had just been invaded by the British, wasn't very tactful. But what was even worse was that the Canadians ~~and~~ British uniforms were absolutely identical. It was obviously

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impossible<sup>1</sup> to put in any troops which couldn't be clearly identified as UN; and so then the question was how you did that, and those of us who had been in the army said that the only way you could do this was by hats because it's the only thing you can see in a battle, and they have to be fairly bright and something completely different.

So then we went <sup>suggested</sup> into the ~~business~~ of UN-blue berets, and everyone thought that was a wonderful idea. It would emphasize the peaceful nature of the Force and so on. The only trouble with that was that the manufacturer could only do it in sufficient numbers in seven weeks. So that was out. So then I, I think, finally said: you know the United States helmet liner, which is made of plastic, is a wonderfully light, perfectly comfortable hat once you take the metal part of it off, and surely it must be possible to dip it into a bucket of blue paint. And everybody said, yes. There was <sup>are</sup> something like 3 million of these things in stores in Europe; and this is finally <sup>what</sup> we did: it was simple to spray paint them in Pisa, and that is where the blue helmet started, the reason being that we couldn't get anything else in time.

Q: Nobody every said this was Urquhart's graffiti?

A: No, no, certainly not.

Then there was a ~~tremendously~~ long thing about how the hell are we going to feed these people, and nobody could figure out a way of getting stores for, let's say, 4,000 troops in the middle of Egypt during a war, until it occurred to, I ~~do head of the UN Field Operations Service,~~ think, George Lansky, that there were 15 ships stuck in the Canal, all with their generators going and in perfectly good shape, and all the food for UNEF was taken off the stuck ships. It was improvisation right from the beginning. It was fun.

Of course not everybody believed that this was a viable concept at all, including in the beginning Hammarskjold, who was extremely dubious about it because

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the Egyptians were very, very nervous about having a new lot of <sup>soldiers</sup> foreigners bumbling around in Egypt. They had already got the Israelis, the British and the French, and throughout their history they had had a great number of invasions and they were extremely distrustful, so that the whole <sup>job</sup> essence of negotiating this thing in was a very tough negotiation for Hammarskjold. He went to Cairo and negotiated with Nasser and Fawzi, and I think it was a remarkable achievement of imagination on his part that he managed to get the thing <sup>off</sup> on the ground. I think the first troops <sup>arrived</sup> were ~~there~~ on 14 November. Anyhow it was <sup>less than</sup> ~~about~~ two weeks.

Q: To what degree did all this constant staff work on the details - necessary details, but nevertheless details - contribute to Hammarskjold's confidence that he could negotiate something? What I am really asking about here is...

A: Well I think he was never in any doubt that we could manage the practical thing. It was going to be a bit of a scramble and so on, but ~~you~~ <sup>there is a</sup> know ~~the~~ great blessing about peace-keeping, ~~and~~ <sup>peace-keeping</sup> having once been in a fighting army myself I can tell you the difference between ~~that~~ and ordinary military operations is that in ordinary military operations ~~if you are plying here all day~~ you are presumably going to land in battle conditions if not an assault landing, and to do that requires the most meticulous planning, timing and scheduling. You really <sup>need</sup> ~~have to have the thing~~ and that is months of staff work. D-day, for example, took two years, because you simply had to know at any given time where each soldier was, what he was going to need, where the back-up was coming from, how it was going to get there and how you were going to fit them all onto a beach <sup>at</sup> and onto one road. It was a tremendous problem, and this is the kind of planning that takes time.

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The great thing about UN operations is that they very specifically don't have to fight. If they are going to fight they aren't any good anyway. So all you have to do is put people in a transport aircraft and get them somewhere, and being there is three quarters of the <sup>job</sup> ~~thing~~. I mean there are lots of other things they can do, but actually their presence is the initial point and that is a much easier thing. We could put a completely assorted bunch of troops into C-110s, the most sick-making aircraft in the world without any exception - ~~it is almost unique in its airsick-making qualities~~ and fly them airsick as dogs into <sup>Abu Sueir</sup> ~~I forget what~~ ~~the name of the place~~ ~~was~~ on the Canal - and their actually arriving immediately, even if in a somewhat motheaten condition, was already half the game politically and practically, because they provided a cushion between the British and French on the one side and the Egyptians on the other, and then they provided a physical <sup>buffer</sup> ~~thing~~ on the ground, a symbol, where you could say to the British and French: "OK, we are now arriving. We are taking over. There is no need for you to be there; forget it. And furthermore it's going to be safe for you to leave. You're not going to be shot at when you're leaving."

I think that as things went on, Hammar skjold's <sup>greatest</sup> ~~main~~ problem was with the Egyptians, who were, and I think rightly, extremely nervous. This was a new experiment and they had already been at the receiving end of a whole lot of experiments of all sorts that year and were very distrustful, and I think <sup>It</sup> was a tremendous example of Hammar skjold's capacity for confidence-building and understanding other people's problems that he could do this.

There were some other things that he was determined to get in there <sup>to the agreement</sup> and that ~~he sent very early on; he paved the way for them himself.~~ Then ~~He~~ sent the Legal Counsel, Stavropoulos, to Cairo to negotiate the status of forces agreement on UNEF

with the Egyptian Government. Now Hammarskjold always had a great sense of establishing <sup>legal</sup> precedent in everything he did, no matter how much of an emergency it was. He was always looking at what it would mean in historical terms and what it would mean for the future, which ~~I think~~ is one of the reasons that he was such a remarkable person. He always found time to do this, and he was determined that that <sup>this</sup> agreement should in some way be an advance on previous things of its kind. <sup>a model</sup> ~~It~~ <sup>and a model for the future</sup> should be an advance on NATO agreements and that kind of thing. And the advance he was determined to have was that the Egyptians would agree that members of the UN Force, if arrested <sup>while serving</sup> while in UNEF for civil offences, would be repatriated and tried under the laws of their own Governments for those offences, and there would be a reciprocal agreement. They would be tried, but not in Egypt. In those days this was a fairly farsighted idea, because it had never been done before. He got it, and I think that was very important. It sounds like a nitpicking thing, but it really isn't if you think in terms of the willingness of Governments to allow their soldiers to serve in rather complicated situations in other parts of the world. It is a very important <sup>provision</sup> ~~thing~~, and these were the things to which, after we all got <sup>down</sup> to organizing the business, he really put his attention—and mind, and I think he was right.

Q: Did you specialize in some aspect of organization?

A: No, he ordered everything.

Q: To what degree were you leaned on for your military experience?

A: Well quite a lot, actually, because I had been six years in the army and had been through the British Staff College when I was wounded in the war and I did know actually quite a lot about the both the practice and the theory of how you organize and run military forces, and nobody else did. So that was the situation

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until we got a military staff, which we finally did.

Q: You had a committee of military attachés helping you. Were they helpful or were they liaison...?

A: They were tremendously <sup>helpful.</sup> ... everybody. <sup>This was a period of</sup> tremendous enthusiasm and everybody was simply delighted <sup>to help</sup> and, I remember, we had two American officers who were organizing the airlift logistics. We had General <sup>Coulter</sup> ~~Culter(?)~~, who at that time...

~~General Coulter(?)~~

~~A: Yes, ... who at that time was the Director-General of the United Nations Korean Reconstruction Agency and was a full general in the United States Army. He was borrowed, and we all worked well. It was interesting. But I think that people always overestimate the practical side of this and always underestimate the enormous political problems that underly the concept of using troops for this purpose, and I think that This is where Hammarskjold showed an extraordinary perceptiveness and capacity for really thinking about something while he was working 24 hours a day. It was one of his great and remarkable qualities, and he never stopped thinking about what it really meant in terms of sovereignty, international law, the use of various organs of the United. <sup>what I mean</sup> We have to remember that UNEF was in some sense a bastard child anyway, because the British and French vetoes had blocked the Security Council, and UNEF was therefore conceived not by the Council but by the Assembly and had to be created and run by the Secretary-General. For this reason both the French and the Russians always regarded it as illegal, and we started a whole peck of trouble right there. This was the first shadow over the whole concept of peacekeeping, and we have had it ever since for various reasons, and we are now desperately trying to get rid of it. Hammarskjold was very conscious of that too.~~

Q: What kind of interplay was there between the practical work that you were doing and the broader political questions? Did you feel you were informed about the direction you should take, or did you concentrate primarily on the technical aspects ~~and~~...?

A: I think that Ralphe Bunche, who was at that time, and will <sup>always</sup> remain, a kind of dean of all Middle East negotiators, did understand the political side, but, if you remember, (often) he wasn't very good at passing on his perceptions to other people; and Hammarskjold was on this somewhat Olympian plane at the Nasser level, ~~trying to~~. <sup>so</sup> ~~And~~ one really had to learn for oneself, ~~and~~ I didn't realize, I must confess, until quite a bit later what was involved in all this: why it was such an important precedent, why it was so difficult, why we had to be so cautious ~~why Hammarskjold~~. For example, Dulles went ~~completely~~ mad with joy over UNEF. He thought it was the greatest thing since the invention of the wheel and proceeded in his declining years - because he was already dying of cancer - to become the ~~great~~ champion of trying to <sup>peace-keeping</sup> build this into a permanent structure, a permanent standing UN Force. In fact the two houses of Congress passed a unanimous resolution to this effect ~~some time~~, I think, in ~~1957~~ <sup>in</sup> or early 1958.

(Side 2 begins)

~~And~~ <sup>enthusiasm</sup> As a result of all this activity, Hammarskjold was asked in 1958 to report to the Assembly on the lessons of UNEF. This ~~really~~ throws a very interesting light on the greatness of Hammarskjold, in my view. Instead of running up the flag and saying how absolutely smashing the whole thing was and how the millenium had come and everything, Hammarskjold reacted to this <sup>request</sup> with extreme caution, because he knew perfectly well that the moment you try to generalize the success of UNEF into some standing large constitutional change in the UN you would instantly hit the

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dust, not only from the Russians and French but from a lot of other countries which were perfectly happy to have a UN Force careering around in somebody else's country but didn't want the possibility of its suddenly turning up in their backyard if they didn't want it, ~~and~~ <sup>we</sup> are still at that stage now. Hammarskjold knew this and didn't want to wreck this delicate but promising plan<sup>y</sup> by pushing it too far too fast, ~~and he wrote~~ I remember it <sup>well</sup> (because I was asked to write the first draft of this report and I got the whole idea completely wrong: instead of going on holiday I wrote the first draft of his report, about 150 pages - which was actually a quite interesting report - on how we had set UNEF up, with some very upbeat conclusions and lessons for the future; and then I came back with this thing proudly and gave it to Hammarskjold and said, "I do hope this is of some use"; and he thanked me <sup>warmly</sup>, ~~very much~~, I never heard another word about it, because he was much too polite to say that it wasn't in the remotest degree what he had had in mind. ~~On the other~~ ~~hand~~ <sup>it</sup> just wasn't the right idea. It was quite an interesting document; I still have it, but it wasn't at all what was required. <sup>Hammarskjold</sup> ~~And he~~ then wrote his own analysis, which was a masterpiece, dealing with all aspects of the UN and peacekeeping which have since come out: the question of sovereignty, the question of changing the nature and balance of the UN system, the question of the rights of the Security Council, the rights of the host country, the susceptibilities of those providing troops. It was a brilliant performance, and I must say that that was the first time I really understood, over and above providing sufficient hats and <sup>and communications</sup> ~~breakfast food~~ for the troops, what the hell we were all talking about, ~~and~~ <sup>it</sup> was a most terrific lesson. It's a remarkable document and I quite often still read it because it <sup>is the work of</sup> ~~just shows~~ somebody who was very mature, with a tremendous depth of perception of international problems, who really understood the system <sup>and its</sup> ~~and its~~ nature and its problems.

Q: It was a very short document. Did he make the first draft himself?

A: He wrote the whole thing, I think. Well, I mean I made the first draft; it was 170 pages, and was jolly good too, but it wasn't what was wanted.

Q: Then the second draft was really the first draft?

A: Yes, he wrote it himself. ~~I think he realized... he was very...~~ I mean it was nice of him not to say, "You poor bloody fool, this is not what. <sup>asked for</sup> He didn't do that. ~~He simply said...~~ and I think he realized at that point that not even Bunche or his Legal Counsel could express what he had in mind; they simply could not encompass it. So he did it himself.

Q: You said a moment ago that the practical aspects somehow paled beside the political aspects and of setting precedents or avoiding setting precedents for the future. One of the big practical enterprises was clearing the Suez Canal. That was done, I remember vividly, amidst cries from every quarter that you couldn't do it.

A: Yes, that's right.

Q: Do you want to talk a bit about how that went, what you did with it?

A: I didn't have too much to do with it; I wish I had. The guy who was employed very early on for that was a wonderful man named General Wheeler, "Spec" Wheeler, who had been the general in command of the Corps of Engineers in the United States Army, who had a tremendous record in <sup>al</sup>salvage operations. He was the person who cleared the port of Cherbourg after D-Day. Hammarskjold adored Wheeler, who was a very unponpous, slightly sort-of straw-in-the-hair, rumped figure, but who actually had a mind like a steel trap. You couldn't beat "Spec", ~~no way~~ because everyone always assumed that he was a little bit dim <sup>and slow then</sup> and discovered the hard way that he wasn't. It was delightful dealing with him. Of course the British and French had assembled a huge salvage fleet. You see, they were very

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upset with the Egyptians for having blocked the Canal and made a series of really ~~appalling~~ quasi-racist remarks about how unreliable the Egyptians were to have done this. ~~I mean,~~ what the hell they expected the Egyptians to do is rather hard to see, but still... They had then rallied a very large salvage fleet of naval vessels and put under contract two firms in Rotterdam - Schmid~~g~~ and ~~Schwitzer~~ <sup>Switzer</sup> (?) - who were then the biggest - I think they still are - salvage people in the world, the ~~big~~ <sup>heavy</sup> lift stuff. They had got them under contract, and Hammarskjold simply relieved them of the contract because Schmid~~g~~ and ~~Schwitzer~~ didn't particularly want to go there under the British or French flags. They thought, quite rightly, that they would get shot at.

The British and French were extremely obstructive about this and tried to insist that British and French vessels be included. Hammarskjold equally ~~tried to~~ insist, ~~well, he did insist,~~ <sup>ed</sup> that this was quite impossible, that the Egyptians would not agree to it after they had been attacked. The British then ~~typically~~ started to attack General Wheeler, ~~and~~ <sup>Lord Hailsham</sup> in fact the ineffable ~~(what is the name of that man? He is now the British Lieutenant, I've forgotten his name. Lord~~ <sup>Hailsham</sup> ~~something,~~ who was a ~~kind of~~ dyed-in-the-wool provincial Tory, referred at one point to the irresponsibility of Hammarskjold in appointing <sup>"</sup> an old Middle Western grocer for this very important task of clearing the Canal, ~~and~~ <sup>"</sup> Hammarskjold flew in <sup>to</sup> a wonderfully well-contrived rage about this and said, "Well, perhaps we'd better have this out in the open. If anybody <sup>knows</sup> wants ~~to see~~ General Wheeler's credentials, General Wheeler doesn't at all mind being called an old Middle Western grocer. In the United States apparently this is a term of affection and endearment. But the plain fact of the matter is that these are his credentials, and maybe it would be good if the British Government would stop making silly remarks to cover its own

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mistakes." And there was quite a considerable row.

They started that operation almost immediately, in November, I think. ~~And it went much, much better.~~ There were - I think I am correct in saying this - 17 wrecks, including three or four really big ones. There was the El Fadani <sup>Firdan</sup> railroad bridge, which was down right across the Canal; and there were three or four blockships filled with concrete which had simply sunk and were tremendous things to lift. One <sup>was</sup> called the Akka (7), I remember. Also there were a lot of mines and things like that had to be dealt with. So it was a complicated operation. Wheeler did a brilliant job, and it was finished ~~I don't quite remember now exactly when, but really~~ in an extraordinarily short time at the cost of, I think, about \$11,500,000, which isn't very much, though one has to remember that the dollar was slightly more valuable then.

~~And then Hammarskjold~~ had privately negotiated with the Suez Canal company which was based in Paris and run by the brother of Georges Picot, who used to be here; and he had negotiated a deal with them by which this money should be paid. He borrowed the money from the World Bank, and he ~~simply~~ privately arranged that once the Canal was opened the dues on the ships going through would be put up 2 per cent until the debt was paid. Of course everybody was so delighted to be able to go through the Canal again that it never occurred to anyone to wonder about the dues going up 2 per cent, and the actual debt was paid off without any fanfare at all by this scheme, I think it was three days after Hammarskjold was killed in 1961. It was an amazingly efficient and completely painless scheme. And we all discovered something that none of us knew ~~which is~~ that Hammarskjold was an expert on maritime insurance. I don't know why he was, but he seemed to know absolutely all there was <sup>to know</sup> I know because we got some experts in to go through the whole thing

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with Wheeler and Hammarskjold about insuring the salvage ships and then giving the certificate of clearance to the Canal, and they all came out absolutely sweating and said, "My God, he knows much more about this than we do. It's absolutely terrible". It was very funny, I must say. So that was that.

Q: What was the relationship between UNEF in place and the Canal operation?

A: Very little, because, as far as I remember, UNEF's initial function up to Christmas was a kind of screen between the Egyptians and the British and French, ~~and it seems to me that it went only across the Canal.~~ It was never on the Canal much, I don't think. I don't think there was much of a connection. There wasn't really much trouble once the British and French had left. The Israelis, I think, retired 10 or 12 miles, and then of course, after Christmas 1956 there was this very prolonged negotiation to get the Israelis to withdraw *from Sinai*.

Q: Let's talk a little bit about the relationship you already referred to with the Egyptians. Clearly the principal figure there was Nasser. The Secretary-General negotiated with him. What did you know about this? What did you have to do with it and what did you hear and what are your reflections on this relationship? How did it develop, what were its character and problems?

A: ~~I have to be very honest about this.~~ At the time I knew remarkably little about it. Later on when I wrote about Hammarskjold I did go through all his papers and so I know quite a bit from what is on record about it. But I think the essence of Hammarskjold's relationship with the Egyptians was that he had already become a great friend of Mahmoud Fawzi, the Foreign Minister, who was a remarkable, ~~extremely~~ urbane and very civilized man who was a kind of ~~urbane~~ facade for Nasser. I am not sure how Hammarskjold got on with Nasser. I am not really sure that they did get on very well, except that Hammarskjold always had rather an

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admiration for Nasser because he thought that he was a person of a certain integrity and although possibly he had dotted objectives, at least there was something you had to admire in him: the idea of an Egypt where everyone was entitled to a reasonable standard of living, which was something completely new, and that sort of thing. He also did build up, I think, a considerable relationship of confidence with Nasser because, when necessary, he ~~really~~ was extremely firm. For example over the participation of the Canadians, the Egyptians announced publicly that they were not acceptable, and Hammarskjold went and said, "Look, you cannot do that. Don't you understand that you have been bailed out of this appalling mess to a very large extent by the Foreign Minister of Canada, ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> ~~last~~ Pearson. This whole scheme is to a very considerable extent a brainchild of his, not of mine, and it would simply won't be understood, as ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> Canadians have always been on your side in this. <sup>K</sup> You can't simply ~~now~~ spit in their eye. No way." And they climbed down, ~~or~~ <sup>or</sup> the only thing we got changed was the regiment that was sent, from being the Queen's Own something or other to something else. I forget what it was called.

And of course later on that stood <sup>Hammarskjold</sup> ~~in~~ in very good stead in the Lebanese crisis in 1958, which we will come to, where again it was very important that Hammarskjold was on a firm basis of mutual confidence with Nasser because, if you remember, the initial accusation in the Lebanese crisis was that the Egyptians were infiltrating Lebanon through Syria, and it was only when Hammarskjold had the absolute personal undertaking of Nasser that <sup>the</sup> ~~such~~ was not happening, even had it been intended in the past, that he could actually then, with the Observers <sup>reports</sup> ~~certify~~ certify that there was nothing going on, which was a very important phase in that particular crisis. But his relationship with Fawzi was a very close working and personal one. He had a very long personal correspondence with Fawzi. He was very

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fond of him and I think Fawzi was very fond of ~~him~~. They were great friends.

Q: Did you witness this yourself at all?

A: Oh yes, a little bit. I mean nobody ever travelled with Hammaraskjold. He always went by himself with one press spokesperson or so. ~~So~~  
~~that I didn't...~~

Q: Did you see them...

A: I saw them together here, yes. And certainly the correspondence, <sup>is</sup>  
~~which was very~~ <sup>personal and very</sup> interesting. And of course it went parallel with a rather similar relationship with Ben-Gurion.

Q: Yes. I hope you will begin to talk about that, because I think these two really go together. Do you want to talk a bit about the relationship with Israel and contrast it with the Egyptians and tell us what you were doing in this?

A: ~~I have to tell you that my role at this part was somewhat esherdiata~~  
~~(unintelligible) quite useful on (unintelligible) nuts and bolts, but Hammaraskjold~~  
was very much his own man. He wrote his own cables, he wrote his own speeches, he wrote his own policy, and if you spoke with Hammaraskjold you didn't come rushing in one morning and say that you <sup>have</sup> simply got to do this, it's a fantastic idea. No way. He wasn't like that. Which is one of the reasons that he was thought of as a very dignified, <sup>almost</sup> authoritative man. ~~But~~ Bunche had a ~~slightly~~ different relationship with him than anybody else did, because Bunche was a very grand, respected international figure in his own right. But even he was extremely subordinate to Hammaraskjold. There was no question of a kind of coequal relationship, and I don't think Bunche would have wanted it, and it wasn't what Hammaraskjold would have thought of either. They were great friends, but it simply didn't work out that way, though he would send Bunche off by himself. <sup>in missions</sup> Bunche was sent off to negotiate, for example, when we put UNEF in Gaza in March 1957, when

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there were all sorts of problems, both with the Israelis and with the Egyptians, about Gaza. ~~He went off there, and I think~~ Hammarskjold completely trusted Ralph Bunche, and he was right too. He was absolutely a reliable person of tremendous political common sense and total integrity. In no way would Ralph get seduced into some false role or something like that. ~~And~~ I think that that was a very happy relationship really, but it wasn't an equal relationship.

You see, the Middle East was rather new to Hammarskjold at this point. In fact, I think I am right in saying that he had never been <sup>there</sup> until his expedition ~~there~~ in April 1956. And of course like everybody else with any historical imagination, he was completely fascinated by it. It is ~~(unintelligible)~~ the most interesting place in the world, and this comes through very clearly in his personal remarks from that period.

Q: May I interrupt you for just a moment? You recalled earlier and at an earlier session that Ralph Bunche had said something about the establishment of the State of Israel as a kind of political turning point for the UN Organization, that this was going to be one of those factors that was of constant influence. Do you know whether Hammarskjold was aware of this remark and of his point of view?

A: No, I don't think so, except that, of course, the Middle East as always was an obsessive subject all the way through. It has been ever since we started, and I think ~~personally~~ <sup>sometimes</sup> that you can say that the Middle East is the cross on which this Organization is being crucified. If it hadn't been for the Middle East we would probably have developed in a quite different way and with much greater ease, because of all the emotional cross currents that got injected into the life of the Organization because of this. I think that what people always forget about the Middle East, ~~and~~ if we just go back to 1948, is that ~~and it's a~~ ~~perfect example of one of the basic things about the UN~~ the UN is essentially

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the organization of the underdog and one that top dogs don't like. We see this now, for example, in Namibia and South Africa and we see it in the Middle East, except that in the Middle East the underdog in 1948 was Israel, and this organization was not only essential in the establishment of Israel: it was indispensable. If it hadn't been for Bunche getting the Security Council to order a stop to the war of 1948, Israel <sup>would have faced an endless crisis.</sup> ~~in its then form would have ceased to exist. It was under an overwhelming military threat, and it was that decision and the fact that he persuaded King Abdullah to go along with it that enabled Israel to survive.~~ People tend now to forget that. It was when the military balance began to change, and that was the point at which ~~it began to change because that was the point at which~~ the Arabs lost forever all hope of a military victory over Israel. They lost it on 17 July 1948. And then the balance began to change. Israel became a much more powerful State in relation to its Arab neighbours and by the early 1950s was in a state of aggressive defence, as was shown rather clearly for the first time in 1956. But they were doing massive raids into Gaza in 1954 and 1955 with <sup>considerable</sup> very large casualties, and had become a very dynamic power by then. And thus the balance of power began to change. ~~Of course that coincided with the voting balance in the~~

<sup>Remember on,</sup>  
~~United Nations a little bit later on.~~ Xon began to get the ex-colonial States, the third world, into the majority in the UN and they were predisposed in favour of the Palestinians and Arabs, on the grounds that Israel was occupying various bits and pieces of their territory. <sup>so the voting balance in the UN radically changed.</sup> ~~This was a sort of post-colonial situation that was intolerable, and we have it to this day. In my view, as far as this outfit as an organization is concerned, <sup>Palestine</sup> this has been the most disruptive issue that could possibly have been injected <sup>into the UN,</sup> <sup>I suppose</sup> and we have, of course, our dear old chums, the British, <sup>officially</sup> to thank for it, due to the rather peculiar way in which the British acted at the end of World War I and their subsequent efforts concerning the Mandate.~~

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It's like Cyprus; it's nice to know there is still a power which can create insoluble problems. But anyway, there we are.

~~But~~ Hammarskjold, ~~learned this equation very quickly and he~~, like everybody else in the UN who has ever dealt with <sup>the Middle East</sup> ~~that subject~~, used to get absolutely furious with both sides because, just when you get one thing settled with one side, the other would do something so hotheaded that you couldn't believe it, and you would go right back to square one. I mean, <sup>it</sup> was like hanging wallpaper: you would hang a piece of wallpaper in Damascus, and then on your way to Israel it would curl up and fall off the wall; and it is like that still. Actually I quite enjoy it now, but it is an experience that takes a lot of getting used to and it's an acquired taste. ~~I must say, and Hammarskjold hadn't quite acquired it in April.~~ <sup>1956</sup> He got terribly irritable with everybody.

~~But~~ then he had a tremendous row with Ben-Gurion over the question - well, to this day it's a very important question - the question of the validity of the policy of armed reprisal. ~~And~~ he discovered in Ben-Gurion's reply to ~~the~~ <sup>his</sup> tremendous blast about this subject, ~~which was a very important subject~~, that he was talking to someone to whom he could really talk and they became very fast friends, ~~and~~ they had the most wonderful correspondence, very extensive, on every conceivable subject - philosophy, history, Buddhism, everything - and then occasionally these tremendous ~~exchanges of disagreement~~s. But they both had the quality to see that this was important, and I think that this friendship was <sup>quite largely</sup> ~~the~~ basis for whatever success Hammarskjold actually managed to have in the Middle East. Without it he would not have got through with the UNEF business and he certainly would not have got through with some of the later things, including the Lebanese business in 1958. ~~Although~~ I think it is important to remember that

Hammarskjold made no progress whatsoever on the <sup>base</sup> ~~main~~ problem of a Middle East settlement. He dealt with crises as they came up, but his only effort to make a fundamental change in the situation was a complete failure, which was this effort to start a Middle East development bank that would use the Palestinians as an asset rather than as a liability. That was shot down in flames very early on, and he didn't make any progress - no more than anybody else had done on that, ~~and he was very good at dealing with crises.~~

Q: He never really succeeded in getting the Israelis even to accept in principle the notion that UNEF should come anywhere near what became the border, but he did succeed - or the Organization succeeded - in getting the Israelis to withdraw significantly in the later months of that year...

A: Well, Eisenhower did.

Q; Well, do you want to talk about that?

A: They completely withdrew; they withdrew to where they had come from, <sup>Problem</sup> ~~and this~~ was first of all taken up here by Hammarskjold with Abba Eban, who was then - I think I am right in saying - the Foreign Minister, and Golda Meir, who was then - I think I am right in saying - the Ambassador in Washington - or maybe it was the other way around; I can't remember - and he got nowhere with it. They <sup>talked</sup> were very acrimonious. It reminds one of many of our efforts now to get the Israelis to withdraw from southern Lebanon. There are always <sup>great</sup> ~~reminders~~ declarations of intention followed by extremely pointed conditions that had to be met, followed by pointing out that the UN couldn't possibly meet those conditions. ~~I mean we had~~ exactly the same thing.

Finally the <sup>talks were</sup> ~~thing~~ was transferred to Washington, where Eisenhower, as far as I know, simply told the Israelis: "Now look, this is a matter of principle. I as

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President of the United States am committed to your withdrawal from Sinai, and if that doesn't happen there are a number of things that will take place. It isn't just the aid to Israel and all that, but there is also such a thing as the US veto in the Security Council which is your best protection against sanctions; and if you want that withdrawn, all right. But just bear in mind what it means. It means that for once in a lifetime the UN will work as it was supposed to work: it will employ sanctions and implement them; and if you want that, OK." They ~~left~~<sup>agreed</sup> the next day.

I believe there is no documentation ~~of~~ this whatsoever that I can discover, but I am almost certain that that is what was done and that is why they did not leave <sup>Sinai</sup> when Hammarskjold asked them, <sup>but</sup> they left when Eisenhower did.

This was a very strange period. Because of the rather considerable diplomatic going over that they got from the Americans, the Israelis were deeply resentful of UNEF, and because they refused to have UNEF on Israeli territory on the grounds that it was an infraction of Israeli sovereignty - and everybody agreed that this was a perfectly <sup>legal</sup> reasonable position; even the enemies of Israel agreed to it - <sup>so</sup> it was very odd, 10 years later, when the Israelis were saying it was outrageous ~~that~~ the Egyptians were doing, which was invoking exactly the same <sup>to have UNEF withdrawn</sup> sovereign right. I could never understand that. <sup>No Israelis</sup> ~~but~~ they did start off with a ~~most~~ vitriolic propoganda campaign against UNEF, including a lot of stuff by <sup>J. Alsop</sup> columnists in The New York Times and the then Herald Tribune alleging deals that Hammarskjold had made with the Egyptians, alleging that Hammarskjold had agreed with the Egyptians to bring back the Egyptian military to Gaza, which, under the Armistice Agreements, was under Egyptian administration. All these things were untrue, <sup>was also a col</sup> and there were ~~all~~ sorts of nonsense about the <sup>partiality</sup> completely ~~partial~~ nature of General Burns and the troops and everything.

Then they <sup>Israelis</sup> discovered, much to their surprise, that UNEF actually worked. And <sup>their attitude</sup> this over the next few months changed to the point where by the time we came to withdraw UNEF 10 years later the Israelis were the greatest champions of UNEF and said that it was terrible that this would happen. But in that initial period it was very sticky and ~~I remember that we had a lot of trouble, especially with the press. One was constantly trying to get people not to believe the most amazing cock-and-bull stories produced and leaked by the Israelis to Joe Sapore (2) or whomever it was. It was a very sticky period.~~ <sup>discredit</sup> <sup>Also</sup> <sup>Sapora (2)</sup>

Q: Did you bring press people, media people, in to see UNEF at that time?

A: No, I don't think we did. We were very sticky about the press in those days. There was ~~I hate to tell you~~, a very old-fashioned view of "to hell with the media", which went to great excess. Hammarskjold was actually rather good with the press, ~~wasn't he?~~ <sup>Person</sup> Because he was rather like ~~John~~ <sup>Bjorn</sup> Borg(?) or Greta Garbo. There was an element of mystery about him which attracted the press, and he was obviously a very effective and unique <sup>Person</sup> ~~man~~. But we weren't very good with the press in those days. Nor are we now.

Q: We'll save that for a private session.

A: Yes, we might have a ~~pop~~ talk about that.

Q: When the Israelis withdrew, did you encounter any technical difficulties for UNEF?

A: There were great difficulties because the Israelis <sup>took</sup> up all the roads and the railway track along the coast. They had these amazing vehicles with huge hooks in the back which simply <sup>ripped</sup> (untelligible), if you remember, and <sup>the result</sup> ~~it~~ was <sup>quite</sup> really very spectacular, and ~~was quite a vehicle~~. They did that to the access roads and to the railway, and the railway has never recovered. ~~It's been shot ever since.~~

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You used to be able to go from Beirut to Cairo by rail. Lovely trip all along the Mediterranean. Beautiful and wonderful. No longer.

And there was a great problem with minefields also. The Sinai was then and is now ~~absolutely~~ full of mine fields and there was a tremendous problem with that. But the worst problem was the roads and the railway, because we had always thought it would be easy to supply UNEF, and in those first days it certainly wasn't since you couldn't go off the roads because of the minefields and you couldn't go on the roads <sup>and the railways</sup> because they had been destroyed. So it was quite a mess, but we still overcame it.

Q: What were you personally doing during this period of withdrawal?

A: I am just trying to remember. That was in 1957. I think I was simultaneously the Deputy Executive Secretary of the Preparatory Commission of the Atomic Energy Agency, so that I was doing two lots of things <sup>at once</sup>. And then UNEF soon became routine. ~~That is what was amazing.~~ It settled down very shortly, and there wasn't very much that UNEF day-to-day really had to do. It was under an indefinite mandate, so you didn't have meetings of the Security Council to discuss it.

<sup>Very little</sup> ~~Absolutely nothing~~ happened in the UNEF area except for the odd goat straying across the Line and something like that. There were very few incidents. The fedayeen were completely put down. Later on we had lots of trouble about financing it because everybody said it was unnecessary, including the British and the Americans. I used to go out quite a lot <sup>to try to reduce UNEF costs</sup> and ~~fun-around-saying-I-was-going~~, but that was later on. I went back pretty much to the atomic energy business for a year after this and then came back <sup>to New York</sup> in 1958 when we got into Lebanon.

Q: I remember that at the time the withdrawal of the Israelis from the Sharm al-Sheik area was considered to be one of the really important moments in all

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this history. Did it seem to you at the time? Was that a special thing?

A: No, I don't think so. The thing about Sharm el-Sheikh was that ~~the whole business of Sharm el-Sheikh was a very dicey thing, and in fact it was the~~ key to the crisis in 1967 when UNEF was withdrawn because Sharm el-Sheikh and Ras ~~was~~ <sup>NASRANI</sup> Rani(?), which was the actual village, were the sites of the Egyptian coastal guns commanding the Straits of Tiran, which is the entrance to the Gulf of Aqaba, and if those guns are manned you really can't send ~~troops~~ <sup>ships</sup> through the Straits.

Hammarskjold had got the Egyptians to agree that if we occupied Sharm el-Sheikh, ~~not that~~ they wouldn't reoccupy the coastal guns - the phrase used... Hammarskjold said, "I take it that if we are in Sharm el-Sheikh you will not be" and Fawzi said, "I close my eyes". That was the end of that conversation, and they never, never challenged it <sup>until 1967</sup>  
(end of side two)

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So it was very important to have a presence in Sharm el-Sheikh. This was the pretext under which the Egyptians didn't have to reoccupy what was for them a very strategic place because it controlled the whole navigation not only to Elat but also to Aqaba, ~~and~~ <sup>announcement of the</sup> Of course it was the closing of those Straits <sup>to Israeli shipping</sup> (by Nasser in 1967 that was the casus belli for the Israelis, the reason that they launched the 6 June campaign.

Q: Let me refer back to some of the remarks you made about France and the United Kingdom. You clearly indicated that the French and UK Governments were leaving the UN out of their equations pretty much, that in your estimate they behaved in a rather foolish way. When did you see any shift in this?

A: I don't think that they left the UN out. They went behind the UN, they very deliberately deceived both the United States and the UN. They went along with the public negotiations on the Canal right here in our room on the thirty-eighth floor. At the same time they were busily engaged in plotting this whole scenario with the Israelis.

Q: Did anybody say anything about Mussolini and Abyssinia at that time?

A: I don't remember it. I don't think so. I think there was a sense of moral outrage and shock at this. I remember very well when this all happened and that the British ambassador in the Security Council, Sir Pearson Dixon, didn't even know <sup>about the Anglo-French</sup> of any of the ~~decisions~~; in fact he was <sup>very</sup> ~~just~~ annoyed <sup>that</sup> there was <sup>said to be</sup> any such plan when he was handed the AP ticker which announced the first Anglo-French bombing raids on Egypt. He was actually making a speech that it wasn't so. ~~And it was~~ ~~terrible~~ It was a time of great foolishness. It really was and I don't know what went wrong. I think a lot of it had to do with Eden's state of health, the fact that he had been kept waiting far too long to become Prime Minister, that he wasn't

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a very strong-minded person anyway and that he was sick as a dog. ~~I mean~~ <sup>He</sup> was running intermittent fevers up to 104 degrees all through this period and it really was a very sick situation.

The French were in a different situation. The French were totally embroiled at that time in Algeria and anything that distracted attention from that, exerted French muscle and did a bit of damage to the leader of the Arab world was OK with them. And of course the Israelis had their own preoccupations. They were ~~very~~ <sup>very</sup> very bothered about Nasser's rhetoric, his increased armaments and what would happen next.

~~And-I-think-Hammarshold~~ <sup>Hammarshold</sup> was extremely... One of those things that I thought was extremely admirable about ~~him~~ <sup>him</sup> was that he ~~was~~ <sup>could be</sup> very angry. In fact he made a declaration on the first day in the Security Council which ~~is worth reading~~ about the responsibilities of the Secretary-General if Member States, and especially the permanent Members, don't take their obligations seriously. It is a very good statement. The British felt that this was a threat to resign and therefore was blackmail, but I don't know what he intended. Actually I think it wasn't. I think he simply was a very moral man and intended to ~~bloody-well~~ make sure that his moral position was clear, and it was as simple as that. Any idea of blackmail was not ~~necessarily~~ <sup>very</sup> very much like him. But he realized, I think, very early on that there was a terrible, disastrous connection between Suez and Hungary, that Hungary was ~~really~~ a terrible tragedy with which the UN ~~had been~~ <sup>was</sup> totally incapable of dealing, ~~and~~ with which the West could not deal, with which nobody could deal, and that it was terribly important not to allow the West to tear itself to bits over the Suez <sup>crisis</sup> when this other monstrosity was going on.

I used to know Selwyn Lloyd very well in the war. We were ~~together~~ in the army together. ~~and~~ He was another odd character, but I was sort of fond of Selwyn; and he was in a terrible position when he came here after the cease fire, ostensibly to supervise the arrangements that we were making to take over <sup>in Egypt</sup> - which was a piece of bloody impertinence anyway. And I remember saying to Selwyn, "You know, Selwyn, this is simply a non-starter. You cannot put a military and naval team into my office to look over my shoulder. I won't have it. You're the people who started all this. Why should the burglar come and supervise the police? It's just nonsense. No way are we going to do it." ~~and he was in a very awkward position~~ and ~~he~~ was doing the same thing <sup>over clearing</sup> ~~at~~ the Suez Canal, clearance operations, raising the most ludicrous difficulties. ~~And~~ Hammarskjold realized that he was in a terrible personal position and set about doing everything he could to make Selwyn Lloyd's position possible at home and to get him ~~sort of~~ back into the international community. The British and the French were really in the dog house in no uncertain terms in those days, and ~~he~~ <sup>Hammarskjold</sup> had the extraordinary decency to see that this had to stop and he was the one who really made a tremendous effort with the British and the French to bring them back in as working members <sup>as outlaws</sup> and not... It was terrible easy in those days to shut the door on them, to say, "Look, go away. We're too busy." He didn't do it and I think it was a very, very important thing to have done and he did it. There were those of us, particularly if you happened to be British or French, who were rather more impatient <sup>and less understanding</sup> with all this.

Q: That's the point I wanted to raise before I parolled you. Here you are, a national of the United Kingdom and in those days fairly up in the middle ranks of the UN service, a veteran of the British forces, and your skills learned

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in those days were being employed in a policy to which the British Government objected strenuously and you are even having conversations with your old army comrade, Selwyn Lloyd, about matters which are difficult for him. How did you fare in all this?

A: Well I don't think there was a great problem really. It seems to me that, provided you have some idea where you stand on things, even if you are wrong you start off with a much stronger position than people who aren't quite clear what they really think. And I have always thought that in the Secreatariat, where we don't have the advantage of physical power or political clout or anything like that, the next best thing is to have an extremely clear view of what you think is the position and the right way to go about it and to stick to it, and sooner or later, particularly if you happen to turn out to be right, people will begin to trust you the next time and you <sup>can</sup> develop a certain degree of confidence and trust, and without that you can't do anything anyway.

~~I think that that~~ <sup>Suez</sup> was such a highly emotional controversy, including in England and France, that people who had been friends for life didn't speak ever again over this issue. It was a tremendously divisive issue but there was never any question so far as the UN was concerned of where we all stood. I would have stood there anyway if I had been an MP in England. But the fact of the matter is that we had a prescribed function and a prescribed position set out by the Security Council and later on by the General Assembly, and above all by Hammarskjold. And we were also lucky enough to have something useful to do so that it didn't seem to me to be a problem.

Q: You weren't kept out of aspects of it because you were British?

A: In those days people weren't so touchy about what nationality you were in the Secretariat. ~~It seems amazing that on Bunche's staff, when he was running the Special Committee on Palestine in 1947, there were at least two Jews and at least two Arabs, and it never occurred to anyone that they were anything except members of the Secretariat. He had Bill Epstein, Bill Mashler (F); he had an Egyptian called - I forget what his name was - and then was a Syrian, whose name I can't remember either. And it never occurred to anyone to say, "You can't send those people to the Middle East because they might be partial". I think it was a terrible thing when we got into this game of constantly looking up to see what nationality <sup>development</sup> ~~is~~.. I mean I don't regard myself as <sup>secretariat</sup> ~~secretariat~~ You know, one takes an oath when one joins this ~~thing~~ and I have always taken it perfectly seriously. I don't see why not, and it's all in the Charter anyway. So what difference does it make what nationality? Anyhow, I am Scottish so that I am not necessarily pro-British anyway.~~

Q: That's a good place to stop, I guess. I think this has been fine. Did you enjoy it?

A: Yes. Its extraordinary how much one can remember once one ~~sort of~~ gets back into it.

Q: That's right, and again we have pretty much tried to get you to interpret and to recall atmosphere and so on.